**SOC 8210 Advanced Research Design & Analysis:**
**Qualitative Methods**

Spring 2007
Mondays, 5-7:40 pm, Cina 214

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**Course Description:**
This course focuses on the field of qualitative methodology. The seminar is designed to engage you in both intellectual inquiry and the working practicalities of qualitative methods. To this end, we will examine issues in qualitative research through a workshop format, drawing from both reading materials and each of our ongoing research projects. Each student will undertake the beginning stages of a qualitative research project over the course of the semester, including research design and fieldwork. In addition, you will provide in-depth feedback to other seminar participants on their research projects. Each week will focus on themes central to qualitative research, such as research design, interviewing, ethnography, ethics, self-reflexivity, and writing up research results. Finally, we will spend time reading and discussing the qualitative works of established authors. This will expose you to a variety of styles in the approach to fieldwork, interpretation, and writing. I invite all of us to bring our personal interests, perspectives, and feelings to the material, while at the same time allowing room for new and different viewpoints and creative ways of understanding and interpreting social worlds.

**Course Texts:**


**Assignments:**

4 Papers (40% total, 4 @ 10% each):

1st Paper: Observation Assignment, 4-6 pages
Choose a public setting to conduct field observations. Bring a notebook and maintain a presence there for 1-2 hours. Carefully observe and take notes on the setting—what do you see, hear, smell, and feel? What are people doing and saying? How are they interacting with others and/or you? What is the environment like? Note every detail, even the small ones, of what is happening around you. Upon returning home, try to immediately continue your reflection on the field experience: what larger impression do you have of the scene? What feelings did it stimulate in you? As a researcher, what kinds of questions were stimulated by your observation? If you decided to conduct a qualitative research project related to your observation, what would the topic and research questions be? What do you want to know more about?

2nd Paper: Personal Reflection, 4-6 pages
Imagine what it would be like to be the subject of an ethnography. Choose any period of time/point in your life that could have been of interest to a social researcher (childhood, adolescence, adulthood, specific events, etc.), and reflect upon what this researcher might have observed about you and your surroundings. What kinds of research questions come to mind? What conclusions might have resulted? Finally, how does this experience feel? In other words, what is it like to be the subject of research? Consider your personal feelings (e.g., fear, embarrassment, enjoyment, curiosity, anger, etc.), and then relate this to ethics in social research. How would you wish to be treated, if you were the subject of research and analysis? Be assured that I will not discuss your assignment or show it to anyone else. Although we will discuss the experience of writing this paper in class, you need not reveal any personal details unless you are comfortable doing so.

3rd Paper: Article Review, 4-6 pages
Choose 2 articles from either Journal of Contemporary Ethnography or Qualitative Sociology. Both of these journals are available electronically (full-text) through UMD. I suggest you first skim the title lists of both journals until you find articles of interest, then look at the abstracts, then choose and print the articles you want. If you can find one article that relates to your specific research interests, do so. Then choose one article seemingly unrelated to your research interests (in other words, one for “work” and one for “fun”). As you read the article, take careful notes about the research questions, methods, findings/analysis, and conclusions. Then write a review of the articles (praise/limitations/questions), and what you learned from them.

4th Paper: Reflective paper on Making Good or Sidewalk, 3-5 pages
Focus on your reading of the material, not a summary of the book. This means you reflect and analyze from an academic standpoint, but also consider your personal reaction. Do you agree with the thesis/arguments/evidence presented in the book? Why or why not? Does the author explain their method well? Are their methods appropriate to the kind of knowledge they seek? What questions do you have after reading it? How does this connect to other topics/issues that are of interest to you? We will use your essays to help guide our discussions of these books. (Due on Monday morning via email at 10am, but bring a printed copy to class). You can write your paper any week that we discuss the books (e.g., 4/2, 4/9, 4/23, or 4/30).

Discussion Facilitator (5%): Facilitate discussion of 2 articles from the policing, judiciary, or corrections articles in Qualitative Approaches to Criminal Justice. Use the “Article Review” format I will hand out later to help you organize your thoughts and come up with discussion questions.
Article Review Presentation (5%): Share your review of 2 articles (from Paper #3) with the class.

Research Portfolio & Final Research Paper (50%):
Your research portfolio is a way to organize and chart your progression through the class. It will include all papers you wrote for class (they will have my remarks and a grade already recorded), including the “first draft” of each research element, described below. Each of your research element papers will also have my feedback, but no grade recorded—since they are “works in progress.”

Your research portfolio should also contain all notes you took from feedback received from your peers during class discussions of your research project. Finally, your portfolio should contain the final draft of your research paper (which you have repeatedly revised throughout the semester, based on feedback).

Make your portfolio “reader-friendly”: clearly identify and organize the various elements. Allow yourself to be creative and colorful—this will hopefully be a tool that you go back to repeatedly for guidance and inspiration. So make it something you will enjoy revisiting!

Research Element #1: Crafting the Research Question & Choosing Your Method(s)
Define your research question(s). Why is this topic important/interesting to you, and what is the social relevance of your research question (the “so what” question). What method(s) do you intend to use? What is your overall approach to the research design, and why are you choosing those particular methods? How would you define your approach: is this exploratory research? Or will you be testing hypotheses? Finally, be sure to define your parameters (what won’t you study that is closely related to the topic?), and suggest avenues for future research/methodology (what might you or others study in the future related to the topic?).

Research Element #2: Designing Your Method(s)
How will you measure or operationalize your variables? How do you intend to choose your sample? Justify your sample (e.g., why will you only interview men?). Where will you find information (including where you will find people). Include details such as time you will spend in the field, number of interviews, how you will collect data (field notebook, tape recorder, videocamera, transcription). Consider questions of validity and reliability as well. Then discuss limitations to your design (honesty is the best policy). Finally, make a sketch of the questions you intend to ask participants (interview/survey questions), categories for content analysis, aspects you wish to observe for ethnography, etc.

Research Element #3: Literature Review
What areas of literature will you read that are relevant to your topic? What have others found on your topic, and how did they find it (by what methods)? Your lit review might include research you hope to use as guidance, and/or research or arguments you find problematic and wish to challenge. Discuss what still needs to be learned (hint: this gets to why your research is needed and important). Keep in mind that you are certainly not expected to accomplish your entire literature review by the end of this class! This assignment is to help you narrow down what areas you will eventually read, identify some key works in each of these areas, and read a select few.
Research Element #4: Reflexivity, Analysis, Interpretation, & Ethics
Based on our readings and class discussions, discuss how you will approach reflexivity, analysis, interpretation, and ethics in your research project. How will you conduct yourself while entering the field, observing/participating/interviewing, and leaving the field? How will you deal with the complicated issues of interpretation? What dilemmas might you face as a researcher? How might your work affect you personally, and might you personally affect your work? What steps can you take to respect participants and make a meaningful contribution to knowledge and social change?

Course Schedule:

1/22  Introductions, Syllabus Review, & Heisenberg’s “Uncertainty Principle”

1/29  The Qualitative Paradigm
      • Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chap 1
      • Pogerbin, Preface, Chaps 1, 2, 3
      *Observation Assignment Due*

2/5   Crafting Research Questions, Ethics of Social Research, Feminist Methods, In-Depth Interviews
      • Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chaps 2, 3, 4
      • Pogerbin, Chap 4
      • Reinhartz, Chaps 1, 2
      *Personal Reflection Due*

2/12  Oral Histories, Focus Groups, Ethnography, Surveys, Cross-Cultural Research, Content Analysis
      • Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chaps 5, 6, 7, 8
      • Reinhartz, Chaps 4, 6, 7, 8
      *Research Element #1 Due: Crafting the Research Question*

2/19  Case Studies, Community Action Research, Mixed Methods
      • Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chap 9
      • Reinhartz, Chaps 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
      *Research Element #2 Due: Selecting Your Method(s)*

2/26  Qualitative Research on Policing
      • Pogerbin, Chaps 6, 7, 9, 10, 12

3/5   Qualitative Research on the Judiciary
      • Pogerbin, Chaps 13, 14, 15, 18, 19
3/12-3/16  Spring Break

3/19  Qualitative Research on Corrections
    •  Pogerbin, Chaps 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26
    *Article Reviews Due*

3/26  Fieldwork Experiences in Criminal Justice: Ethical Dilemmas
    •  Pogerbin, Chaps 27, 28, 29

4/2  Understanding Stories/Narratives within Social Contexts
    •  Maruna, Chaps 1-5
    *Research Element #3 Due: Literature Review*

4/9  Narratives & Content Analysis
    •  Maruna, Chaps 6, 7, 8, and Appendix

4/16  Analysis & Interpretation of Qualitative Data, Part I
    •  Orwell, George. "Why I Write." (to be handed out in class)
    •  Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chap 10
    *Research Element #4 Due: Reflexivity, Analysis, Interpretation, & Ethics*

4/23  Creating Ethnography
    •  Duneier, Parts 1-3

4/30  Analysis & Interpretation of Qualitative Data, Part II
    •  Duneier, Parts 4 & 5, Afterword, Appendix: A Statement on Method

*FINAL PAPERS & RESEARCH PORTFOLIOS DUE*: Monday, May 7th, 4pm