

**SOCY 699J: Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods
Spring 2011, University of Maryland**

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:15

Location 1117 Art-Sociology Building.

Professor Dana R. Fisher

Office: 3133 Art-Sociology

Office Hours: Thursdays 2-4

This course is designed as an introductory course in qualitative research methods, it provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect qualitative information about social phenomena, focusing on how to collect and analyze data that are reliable and applicable to our research questions. We will begin by constructing a research question that will drive our work for the entire semester. In this course, you will learn three of the main ways that qualitative data are used in sociological research: analysis of written material, participant observation, and open ended semi-structured interviews.

Requirements and Grading:

- (1) Paper Assignments (20% each for total of 60%)
- (2) Class participation and fulfilling weekly assignments (25%)
- (3) Final Presentation (15%)

Required Books at the University Book Center:

Duneier, Mitchell and Ovie Carter. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fisher, Dana. 2006. *Activism, inc. : how the outsourcing of grassroots campaigns is strangling progressive politics in America*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing social settings : a guide to qualitative observation and analysis, 4th edition*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Newman, Katherine S. 1999. *No shame in my game : the working poor in the inner city*. New York: Knopf and the Russell Sage Foundation.

Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

Additional Readings are available online.

Weekly Syllabus: Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1 (24 January): Introductions and Overview

Readings:

Howard Becker, 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." Pp. 53-72 in *Ethnography and Human Development. Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, ed. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Schweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jeff Goodwin and Ruth Horowitz, 2002. "Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology* 25 (1): 33-47.-

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture"

Assignment:

In pairs meet your "partner" and, based on the data that you observe, write a narrative summary.

Week 2 (31 January): Constructing a Research Question

Readings:

Special issue on Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy, edited by Katherine Newman. 2002. *Sociological Methods and Research*, (volume 31, number 2). Read first four articles

National Science Foundation. 2004. *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research*. Washington, DC. Available at:
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2004/nsf04219/nsf04219.pdf>

Assignment:

Develop a general research question that will direct your research for the semester and identify sources that you will use for the three components of the class: analysis of written text, participant observation, and open ended semi-structured interviews.

Week 3 (7 February): Qualitative analysis of Written Text

Readings:

Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 8-9: 177-245

Assignment:

Refine research question for this methodological approach—submit this research question. Class discussion will determine how much data must be collected and analyzed for the

written text assignment. Enter data into database (excel), identify THREE theoretically driven codes that will be used to code your data and provide clear operationalizations of these codes and start coding.

Week 4 (14 February): Written Text II

Readings:

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.(part 1)

Assignment: Complete Coding and prepare summary of analysis for class.

Week 5 (21 February): Written Text III

Readings:

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.(part 2)

Assignment: Submit Paper 1 on findings from analysis of written text.

Week 6 (28 February): Participant Observation

Readings:

Burawoy, Michael (2003). Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography. *American Sociological Review*, 68(5):645-679.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing social settings : a guide to qualitative observation and analysis, 4th edition*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company. Parts 1 and 2: 9-178.

Assignment:

Refine research question for this methodological approach and submit. Set-up your field research: gain access, and set up a sampling frame and plan for data collection.

Week 7 (7 March): Participant Observation II

Readings:

Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5: 107-125.

Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Assignments: Collect 7 hours of data, take field notes on your time in the field. Type up field notes.

Week 8 (14 March): Participant Observation III

Readings:

Duneier, Mitchell and Ovie Carter. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

SPRING BREAK week of 21 March

Week 9 (28 March): Participant Observation IV

Readings:

Bourgois, Philippe. 1998. "Just Another night in a Shooting Gallery." *Theory, Culture, & Society*. Volume 15 (2): 37-66.

Goffman, Alice. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review*. Volume 74 (June): 339-357.

Assignment: Submit Paper 2 on findings from analysis of field research.

Week 10 (4 April): Open Ended Semi-Structured Interviews

Readings:

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

Assignment: Refine research question for this methodological approach and submit. Set-up your field research: gain access, and set up a sampling frame and plan for data collection. Develop Interview Protocol (3 interview questions plus follow-ups).

Week 11 (11 April): Interviews II

Readings:

Fisher, Dana. 2006. *Activism, inc. : how the outsourcing of grassroots campaigns is strangling progressive politics in America*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Assignment: Conduct your interviews (5) and write fieldnotes of each meeting. Transcribe data and come up with 3 codes for analysis.

CATCH-UP Week of 18 April

Week 12 (25 April): Interviews III

Readings:

Newman, Katherine S. 1999. *No shame in my game : the working poor in the inner city*. New York: Knopf and the Russell Sage Foundation.

Assignment: Manually code transcripts (stage 1 of analysis—discuss additional stages that one would do).

Week 13 (2 May): Interviews IV

Readings:

Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Assignments: Submit Paper 3 on findings from analysis of interview data.

Week 14 (9 May): Final Presentations Synthesizing Findings from Three Projects