This seminar is an introduction to the use of qualitative methods with a particular focus on techniques. You will gain hands-on experience in ethnography or participant observation and interviewing. Analytical techniques and theory building of qualitative research will be discussed and practiced. In addition, we will consider ethics, epistemology and research design.

Course Requirements

The following books are being used in this course. We will be reading a substantial portion of each book. These books are NOT on reserve.


**Highly recommend: Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives & Formulations, Ed (Robert Emerson).

Most of the other book chapters/excerpts for the course have been placed on Reserve or EEE. You can access these through the library.
Assignments:

**Class Attendance & Leading Class Discussion**

Attendance at class and active participation in discussions is a vital part of this class. In addition, students will lead class discussion on several occasions during the quarter.

20% of Grade

**Drop Box / Portfolio**

I will read and comment on, but not grade, the assignments in the class. You have the option of revising any assignment that you would like. At the end of the class, create a portfolio that includes all the assignments listed below (include only the revised version if you revise).

The portfolio will count for 50% of your grade.

#1 **Research Questions and Approaches**

Propose theoretical questions about your research topic. You will not be required to pursue these for your paper (though you may want to), so feel free to think broadly. Explain how these questions or some aspect of these might be answered by taking a positivist approach and an interpretive approach.

Come up with 1 question for each approach. I am not looking for a full-blown research design, but for your understanding of the match between question and research approach.

**DRAFT DUE: WEEK 3, FINAL DUE: WEEK 4,**

Submit this assignment to the "Message Board" of our EEE webpage. Also bring a hard-copy of your questions to class for discussion on

#2 **Sociological Biography**

Post a 2-3-page auto-ethnography. If possible, use sociological concepts you are familiar with to describe your identity, community of origin, and social trajectory. Having discussed who you are, explain how you think this impacts the work you do, including the research you engage.
Submit this assignment to the "Message Board" of our EEE webpage & read your classmates bios.

**DUE WEEK 4,**

### #3 Fieldnotes

Over the course of the semester every student will write two sets of fieldnotes based on in-person observation of events associated with their research topic. If possible, try to make one event one that you observe, and another one that you participate in. Both should be included in your portfolio.

- Submit to “Fieldnotes1”& “Fieldnotes 2” in the class Dropbox on EEE

**FIELDNOTES 1, DUE WEEK 6,**
**FIELDNOTES 2, DUE FINALS WEEK,** in Dropbox/Portfolio

### #4 Interview Guide -

Write 10 interview questions that you plan to ask as part of your research. Be sure to specify who the questions are designed for: a leader in an organization, a student, a resident of given community? Be careful about wording and order. Bring a copy of the questionnaire to class.

- Submit to “Interview Guide” in the class Dropbox on EEE

**DUE DRAFT: WEEK 6,**
**DUE FINAL: WEEK 6,**

### #5 Interview transcripts

Over the course of the semester every student will conduct two interviews. One interview should be taped (if possible). During this interview you should take some notes on such things as the setting and expressions of the interviewee. These notes should be fairly minimal as you will want to be focusing on the conversation. The other interview may be taped, but the transcript will be made entirely from notes and memory. Be sure to write on each transcript whether you worked from tape or notes. All transcripts should be made as soon after the interviews as possible. Both should be included in your portfolio.

**TRANSCRIPT 1, DUE WEEK 7,**
**TRANSCRIPT 2, DUE FINALS WEEK,** in “Dropbox/Portfolio”
Final Paper

Your final paper is an interim report on a research project that could grow from the initial data collection we have done in the class. The paper should cover every aspect of the course. It should pose a question, discuss the appropriate epistemological approach to answering it, and discuss the data that have been and still need to be gathered. It should also include analysis of some of the data that have been gathered and a discussion of how this analysis helps to answer the question. Finally, it should discuss issues of reliability and validity with reference to the data and the design you have chosen, as well as any other design issues, as appropriate. 12-15 pages is the limit for the paper.

The paper will count for 30% of your grade.

PAPER DUE: 

WEEK 1

What is Qualitative Research? Intro to Your Research Project


WEEK 2

Epistemology Approaches

Positivists:


**Interpretivists:**
- Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description*, Chapter 1

**BREAK 10 MINUTES**

**Class Exercise: What is your epistemological approach?**

**Reconciling these Approaches & Research Design**
- Howard Becker. Ch.13 “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research"

**WEEK 3**

**Theoretical Approaches & Research Design**

**Testing Theory & Design**
- Andrew Bennett, Testing Theories and Explaining Cases, in *NSF* 49-51.

**10 minute break**

**Building Theory & Design**

**10 minute break**
Critical Theory & Reflexive Science


  - Watch: Clip Righteous Dopefiend by Phillip Bourgois

** Class Exercise: What is your theoretical approach?

** DUE NEXT WEEK:

DRAFT OF QUESTION(S).

SOCIOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY: Read classmates bios in preparation for class discussion the following week.

WEEK 4

Defining and Developing a Research Project

- Robert K. Yin, Case Study Research, Chapter 1 & 2 pp. 1-69


** 15 Minute Break


**Class Exercise: Given your question – what’s your design?

** DUE NEXT WEEK:

RESEARCH QUESTION(S) & DESIGN:
Getting In and Getting Access:  
Practical, Ethical, Power Issues

** Come prepared to discuss who you are and how it matters for your research.  
** Discuss Ethics and Human Subjects – In Design, Getting In, During and After the Study

- Carol Warren. “Gender and Field Work Relations” chapter 9 in Contemporary Field Research.
- Maxine Baca Zinn “Insider Field Research in Minority Communities” chapter 6 in Contemporary Field Research.

** 15 minutes


- SKIM Critiques:
  - **Ethics On The Run By STEVEN LUBET
  - What Does Alice Goffman Have in Common With Rachel Dolezal?
  - Alice Goffman’s Heralded Book on Crime Is Disputed
  - Many more…search online

WEEK 6

Ethnography & Participant Observation

- Erving Goffman, On Fieldwork pp. 153- 158 in Contemporary Field Research
- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chapters 1-3. pp. 4- 87
Refining Your Analytical Focus While On the Field

  - [See also: Corbin and Strauss. 2008. Ch. 7 “Theoretical Sampling” pp. 143-157]

- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chapter 5 Pursuing Members Meanings pp. 129-169

Optional:

**DUE NEXT WEEK:**

**FIELDNOTES #1:**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE DRAFT:**

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### WEEK 7

Fieldwork (cont.) & Interviewing

*Bring hard copy of your field notes.*

Class Exercise: Exchange Fieldnotes 1 and Discuss

**10 minutes**

Selecting Interview Respondents and Improving Interview Guide

- Robert S. Weiss, Learning from Strangers, Ch1-4. pp. 1-119

**10 minutes**

*Bring hard copy of DRAFT interview guide. Exchange and Discuss.*


**DUE NEXT WEEK:**
WEEK 8

Interview (cont.)

- Robert S. Weiss, Ch 5. Issues in Interviewing. pp. 121-150
  ** 15 minutes **

  **Class Exercise: Exchange Transcripts**


WEEK 9

Ethics

**Guest Speaker**, Research Ethics: Human Subjects Presentation


WEEK 10

Overview

Optional:
• Robert M. Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 7. Writing an Ethnography, pp. 201-242

**FINALS WEEK**

**Paper and Portfolio Due Date:** [blank]