

## **SOCIOLOGY 211A: FIELD RESEARCH METHODS**

Professor Verta Taylor  
Office: SSMS 3008  
Office Hours: 1-2 Tues; 1:30-2:30 Wed. and by appt.

Fall 2013  
SSMS 3017  
Tuesday 2-4:50

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to qualitative field research in the social sciences. It will cover a wide range of issues, including ethics and human subjects, conceptualization, data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Students will be introduced to the most commonly used techniques for collecting qualitative data, including participant observation, life histories, interviewing, focus group interviewing, case studies, and textual analysis.

The course is structured as a research practicum. Students will be expected to come to the class prepared to work on an empirical research project with the goal of gaining practical experience in qualitative methods and analysis. Students will complete a number of in-class and out-of class exercises using qualitative methods, as well as an empirical paper and oral presentation based on their fieldwork project.

Sociology 211A/B fulfills the MA/PhD methods requirement in Sociology. 211A focuses on the design and execution of field research. 211B concentrates on techniques of qualitative data analysis and writing strategies. Students enrolled in 211A should also take 211B.

### **REQUIRED READING:**

Required reading will be assigned from the following texts:

Bruce Berg and Howard Lune. 2012 (8<sup>th</sup> edition). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.

John Lofland, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Belmont, CA: Tomson/Wadsworth.

Robert Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 2011 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Sarah Fenstermaker and Nikki Jones. 2011. *Sociologists Backstage: Answers to 10 Questions About What They Do*. New York, NY and London: Routledge.

In addition, other required readings (listed on the syllabus) are available for purchase as a reader at SBprinter, and a few readings may be added throughout the quarter. They are also available on Electronic Research. ERes password: **platypus**.

### **RECOMMENDED READING (NOT REQUIRED):**

Howard Becker. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Nancy Naples. 2003. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. New York, NY and London: Routledge.

Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. 1998 (2nd edition). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Students' final grades will be based on the following:

**CLASS PARTICIPATION AND REACTION PAPERS.** For the seminar to be a success, students should attend regularly, read assigned readings prior to class, complete all written assignments by the due date, read other students' papers prior to class when relevant to the assignment, and make regular and thoughtful contributions to classroom discussions.

For each class, students should submit a 1 page typewritten **REACTION PAPER** assessing the main points of the readings for that week, noting useful ideas/lessons for your own research project, and questions you want to discuss in class or pursue with further reading. Class participation will count 10 points.

**LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER AND PRESENTATION.** Students should select 1 journal article or book based on empirical qualitative research related to their topic. Write a short paper (3-4 typewritten pages) in which you describe the research methods and analytical procedures used in the research on which the paper is based. Discuss the main substantive and theoretical contribution of the research. Analyze how it relates to the questions you will address in your project. Students will be asked to make a brief (5 minute) presentation to the class about this assignment on the date that it is due. This paper is due on October 29 and is worth 10 points.

### **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENTS.**

Each student will complete a qualitative mini-research project based on data derived from participant observation AND in-depth interviews. Students may elect to use only one of the two methods if this is appropriate to their project, but please speak with me in advance about how to adapt this assignment to your project. This assignment is worth 40 points (20 each).

Participant Observation, Field Notes, and Analytical Memo. You should observe at least 2 different times for about 1-2 hours each. Select a setting and explore possible entre. Get a feel for the situation, observe what is going on, talk with participants, and check out your impressions

with them and through repeated observations. You will be asked to share your typewritten field notes with class members and to write a short (1-2 page) “analytical” memo in preparation for your final paper. Field notes and the analytical memo should be turned in as an appendix to your paper. The typewritten field notes and memo are due November 5 and are worth 20 points.

In-depth Interview. Construct an appropriate interview guide. Then set up and conduct 1 interview, recording it and taking hand written notes. Revise your interview guide as needed following the interview, and explain the reasons for your modifications in your final paper. You will be asked to share your transcribed interviews with the class, and a printed transcription of your interview should be turned in with the final paper. The interview transcription is due on November 19 and is worth 20 points.

#### FINAL PAPER AND ORAL PRESENTATION:

The mini-project will involve several steps:

Step 1: Select a fieldwork site for your study by **October 15**.

Step 2: Conduct a brief literature review to determine who previously studied this topic or something similar. Note especially the theoretical contributions of this earlier work, the major findings, and any gaps or inconsistencies in existing knowledge about the topic. Describe how your research project contributes to this literature in new ways.

Step 3: Collect the data (observations/field notes and interview data.)

Step 4: Keep ongoing notes of your field experiences, observations, reflections, impressions, questions, and personal reactions in a separate “fieldwork” file.

Step 5: Make a brief (15 minute) presentation to the class describing progress on your mini-research project. The presentation should address several questions. What is your research question? Why is it worth answering sociologically? What methods did you use to answer it? Why are qualitative methods appropriate for this study? What problems have you encountered in the field? How did you overcome them? What are your preliminary findings and conclusions?

Step 6: Write up the paper. The paper should summarize the procedures, problems, and successes of your field work. It should emphasize the methods you used to conduct the research.

The first half of the paper should focus on describing the problem and its importance, briefly summarizing previous literature on the subject, describing the methods of data collection and any problems you encountered, how you managed them, and what you learned about field work and qualitative research. Make certain to use the course readings to frame this discussion. Attach your field notes and interview transcription as appendices to the paper.

The paper will be evaluated on the basis of its clarity, organization, understanding of the readings and class discussion, and what you have learned from the experience. Reports of

mistakes, errors in judgment, failures, etc. will NOT result in a poor grade. Where these occur, suggest how you might improve on the data collection in the future.

You are encouraged to discuss your work with other students, and you may choose to collaborate with other students to collect data for this project. However, each student should complete the final paper individually. The paper should not exceed 15 double-spaced pages and is due **Friday December 6 at 5pm.**

Students interested in writing a different final paper should discuss this with me at the beginning of the quarter. For students at later stages of graduate study, the final paper may be a master's thesis, dissertation chapter, journal article, or conference paper. The paper is worth 40 points.

Students who elect to use data collected from this class for a thesis, conference paper, or journal/book publication **must receive human subjects approval** PRIOR to data collection. Per federal regulations, any data collected for research purposes without human subjects approval cannot be used for any other purpose except for this class assignment.

**FINAL GRADE:**

Review of the Literature Paper/Presentation	10
Class Participation/Reaction Papers	10
Field Notes/Analytical Memo	20
Interview and Transcription	20
Final Paper	<u>40</u>
	100 points

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

(The titles of articles are abbreviated.)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic and Readings</b>
Week 1	10/1	<b>Introduction and Overview</b>

Week 2	10/8	<p><b>Why Qualitative Methods?</b></p> <p>Readings: <i>Sociologists Backstage</i>:</p> <p>Chapter 1 Mary Patillo</p> <p>Chapter 2 Scott Brooks</p> <p>Chapter 3 Alfred Young</p> <p>Chapter 4 Mitch Duneier</p> <p>Chapter 5 Millann King</p> <p>Chapter 6 Hung Cam Thai</p> <p>Chapter 7 Nazli Kibria</p> <p>Chapter 8 Rachel Parrenas</p> <p>Lofland, et. al., Chapters 1, 2, and 3</p> <p>Berg, Chapter 1</p>
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Week 3	10/15	<p><b>Entre, Ethical Issues, and Role Dilemmas</b></p> <p>Readings: <i>Sociologists Backstage</i>  Chapter 9 Media Chesney-Lind  Chapter 10 Victor Rios  Chapter 11 Mercer Sullivan  Chapter 12 Valerie Jenness</p> <p>Berg and Lune: Chapter 3</p> <p>Becker, Howard, “Whose Side are We On?”  Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp, “When the Girls are Men.”  Kathleen Blee, “White-Knuckle Research: Emotional Dynamics in Field Work with Racist Activists”  Bernadette Barton, “My auto-ethnographic dilemma: Who Owns the Story?”</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b>  <b>Select Field Site by Today</b></p>
Week 4	10/22	<p><b>Theory and Method in Qualitative Research</b></p> <p>Burawoy, Michael, “Critical Sociology”  Anthony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz, “Grounded Theory in Historical Perspective”  Verta Taylor, “Feminist Methodology in Social Movement Research”</p> <p>Berg, Chapter 2</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENTS: Complete Human Subjects Training Module</b>  <b>How to complete the module</b></p> <p>*go to <a href="http://hstraining.orda.ucsb.edu">http://hstraining.orda.ucsb.edu</a>  *click on Start Training Module  *click on login  *ID number=RES-D-WA-ME-002  *Enter your last name, first name and email address  *Enter owner as WARREN  *Have you logged in with this ID before? “No”  *Complete module. Only use module navigation, not back or forward  *When you are finished, you’ll get an email telling you the module is completed</p>

Week 5	10/29	<p><b>Participant Observation</b></p> <p>Readings: <i>Sociologists Backstage</i>  Chapter 13 Karyn Lacey  Chapter 14 France Winddance Twine  Chapter 15 Denise Segura  Chapter 16 Christine Williams  Chapter 17 Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp  Afterword: Sarah Fenstermaker and Nikki Jones</p> <p>Lofland, et. al: Chapters 3, 4 and 5  Berg and Lune: Chapter 6</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT: Literature Review Paper Due</b></p>
Week 6	11/5	<p><b>Observational Data and Analysis:</b></p> <p>Reading: Emerson, et. al. <i>Writing Ethnographic Field Notes</i></p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b>  <b>Field Notes and Analytical Memo Due</b></p>
Week 7	11/12	<p><b>Interviewing: Life Histories, In-depth, Focus Groups</b></p> <p>Berg and Lune, Chapters 4 and 5</p> <p>Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor, “Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research”</p> <p>Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp, “Researching the Women’s Movement: We Make Our Own History, But Not Just as We Please”</p>
Week 8	11/19	<p><b>Organizing and Analyzing Data, Mixed Methods</b></p> <p>Berg and Lune, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10</p> <p>Taylor, et. al. “Culture and Mobilization: Tactical Repertoires, Same-Sex Weddings, and the Impact on Gay Activism”</p> <p>Workshop on Atlas.ti (Heather Hurwitz)</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b>  <b>Interview Transcription Due</b>  <b>Watch the following video prior to class: Introduction to ATLAS.ti-Sept. 11, 2012:</b> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snALgUYStPc">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snALgUYStPc</a></p>
Week 9	11/26	Presentation of Student Papers
Week 10	12/3	Presentation of Student Papers
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>12/6</b>	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>

