
Fall 2013 Syllabus
Sociology 6121: Qualitative Methods
Thursdays: 3:00-5:50 pm, KTCH 33

Instructor:	Christina Sue
Office:	Ketchum 217
Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs: 2:00pm-3:00pm or by appointment
Email:	christina.sue@colorado.edu
Phone:	303-492-3538

Course Description:

This seminar is the second in a three-course qualitative training series offered by the Department of Sociology and is thus generally intended for those who have taken the first course in the series (Logics of Qualitative Inquiry). Whereas Logics of Qualitative Inquiry introduced you to the history and epistemology of qualitative methods and honed your ability to engage with and critique qualitative research, this course is geared towards qualitative research techniques and practices. Although we will be doing reading in this course, much of your time will be spent in the field (in a site of your choosing) and on writing about your field experiences. In this class you will select and immerse yourself in a field site, collecting your own, original qualitative data. By the end of the class you will have developed a small dataset consisting of fieldnotes and interviews, which you can then build upon in preparation for the final course in the series dedicated to qualitative analysis and writing. The topics we will cover in this class include practical concerns such as how to select a site, gain entrée, establish rapport, conduct participant observation, deal with ethical issues and the IRB, take fieldnotes, design interview questionnaires, conduct focus groups, and how to develop preliminary analytic codes and memos. Although there are a range of methodologies which are considered “qualitative” in nature, this course will emphasize participant observation and interviewing techniques.

Course Readings

The following texts are required for this course:

Emerson, Robert (Ed.). 2001. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth.et

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Whyte, William Foote. 1993. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

I will post additional articles/chapters that are required reading on D2L. They will be marked with an asterisk on the weekly outline. For access, go to <https://learn.colorado.edu/>. You should automatically be granted access to the D2L component of the class if you are officially enrolled in the course. If you have problems with D2L, please see: <http://oit.colorado.edu/d2l> and/or contact Information Technology Services (ITS) at (303) 735-HELP or help@colorado.edu.

Course Format

On a typical day, we will dedicate the beginning of each class to discuss the readings. The student who signed up for that week will be responsible for leading the discussion. In order for a discussion-based format to work, all students will need to arrive to class having carefully read the assigned readings for that week and be prepared with questions and points to discuss. The rest of class will be reserved for discussion of our class exercises and students' individual projects. Each week I will ask everyone to provide a brief update on their experiences with assigned exercises and/or their progress in the field.

WEEKLY OUTLINE

Note: You need to complete all readings, exercises, and assignments for each week *before* the class meets on Thursday. If possible, please read each week's readings in the order that they appear on the syllabus. The activities you should *have completed* each week are listed under "exercise" for that week. Instructions for each exercise (italicized in the weekly outline) are in the "Course Grading" section of the syllabus. Written assignments which need to be turned in via D2L's dropbox that week are in bold.

WEEK 1/August 29: Introductions and Overview

WEEK 2/September 5: Choosing a Site or a Group

Exercise: Scope out potential field sites; *Breaching experiment*

- Katz, Jack. 2001. "Ethnography's Warrants" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 361-382)
- Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Chapters 1-2 (pgs. 9-32)
- *Bechhofer, Frank and Lindsay Paterson. 2000. Chapter 4 "The Choice of Locale and Group" (pgs. 43-54)
- *Stake, Robert E. 2008. "Qualitative Case Studies" in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (pgs. 119-149)

WEEK 3/September 12: The Art of Observing and Jotting

Exercise: Continue scoping out potential field sites; *Observation of two sites/scenes*; **fieldnotes from observation**

- Emerson, Robert. 2001. "The Face of Contemporary Ethnography" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 27-53)
- Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings*, excerpt from Chapter 5 (pgs. 108-117)
- Emerson et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chapters 1-2 (pgs 1-38)

WEEK 4/September 19: Fieldnotes

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; *Go along*; **fieldnotes (from fieldsite)**

- Emerson et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chapters 3-5 (pgs 39-141)

WEEK 5/September 26: Gaining Entrée, Developing Rapport, and Being in the Field

Exercise: Site observation (minimum of 1 hour) with fieldnotes; **fieldnotes**

- Goffman, Erving. 2001. "On Fieldwork" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs 153-158)
- Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Chapters 3-4 (pgs. 33-80)
- Emerson, Robert. 2001. Excerpts from "Fieldwork Practice: Issues in Participant Observation." in *Contemporary Field Research* (pages 113-131)
- *Ostrander, Susan A. 1993. "Surely you're not in this just to be helpful: Access, Rapport, and Interviews in Three Studies of Elites." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22: 7-27.

WEEK 6/October 3: Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Exercise: Site observation (minimum of 1 hour) with fieldnotes; **fieldnotes**

- Baca Zinn, Maxine. "Insider Field Research in Minority Communities" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 159-166)
- *Twine, France Winddance. 2000. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies." Pp. 1-34 in *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*, edited by France Winddance and Jonathan Warren Twine. New York: New York University Press.
- Kondo, Dorrine K. 2001. "How the Problem of 'Crafting Selves' Emerged" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 188-202)
- Warren, Carol A.B. 2001. "Gender and Fieldwork Relations" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 203-223)
- Thorne, Barrie. 2001. "Learning from Kids" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 224-238)

WEEK 7/October 10: Ethical Issues in the Field and the IRB

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; *informal conversation*; **fieldnotes**

- *Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2011. Chapter 3, "Ethical Issues" in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (pgs. 61-104)

- Emerson, Robert. 2001. Excerpts from "Fieldwork Practice: Issues in Participant Observation." in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 134-151)
- *Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas in Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3):267-94.

WEEK 8/October 17: Ethical Issues in the Field and the IRB

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) and fieldnotes; start developing interview questions; *Take CITI course; turn in certification; fieldnotes*

- Read and familiarize yourself with the information on the CU IRB website (<http://www.colorado.edu/VCRsearch/integrity/humanresearch/index.html>);
- *Humphreys, Laud. 1997. "Tearoom Trade: Homosexual Behavior in Public Restrooms." Pp. 396-410 in *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context, and Interaction*, edited by Patricia A Adler and Peter Adler. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- *Ellis, Carolyn. 1995. "Emotional and Ethical Quagmires in Returning to the Field." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 24(1):68-98.
- Leo, Richard A. 2001. "Trial and Tribulations: Courts, Ethnography, and the Need for an Evidentiary Privilege for Academic Researchers" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 260-279)

WEEK 9/October 24: Interviewing

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes, **preliminary interview schedule due; fieldnotes**

- *Heyl, Barbara S. 2001. "Ethnographic Interviewing" in *Handbook of Ethnography* (pgs. 369-383)
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Chapters 1-4 (pgs. 1-79)

WEEK 10/October 31 [CLASS RESCHEDULE]: Interviewing

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; *pair interviewing with classmates; fieldnotes*

- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Chapters 5-9 (pgs. 80-200)

WEEK 11/November 7: Focus Groups

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; refine interview schedule; *interview (insider); fieldnotes*

- *Morgan, David. 1997. "Planning and Research Design for Focus Groups" in *Qualitative Research Methods Series* (pgs. 31-45)
- *Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2011. Chapter 5, "Focus Group Interviewing" in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (pgs. 164-194)
- *Hunt, Darnell. 1999. "Raced ways of seeing O.J." in *O.J. Simpson Facts and Fiction* (pgs. 181-215)
- *Hollander, Jocelyn. 2004. "The Social Contexts of Focus Groups" in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (pgs. 602-637)

WEEK 12/November 14: Focusing Data Collection

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; refine interview schedule; start developing memos; *interview (outsider)*; **fieldnotes**

- Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Chapters 6-7 (pgs. 120-167)
- Weider, D. Lawrence. 2001. "Telling the Convict Code" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 76-88)

WEEK 13/November 21: Identifying Themes and Memoing

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing; develop memos; **fieldnotes**

- Emerson et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapter 6 (pgs. 142-168).
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Chapters 10-11 (pgs. 201-245)

November 28 – Fall Break

WEEK 14/December 5: Enduring Ethnographies

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing; **fieldnotes; memos due**

- *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*

Week 15/December 12: Controversies over the Classics

Exercise: Site observation (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing

- *Adler, Patricia, P. Adler, and J. Johnson. 1992. "Street Corner Society Revisited: New Questions About Old Issues." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21: 3-10.
- *Boelen, Marianne. 1992. "Street Corner Society: Cornerville Revisited." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21: 11-51.
- *Whyte, William Foote. 1992. "In Defense of Street Corner Society." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21: 52-68.
- *Orlandella, Angelo Ralph. 1992. "Boelen may know Holland, Boelen may know Barzini, but Boelen Doesn't know Diddle about the North End!" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21: 69-79.

Course Grading

Attendance and participation (15%): Attendance and participation are integral parts of the learning experience and will be the key to the success of this seminar as a whole. I expect you to come to each class session prepared with questions and comments about the readings and your experiences in the field. Please feel free to introduce reading- and/or fieldwork-related issues that you would like us to "work through" as a group. Each week you will be asked to give a brief, in-class "status update" highlighting your progress in the field from the previous week and any methodological dilemmas that you have encountered.

Exercises (15%): On select weeks you will be required to engage in particular exercises. These exercises are marked in italics in the weekly outline. You need to come to class

that week prepared to share your experience and observations with the class. There is no written work associated with these exercises. A description of each exercise follows.

Breaching experiment: In this exercise you will need to breach a social norm (e.g. related to gender, etiquette, sequencing). During this experiment you are *not* to tell people that you are engaging in an experiment as the point of the exercise is to gauge people's reactions to your behavior which transgresses a social norm. It is imperative that during and following your breach of the norm, you act as if nothing out of the ordinary is occurring. Please keep in mind that people are highly invested in following and maintaining social norms so if anyone gets overly upset during this experiment, *please abort*. Please come to class prepared to discuss your experience.

Observation of two sites/scenes: Select two sites or scenes which you can observe and in which your presence is not overly disruptive. One of these sites/scenes should be something you are very familiar with (i.e. an insider) and the other, a place you are largely unfamiliar with (i.e. an outsider). Observe both scenes for a half an hour, paying attention to context, non-verbal interactions, talk, sequence of events, etc. Do *not* take any notes while you are observing but make mental notes to yourself. Complete a detailed write-up immediately after you have completed your observation. This write-up should include a description of the setting and a description of any individuals that you observe, their behaviors, interactions, conversations, etc. This write-up should represent a description, not analysis, of what you witnessed.

Go along: In this assignment you will need to stand outside of a grocery store and ask a stranger if s/he will allow you to "tag along" as s/he shops. As you shadow this person, ask him or her what they are doing and why (e.g. why are they buying particular products, how they choose what to buy, etc.). This exercise represents a fusion between observation and conversation.

Informal conversation: At your field site, engage an individual in informal conversation loosely based on your research interests. Do not prepare interview questions and do not take notes or record the conversation. Let the conversation flow naturally, allowing the individual to express what s/he feels is important. Take detailed notes immediately following the conversation.

Pair interviewing: After you have drafted your preliminary interview schedule, choose someone else in the class and interview him or her and allow yourself to be interviewed by that same classmate. Immediately following both interviews, have a discussion about your experiences. Focus on what you learned about your own interview questions and your interviewing technique as well as your experience as someone being interviewed.

Interview (insider): After you have revised your interview schedule based on your feedback from the pair interviewing exercise, identify someone who you feel is similar to you on a number of levels (e.g. class, race, gender, age) and conduct the interview. Reflect on issues related to your positionality vis-à-vis the interviewee after this exercise.

Interview (outsider): Identify someone who you feel is different from you on a number of levels (e.g. different class, race, gender, age) and conduct the interview. Reflect on issues related to your positionality vis-à-vis the interviewee after this exercise.

Written assignments (25%): On selected weeks you will be asked to turn in written assignments. These assignments are marked in bold in the class outline.

Weekly fieldnotes: Beginning in Week 3, you will need to turn in weekly fieldnotes based on observations and conversations that you engaged in that week. Fieldnotes should include your observations, details of any discussions you engaged in or overheard, and any methodological notes you wish to include. You should work to develop a writing technique for fieldnotes that works for you. You do not need to submit your notes in any particular style and do not need to edit them (the raw version is fine).

Interview schedule: On Week 9, you will need to turn in a preliminary interview schedule consisting of a minimum of ten questions. When designing your questionnaire, consider the importance of question order, word choice, question construction, and other issues covered in the readings and discussion.

Memos: On Week 15 you will need to turn in a write-up describing themes and subthemes that have emerged from your data. For each theme you should have a theme heading, a summary of your findings related to that theme, and a section which includes data exemplifying the general patterns related to that theme.

Oral Presentations (15%): Each week there will be a discussion leader who will be responsible for presenting a short summary, reflection, and/or critical evaluation of the readings for that week. The discussion leader should address the new methodological issues that arise in the readings and how the various texts (when applicable) relate to each other. The discussion leader will also need to prepare at least five discussion questions for the rest of the class related to that week's readings.

Final paper (30%): At the end of the semester, you will be required to turn in a final paper based on the data that you have collected for this course. The paper should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages in length (not including references) and include 1) a site description; 2) a detailed methods section (complete with references from the class readings); and 3) a preliminary findings section. The paper will be due in the D2L dropbox on Monday, December 16, 2013 by 5pm.

Miscellaneous policies:

Disability: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please provide me with a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

Religious observance. Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class I have done my best not to schedule important class activities on major religious holidays. However, if you do have a religious observance conflict, you will need to provide written proof of the conflict and I will work with you on an individual basis to address the issue. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>