

SOC6713S Qualitative Research Methods II:  
Qualitative Interviewing, 2015-16  
Dr. Ping-Chun Hsiung, Department of Sociology  
University of Toronto

Class: Room 240 (725 Spadina Ave.)  
Date: Friday, 9:00-11:00  
Office: Department of Sociology, room 354

Phones: 416-287-7291  
E-mail: [pchsiung@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:pchsiung@utsc.utoronto.ca)

**Course Objectives and Description**

This seminar analyzes the politics and practices of qualitative interviewing in local and global contexts. By addressing both its technical and theoretical aspects, the course examines:

- 1) the roles of qualitative interviewing in knowledge production and reproduction;
- 2) the constructive process and the inter-subjective dynamic of qualitative interviewing;
- 3) the technical aspects of asking questions and beyond;
- 4) practices of reflexivity, hearing data, and interpreting silences.

Using primary interview data about immigrant families from the Caribbean, China, Italy, and Sri Lanka, students will acquire first hand experience of doing qualitative interviewing by:

- 1) reading, commenting on, and revising good examples and mistakes from transcripts of 39 immigrant interviews;
- 2) carrying out and reflecting upon an in-class interview practicum;
- 3) analyzing interview process, coding interview transcript, and writing reflective essays;
- 4) engaging in and opening to constructive criticism.

**Reading**

Required readings:

- 1) Ping-Chun Hsiung  
Lives and Legacies: A Guide to Qualitative Interviewing (LL hereafter)  
<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~pchsiung/LAL/>
- 2) Additional selected readings are listed below.

**Organization**

- 1) The class will be dedicated to lectures and discussions. Students are responsible for doing the assigned reading, active participation, and carrying out in-class exercises. As integral parts of the teaching and learning process, in-class exercises and weekly tasks are designed to take students step by step toward the completion of your final paper.
- 2) Students will carry out two rounds of interview practicum to acquire hands-on experience of qualitative interviewing. For each round, each student will take turns as the interviewer and as the informant. The central themes of the interview are graduate students' experiences or doing gender in reproductive functioning. The specific focus will be decided in class. Each student will complete three components: (1) designing a qualitative interview guide; (2) conducting two 40–50 minute tape recorded interviews; (3) transcribing the interviews in which you are the interviewer and then either posting the transcripts on the Blackboard or sending them to the instructor for teaching/learning purposes. Participation is mandatory

because the interviewing experiences and transcripts form an integral part of the teaching and learning.

- 3) Constructive criticism is an essential aspect of teaching and learning in this seminar. Students need to acquire skills to provide AND to receive constructive criticism. Professional respect and openness are expected.
- 4) All course related information is posted on the Blackboard, which you need to use your UTORid to access (Any UTORid related enquiries, please consult <https://www.utorid.utoronto.ca>). Other URL related information for the Blackboard will be available in the first week.
- 5) All assignments should be submitted at the beginning of the class on the due date. An electronic version must be submitted to the Blackboard. **Late submissions** will be penalized **1% of the FINAL GRADE** per day, including weekend and holidays. An assignment not submitted by a week after its due date will automatically receive a grade of zero. No written comments will be provided on late submissions.

### **Evaluation**

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Due dates</i>
Punctuation and participation	10%	NA
Reading journals	20%	Wednesdays, midnight
Reflective essay #1	20%	Nov. 6 (session 8)
Reflective essay #2	20%	Nov. 20 (session 10)
Final paper	30%	Dec. 11
Total	100%	

### **Instruction and marking schemes**

#### 1. Punctuation & participation:

- A) Instruction: Attendance is mandatory. Punctuation and student participation are crucial to the quality of the collective and individual learning of this seminar. Students should be ready to participate by having completed the assigned reading prior to attending the class. Participation in the in-class exercises and discussions is also essential.

#### B) Marking schemes:

- 1) Does the student arrive on time and prepared for in-class discussions and exercises? (50%)
- 2) How much of a constructive but critical contribution has the student made? (50%)

#### 2. Reading Journals:

- A) Instruction: The journals are intended to facilitate in-class discussion and to help students develop analytical skills. Your journal should include: an analytical summary of the assigned readings; issues you find interesting or informative; and questions for in-class discussion (~300 words in total). You need to submit a total of nine weekly journals (session # 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) for the respective assigned readings. Your journal should be posted on the Blackboard by Wednesdays, midnight.
- B) Marking scheme: 1% of the final grade is given to every journal submitted on time and 0% is assigned to missing submission or journal submitted after the deadline. In addition, 11% of the final grade is used to assess the insight and analytical quality of the entire set of journals.

3. Reflective essay #1: This assignment asks you to reflect upon your experiences of the interview practicum.

A) Instructions:

1) Some issues you may want to consider as you reflect upon your interview practicum are shown below. Feel free to address any additional ones.

a) As the interviewer:

- (1) What does “sense making” mean to you?
- (2) What is the strength, and what is the weakness, of the interview?
- (3) What are the implications, if any, for your relationship with the informant and for the interview topic of your location or position?

b) As the informant:

- (1) What does “sense making” entail for you as an informant?
- (2) What does “being heard” mean? Did you feel that you were “being heard”? If so, how? If not, how not?
- (3) What have you learned from being the informant, and by closely examining this experience?

c) Overall :

(1) How has the interview practicum facilitated your understanding of qualitative interviewing? What have you learned from this reflective exercise?

2) Format: Your essay must be typed, single-spaced, and in 12pt. font, and be no more than four pages, with pre- and post-interview journals attached as appendix.

3) Submission: a hard copy is due in class, with an electronic version to be submitted via the Blackboard.

B) Marking schemes:

1) Has enough thought been put into the reflection? (25%)

2) To what extent have the skills of qualitative interviewing been used to address the strength(s) and weakness(es)? (20%)

3) How well is the interviewer’s experience analyzed? (25%)

4) How well is the informant’s experience analyzed? (25%)

5) Is the essay presented in a professional manner? Have the pre- and post-interview journals been attached (5%)?

4. Reflective essay #2:

A) Instructions:

1) Open code two selected pages from the transcript where you were the interviewer.

Review the entire transcript based upon what you learn from the open coding. Write an essay to address issues pertinent to “hearing the data and interpreting the silences.”

Below are some questions you may use to guide your essay writing. Feel free to address any additional ones.

a) On “hearing the data”:

(1) Is failing to “hear the data” an issue, and if so, how?

(2) How has the open coding helped, or failed to help (or both), you identify the missed opportunities?

b) On “interpreting the silences”:

(1) Is “the silence” an issue, and, if so, how?

(2) How is “the silence” employed or interpreted by the interviewer and interviewee?

(3) How has the open coding helped, or failed to help, you identify the “the silence”?

- c) Overall
  - (1) What overall methodological or epistemological lessons have you learned?
  - (2) Compared with your reflective essay # 1, have you made any progress? If so, how? If not, explain.
- 2) Format: Your essay must be typed, single-spaced, and in 12pt. font, and be no more than four pages.
- 3) Submission: a hard copy is due in class, with an electronic version to be submitted via the Blackboard.
- B) Marking schemes:
  - 1) Has enough thought been put into the reflection? (20%)
  - 2) How well are the assigned readings being used? (20%)
  - 3) How well are the notions of “hearing the data,” and “interpreting the silences” addressed? (30%)
  - 4) How well is the overall issue analyzed? (25%)
  - 5) Is the essay presented in a professional manner? (5%)
- 5. Final paper:
  - A) Instructions:
    - 1) Open code two selected pages from your second interview transcript where you were the interviewer. Review the entire transcript based upon what you learn from the open coding. Compare and contrast your coding and your understanding of the substantive issues with your first interview. Write an essay to address issues pertinent to the technical and theoretical aspects of qualitative interviewing:
      - a) The roles of qualitative interviewing in knowledge production and reproduction;
      - b) The constructive process and the inter-subjective dynamic of qualitative interviewing;
      - c) The critical, reflective attributes of doing qualitative interviewing.
    - 2) Format: Your final paper must be typed, single-spaced, and in 12pt. font, and be no more than four pages.
    - 3) Submission: a hard copy is submitted to my mailbox, with an electronic version to be submitted via the Blackboard.
  - B) Marking schemes:
    - a) Has enough thought been put into the reflection? (20%)
    - b) How well are the assigned readings being used? (20%)
    - c) How well are the technical and theoretical issues addressed? (55%)
    - d) Is the essay presented in a professional manner? Have the pre- and post-interview journals been attached (5%)?

**Schedule**

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Topics</i>
Sept 18 (session 1)	Introduction
Sept 25 (session 2)	Situating Qualitative Interviewing <b>Readings</b> *LL, What is Qualitative Research *Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, 2001, “From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society,” eds. J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein, <i>Handbook of Interview Research: Context &amp; Method</i> , p. 3-32, Sage. *Bodil Hansen Blix, 2015, “‘Something Decent to Wear’: Performances of

	<p>Being an Insider and an Outsider in Indigenous Research,” <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> 21(2):175-83.</p> <p>*Erin E. Seaton, 2008, “Common Knowledge: Reflections on Narratives in Community,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 8(3):293-305.</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>*contexts, strengths, and limitations of qualitative interviewing</p> <p>*Individual student’s research interest/topic</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Reading and writing weekly journal</p>
Oct. 2 (session 3)	<p>Politics of, and rich narratives in, qualitative interviewing</p> <p><b><i>Readings</i></b></p> <p>*Kathryn Roulston, 2010, “Considering Quality in Qualitative Interviewing,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 10(2):199-228.</p> <p>*James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, 2000, “Narrating the Self,” chapter 6 in <i>The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World</i>, p. 103-23, Oxford University Press.</p> <p>*LL, Characteristics of Good Interviews</p> <p>*LL, The Complexity of Rich Data</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>*“Critical perspectives in qualitative interviewing”</p> <p>*“What is in a story?”</p> <p>*“What is in an image?”</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Reading and writing weekly journal</p>
Oct. 9 (session 4)	<p>Research ethics</p> <p><b><i>Readings</i></b></p> <p>*Jeannine A Gailey and Ariane Prohaska, 2011, “Power and Gender Negotiations during Interviews with Men about Sex and Sexually Degrading Practices,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 11(4):365-80.</p> <p>*Gate Watson, 2009, “The ‘Impossible Vanity’: Uses and Abuses of Empathy in Qualitative Inquiry,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 9 (1): 105-17.</p> <p>*Ethics Review at University of Toronto</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>*Discussing ethical issues pertinent to your research</p> <p>*Drafting your consent form for the interview practicum</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Completing your consent form</p>
Oct. 16 (session 5)	<p>Interview guide</p> <p><b><i>Readings</i></b></p> <p>*Margrit Eichler, P. Albanese, 2007, “What is Household Work? A Critique of Assumptions Underlying Empirical Studies of Housework and an Alternative Approach,” <i>Canadian Journal of Sociology</i>, 32 (2):227-258.</p> <p>*LL, Phrasing Questions and Other Techniques</p> <p>*LL, Fieldnotes</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>* Finding your interview partner for the interview practicum</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Drafting your interview guide for the interview practicum</li> </ul> <p><b>Weekly task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Completing your interview guide for the interview practicum</li> <li>*Writing pre-interview journal</li> </ul>
Oct. 23 (session 6)	<p>Interview practicum</p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*LL, Conventions for Transcribing Interviews</li> <li>*Blake D. Poland, “Transcription Quality,” eds. J. F. Gubrium &amp; J. A. Holstein, <i>Handbook of Interview Research: Context &amp; Method</i>, p. 629-649, Sage, 2001.</li> </ul> <p><b>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Carrying out the interview practicum</li> </ul> <p><b>Weekly task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Writing post-interview journal</li> <li>*Transcribing your interview</li> <li>*Posting your transcript by noon, Oct. 28 (Wed)</li> </ul>
Oct. 30 (session 7)	<p>Politics of research and re-searching</p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*LL, Reflexivity</li> <li>*Andrea Doucet, 2008, “From Her Side of the Gossamer Wall(s)?: Reflexivity and Relational Knowing,” <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 31:73-87.</li> <li>*Roni Berger, 2015, “‘Now I See it, Now I don’t’ Researcher’s position and reflexivity in qualitative research,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 15(2):219-34.</li> <li>*Ruth Nicholls, 2009, "Research and Indigenous Participation: Critical Reflexive Methods." <i>International Journal of Social Research Methodology</i> 12(2):117-26.</li> </ul> <p><b>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Examining one’s personal location</li> </ul> <p><b>Weekly task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Review and reflection</li> </ul>
Nov. 6 (session 8) <b>Reflective essay #1 due</b>	<p>Hearing the data and interpreting the silences</p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Tracy Morison &amp; Catriona Macleod, 2014, “When Veiled Silences Speak: Reflexivity, Trouble and Repair as Methodological Tools for Interpreting the Unspoken in Discourse-based Data,” <i>Qualitative Research</i>, 14(6): 694-711.</li> <li>*Dorit Roer-Strier &amp; Roberta G. Sands, 2015, “Moving Beyond the ‘Official Story’: When ‘Others’ Meet in a Qualitative Interview,” <i>Qualitative Research</i> 15(2):251-68.</li> </ul> <p><b>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Issues related to hearing data and interpreting silences</li> </ul> <p><b>Weekly task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Reflecting upon hearing data and interpreting silences</li> </ul>
Nov. 13 (session 9)	<p>Open coding and focused coding</p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Julie Kaomea, (in press), “Qualitative Analysis as Ho‘oku‘iku‘i or Bricolage: Teaching Emancipatory Indigenous Research in Postcolonial</li> </ul>

	<p>Hawai‘i,” <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i>.</p> <p>*LL, Analysis — introduction, finding a focus, possible research topics, open coding, focused coding, and developing an analytical lens</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>*Doing open and focused coding</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Doing open coding on a selected transcript and writing reflective essay #2</p>
<p>Nov. 20 (session10)</p> <p><b><i>Reflective essay #2 due</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Reflective essay #1 return</i></b></p>	<p>Exposing failures and exploring contexts</p> <p><b><i>Readings</i></b></p> <p>*Karen Naim, Jenny Munro and Anne B. Smith, 2005, “A Counter-narrative of a ‘Failed’ Interview,” <i>Qualitative Research</i>, 5(2): 221-44.</p> <p>*Carol A. B. Warren and Kristine N. Williams, 2008, “Interviewing Elderly Residents in Assisted Living,” <i>Qualitative Sociology</i>, 31: 407-24.</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion &amp; exercise</i></b></p> <p>*Debriefing on hearing data and interpreting silences</p> <p>*discussing exposing failures and exploring contexts</p> <p>*preparing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Working on interview guide</p>
<p>Nov. 27 (session 11)</p>	<p>Sample size in qualitative interviewing</p> <p><b><i>Readings</i></b></p> <p>*Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, Laura Johnson, 2006, “How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability,” <i>Field Methods</i>, 18(1):59-82.</p> <p>*Mark Mason, 2010, “Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews,” <i>Forum: Qualitative Social Research</i>, 11(3), article 8.</p> <p><b><i>Weekly task</i></b></p> <p>*Carrying out the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview practicum</p>
<p>Dec. 4 (session 12)</p>	<p>Conclusion: Looking back and moving forward</p> <p>*Posting your 2<sup>nd</sup> transcript by December 3 (Thursday), noon.</p> <p><b><i>In-class discussion</i></b></p> <p>*Individual and collective reflections</p>
<p>December 11</p> <p><b><i>Reflective essay #2 return</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Final paper due</i></b></p>