

SOCIOLOGY 754
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY

Instructor: Michael Bell (michaelbell@wisc.edu)

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fall, 2018
Tuesdays 4-6:30pm, Ag Hall, Rm 301

What is the difference between a wink and a twitch? What do “justice,” “nature,” and “God” mean to different people? How does it feel to be discriminated against? Why is it that some people do not believe in human-induced climate change and some do? What is life like in the small towns and small neighborhoods of rural and urban Wisconsin? What is really going on behind the front doors of households today? How do people themselves understand how and why they do what they do?

This course provides some of the research tools for answering questions such as these, the tools often described as *qualitative* methods of social inquiry. Generally speaking, qualitative methods are those that seek, as Max Weber put it, an “interpretive understanding of social action.” The goal of this class is to broaden and hone students’ interpretive skills by presenting a range of qualitative methods, their epistemological standing, their sociological utility, and the practical and ethical problems associated with them.

The course is a cross between a seminar and a workshop, and has a kind of three-by-three design. There are three sections of topics:

ways of relating (the epistemological and ethical foundations of qualitative research);

ways of gathering (the practice of qualitative research);

ways of telling (performing qualitative research through writing and other means).

As well, most class meetings – we meet once a week on Tuesdays – will cover the relational, the practical, and the narrative dimensions of qualitative methods. We will read and discuss articles, we will have a workshop on methods, and we will discuss the 4 ethnographies – three of them by recent UW-Madison graduates! – we will read over the course of the semester.

Along the way, there will be numerous small workshop assignments, as well as a weekly intellectual journal of 250-350 words. Students will share their entries on the course site with a 3 to 4 member “muddle group” by midnight on Sunday each week. Keep everything in an electronic portfolio someplace. A few times during the semester I will ask you to send me an email with all your stuff. The final assignment will be to write up a qualitative research proposal on something you might actually study, or are already studying. There will also be three short assignments to help you develop your thoughts on your proposal, and to loosen your mind and your pen.

The course will conclude with a series of workshops on the research proposals, and an “un-final un-exam” – an ungraded, in-class collective exercise.

Learning Objectives

- Develop students' critical thinking about qualitative methods.
- Develop students' practical and narrative skills in qualitative methods.
- Develop students' capacity for contextual understanding about social life.
- Encourage students' love for and self-confidence in qualitative research.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following: your *portfolio* (50%), your *research proposal* (25%), and your *class participation* (25%).

Work Load and Credit Hours

This course requires 3 credit hours of work. Under UW-Madison's guidelines that means, in addition to our two 75 minute class sessions a week, you can expect an average *minimum* of 6 hours a week of work outside of class. In this course, though, you should plan for a higher workload than the "average minimum," given the workshop exercises, the readings, and the writing assignments.

Anxiety and the Blues

Sometimes things get out of control in one's life. It happens to all of us. Emails unanswered. Assignment deadlines missed. Personal relationships frayed. Stuff starts to swirl into a vortex in which you feel trapped. If you are feeling this way and it is interfering with your performance in the class, let me know!!! Reach out. I am here to help you succeed.

Course Readings

Books

Ashwood, Loka. 2018. *For-Profit Democracy: Why the Government Is Losing the Trust of Rural America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. ISBN-10: 0300215355, ISBN-13: 978-0300215359.

Desmond, Matt. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Random House. ISBN-13: 978-0553447453, ISBN-10: 9780553447446.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1989 (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Introduction by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. [Place]: Bantam Classics. ISBN-13: 978-0553213362, ISBN-10: 0553213369.

Orne, Jason and Michael M. Bell. 2015. *An Invitation to Qualitative Fieldwork*. New York and London: Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0415536622, ISBN-10: 0415536626.

Orne, Jason. 2017. *Boystown: Sex and Community in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN-13: 978-0226413396, ISBN-10: 022641339X

Books are available at Room of One's Own bookstore.

Other Readings

All other readings for the course will be available on line at the course Canvas website.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(All readings subject to change. Check the course website for the latest news!)

Ways of Relating

Week 1 (9/11): Meta-Methods: Explanation and Context

Martin (2017), pp. 1-15.

Orne and Bell (2015), pp. 3-19.

Max Weber. 1968 (1920s). "The Definition of Sociology and of Social Action: A. Methodological Foundations." In *Economy and Society*, Guenther Ross and Claus Wittich, eds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pp. 4-22.

In-class workshop: interpreting a scene

Week 2 (9/18): The Voices of Research

Orne and Bell (2015), pp. 23-63.

Martin, (2011), "Why Questions, What Explanations?," pp. 3-23 in *The Explanation of Social Action*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2: "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research" and "In the Field."

In-class workshop: recording a scene

Lab 1: non-participant observation (two weeks): 400-500 words of fieldnotes on an hour or so of non-participant observations of a social scene, with a partner from the class, focusing on the "3 em's."

Week 3 (9/25): The Promise of Qualitative Research – A New Classic

Desmond, whole book (with skimming!!!!).

Desmond, Matthew. 2018. "Americans Want to Believe that Jobs Are the Solution to Poverty. They're Not," *New York Times*, September 11.

In-class workshop: Problem versus Literature Orientations in Research – With a short assignment

Week 4 (10/2): Standpoints and Politics

Common Readings

Becker, Howard. 1967. "Whose Side Are We On?" *Social Problems* 14(3): 239-247.

Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." Pp. 1-26 in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Berkeley: University of Cal. Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1971 (1908). "The Stranger." In *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, Donald N. Levine, ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Individual Muddle Readings on Feminist Reflexivity

Harding, Sandra. 2004. "Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate," pp. 1-17 in *The Feminist Standpoint Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, Sandra Harding, ed. New York; Routledge.

Hemmings, Clare. 2012. "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation." *Feminist Theory* 13.2: 147-161.

Faria, Caroline & Sharlene Mollett. 2016. "Critical feminist reflexivity and the politics of whiteness in the 'field'," *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23 (1):79-93.

In-class workshop: The self in interaction

Lab 2: Taking the Self Into Account (3 weeks): with a partner from the class, conduct two hours of participation in a social scene that is new to you both and that highlights your own subjectivities and standpoints; record and compare your experiences and observations of yourself and your partner in interaction with the setting.

First portfolio collection (Lab 1 and first three journal entries)

Week 5 (10/9): Research Ethics

ASA Code of Ethics. (Focus on the research ethics sections.)

Heimer, Carol A. and JuLeigh Petty. 2010. "Bureaucratic Ethics: IRBs and the Legal Regulation of Human Subjects Research." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* Vol. 6: 601-626.

Hessler, Richard, D. Donnell-Watson, and John Galiher. 2011. "A Case for Limiting the Reach of Institutional Review Boards." *The American Sociologist* 42(1):145-152.

Haggerty, Kevin D. 2004. "Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics." *Qualitative Sociology* 27(4): 391-414.

Orne, Chapters 1 to 3

In-class workshop: whose ethics?

Assignment: If you haven't already, take the UW IRB training

Ways of Gathering

Week 6 (10/16): Looking – Ethnographic Observation

Orne and Bell (2015), pp. 99-118.

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*. 16: 4-33.
Desmond, Matthew. 2014. "Relational Ethnography." *Theory and Society*. 43: 547-579.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2000. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods." Pp. 509-536 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. London: SAGE Publications.

Marcus, George, E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.

Finish Orne (with lots of skimming)

Workshop: Google hangout with Jason Orne

Week 7 (10/23): Listening – Interviewing

Orne and Bell (2015), pp. 67-98.

Curato, Nicole. 2012. "Respondents as interlocutors: translating deliberative democratic principles to qualitative interviewing ethics." *Qualitative Inquiry* 18 (7): 571-582.

Jerolmack, Colin, and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk is cheap: ethnography and the attitudinal fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(2) 178-209.

Ashwood, pages TBA (plus skimming).

In-class workshop: interviewing techniques

Lab 3: Collaborative Interview and Coding Project (4 weeks)

Week 8 (10/30): Coding – Texts

Campbell, John L., Charles Quincy, Jordan Osserman, and Ove K. Pedersen. 2013. "Coding in-depth semistructured interviews problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement." *Sociological Methods & Research* 42(3): 294-320.

Holton, Judith A. 2010. "The Coding Process and Its Challenges." *Grounded Theory Review* 9, no. 1: 21-40.

Wodak, Ruth and Michael Meyer. 2009. "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology," pp. 1-33 in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Maynard, D.W., Freese, J. and Schaeffer, N.C., 2010. Calling for Participation Requests, Blocking Moves, and Rational (Inter) action in Survey Introductions. *American Sociological Review*, 75(5), pp.791-814.

In-class workshop: demonstration of coding software

2nd portfolio collection (Lab 2 and second batch of journal entries)

Week 9 (11/6): Participating – Participatory Research

Orne and Bell (2015) chapter on "Participating: Research as Practice," pp. 119-149, but focus on pp. 119-138.

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70(1): 4-28.

Stoecker, Randy. "Community-Based Research and the Two Forms of Social Change." *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 27, no. 2 (2012): 83-98.

Finishing Ashwood (with lots of skimming)

In-class workshop: whose agenda?

Week 10 (11/13): Mixing – Mixed Methods Research

Greene, Jennifer C. "Engaging critical issues in social inquiry by mixing methods." *American Behavioral Scientist* 56.6 (2012): 755-773.

Johnson, R. Burke and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie. 2004. "Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come." *Educational Researcher* 33(7): 14-26.

Johnson, R. Burke. "Dialectical pluralism and mixed research." *American Behavioral Scientist* 56.6 (2012): 751-754. (Only a 4-page piece.)

Meschede, Tatjana, Hannah Thomas, Alexis Mann, Allison Stagg, and Thomas Shapiro. "Wealth Mobility of Families Raising Children in the Twenty-First Century." *Race and Social Problems* 8, no. 1 (2016): 77-92.

In-class workshop: devising a mixed methods research strategy

Ways of Telling

Week 11 (11/20): The Art of the Social Science Narrative

Orne and Bell (2015) chapter on “The Multilogics of Writing,” pp. 153-175.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1999 (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terry Hume Oliver, eds. New York: Norton.

Bell, Michael M. 2002. “Sentences and Commitments,” *International Journal of Humanities and Peace*, 18(1): 58.

In-class workshop: Narrative creativity

Week 12 (11/27): Performative Research

Bell, Michael M. 2011. Chapter 1 and Chapter 11, and the “Program Notes” in *The Strange Music of Social Life: A Dialogue on Dialogic Sociology*. Ann Goetting, ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

3rd portfolio collection (Lab 3 and next batch of journal entries)

In-class workshop: “bus-stop” game (in preparation for the next week)

Weeks 13 (12/4): Proposal Workshops

Workshops on student research proposals. Reading for this period will be seminar members’ draft proposals, due electronically 48 hours before the class in which it is discussed.

Week 14 (12/11): Unfinal Unexam

An ungraded, collective, in-class exercise.