

Sociology 592: QUALITATIVE METHODS  
Winter 2019 Wednesdays 2:00-4:50  
Cramer 265

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of qualitative research in sociology, including the contribution of qualitative research, qualitative research design, best practices for high quality research, and research ethics. It covers a variety of methods for collecting qualitative data, such as qualitative content analysis, ethnography or participant observation, interviews, and focus groups.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *1. Class preparation and participation (20 points)*

- Students are responsible for coming to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and course assignments. Students are expected to participate in the conversation with thoughtful comments and questions.
- Being absent from more than one class will negatively affect your course grade.

### *2. Discussion questions (16 points)*

- Each student will write one discussion question for eight of the ten class meetings.
- Each individual question may focus on one reading or may make comparisons across readings for that week.
- Discussion questions are due via D2L (e.g. D2L course home--Activities--Assignments--Discussion question week 1). Copy and paste your question in to the comments field as well as attaching the document. Discussion questions are due by 9:00am on the day of the class meeting. Discussion questions will be accepted between 9:00am and 2:00pm on the day they are due with a late penalty. Discussion questions will not be accepted after 2:00pm.

### *3. Human subjects training (4 points)*

- You will complete the CITI training at [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org) (Click on Register in the top right; Select PSU from the Participating Institutions drop down menu; Create username and password; On the 'Select Curriculum' page ONLY ANSWER QUESTION #1; Select Group 1: *Human Subjects Researcher*)
- In order to get credit, you will need to save the certificate of completion and submit it via D2L (make sure you also save a copy for your files, to submit with your IRB application). If you have previously completed the NIH or CITI training, you do not need to do it again, just submit your certificate of completion to receive credit.

### *4. Qualitative content analysis assignment (10 points)*

- Design a qualitative content analysis study of a topic covered in the news. Define the parameters of the study so that approximately 40 newspaper articles are included in the sample by either limiting the population (e.g. limit the date range or newspapers included) or including a sampling strategy (random or stratified).
- Write up the methods section as you would for a journal article (minus the data analysis section). Key elements to include:
  - Research question (state in the form of a question, be sure it is appropriate for qualitative research and can be answered with your data)
  - Method: Your research method.
  - Data collection: Source of the data (e.g. LEXIS NEXIS); criteria for inclusion of cases in population: date range, key terms or topic, other criteria for inclusion (e.g. which newspaper(s)); sampling strategy (e.g. random, stratified, sample is entire population); number of cases in population and number of cases in sample
  - Include an appendix listing the 40 newspaper articles

#### 5. *Ethnography assignment (10 points)*

- Design an ethnography of a meet-up group. Identify a group from [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com), attend one meeting of that group (at least two hours)
- Write up detailed fieldnotes on your observation. Include fieldnotes (with asides) as well as commentary section at the end. Length of field notes will vary but we expect your field notes will be in the range of 2,000-3,000 words.
- Write up the methods section for a *one-year study in your setting* as you would for a journal article (minus the data analysis section). Key elements to include:
  - Research question (after your site visit, come up with a specific research question that can be addressed with ethnographic data, state it in the form of a question)
  - Method: Your research method (ethnography or participant observation)
  - Describe setting: Describe the site or setting (use pseudonym for identifiable locations); criteria/explanation for choosing the setting (specifically in relation to the research question); how the researcher entered the site (including gaining permission from gatekeepers if relevant); initial and ongoing consent process; (approximate) numbers and types of people in the site (note that names are pseudonyms)
  - Data collection: time spent in the setting (date range, number of visits, and/or number of hours; for this assignment, assume that you continued in your site for one year); how the researcher took jottings/notes in the setting (if at all) and after leaving; what kind of data was collected (e.g. conversations, behavior)
  - The role of the researcher in the setting: degree the researcher participated in the setting; relevant identities of the researcher and how these identities shaped data collection and analysis

#### 6. *Interview assignment I (10 points)*

- Students will work in groups in class to develop a short interview guide (to be discussed in class). Students in different groups will be paired up to interview each other outside of class. **Interviews must be audiotaped but not transcribed.**
- Upload audio file of interview to D2L.
- Students will write up a research memo, including:

- Include the original guide developed by the group.
- Include a revised interview guide based on your pilot interview and also provide a written evaluation of the interview guide, noting what worked and the changes you would suggest.
- Reflect on your own experience as an interviewer. *Was this easy or challenging? How would you evaluate your skills as an interviewer? What areas would you need to develop?*

#### 7. Interview assignment II (10 points)

- Design an interview study based on your ethnographic field site, including a ten question interview guide. Each student in the class must conduct one pilot interview to test the interview guide (interview does not have to be with someone from your field site).  
**Interviews must be audiotaped but not transcribed.**
- Upload audio file of interview to D2L.
- Write your own unique journal-article-quality methods section for this research project (minus the sample description and data analysis sections). Build on your previous work to write a methods section that includes both the ethnographic and interview components. Key components to add for the interview portion:
  - Research question (revise as needed from the ethnography assignment)
  - Method: Your research method (qualitative interviews or in-depth interviews)
  - Data collection: Sample and sampling strategy: Criteria for participation (e.g. individual characteristics); access and recruitment; sampling strategy (how sample was chosen from population of all people meeting criteria, e.g., convenience, purposive, random); number of interviews; style of interview (e.g. semi-structured interview); interview questions, topics addressed, or examples of questions; interview details (month/year interviews conducted, geographic location, type of space where interviews were conducted, average length or range), state interviews are audiotaped and transcribed
  - The role of the researcher: relevant identities of the researcher and how these identities shaped data collection and analysis
  - Demographics table (developed, but not filled in with participant info)
  - Interview guide

#### 8. Mini-proposal (20 points)

- Write a mini-proposal for a qualitative research project. If you are planning on a qualitative thesis or dissertation project, use this opportunity to write (or refine) your proposal. If you are planning on a quantitative thesis or dissertation project, develop a proposal for a project that uses a qualitative method to explore the topic of your project. Proposals should be a maximum of four pages, single spaced, not including references or interview guide. A proposal template and sample mini-proposals can be found on D2L. The proposal should include:
  - Introduction: Introduce your study. Identify what we already know about this topic (consider 5-10 peer-reviewed articles), what gap exists in the literature, and how your proposed project will fill that gap. Include an explicit statement of research question(s).
  - Method(s); be sure to include all of the components of the methods section, just as you have done for the methods section assignments for this course (see above)

- Limitations: State the limitations of the study.
- The significance of the study: state how this contributes to our knowledge of this topic (i.e. how it fills a gap in the literature). You may also discuss how this contributes methodologically (if you are doing something innovative) and/or discuss the policy implications.
- References: You should include at least 5-10 peer reviewed articles (or books).
- Appendix: Interview based proposals should also include a first draft of an interview guide as an appendix.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Discussion questions are due via D2L by 9:00am on the day of the class meeting. A discussion question must be submitted for 8 of the 10 class meetings.

Week 1: January 9

Qualitative research and content analysis (Maura)

Reading due

- Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. "What is Qualitative Research?" in *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. [LINK](#)
- Lareau, Annette. 2012. "Using the Terms Hypothesis and Variable for Qualitative Work: A Critical Reflection." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74(4): 671-677. [LINK](#)
- **Swap out** Corder, Alissa and Eliana Schwartz. 2018. "Covering Wildfires: Media Emphasis and Silence after the Carlton and Okanogan Complex Wildfires" *Society and Natural Resources*.
- **Add back** Heterosexiness

Week 2: January 16

Ethics in qualitative research (Amy)

Assignment due

- CITI training certificate due via D2L Tuesday January 15 at 5pm
- Identify research question for content analysis assignment, due via D2L by Wednesday January 16 at 9am (include with week 2 discussion questions)

Reading due

- Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. "Ethics" in *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. [LINK](#)
- Scharff, Darcell P. 2010. "More than Tuskegee: Understanding Mistrust about Research Participation." *Journal of Health Care: Poor Underserved* 21(3): 879-897. [LINK](#)
- Thomas, Veronica. 2013. "Critical Race Theory: Ethics and Dimensions of Diversity in Research" in *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, edited by Donna M. Mertens and Pauline E. Ginsberg. SAGE. [LINK](#)
- Reilly, Paul. 2018. "The 'Battle of Stokes Croft' on YouTube: The Development of An Ethical Stance for the Study of Online Comments." *SAGE Research Methods* [LINK](#)
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Week 3: January 23

High quality qualitative research (Amy)

#### Assignment due

- Qualitative content analysis assignment due via D2L by Tuesday January 22 at 5pm
- Identify site for field research from meetup.com, due via D2L by Wednesday January 23 at 9am (include with week 3 discussion questions); *you will complete field research and submit field notes by Tuesday January 29 at 5pm.*

#### Reading due

- Monahan, Torin and Jill Fisher. 2010. "Benefits of 'Observer Effects': Lessons from the Field." *Qualitative Research* 10(3): 357-76. [LINK](#)
- Morse, Janice et al., 2002. "Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. [LINK](#)
- Cresswell, John and Dana Miller. 2000. "Determining validity in qualitative inquiry." *Theory into Practice* 39(3): 124-130. [LINK](#)
- Tracy, Sarah J. 2010. "Qualitative quality: Eight 'big-tent' criteria for excellent qualitative research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(10):837-851. [LINK](#)
- **Add** Sovacool, B. K., Axsen, J., & Sorrell, S. 2018. Promoting novelty, rigor, and style in energy social science: towards codes of practice for appropriate methods and research design. *Energy research & social science*.

#### Week 4: January 30

##### Ethnography and Participant Observation I (Maura)

#### Assignment due

- Qualitative content analysis assignment revise and submit (if required) due via D2L by Tuesday January 29 at 5pm
- Ethnography assignment (field notes) due via D2L by Tuesday January 29 at 5pm

#### Reading due

- Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. "Ethnography" in *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. [LINK](#)
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. Chapter 3 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press. [LINK](#) (PSU course e-reserves)
- Morris, Patricia. 2012. "Managing Pet Owners' Guilt and Grief in Veterinary Euthanasia Encounters" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41(3) 337–365. [LINK](#)

#### Week 5: February 6

##### Ethnography and Participant Observation II (Maura)

#### Reading due

- Reich, Jennifer. 2015. "Old Methods and New Technologies: Social Media and Shifts in Power in Qualitative Research." *Ethnography* 16(4):394-415. [LINK](#)
- Smith, Daniel R. 2017. "Ethnography Among the British Upper Middle Classes: Writing About or Writing a Gentry Class?" *SAGE Research Methods* [LINK](#)

- Seim, Josh. 2017. "The Ambulance: Toward a Labor Theory of Poverty Governance" *American Sociological Review* 82(3): 451-475. [LINK](#)

Week 6: February 13  
Interviewing I (Amy)

Assignment due

- Ethnography assignment (methods section) due via D2L by Tuesday February 12 at 5pm

Reading due

- Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. "Interviewing" in *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. [LINK](#)
- McLean, Andrew. 2014. "Researching Sex Work in the Online Age: A Qualitative Approach." *Sage Research Methods Cases* [LINK](#)
- Schneider, Matthew Jerome. 2018. "Exotic Place, White Space: Racialized Volunteer Spaces in Honduras." *Sociological Forum* 33(3): 690-711. [LINK](#)
- Read selected excerpts from *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough?* by Sarah Elsie Baker & Rosalind Edwards. Assigned excerpts: Adler & Adler; Julia Brannen; Alan Bryman; Kathy Charmaz; Andrea Doucet. **Not in library** [LINK](#)

Week 7: February 20  
Interviewing II (Amy)

Assignment due

- Interview assignment 1 (audio file and research memo) due via D2L by Tuesday February 19 at 5pm.
- Watch the instructional videos available at <http://www.dedoose.com/resources/#> (watch the following videos: introduction, code setup, descriptors, documents, document excerpting, and analysis) by Wednesday February 20 at 2pm (to be discussed in class).

Reading due

- Korver-Glenn, Elizabeth. 2018. "Compounding Inequalities: How Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination Accumulate across the Stages of Housing Exchange." *American Sociological Review* 83 (4): 627-656. [LINK](#)
- Madfis, Eric. 2014. "Averting School Rampage: Student Intervention and Persistent Code of Silence." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 12(3): 229-249. [LINK](#)
- Mallet, Marie, Calvo, Rocio, & Mary Waters. 2017. "I Don't Belong Anymore": Undocumented Latino Immigrants Encounter Social Services in the United States. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 39(3), 267-282. [LINK](#)

Week 8: February 27  
Focus groups and CBPR (Amy)

Assignments due

- Preliminary 10 question interview guide for interview assignment II by Wednesday March 26 at 9am (submit with week 8 discussion questions)

Reading due

- McLafferty, Isabella. "Focus Group Interviews as Data Collecting Strategy." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 48(2):187-94. [LINK](#)
- Kidd, Paula and Mark Marshall. 2000. "Getting the Focus and the Group: Enhancing Analytical Rigor in Focus Group Research." *Qualitative Health Research* 10(3): 293-308. [LINK](#)
- Mosavel, Maghboeba, Christian Simon, Debbie van Stade, and Mara Buchbinder. 2005. "Community Based participatory research (CBPR) in South Africa: Engaging multiple constituents to shape the research question." *Social Science & Medicine* 61(12): 2577-2587.

Week 9: March 6  
Mixed methods (Maura)

Assignment due

- Interview assignment II (audio file and methods section) due via D2L by Tuesday March 5 at 5pm

Reading due

- Morgan, David L. 2014. Chapter 1 Pp 3-23 in *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A Pragmatic Approach*. Sage. [LINK](#) (PSU course e-reserves)
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and Tyrone Forman. 2000 " 'I'm Not a Racist But...' Mapping White College Students' Racial Ideology in the USA." *Discourse and Society* 11(1): 50-85. [LINK](#)
- Kada, Olivia and Herbert Janig. 2016. "Mixed Methods in Action: The Dilemma of Nursing Home Residents Relocated to Hospital" *SAGE Research Methods Cases* [LINK](#)

Week 10: March 13  
Visual methods in sociology (Maura)

Assignment due

- Identify your thesis/dissertation title and your three thesis committee members by Wednesday March 13 at 9am (submit with week 10 discussion questions). First year sociology masters students must have three confirmed committee members.
- Preliminary 10 question interview guide for mini-proposal by Wednesday March 13 at 9am (submit with week 10 discussion questions).

Reading due

- Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. "Visual methods" in *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. [LINK](#)
- Hormel, Leontina. 2016. "Designing Community Participatory Action Research: A Proposal for Using Photovoice Method to Center Indigenous Knowledge" *SAGE Research Methods Cases*. [LINK](#)
- Musto, Michela, Cheryl Cooky, and Michael A. Messner. 2017. "'From Fizzle to Sizzle!' Televised Sports News and the Production of Gender-Bland Sexism." *Gender & Society* 31(5): 573-596. [LINK](#)

Finals week: March 18-22

Assignment due

- Mini-proposal via D2L by Tuesday March 19 at 5pm

## POLICIES

You will be required to read selections available online through the PSU library. If you cannot access the readings through the e-reserves, navigate to the readings from the library homepage. Use the following direction to access the articles:

- Go to the library web site: <http://library.pdx.edu/>
- Click on Course Reserves
- Search by instructor last name (Lubitow) or course number (592)
- Login with your Odin account and Password
- Find and click on “Reading Folder for SOC 592”
- Click on the link to open the document

*D2L:* The syllabus, sample proposals, and other course materials will be posted on D2L. All assignments will be submitted via D2L (no hard copies will be accepted). Points earned and written feedback for all assignments will be posted on D2L. Note that course readings are available through the library e-reserves (not D2L), see above.

*Email:* We will regularly communicate with students individually and as a class via email. Our emails will be sent to your PSU email. It is your responsibility to check your PSU email daily during the school week and respond in a timely manner. In emails to us, please put the title of the course in the subject line and sign your emails using your first and last name. Use the email addresses on the first page of the syllabus. We will generally respond to email within 24 hours. Emails sent after 5:00pm on Friday will generally be answered by 5:00pm on Monday.

*Standard formatting:* This formatting is required for all assignments: Times New Roman, size 12 font; one inch margins all around; paragraphs indented half an inch; heading in upper right corner (name, date, assignment name); page number in bottom right corner; single spaced. Sample assignments using this standard formatting can be found on D2L.

*Academic honesty:* You are expected to demonstrate complete academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Conduct Code for more detailed information on PSU policies. Cheating or plagiarizing will result in failing the assignment and will be reported. If you use a direct quote (i.e. someone else’s written or spoken words), you must include it in quotation marks. Any time you take a direct quote, as well as when you summarize or paraphrase an idea from another person, you must cite the source and include a references section at the end of the paper. Failure to cite your sources, whether intentional or not, is plagiarism. Instances of plagiarism will result in failing the assignment, and possibly the course, and will be reported.

*Late Assignments:* Assignments will be marked down 10% per day late and will not be accepted after seven days. Assignments due during finals week will not be accepted after 5pm on Friday of finals week.



*Revising Assignments:* For assignments 4-7, if the assignment does not meet our minimum standards (a grade of “B” or higher), you will be required to revise it to receive credit. We will indicate unacceptable assignments and identify the key areas to improve in our comments on D2L. You will have 5 weekdays to revise and resubmit your assignment from when you receive our comments.

*Access and inclusion for students with disabilities:* If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the DRC to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu), <http://www.pdx.edu/drc>. If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and to discuss your accommodations.

*Title IX reporting:* As a member of the university community, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.