

Sc 558 Qualitative Research Methods, Fall 2005

Monday 12-2:30
McGuinn: 415
Professor Sharlene Hesse-Biber
Office: 404 McGuinn Hall
Office Hours: Monday: 3-4:30
Office Phone: 552-4139
Email: hesse@bc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to qualitative research methods. Readings are concerned with the basic procedures of participant observation, intensive interviewing and focus group interviewing, as well as content analysis and image-based analysis. We will address the theoretical, ethical and practical issues that arise in the conduct of qualitative research. This course takes a "hands on" approach. You will learn by practicing a range of qualitative approaches.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation and Journal (25%)

a. Participation in the discussion of class readings is a vital part of the seminar. Students are responsible for the assigned readings, for taking part in class discussions, and for presenting oral summaries of their research projects. The seminar format relies on your informed contributions and therefore it is important that you read all relevant articles before the class in which they will be discussed.

Students are required to co-lead part of two seminars per semester where they will discuss the class readings for that seminar and be prepared to bring questions for classroom discussion prior to our class meeting.

b. Students must keep a Research Journal throughout the semester. The journal should include your reflections on at least **one** of the readings per week. You are asked to first summarize the reading in your own words and then integrate the reading with the topic under discussion or with your own research project. You should also use the journal to make biweekly entries about your research project, both as you are formulating it (which can include comments on the readings, seminar remarks etc) and as you are conducting research (as a field notebook). This would include notes taken during field interviews, transcribed interviews, data interpretations and analyses and other relevant materials. Be sure to include the following topics: (1) what was the research question? (2) The theoretical perspective (3) Data collection Method (3) sampling procedure (4) data analysis procedure/method (5) findings/conclusion. (6) Your personal reflection/critique on this reading.

Journals will be collected TWO times during the course of the semester.

c. Assignments: You must complete THREE assignments:

Assignment #1: Exemplary Reading (15%)

1. You should read one of the following books based on qualitative research and prepare a 4 to 5 page analytic discussion of the author's **theoretical and methodological assumptions** and decisions. See me if you wish to use a book other than what I have suggested. Carefully prepare a summary and methodological critique of the book. This presentation should include analyzing and evaluating the intent, ethics and consequences of this work and placing this work in relation to the other course readings and themes. Some questions you might address are: What qualitative methods did the researcher use? Why were they chosen? If multi-method, how do the methods interlink? What is the role of the researcher and what is the role of key informants/research subjects? Who set the agenda for research: who defines the issues, methodology, and analysis and use of the data? What is the impact of the research on the researcher? On the researched? Who ultimately gains from the research? How is the story told? What type of analysis?

Assignment #2. In the field: Observation and Participant Observation (30%)

You will receive a separate handout on this assignment. You will be asked to select a field site (setting) where you can gather information either through direct observation or participant observation. You will be asked to log in field notes and write up your findings in a short paper.

Assignment #3. Intensive Interview/Focus Group Interview or Content Analysis (30%)

You will receive a separate handout on this assignment as well. You can carry out either an intensive interview with an individual or small group of individuals (focus group) or you may engage in a project of a textual and/or visual (content) analysis or perhaps a project that combines interviewing and textual/visual analysis. You should plan to submit a complete record of your data collection and analysis materials (transcript, code sheets) as well as an analysis paper summarizing your results. I encourage you to explore an area of research you are interested in working on for either a master's paper/thesis or Ph.D. project, etc.

Oral Report.

You should plan to give a brief oral report to the class about either your second or third assignment whichever you find of greatest interest to you and to the class.

Some Additional notes: For assignments 2 and 3, please see me early so that we can discuss your project and make sure it is within the time limits of the course.

Required Texts:

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene , and Leavy, Patricia (2004). *Approaches to Qualitative Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Leavy, Patricia (2006). *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Bailey, A. *A Guide to Field Research*. Pine Forge Press.

Lareau, Annette and Shultz Jeffrey, 1996. *Journeys Through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Additional Course Readings:

A Required Research Packet of Readings is also available for purchase at the beginning of class.

Own Choice of Book for Review : Select ONE of the following books from the Neill Library, or you can buy one of these books at your local book store or on Amazon.com or another online bookstore.

Mitchell Duneier 1992 *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

William Foote Whyte. 1955 *Street Corner Society* The University of Chicago Press.

Gary Alan Fine 1987. *With the Boys*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Arlie Hochschild 1989. *The Second Shift*. New York: Viking.

Judith Rollins 1985. *Between Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Barbara Ehrenreich *Nickel and Dimed*.

Greta Foff Paules, *Dishing it Out: Power and Resistance Among Waitress in a New Jersey Restaurant*.

Dorothy Holland & Margaret A. Eisenhart: *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, And College Culture*. 1990. University of Chicago Press.

Jay MacLeod *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations & Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder, CO. Westview Press.1995.

Barbara Myerhoff. Number our Days. 1978. NewYork: Dutton (on reserve at O'Neill).
Karen Sacks. *Caring By the Hour: Women, Work and Organizing at Duke Medical Center*. Urbana: University of Minnesota Press 1998.

Bourgois, Philippe. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Presss, 1995.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS:

Part I: Locating the Field of Qualitative Research: Major Paradigms and Perspectives

Week 1: Introduction/Overview

Week 2: Meaning and Methods

Research paradigms and orientations in social research
Research questions and designs

Part II: Strategies of Inquiry

Week 3 : Research Design and Ethical Dilemmas in Research

Developing the research questions
Combining Qualitative/Quantitative
Ethical and political considerations

PART III: Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data.

Week 4: Field Work

Entering/exiting the field
Research/researcher relationship
Representing the "other" and studying across difference : gender/race/class/sexuality

Week 5: Studying Across Difference (Continued) and Fieldnotes and Journals.

Week 6: Keeping A Journal and Other Issues in the Field

Issues and challenges in keeping a journal
Field Notes
Writing and rewriting
Issues of validity and reliability

Week 7: In-Depth Interviewing.

Week 8: Analysis, Representation and Writing

Computer software for text analysis
Interpreting the results
Linking data to theory
Class discussion of issues and challenges

Week 9: Analysis, Representation and Writing (continued)

Analyzing textual data

The Coding Process
Grounded Theory

Week 10: Analysis, Representation and Writing

Writing about Qualitative Research
Format
Integrating Data
Assessing interpretive validity
Class discussion of issues and challenges

Week 11: Focus Group Analysis

Week 12: Content Analysis.

Week 13: Image-Based Research

Week 14: Select one of the following Methods to discuss:

Discourse-Centered Methods, OR Fieldwork in the Archives: Methods and Sources in
Historical Anthropology OR a Qualitative method we have not discussed that you are
particularly interested in.

Week 15: Wrap-up: Presentation of Projects