

## QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

5:00-8:20 Tuesdays

3410 Faner Hall

Professor Rob Benford

Office Hours: 9:30-11:30 T&W, 1:30-3:30 W, or by appointment

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to familiarize you with the major techniques of qualitative data collection and analysis used by sociologists and other social scientists. These include participant observation, in-depth interviewing, focus group interviewing, biographical methods, content analysis, archival research, and a variety of nonreactive techniques. This course will also address the links among theory, data, and methods, and provide you with a critical appreciation for the qualitative tradition in social sciences. You will not only become acquainted with various qualitative techniques and issues, but also how to conduct field research that is descriptively interesting, theoretically illuminating, and ultimately publishable. The course will follow a seminar format emphasizing reading, group discussion, in- and out-of-class exercises, oral presentations, original research, and writing. We will hear "tales from the field" from faculty members and students who have employed qualitative methods in their research. The success of the class will depend largely on your individual and collective contributions.

### TEXTS

Berg, Bruce L. 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Fifth Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Emerson, Robert M, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, and Patricia Levy. 2004. *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, Fourth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Wolcott., Harry F. 2001. *Writing up Qualitative Research*, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation: You are expected to attend each seminar meeting, participate in discussions, and share your research experiences (tales from the field) with your colleagues. [10%]
2. Assignments: Considerable emphasis will be placed on learning by doing. You will be required to complete 10 challenging but enjoyable assignments. (4% each) [40%]
3. Oral Presentation: The last two weeks of the course have been set aside for you and your fellow students to present your research experiences and findings. [10%].

4. Research Paper: You are to prepare an original research paper based on fieldwork conducted throughout the term. The paper should be analytical and shed some empirical light on a methodological or substantive problem that emerged from your fieldwork. A purely descriptive paper will not be acceptable. You must submit an HSC application form including a brief description of your proposed research on or before August 30th. You should craft your paper as though you were submitting it for publication in a qualitative journal such as the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Qualitative Sociology*, *Symbolic Interaction*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and *Human Organization*. Papers are due Dec 6. [40%]

## SEMINAR OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

### **I. Epistemology & Ethicality**

Aug 23      Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

Aug 30      Ethical Issues, Human Subjects and Institutional Review Boards

Readings:      Berg, Ch. 3: "Ethical Issues"  
Hesse-Biber & Levy (pp. 131-148): "Interaction and Positionality within Qualitative Research"  
hooks (Ch.6 in H-B&L): "Culture to Culture: Ethnography and Cultural Studies as Critical Intervention."  
Thorne (Ch. 7 in H-B&L): "'You Still Takin' Notes?' Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent"

Assign. 1:      HSC Application Forms/Research Proposals Due

Sept 6      The Legacy of Qualitative Research Methods and Introduction to Grounded Theory

Readings:      Berg, Ch. 1: "Introduction"  
Hesse-Biber & Levy (pp. 1-16): "Distinguishing Qualitative Research"  
Guba & Lincoln (Ch. 1 in H-B&L): "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues"  
Charmaz (Ch. 23 in H-B&L): "Grounded Theory"  
Berg, Ch. 2: "Designing Qualitative Research"

### **II. Doing Fieldwork**

Sept 13      Getting Started

Readings:      Lofland et al.: "Introduction"  
Lofland et al., Ch.1: "Starting Where You Are"  
Lofland et al., Ch. 2: "Evaluating Data Sites"  
Lofland et al., Ch. 3: "Getting In"  
Berg, Pp. 147-154: "Ethnographic Field Strategies"  
Emerson et al., Ch 1: "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research"  
Gallagher (Ch. 10 in H-B&L): "'White Like Me?' Methods, Meaning, and Manipulation in the Field of White Studies"

Assign. 2:      Field Notes I Due

- Sept 20      Participant Observation  
Readings:      Lofland et al., Ch. 4: "Getting Along"  
                    Berg, Pp. 154-173: "Ethnographic Field Strategies" (continued)  
                    Emerson et al., Ch. 2: "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting  
                                    Notes"  
                    Weston, (Ch. 8 in H-B&L): "Fieldwork in Lesbian and Gay Communities"
- Assign. 3:      Field Notes II Due
- Sept 27      Logging Field Data  
Readings:      Lofland et al., Ch. 5: "Logging Data"  
                    Emerson et al., Ch. 3: "Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk"  
                    Emerson et al., Ch. 4: "Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the  
                                    Page"  
                    Berg, Pp. 173-179; "Ethnographic Field Strategies" (continued)
- Assign. 4:      Field Notes III Due
- Oct 4        Intensive Interviewing  
Readings:      Berg, Ch. 4: "A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing"  
                    Miller & Crabtree (Ch. 9 in H-B&L): "Depth Interviewing"  
                    Berg, Ch. 5: "Focus Group Interviewing"  
                    Morgan (Ch. 13 in H-B&L): "Focus Groups"  
                    McDermott & Rothenberg (Ch. 14 in H-B&L): "Why Urban Parents  
                                    Resist Involvement in Their Children's Elementary Education"
- Assign. 5:      Field Notes IV Due
- Oct 11      Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data  
Readings:      Lofland et al., Ch. 6: "Thinking Topics"  
                    Lofland et al., Ch. 7: "Asking Questions"  
                    Emerson et al., Ch. 5: "Pursuing Members' Meanings"  
                    Emerson et al., Ch. 6: "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing"  
                    Lofland et al., Ch. 9: "Developing Analyses"  
                    Berg, 179-189: "Ethnographic Field Strategies" (continued)  
                    Hesse-Biber (Ch. 25 in H-B&L): "Unleashing Frankenstein's Monster:  
                                    The Use of Computers in Qualitative Research"
- Assign. 6:      Interview Transcripts/Notes V Due

### III. Nonreactive Techniques

- Oct 18      Content Analyses  
Readings:      Berg, Ch. 11: “An Introduction to Content Analyses”  
Prior (Ch. 15 in H-B&L): “Following in Foucault’s Footsteps: Text and Context in Qualitative Research”  
Mann & Stewart (Ch. 18 in H-B&L): “Introducing Online Methods”  
Harmon & Boeringer (Ch 19 in H-B&L): “A Content Analysis of Internet-Accessible Written Pornographic Depictions”  
  
Assign. 7:      Taxonomic Analysis Due  
Assign. 8:      In-Class Content Analysis Exercise
- Oct 25      Guest Ethnographer—Dr. Kathy Ward: “Failed Tales from the Field”  
Readings:      Sprague & Zimmerman (Ch. 2 in H-B&L): “Overcoming Dualisms: A Feminist Agenda for Sociological Methodology”  
Harding (Ch.3 in H-B&L): “How Standpoint Methodology Informs Philosophy of Social Science”  
  
Assign. 9:      Field Notes VI Due (place in my mailbox)
- Nov 1      Physical Traces and Audio Visual Techniques  
Readings:      Berg, Pp. 224-227 (end of Ch. 8)  
Hesse-Biber & Levy (pp. 303-316): “Unobtrusive Methods, Visual Research and Cultural Studies”  
Prosser & Schwartz (Ch. 16 in H-B&L): “Photographs within the Sociological Research Process”  
Rose (Ch. 17 in H-B&L): “Analyses of Moving Images”  
  
Assign. 10:      Field Notes VII Due
- Nov 8      Biographical and Historical Methods  
Readings:      Berg, Pp. 209-224 (beginning of Ch. 8)  
Berg, Ch. 9: “Historiography and Oral Traditions”  
Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner (Ch. 11 in H-B&L): “Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History”  
Botting (Ch. 12 in H-B&L): “Understanding Domestic Service through Oral History and the Census: The Case of Grand Falls, Newfoundland”  
Berg, Ch. 10: “Case Studies”

#### IV. Finishing Touches

- Nov 15      The Art and Craft of Writing, Speaking and Publishing Ethnography  
 Readings:      Wolcott (entire book)  
                     Lofland et al., Ch. 10: "Writing Analysis"  
                     Berg, Ch. 12: "Writing Research Papers: Sorting the Noodles from the  
                                 Soup"  
                     Emerson et al., Ch. 7: "Writing an Ethnography"  
                     Emerson et al., Ch. 8: "Conclusion"  
                     Richardson (Ch. 22 in H-B&L): "Writing: A Method of Inquiry"
- Nov 29      Evaluating Qualitative Research: Issues of Reliability, Validity, Voice & Resonance  
 Readings:      Lofland et al., Ch. 8: "Arousing Interest"  
                     Van Maanen (Ch. 20 in H-B&L): "An End to Innocence: The  
                                 Ethnography of Ethnography"  
                     Denzin (Ch. 21 in H-B&L): "The Art and Politics of Interpretation"  
                     Borland (Ch. 24 in H-B&L): "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive  
                                 Conflict in Oral Narrative Research"
- Course Evaluations
- Dec 6        Student Presentations  
                     **Research Papers Due**
- Dec 13      Student Presentations Continue (if necessary)