

Qualitative Research Methods

Spring 2022

Tuesday 1:30-3:20pm

SOCY 592, WGSS 592

Professor Rene Almeling

Course Description

The goal of this course is to introduce graduate students in the social sciences to qualitative research methods. The course is designed to walk students through the process of conducting qualitative research, including the initial steps of deciding on a topic and developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and writing it all up. The week's readings alternate between "how-to" methods texts and award-winning books based on qualitative dissertations, which we use to examine how the authors link theory, method, and data.

Throughout the semester, students also gain practical experience with typical qualitative methods, learning how to do observations, content analyses, and open-ended interviews. All students begin with the same observation exercise (going to a grocery store), but the content analysis and interview assignments will be shaped by each student's research interests. Students are encouraged to use the class to begin a qualitative research project, but this is not a requirement. The course culminates in a final paper, which can either be a draft proposal of a qualitative research project (such as a second-year paper or a dissertation) or an initial analysis of the student's qualitative data.

Enrollment

Instructor permission to enroll is required for all students; enrollment will be limited to approximately 8 students. This course involves intensive reading and writing throughout the semester. I will consider allowing a few undergraduate students to enroll, but they must be junior sociology majors who intend to use qualitative methods in a year-long senior thesis. No auditors will be allowed.

Accessibility

My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. If you are experiencing any difficulties with the class, including with accessibility, please let me know. You may also wish to contact [Student Accessibility Services](#), which can provide information and arrange accommodations. Other useful resources on campus include the [Writing Center](#) and [Academic Strategies](#).

Requirements

Attendance and participation in class 15%

Response memos 10%

Students will write a memo for Meadow's book + two other exemplars. In 250 words, summarize the research question, theoretical framework, methods, and main findings. Then in 100 words, offer your own reflections. Upload to Canvas/Assignments 2 hours before class.

Practicing Qualitative Methods

-1 st set of fieldnotes of observation exercise at grocery store	5%
-2 nd set of fieldnotes of observation exercise at grocery store	5%
-Brainstorming 3 qualitative research ideas	5%
-In-class presentation of content analysis	10%
-Brief statement of plans for 2 interviews + draft interview guide	5%
-Transcriptions of 2 interviews (can use Trint for initial draft)	5%
-Completed coding + one memo for 2 interviews	10%

All methods assignments should be uploaded to Canvas/Assignments 24 hours before class.

Final Paper, due May 11 30%

Graduate students who choose to draft a qualitative research proposal will write 5-7 pages, including an introduction, literature review, methods section, and potential contributions. Those who choose to analyze their own qualitative data should plan to write 5-7 pages and consult with me about what form the analysis will take, e.g. several analytic memos, a draft results section for a journal article, etc. (Undergraduate students are not expected to write a final paper, so this portion of their grade will be redistributed through all the other assignments.)

Exemplars (award-winning qualitative books based on dissertations)

Meadow, Tey. 2018. *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the 21st Century*. University of California Press.

Rosales, Rocío. 2020. *Fruteros: Street Vending, Illegality, and Ethnic Community in Los Angeles*. University of California Press.

Almeling, Rene. 2011. *Sex Cells: The Medical Market for Eggs and Sperm*. University of California Press.

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2015. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. University of California Press.

Methods books (many or all chapters assigned so you may want to purchase these)

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*. University of Chicago Press.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes (2nd Edition)*. University of Chicago Press.

Gerson, Kathleen and Sarah Damaske. 2020. *The Science and Art of Interviewing*. Oxford Univ Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. University of Chicago Press.

Schedule

All readings are available for no cost. Articles and book chapters are available as links in the syllabus. Books with most or all chapters assigned are available as e-books from Yale Library or via physical reserves (2-hour checkout) at Bass Library.

January 18 Introduction

January 25 Perspectives on Qualitative Research + Practicing Observation

- Reading**
- Lareau, *Listening to People*, Ch 1 on “The Emergent Nature of the Research Process” and Ch 10 “Why Interviews and Participant Observation are Valuable”
 - Ragin, Charles and Lisa Amoroso. 2018. *Constructing Social Research (3rd edition)*. Sage Publishing. Ch 5 on “Qualitative Research.”
 - Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16: 4-33.
 - Harding, Sandra. 2004. “Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophical, and Scientific Debate.” In *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*.
 - Choo, Hae Yeon and Myra Marx Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28: 129-149.
 - Schilt, Kristen, Tey Meadow, and D’Lane Compton. 2018. “Introduction: Queer Work in a Straight Discipline.” In *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by Compton, Meadow, and Schilt. University of California Press.

- Assignments**
- First set of fieldnotes from grocery store observation (due 24 hours before class)
 - Skim-read other students’ fieldnotes before class

February 1 Discussing Theory/Method/Data in *Trans Kids* by Tey Meadow

- Reading**
- Meadow Ch 1-4, 7, and appendices
 - Before second observation at grocery store, read Emerson et al, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch 1 “Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research, Ch 2 “In the Field: Participating, Observing and Jotting” and Ch 3 “Writing Up Fieldnotes: From Field to Desk”

- Assignments**
- Second set of fieldnotes from grocery store observation (due 24 hours before class)
 - Response memo to Meadow’s book (due 2 hours before class)
 - Skim-read other students’ fieldnotes before class

February 8 Discussing Theory/Method/Data in *Fruteros* by Rocío Rosales

- Reading**
- Read entire book including appendices
- Assignment**
- Response memo (due 2 hours before class)

February 15 Starting a Qualitative Research Project

- Reading**
- Lareau, *Listening to People*, Ch 2 “Before You Begin: Dreaming and Thinking” and Ch 3 “Preparing: The Early Steps in a Study”
 - Gerson and Damaske, *Science and Art of Interviewing*, Ch 1 “Depth Interviewing as Science and Art,” Ch 2 “Getting Started: Pinning Down the Questions and Research Design,” Ch 3 “Interviews with Whom?”
 - Small, Mario Luis. 2009. “How many cases do I need?": On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research." *Ethnography* 10: 5-38.
 - Moore, Mignon. 2018. “Challenges, Triumphs, and Praxis: Collecting Qualitative Data on Less Visible and Marginalized Populations.” In *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by Compton, Meadow, and Schilt. University of California Press.
 - An example of content analysis to prepare for next week’s assignment...
 - Waggoner, Miranda. 2017. *The Zero Trimester: Pre-Pregnancy Care and the Politics of Reproductive Risk*. University of California Press. Chapter 6.
- Assignment** → Brainstorm 3 qualitative research ideas (1 paragraph each, due 2 hours before class)

February 22 Conducting Qualitative Research + Practicing Content Analysis

- Reading**
- Lareau, *Listening to People*, Ch 4 “Learning to Interview,” Ch 5 “How to Conduct a Good Interview,” Ch 6 “Learning how to Do Participant Observation”
 - Gerson and Damaske, *Science and Art of Interviewing*, Ch 4 “Constructing an Interview Guide” and Ch 5 “Seeking Discoveries that Matter”
 - Winfield, Taylor Paige. 2021. "Vulnerable Research: Competencies for Trauma and Justice-Informed Ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.
- Assignment** → Choose 2-4 images or texts, conduct a content analysis, and present results in class

March 1 Discussing Theory/Method/Data in *Sex Cells* by Rene Almeling

- Reading** -Read entire book (including methods details in footnotes to Introduction)
- Assignment** → Response memo (due 2 hours before class)

March 8 Discussing Theory/Method/Data in *Dealing in Desire* by Kimberly Hoang

- Reading** -Read entire book including appendices
- Assignments** → Brief statement of interview plans + draft interview guide (24 hours before class)
- Response memo (due 2 hours before class)

Spring Break

March 29 Initial Analysis of Qualitative Data + Practicing Interviews

- Reading**
- Lareau, *Listening to People*, Ch 8 “Data Analysis: Thinking as You Go”
 - Emerson et al, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch 4 “Writing up Fieldnotes: Creating Scenes on the Page,” Ch 5 “Pursuing Members Meanings,” Ch 6 “Coding and Memo’ing”
 - Gerson and Damaske, *Science and Art of Interviewing*, Ch 6 “Analyzing Interviews: Making Sense of Complex Material”
- Assignment** → Transcription of 2 interviews (can use Trint for first draft; due 24 hours before class)

April 5 Systematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

- Reading**
- Timmermans, Stefan and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30:167-86.
 - Deterding, Nicole and Mary Waters. 2018. "Flexible Coding of In-depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach." *Sociological Methods & Research* 50: 708-739.
 - Small, Mario and Jenna Cook. 2021. "Using Interviews to Understand Why: Challenges and Strategies in the Study of Motivated Action." *Sociological Methods & Research*.
- Assignment** → Completed coding + one memo for 2 interviews (due 24 hours before class)

April 12 From Qualitative Analysis to Draft Manuscript

- Reading**
- Lareau, *Listening to People*, Ch 9 “Writing: Becoming Clearer about Your Contribution”
 - Emerson et al, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch 7 “Writing an Ethnography”
 - Gerson and Damaske, *Science and Art of Interviewing*, Ch 7 “Pulling it all Together: Telling Your Story and Making Your Case”
 - Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chapter 3-5 and 7.

April 19 Exemplar Journal Articles (award-winning qualitative articles based on dissertations)

- Reading**
- Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77: 999-1022.
 - Clair, Matthew. 2020. "Being a Disadvantaged Criminal Defendant: Mistrust and Resistance in Attorney-Client Interactions." *Social Forces* 100: 194-217.
 - Sweet, Paige. 2019. "The Sociology of Gaslighting." *Amer Sociological Rev* 84: 851-75.

April 26 Workshopping Final Projects + Conclusion

Final Paper Due on May 11