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Tu/Th 1:00-2:15
University of Wisconsin-Madison

SOCIOLOGY/RURAL SOCIOLOGY 754
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY

"Sociology...is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences."—Max Weber, 1920.

What is the difference between a wink and a twitch? What do "equality," "nature," and "God" mean to different people? How does it feel to be discriminated against? What is life like in the small towns and small neighborhoods of rural and urban Wisconsin? Why does social life so often turn out so unequally? What is the significance of the *Harry Potter* books and movies for their audience? What is really going on behind the front doors of families 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. To this end, our course will pass through three parts:

methods of knowing (the epistemological and ethical foundations of qualitative research);

methods of gathering (the many means of encountering qualitative social evidence);

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

The format of the course will be a cross between a seminar and a workshop. We will meet once a week in seminar format to discuss the readings (usually on Tuesdays), and once a week to try out various qualitative methods for ourselves (usually on Thursdays). Our focus, then, will be both on the intellectual underpinnings of qualitative methods and on the practical doing of the stuff. 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 with a 3 to 4 member "journal group," via email, with a cc to me, by midnight on Sunday each week. Keep everything in a portfolio. A few times during the semester I will collect and grade the portfolios. 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.

Course Readings

Books

Bell, Michael M.; with Donna Bauer, Sue Jarnagin, and Greg Peter. 2004. *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability*. Rural Studies Series of the Rural Sociological Society. College Station, PA: Penn State University Press. ISBN: 0271023864

Collins, Jane and Victoria Mayer. 2010. *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

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

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. *Sidewalk*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. ISBN: 0374527253

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226206815

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. ISBN: 0385094027

Hochschild, Arlie. 2003. *The Second Shift*. 2nd edition. [Place]: Penguin. ISBN: 0142002925

Skloot, Rebecca. 2011. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Reprint edition. [Place]: Broadway. ISBN: 1400052181

Books are available at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 West Gilman St.

Other Readings

All other readings for the course will be available on line at the course website:
<http://www.michaelmbell.net/sociology-754/home.html>

Course Requirements

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Week 1 Introduction

9/6 Seminar

No reading.

9/8 Workshop: Interpreting a Scene

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.

Workshop assignment: in-class

Methods of Knowing

Week 2 The Promise of Qualitative Methods: Two Qualitative Classics

9/13 Seminar

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. *Sidewalk*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. Pp. 3-80, 173-216, 312-317.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic. Pp. 412-453.

9/15 Workshop: Observing a Scene

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2: "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research" and "In the Field."

Workshop assignment (one week): 400-500 words of fieldnotes on an hour or so of observations of a social scene, with a partner from the class.

Week 3 The Case for Thick Cases Studies

9/20 Seminar

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2): 219-245.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic. Pp. 3-30.

Mitchell, Clyde J. 1983. "Case and Situation Analysis." *Sociological Review* 31:187-211.

9/22 *Workshop: Participating in a Scene*

Emerson et al. Chapters 3, 4, and 5: "From Field to Desk," "Creating Scenes on the Page," and "Pursuing Members' Meanings"

Workshop assignment (one week): 400-500 words of fieldnotes on an hour or so of participation in a social scene, with a partner from the class.

Week 4 *Standpoint, Representation, Participation*

9/27 *Seminar*

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

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

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. Pp. 143-149.

9/29 *Workshop: Taking Yourself into Account*

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. *Sidewalk*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. Pp. 318-357.

Workshop assignment (two weeks): 800-1000 words based on the following: 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; write up your findings together.

Week 5 *Grounding Research*

10/4 *Seminar*

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*. 16: 4-33.

Devault, Majorie. 2006. "Introduction: What Is Institutional Ethnography?" *Social Problems* 53 (3): 294-298.

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.

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.

10/6 *Workshop: Welcoming the Unexpected*

Selections TBA from Bell, Michael M, with 10 others. 2011. *The Strange Music of Social Life: A Dialogue on Dialogic Sociology*. Ann Goetting, ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

No new workshop assignment.

Methods of Gathering

Week 6 Observational Research

10/11 *Seminar*

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Introduction, Chapters I, II, III, VI, VII, and VIII; whole book recommended.

10/13 *Workshop: Studying Situations*

No reading.

Workshop assignment: Audio and video recorded in-class exercise on the presentation of self.

Research proposal topic statement due.

Week 7 Participant Observation Research

10/18 *Seminar*

Hochschild, Arlie. 2003. *The Second Shift*. 2nd edition. [Place]: Penguin.

10/20 *Workshop*

No reading.

Workshop assignment (two weeks): 800-1000 word analysis of the previous week's exercise, based on in-class discussion of the audio and video of the previous week's exercise.

Week 8 Participatory Research

10/25 *Seminar*

Bell, Michael M.; with Donna Bauer, Sue Jarnagin, and Greg Peter. 2004. *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability*. Rural Studies Series of the Rural Sociological Society. College Station, PA: Penn State University Press.

10/27 *Workshop: Participating in Situations*

No reading.

No new workshop assignment.

Week 9 Investigatory Research

11/1 Seminar

Collins, Jane and Victoria Mayer. 2010. *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

11/3 Workshop: Investigating Situations

No reading.

Workshop assignment: Audio and video recorded in-class exercise on interviewing.

Research proposal epistemological statement due.

Week 10 Interviewing

11/8 Seminar

Arendell, Terry. 1997. "Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men." *Qualitative Sociology* 20, 3, 341-368.

Corbin, Juliet and Janice M. Morse. 2003. "The Unstructured Interactive Interview: Issues of Reciprocity and Risks When Dealing With Sensitive Topics." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(3): 335-354.

Devault, Marjorie L. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1):96-116.

Kvale, Steinar. 2006. "Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(3): 480-500.

Vitus, Kathrine. 2008. "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14(3): 466-488.

11/10 Workshop: Transcribing an Interview

MacLean, Lynne M., Meyer, Mechthild, Estable, Alma. 2004. "Improving Accuracy of Transcripts in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 14: 113-123.

Workshop assignment: transcribe 250 words from the previous week's exercise, and provide a short *interview summary* and short *interview notes*.

Week 11 Mixing Methods

11/15 Seminar

Johnson, R. Burke, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Lisa A. Turner. 2007. "Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1(2):112-133.

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

Mistry, Rashmita S., Edward D. Lowe, Aprile D. Benner, and Nina Chien. 2008. "Expanding the Family Economic Stress Model: Insights From a Mixed-Methods Approach." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70: 196–209

Roscigno, Vincent J., Diana L. Karafin, and Griff Tester. 2009. "The Complexities and Processes of Racial Housing Discrimination." *Social Problems* 56(1): 49–69.

11/17 *Workshop: Coding Qualitative Evidence*

Emerson et al., "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Meaning," pp. 142–168.

Workshop assignment: code your 250 word transcript, using Nvivo or other coding procedure.

Methods of Telling

Week 12 Narrative as Artform

11/22 *Seminar/Workshop*

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

Bell, Michael M. 2007. "Rural Geniuses," *Humanity and Society*, 31(2-3): 260–261.

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

Finley, Macklin. 2003. "Fugue of the Street Rat: Writing Research Poetry." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 16(4): 603–604.

Lahman, Maria K. E., Monica R. Geist, Katrina L. Rodriguez, Pamela E. Graglia, Veronica M. Richard, and Roland K. Schendel. 2010. "Poking Around Poetically: Research, Poetry, and Trustworthiness." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(1):39–48.

Workshop assignment: write a research poem.

Week 13 Performing a Narrative

11/29 *Seminar*

Skloot, Rebecca. 2011. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Reprint edition. [Place]: Broadway.

12/1 *Workshop: Voicing Qualitative Evidence*

No reading.

Workshop assignment: rewrite the 250 words from the transcription and coding exercises in two voicings, one positivist and one novelistic.

Weeks 14 and 15 *Proposal Writing Workshops*

12/6, 12/8, 12/13, and 12/15

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 16 *Un-Final Un-Exam*

12/20

An ungraded, collective, in-class exercise.