Sociology 592
QUALITATIVE METHODS
Winter 2015
Tuesdays 2:00-4:50
Cramer 265

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Strategies for acquisition and analysis of data using such approaches as participant observation, content analysis, and interviews. Attention to the special problems of validity and reliability in such research. Consideration of ethical issues and researcher responsibility in qualitative research.

POLICIES

Required Readings: the required book may be purchased at the PSU bookstore or online.


You will also be required to read selections available online through the PSU library e-reserves. 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 (Kelly)
- Login with your Odin account and Password
- Select “Reading Folder for SOC 592”
- Click on the pdf link to open the document

Note: All reading selections are held by the library. If you cannot access the readings through the e-reserves using the above directions, navigate to the readings from the library homepage.

D2L: The syllabus, sample proposals, sample IRB materials, 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 (except the IRB assignment): 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. A template for standard formatting can be found on D2L. Note that incorrectly formatted assignments will lose points.

Late Assignments: Assignments will be marked down 5% per weekday late. Assignments will not be accepted after 10 weekdays. Assignments due during finals week will not be accepted after 5pm on Friday of finals week.

Assignment assessment: Each assignment is worth a specific number of points. If you successfully complete the assignment, you will receive that number of points (minus any penalty for submitting the assignment late or incorrect formatting). We will provide written feedback on the quality of each assignment via D2L. At the end of the term, we will assign a numeric grade based on our evaluation of your in class preparation and participation as well as the overall quality of your assignments. If you would like further feedback on assignments in addition to the written comments provided or if you have any questions about where you stand at any point in the term, please make an appointment to meet with one of us.

Revising Assignments: If any assignment does not meet our minimum standards, 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 10 weekdays to revise and resubmit your assignment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class preparation and participation & overall quality of course work (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.
   - Instructors will evaluate the overall quality of assignments submitted throughout the term. Consistent low quality work and/or a lack of improvement over the term 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--Dropbox--Discussion question week 1). Copy and paste your question in to the comments field as well as attaching the document. Discussion question 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 NIH Human Subjects Research training online: [http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php](http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php). Note that you must register, which is free, before logging in to complete the training.
- In order to get credit, you will need to save the certificate of completion and submit it via email (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.
- Completion certificate due via D2L by January 20 at 2pm.

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 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. Key elements to include: Research question, unit of analysis or case, number of cases, criteria for inclusion of cases (e.g. date range, topic, key terms), approach to data analysis. Include an appendix listing the 40 newspaper articles (note: do not include the text of the articles).
- Due via D2L by January 27 at 2pm.

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), and write up detailed fieldnotes on your observation.
- Write up the methods section for a one year study in that site as you would for a journal article. Key elements to include: research question, case or site, time in site (date range, number of visits, or hours), criteria for inclusion of case (i.e. how site was chosen), role of the researcher in the site (i.e. degree of participation in site), identities of the researcher (and how they shapes data collection), approach to data analysis.
- Field notes due via D2L by February 10 at 2pm.
- Ethnography data collection assignment due via D2L by February 17 at 2pm.
6. **Interview assignment (10 points)**

- As a class, design an interview study of second year graduate students in sociology. You will collectively develop the research questions and interview guide in class.
- Individually, each student in the class must conduct one interview, fully transcribe it, and share it via email with the class.
- Write you own unique journal-article-quality methods section for this research (include the total number of interviews from everyone in the course). Key elements to include: research question, number of interviews, criteria for inclusion of cases (i.e. demographic or other criteria), topics covered in interview guide, identity of the researchers, approach to data analysis, demographics of participants, and demographics table (constructed collaboratively with classmates). Submit your transcribed interview with your assignment.
- Interview transcript due via D2L by March 3 at 2pm. This must be posted to the D2L discussion board so it is accessible to your classmates (i.e. D2L course home--Activities--Discussions--Share interview transcripts here)
- Interview data collection assignment due via D2L by March 10 at 2pm.

7. **Data analysis assignment (10 points)**

- Drawing upon the collaborative interview project, you are required to analyze the interview data collected. We will spend time in class discussing coding strategies and approaches and, as a group, will develop a coding scheme for these interviews.
- Using the qualitative data program Dedoose, each student will be assigned one coding category and must write up the findings of that code. Note that Dedoose has a one month free trial, so don’t sign up before March.
- Due via D2L by March 18 at 5pm.

8. **Mini-proposal (10 points)**

- Write a mini-proposal for your thesis/dissertation project (it can be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods). The proposal should include an introduction, including a very brief literature review (consider 5-10 peer-reviewed articles) and an explicit statement of research question(s); a discussion of the proposed method(s); the significance of the study, and references.
- Interview based proposals should also include a first draft of an interview guide as an appendix. Proposals based on secondary data should include a codebook of key variables as an appendix.
- Proposals should be a maximum of four pages, single spaced, not including references or interview guide or codebook.
- Sample mini-proposals can be found on D2L.
- Due via D2L by March 18 at 5pm.
9. IRB application (10 points)

- Complete an IRB application for your thesis/dissertation project, drawing on the content of the mini-proposal. If you are planning a thesis project that does not require approval for use of human subjects (e.g. content analysis), complete an IRB that expands on either the ethnography project or interview project conducted for this course.
- You should include the consent form, interview guide (for interview based proposals) and recruitment materials (for studies that require recruitment).
- Note that you will need to consult with your chair and have a full proposal approved by your committee before you actually submit your IRB for your project.
- IRB forms can be found here: https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/research/integrity/human-subjects/new-irb-application-forms.
- Sample IRB application can be found on D2L.
- Due via D2L by March 18 at 5pm.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Discussion question 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 6
Qualitative research (Maura)

Reading due

Week 2: January 13
Designing qualitative research I and content analysis (Maura)

Reading due
Week 3: January 20
The role of the researcher and ethical considerations (Amy)

Reading due

Assignment due
NIH training certificate due via D2L by January 20 at 2pm

Week 4: January 27
Ethnography I (Maura)

Reading due

Assignment due
Qualitative content analysis data collection assignment due via D2L by January 27 at 2pm

Week 5: February 3
High quality qualitative research (Amy)

Reading due
Week 6: February 10
Ethnography II (Maura)

Reading due

Assignment due
Field notes due via D2L by February 10 at 2pm

Week 7: February 17
Interviewing I (Amy)

Reading due

Assignment due
Ethnography data collection due via D2L by February 17 2pm

Week 8: February 24
Interviewing II and other qualitative methods (Amy)

Reading due
Hernandez, Luna Jesus Rene. 2009. “Photo-ethnography by People Living in Poverty Near the Northern Border of Mexico.” Qualitative Social Research 10(2).
Week 9: March 3
Data coding and analysis (Amy)

Reading due

Assignments due
Interview transcript due via D2L discussion board by March 3 at 2pm
Watch the instructional videos available at http://www.dedoose.com/resources/# (watch the following videos: introduction, code setup, descriptors, documents, document excerpting, and analysis).

Week 10: March 10
Designing qualitative research II and intersectionality (Maura)

Reading due

Assignment due
Interview data collection assignment due via D2L by March 10 at 2pm

Finals week March 16-20

Assignments due
Data analysis assignment
Mini-proposal
IRB assignment

Note: all three finals week assignments are due via D2L by March 18 at 5pm.