Sociology 522  
Qualitative Research Practicum  
Winter 2015

Professor Karin Martin  
Office: 3164 LSA  
Office hours: Thursday 1-2:30 and by appt  
Phone: 936-0525  
kamartin@umich.edu

Description

This course is the first of a two-part sequence that introduces students to the doing of qualitative research (primarily participant observation and in-depth interviewing) through a variety of activities. This semester (522) we focus on being “in the field,” that is, on the collection of data. In the second semester (523) we will primarily be engaged in analyzing and presenting the data for others. In this course we will learn from reading others’ accounts of fieldwork, “how-to” books on qualitative work, and from published exemplars, and from doing qualitative research and talking to each other about what we do. The “doing” of qualitative research in the course will consist of two types – 1) exercises in how to collect data and 2) conducting your own original research project. We will talk with each other about our findings, problems, issues, topics, substance, and all other research dilemmas in large group discussion in class, in small group discussions in and out of class, and through written feedback from me and from each other.

In 522 you will learn to:
• Produce a manageable research plan for collecting data that will result in a solid draft of a publishable paper.
• Understand how to comply with the IRB regulations and manage the approval process
• Understand the issues and decisions involved in conducting interviews, focus groups, and ethnographies, including what makes a good case or cases, how to assess what is enough data and what is good data, and what are the limits of data.
• Assess the strengths and limitations of each method
• Write an interview schedule and how to conduct a good interview.
• Strategies for gaining access to a field and take good fieldnotes.

Books and Readings

Emerson et al, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes
Weiss, Learning from Strangers
Other readings available on CTools
Assignments and Grading

There are 6 requirements for this course:

1. Observation Assignment, **15 points**

2. Interview Assignment, **15 points**

3. Prepare a do-able brief research proposal, **20 points**
   - Two one-page statements of two research ideas
   - A 3-page rough draft of your proposal
   - A 5-7 page brief proposal

4. Complete your IRB application in time to begin data collection. It should be submitted by Feb. 26 at the latest. **15 points**
   Those requiring Full Board Review should be aware of these dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submit by 8am</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>2/19 (Maize)</td>
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<td>3/4 (Blue)</td>
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<td>2/23</td>
<td>3/19 (Maize)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>4/1 (Blue) – ONLY for those who get referred to Full Board from earlier review</td>
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5. Spend 4-5 weeks working on your own research projects. Two sets of fieldnotes or two interview transcripts and a data log are due by April 16. **20 points**

6. Attend class, do the readings, and participate in discussion. **15 points**
### January 8  Introduction

**Reading:** None

**Assignments:** Bring 2 one page descriptions of 2 ideas for a research project that you will conduct throughout this course.

**In Class:** Introductions to each other and the course. What are your ideas for research projects? What is a manageable project? Importance of comparisons.

### January 15  Approaches to Qualitative Work and Designing Research Questions

**Reading:** Adler and Adler, “The Ethnographer’s Ball–Revisited” from *Qualitative Sociology*

NSF 2005 Report on Qualitative Research, p.1-18 and essays by Blee, Griswold, and Nagel

Alford, “Designing a Research Project”

Pugh, 2013, “What good are interviews for thinking about culture?”


**Assignments:** None

**In Class:** Discussion of readings. Discussion of student projects.

### January 22  Interviewing: Samples and Schedules

**Reading:** Lamont, from *Money, Morals, Manners* p. 1-23

Small, “Lost in Translation: How Not to Make Qualitative Work More Scientific” from NSF report

Sample Interview Schedules

**Examples (originally 522-3 papers):**


**Assignments:** Choose one of your earlier proposals and write a revised 2-3 page research proposal based on comments on your earlier drafts and issues raised by last week’s readings.

**In Class:** Discussion of reading, “sampling issues,” how to construct an interview schedule. Discussion of student projects.
January 29  Conducting Interviews: Getting people to talk and what they say

Reading: Blee, “White-Knuckle Research: Emotional Dynamics in Fieldwork w/Racist Activists” *Qualitative Sociology*
Weiss, p. 61-119, “The Interview”

**Examples (from former 522 papers!):**
Bell, “It’s way out of my league’: Low Income Women’s Experiences of Medicalized Infertility.” *Gender & Society*, 2009
Hutson, “Standing OUT/Fitting IN: Identity, Appearance, and Authenticity in Gay and Lesbian Communities” *Symbolic Interaction* 2010

Assignments: Interview assignment due Tues at 5pm on CTools. Read two other students’ Interview assignments and bring feedback.

In Class: Discussion of reading. Discussion of assignments. Discussion of student projects.

February 5  Beyond the Standard Qualitative Interview

Reading: Young, “The Ethnographic Interview” from *NSF Report*

“Pointy-Headed Regulation: How’s this for a nonsensical regulatory position?” *NYT* 2008
“Cornell Ethics Board did not preapprove Facebook mood manipulation study” *WP* 2014

**Example:** Myers and Raymond, “Elementary School Girls and Heteronormativity” *Gender & Society*, 2010

Assignments: Proposal due: 5-7 pages describing your research question, why it's interesting, and what you're going to do. Begin your IRB application and bring questions!

In Class: Discussion of reading. Discussion of IRB and eresearch. Discussion of student projects.

February 12  Participant Observation/Ethnography

Reading: Macleod, Appendix from *Ain’t No Makin It*
Sanchez-Jankowski, *Introduction, from Islands in the Street*
Emerson, p.17-65 from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

**Example (former 522-3 paper):** Streib, “Class Reproduction by Four Year Olds” *Qualitative Sociology*

Assignments: Ethnographic Assignment due Tues Feb 10th at 5pm on CTools. Read 2 other students’ assignments and bring feedback. Work on IRB.

In Class: Discussion of reading. Discussion of assignment. Discussion of student projects, IRB.
### February 26  Logics and Practices of Field Work

**Reading:** Burawoy, Ch 1 and Ch 13 in *Ethnography Unbound*
Chapters 7, and 12 from *Ethnography Unbound* (especially the “afterwards”).

**Assignments:** Submit IRB no later than TODAY.

**In Class:** Discussion of reading. Discussion of student projects, IRB, Access, going into the field.

### Spring Break

### March 12 Mixed Methods Exemplars

**Reading:** Almeling, "Selling Genes, Selling Gender" *American Sociological Review*
Armstrong et al., “Sexual Assault on Campus: A Multilevel, Integrative Approach to Party Rape” *Social Problems*

**Assignments:** Begin data collection.

**In Class:** Discussion of reading. Discussion of student projects. Discussion of entering the field.

### March 19 Ethics, the Self, and Reflexivity in Qualitative Work

**Reading:** Rollins, Introduction from *Between Women*
Thorne, p.11-27 from *Gender Play*

**Example:** Haney, "Homeboys, Babies, and Men in Suits" from *ASR*

**Assignments:** Begin data collection.

**In Class:** Discussion of reading. Discussion of managing, organizing data discussion. Discussion of books reviewed. Discussion of student projects, IRB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>In Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Into the Field: Access, Fieldnotes, Interviewing</td>
<td>Example: Lareau, “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families” <em>ASR, 2002</em></td>
<td>2 students will bring fieldnotes</td>
<td>Discussion of getting access, problems in the field, field dilemmas, fieldnotes...</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Into the Field: Access, Fieldnotes, Interviewing</td>
<td>Example: Harding, “Violence, Older Peers and the Socialization of Adolescent Boys…” <em>ASR 2009</em></td>
<td>2 students will bring fieldnotes to discuss</td>
<td>Discussion of getting access, problems in the field, field dilemmas, fieldnotes...</td>
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All students will turn in one set of fieldnotes or a transcript                                                                                                                                              | Discussion of getting access, problems in the field, field dilemmas, fieldnotes...                |
| April 16   | Wrapping Up, Moving into Summer Data Collection, Next Steps |                                                                         | Due: Second set of fieldnotes or transcript; data log; plan for remainder of data collection.                                                                                                               |                                                                                                   |