
Fall 2016 Syllabus
Sociology 6121: Qualitative Methods
Thursdays: 3:30-6:00 pm, Hale 235

Instructor:	Christina Sue
Office:	Ketchum 244
Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs: 9:45am-10:45am 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 and reflecting upon your field experiences. In this class you will select and immerse yourself in a field site, collecting 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. For Sociology students, these data will likely be the basis for your third year paper. 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, work with documents and virtual data, 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 (2nd edition). *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc.

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

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

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

In addition to these books, I will post 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 time to discussing class exercises and individual projects. Each week I will ask everyone to provide a brief update of their experiences with assigned exercises and/or their progress in the field. We will spend class time collectively working through issues that classmates are encountering in the field. We will also spend time discussing the readings. The student who signed up for that week will be responsible for leading the discussion by commenting on (not summarizing!) that week's readings and posing questions to the class related to the readings. In order for a discussion-based format to work, all students need to arrive to class having carefully read the assigned readings for that week and be prepared with questions and points to discuss.

WEEKLY OUTLINE

Note: You need to complete all readings, exercises, and assignments for each week *before* the class meets each week. 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 23: Introductions and Overview

- If you have not taken the Sociology Department's "Logics of Qualitative Inquiry" graduate seminar, please contact me or a student who has taken the course for a copy of the syllabus. You should have a general familiarity with the readings assigned in that class and have read these three pieces, in particular:
 - *Becker, Howard S. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." Pp. 53-70 in *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, ed. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A Shweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - *Goodwin, Jeff and Ruth Horowitz. 2002. "Introduction: The Methodological Dilemmas and Strengths of Qualitative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1): 33-47.
 - *Small, Mario. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.

WEEK 2/August 30: Case and Site Selection

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

- Katz, Jack. 2001. "Ethnography's Warrants" in *Contemporary Field Research* (pgs. 361-382)
- *Ragin, Charles C. 1992. Introduction "Cases of 'What is a Case?'" in *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, ed. Charles Ragin and Howard Becker. New York: Cambridge University Press. (pgs. 1-11)
- *Bechhofer, Frank and Lindsay Paterson. 2000. Chapter 4 "The Choice of Locale and Group" in *Principles of Research Design in the Social Sciences*. Oxon: Routledge. (pgs. 43-54)
- Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Chapters 1-2 (pgs. 9-32)

WEEK 3/September 6: The Art of Observing and Jotting

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

- 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 13: Writing Fieldnotes

Exercise: Continue scoping out potential field sites; *Paired observation*; **fieldnotes from observation**

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

WEEK 5/September 20: Gaining Entrée, Developing Rapport, and Fieldwork

Exercise: Continue scoping out potential field sites; *Go along*; **fieldnotes from go along**

- 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.
- Additional optional readings on the go-along:
 - *Carpiano, Richard M. 2009. "Come Take a Walk with Me: The 'Go-Along' Interview as a Novel Method for Studying the Implications of Place for Health and Well-Being." *Health & Place* 15(1): 263-72.
 - *Kusenbach, Margarethe. 2003. "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool." *Ethnography* 4(3): 455-485.

WEEK 6/September 27: Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

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

- *McCorkel, Jill A., and Kristen Myers. 2003. "What Difference Does Difference Make: Position and Privilege in the Field." *Qualitative Sociology* 26(2): 199-231.

- 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.
- 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 4: Ethical Issues and the IRB

Exercise: Site observation #2 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; take CITI training course; **turn in CITI certification (PDF); fieldnotes**

- *Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2012. 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)
- 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)
- Read and familiarize yourself with the information on the CU IRB website (<http://www.colorado.edu/VCRsearch/integrity/humanresearch/index.html>)
- *See Jennifer Pace's IRB Protocol for model

WEEK 8/October 11: Ethical Dilemmas in the Field

Exercise: Site observation #3 and *informal conversation* in fieldsite; start developing interview questions; **fieldnotes of observations and informal conversation**

- *Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas in Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3): 267-94.
- *Humphreys, Laud. 1997. "Tearoom Trade: Homosexual Behavior in Public Restrooms." in *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context, and Interaction*, edited by Patricia A Adler and Peter Adler. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company. (pgs. 396-410)
- *Ellis, Carolyn. 1995. "Emotional and Ethical Quagmires in Returning to the Field." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 24(1): 68-98.
- *Tolich, Martin. 2004. "Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants." *Qualitative Sociology* 27(1): 101-106.

WEEK 9/October 18: Interviewing

Exercise: Site observation #4 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes, **preliminary interview schedule; 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 25: Interviewing

Exercise: Site observation #5 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; *pair interviewing (before refining interview schedule)*; **refined interview schedule; fieldnotes**

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

WEEK 11/November 1: Focusing Data Collection

Exercise: Site observation #6 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; continue to refine interview schedule; *interview someone at site*; **fieldnotes of observation and interview**

- 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 12/November 8: Identifying Themes and Memoing

Exercise: Site observation #7 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; continue to refine interview schedule; *interview someone else at site*; **fieldnotes of observation and interview**

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

WEEK 13/November 15: Focus Groups

Exercise: Site observation #8 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing; start developing themes and memoing; **fieldnotes**

- *Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2012. Chapter 5, "Focus Group Interviewing" in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (pgs. 164-195)
- *Morgan, David. 1997. "Planning and Research Design for Focus Groups" in *Qualitative Research Methods Series* (pgs. 31-45)
- *Hollander, Jocelyn. 2004. "The Social Contexts of Focus Groups" in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (pgs. 602-637)
- *Hunt, Darnell. 1999. "Raced ways of seeing O.J." in *O.J. Simpson Facts and Fiction* (pgs. 181-215)
- Additional optional reading:
 - *Morgan, David L. (1996) Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 22 (1996), pp. 129-152

November 22 – Fall Break

WEEK 14/November 29: Documents, Online Data and Visual Media

Exercise: Site observation #9 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing; memoing; **fieldnotes; draft of initial memos with supporting data**

- *Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2012. Chapter 8, "Unobtrusive Measures in Research" in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (pgs. 280-292)
- *Abbott, Andrew. 2014. Chapters 1-2. "Introduction" and "A Library Ethnography" in *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials* (pgs. 1-35)

- *Kivits, Joëlle. 2005. "Online Interviewing and the Research Relationship" in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet* (pgs. 35-49)
- *Sanders, Teela. 2005. "Researching the Online Sex Work Community" in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet* (pgs. 67-79) Joinson, Kivits, (21-49)
- *Jacobs, Janet. 2008. "Gender and Collective Memory: Women and Representation at Auschwitz." *Memory Studies* 1(2): 211-225.
- Additional optional readings:
 - *Mahoney, James (2004) Comparative Historical Methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol 30 :pp. 81-101
 - *Joinson, Adam N. 2005. "Internet Behavior and the Design of Virtual Methods" in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet* (pgs. 21-34)
 - *Harper, Douglas (1988) Visual Sociology: Expanding sociological vision. *The American Sociologist* 19(1):54-70

Week 15/December 6: Controversies

Exercise: Site observation #10 (minimum 1 hour) with fieldnotes; interviewing; memoing

- *Adler, Patricia, P. Adler, and J. Johnson. 1992. "Street Corner Society Revisited: New Questions About Old Issues." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21: 3-10.
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/nyregion/sudhir-venkatesh-columbias-gang-scholar-lives-on-the-edge.html>
- http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/06/books/alice-goffmans-heralded-book-on-crime-disputed.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1
- <http://0-chronicle.com.libraries.colorado.edu/article/Alice-Goffmans-Implausible-/232491/>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography_b_8028542.html
- <https://contexts.org/blog/how-to-do-ethnography-right/>

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. If there is

written work associated with these exercises, it will be noted in bold in the weekly outline. 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.

Paired observation. For this exercise you will need a class partner. You and your partner need to select a site or scene where you can observe and your presence is not overly disruptive. Observe the scene together, but without discussion, for a half an hour. Do not take any notes while you are observing but make mental notes to yourself. Without consulting with your partner, you should each 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. Again, this write-up should represent a description, not analysis, of what you witnessed. Before class, exchange your fieldnotes with your partner. Be prepared to discuss your results and reflections about this exercise in class.

Go along: In this assignment you will need to either: a) stand outside of a grocery store and ask a stranger if s/he will allow you to "tag along" as s/he shops or b) ask someone you know if you can accompany them as they shop. If you are comfortable with option "a," I would encourage this option. As you shadow this person, ask them 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. 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 them 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. You should work together to refine each other's interview schedule, if appropriate.

Interview in fieldsite: After you have revised your interview schedule based on your feedback from the pair interviewing exercise, identify someone in your site and request an interview. In your write up, be sure to reflect not only on the context of the conversation, but also your positionality vis-à-vis the interviewee.

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. They are due in the dropbox each week by **5pm on the day before class**.

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). *Note:* I intend to use excerpts from students' fieldnotes for instructional purposes. If you would not like particular parts of your notes to be shared, please let me know.

Interview schedules: 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. For Week 10 you will need to turn in a refined interview schedule. Keep in mind that these are initial drafts and the wording and questions will likely continue to evolve during your project.

Memos: On Week 14 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 (10%): Each week there will be a discussion leader who will be responsible for presenting a 5 minute reflection (not summary) 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 (35%): 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 **Tuesday, December 13 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/>