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: There is one required book for this course:


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/](http://library.pdx.edu/)
- Click on Course Reserves
- Search by instructor last name (Lubitow)
- 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, 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 weekday late and will not be accepted after 5 weekdays. 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.

**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--Dropbox--Discussion question week 1). Copy and paste your question into 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. 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 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.
   - NIH training certificate due via D2L by Monday January 11 at 5pm

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. 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 (I strongly suggest either the NewsBank database or another news database through the PSU library); Sample and sampling strategy: Criteria for inclusion of cases in population, date range, key terms or topic, other criteria for inclusion (e.g. which newspaper(s)); number of cases in population and number of cases in sample
     - Data analysis: Approach to data analysis (e.g. inductive, drawing on previous research or theory); unit of analysis; coding software (stating you will be either using it or not is fine); codes or themes (for this assignment, you don’t need to engage in a formal analysis of your data, but give some description of what you found and, more specifically, how you would use your data to answer your research question)
     - Include an appendix listing the 40 newspaper articles (note: do not include the text of the articles).
     - Qualitative content analysis methods section assignment(with appendix listing newspaper articles) due via D2L by Monday January 18 at 5pm

5. Ethnography assignment (10 points)
   - Design an ethnography of a meet-up group. Identify a group from www.meetup.com, attend one meeting of that group (at least two hours), and write up detailed fieldnotes on your observation. 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. Key elements to include:
     - Research question (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); (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

Data analysis: Approach to data analysis (e.g. inductive, drawing on previous research or theory); coding software (only if it is used; either using it or not is fine); codes or themes (for this assignment, you don’t need to engage in an analysis of your data as you only have one field note entry, but give some description of what you found in your setting and, more specifically, how you would use your data to answer your research question)

Field notes due via D2L by Monday January 25 at 5pm.

Ethnography methods section assignment due via D2L by Monday February 8 at 5pm.

6. Interview assignment (10 points)

- As a class, design an interview study of the experiences of graduate students in sociology. We will collectively develop the interview guide in class.
- Individually, each student in the class must conduct one interview and fully transcribe it
- Write you own unique journal-article-quality methods section for this research (include the total number of interviews from everyone in the course).
  - Research question (this will be provided, state it explicitly)
  - 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
  - Describe sample: demographics and other individual characteristics relevant for the analysis (state that pseudonyms are used)
  - Data analysis: Approach to data analysis (e.g. inductive, drawing on previous research or theory); coding software (only if it is used; either using it or not is fine); codes or themes (for this assignment, you don’t need to engage in an analysis of your data as you only have one field note entry, but give some description of what you
found in your setting and, more specifically, how you would use your data to answer your research question)

- Interview transcript due via D2L Discussion Board labeled “Interview Transcript” by Monday February 22 at 5pm. Use your last name as the title for the file and de-identify all parts of the transcript.
- Interview methods section assignment due via D2L by Monday February 29 at 5pm

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 exploring Dedoose.
- As a class, we will develop a set of codes by which to analyze the interview data collected and each person will be assigned at least one code during class.
- Individually, you must do the following:
  - Upload your proposal to D2L Discussion Board labeled “Interview Transcript”. Use your last name as the title for the file and de-identify all parts of the transcript.
  - Make a free student account on Dedoose.
  - Download the transcripts of your peers from the D2L discussion board and upload each to your Dedoose account.
  - Code all interview transcripts for your code(s). This means reading through each transcript, creating relevant excerpts, and assigning them to the appropriate category. There is a User Guide for Dedoose that may prove useful here: [http://userguide.dedoose.com/userguidesection/quick-start-guide](http://userguide.dedoose.com/usrguidesection/quick-start-guide).
- The assignment will include two documents: (1) The output from your assigned code; and (2) A one page reflection of your coding category’s major themes. You must include 2-3 quotes to highlight your code.
- Data analysis assignment due via D2L by Monday March 7 at 5pm

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.
- 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.

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.

Mini-proposal via D2L by Tuesday March 16 at 5pm

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 5
Qualitative research and content analysis (Maura)

Reading due
Qualitative methods definitions handout (available on course D2L page)

Week 2: January 12
Designing qualitative research I (Amy)

Reading due
Lyons, Heather et al., 2011. “Culturally Competent Qualitative Research with People of African Descent.” Journal of Black Psychology 38: 153-169. We acknowledge the problematic nature of the term “people of African Descent” as used in this paper, but we feel that the benefits to reading the paper outweigh the challenge created with this particular language choice. In our discussion, we will focus on how the ideas presented in this paper are applicable to research with a variety of marginalized groups.

Assignment due
NIH training certificate due via D2L by Monday January 11 at 5pm
Week 3: January 19
Ethnography and Participant Observation I (Maura)

Reading due

Assignment due
- Qualitative content analysis methods section assignment (with appendix listing newspaper articles) due via D2L by Monday January 18 at 5pm
- Identify site for field research from meetup.com by Tuesday January 19 (bring to class); you will complete field research between January 19 and 25.

Week 4: January 26
High quality qualitative research (Amy)

Reading due

Assignment due
- Field notes due via D2L by Monday January 25 at 5pm

Week 5: February 2
Ethnography and Participant Observation II (Maura)

Reading due
Reading due

Assignment due
- Ethnography methods section assignment due via D2L by Monday February 8 at 5pm

**Week 7: February 16**
Mixed methods (Maura)

Reading due

**Week 8: February 23**
Data coding and analysis (Amy)

Reading due

Assignments due
- Interview transcript due via D2L discussion board by Monday February 22 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 Tuesday February 23 at 2pm.
Week 9: March 1
Focus groups and CPBR (Amy)

Reading due

Assignment due
- Interview methods section assignment due via D2L by Monday February 29 at 5pm
- Identify your tentative thesis title and three potential committee members by Tuesday March 1 at 2pm (bring to class).

Week 10: March 8
Designing qualitative research II and data coding and analysis II (Maura)

Reading due

Assignment due
- Data analysis assignment due via D2L by Monday March 7 at 5pm

Finals week: March 14-18

Assignment due
- Mini-proposal via D2L by Tuesday March 16 at 5pm