

Instructor: Judith Taylor  
Department: Department of Sociology  
University: University of Toronto  
Office hours: Wednesdays 10-12  
Office location: Sociology 344  
Email: [jtaylor@chass.utoronto.ca](mailto:jtaylor@chass.utoronto.ca)  
Office phone: 416-946-5720

Course:	SOC 6712S: QUALITATIVE METHODS
Term:	Fall 2019
Meeting Place:	Sociology 240
Time:	Thursday 3-6

### **Course Materials:**

*Course Reader*, on Quercus

#### *Books:*

Luker, K. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences (ebook)*

Becker, H. *Tricks of the Trade*

Emerson, et.al. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*

### **Introduction:**

Sociology, (like most disciplines), is about making knowledge. We do this principally through telling stories that have a narrative arc. They begin with a nod to knowledge makers past, with a new or persistent question, with a journey of discovery to answer it, and a deep reckoning with the fruits of our travel upon its conclusion. The quality of this reckoning reflects the genre and traditions within which we have been trained. These outline what we believe is knowable, which questions can or should be answered, how we can go about answering them, what theoretical and political modes of operation should be privileged or eclipsed, and what sociology is for.

Professors and disciplines can be thought of as guilds – independent people who hone their crafts within loosely structured organizations: universities, journals, professional associations, and the like. Most of your craft you will learn from coursework, your mentors, books and articles, conferences, fellow students, and colleagues. This course thinks of sociology as a craft and an art. We strive to not be too technocratic (engaged only in methods for their own sake), soullessly producing data that seems to float apart from intellectual reason. We strive to not be too ideational, wedded to theories that dictate research outcomes. We strive to not fetishize, excessively worried about

whether truths can be asserted, whether lives can be known. We hope to not naval gaze to the point of paralysis, fearful of who can legitimately study whom, who can ask what kinds of questions and expect honest answers.

In sum, knowledge making is multi-faceted, partial, insightful and impaired – and incredibly rich to think about, plan for, and do!

As sociology is a craft, we will really unpack how things are done, and how we should, and shouldn't, do things. That said, we will also respect the ways in which happenstance, creative ingenuity, and talent – also comprise making sociological knowledge. Some people's artistry is going to enable them to elicit, hear, and capture the import of the social world in truly exceptional ways. Through a process of experimentation, emulation, and finding our own unique talents, we all aim to tell about society in ways that are consequential, and recognize others' good stories when we hear them.

### **How to Read**

It is imperative when reading course texts to treat the process more like an autopsy than a Book of the Month Club. In other words, our job is to unpack what was done, how, and with what results. Whether we appreciate the findings or the subject of the research is not our focus. When you read the research examples, take notes on the question, "how'd they do what they did?" not on the subject of their article.

Articles about how to do research are meant to give you tips and insights for how to generate and think about data. Like the research articles, some will be more useful than others. First understand -- then you may want to raise questions.

Project: [Uncoupling Diane Vaughan 1986. Oxford UP](#)

Each year, students in this class conduct research in groups on a shared subject that allows for creativity but provides sufficient structure to enable completion and compliance with university ethics approval. 12 weeks is not a lot of time to introduce you to qualitative methods -- the techniques, analyses, and exemplars – and to give you time in the field to conduct research. As a consequence, each year I select a research focus for us all that enables us to work and learn together on a manageable project with an overarching shared subject.

This year we will test, complicate, and extend the findings of a book published in 1986 on relationship dissolution. The project illustrates the multitude of ways you can go about studying something qualitatively, and does not present glaring ethical dilemmas or negatively impact people in our midst in service of training graduate students in sociology.

This project is going to require you to formulate a loose question concerning some aspect how uncoupling is accomplished that can be answered using qualitative research methods. We will collectively prepare ethics review applications, conduct several weeks of research, and prepare reports based on our findings. My hope is that we will have many fruitful discussions based on our comparative findings. Apart from reading Vaughan's work as guide, we will not be constructing a literature review in the context of this class, nor is one necessary before we enter the field. We can think of this research as preliminary and exploratory. The second week of reading is constructed to give us a sense of the pros and cons of embarking on research in this manner.

Your group should select a group or site that can be easily studied, that is not excessively sensitive, and perhaps to which one person in the group has privileged access. We aim to find practiced people who seek out opportunities to be heard on these issues. We want to avoid vulnerable people, not because of university ethics guidelines, but because vulnerable people need not be practiced on by the likes of us.

### **Assignments and Mark Distribution**

1. Research proposal Due: Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 25%
  - a. Question (What do you want to know, and why does it matter?)
  - b. Chosen site or data, and method
  - c. Completed review application for preliminary research
    - i. <http://www.research.utoronto.ca>
  - d. Consent form
    - i. <http://www.research.utoronto.ca>
  - e. Supporting documents (interview schedule, study description for participants)
  
2. Field Notes Workshop 25%
  - a. Sign up for a week:
    - i. Oct 17
    - ii. Oct 24
    - iii. Oct 31
    - iv. Nov 7
    - v. Nov 14
    - vi. Nov 21
  - b. 2-3 pages of field notes for classmates and instructor  
2-3 page narrative sense making based on your field notes
  - c. These must be circulated Tuesday by email.
  
3. Participation 25%
  
4. Final Portfolio Due Dec 6 25%
  - a. Field Notes
  - b. Preliminary Research Report

- c. Analytical reflection on choice of method
- d. Presentation

#### Introduction to Qualitative Methods Texts:

- Berg, Bruce L. 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Pearson.
- Bryman, Alan. 2001. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Michelle L. Yaiser. 2004. *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. NY: Oxford UP.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Leavy. 2004. *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. NY: Oxford UP.
- Warren, Carol and Tracy Karner. 2005. *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Field Research, Interviews, and Analysis*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

#### Relevant Readings on the History of Sociology:

- Mazlish, Bruce. 1989. *A New Science: The Breakdown of Connections and the Birth of Sociology*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State UP.
- Ross, Dorothy. 1991. *The Origins of American Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Smith, Mark. 1994. *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941*. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.
- Behar, Ruth and Deborah Gordon, eds. 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- DeVault, Marjorie. 1999. *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research*. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

#### Weekly Schedule

1. Sept. 12                      **Introduction**

Luker 1, 2, 4

Vaughann, Dianne. 1975. *Uncoupling: The Process of Moving from one Lifestyle to Another*.

[https://cls.sococo.uci.edu/sites/cls.sococo.uci.edu/files/users/marycu/10-9-17\\_reading.pdf](https://cls.sococo.uci.edu/sites/cls.sococo.uci.edu/files/users/marycu/10-9-17_reading.pdf)

Group work: Brainstorming projects

2. Sept. 19                    **(re)Orienting to Qualitative Research**

Sherryl Kleinman, et al. Qualitatively Different. Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 25: 469-499.

Burowoy, Michael. 1998. The Extended Case Method. Sociological Theory. 16: 4-33

Carroll, William K. Critical Strategies for Social Research. Introduction. Unpacking and Contextualizing Critical Research Strategies. Pp. 1-14.

Recommended:

Goodwin, Jeff and Ruth Horowitz. 2002. Symposium on Methodology in Qualitative Sociology. Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology. Qualitative Sociology. 25: 33-47.

3. Sept. 26                    **In the field**

Luker Chapter 8

Doucet, A. 2007. From Her Side of the Gossamer Walls: Reflexivity and Relational Knowing. Qualitative Sociology. 31: 72-87.

Buford May. 2014. When the Methodological Shoe is on the Other Foot: African American Interviewer and White Interviewees. Qualitative Sociology.

4. Oct. 3                      **Access and Ethics**

Taylor and Patterson. 2010. "Autonomy and Compliance: How Qualitative Sociologists Respond to Institutional Ethical Oversight. Qualitative Sociology. 33: 161-183.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 22: 267-294.

Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "You still takin' notes?" Fieldwork and problems of informed consent. Social Problems. 27: 284-297

Allen, C. 1997. Spies Like Us: When Sociologists Deceive their Subjects. Lingua Franca.

Grant, Amy. 2017. "I Don't Want You Sitting Next to Me": The Macro, Meso, and Micro of Gaining and Maintaining Access to Government Organizations During Ethnographic Fieldwork." International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 16:1-11.

5. Oct. 10                    **Ethnographic Roots**

Geertz. 1972. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. From Interpretation of Cultures.

Whyte, William Foote. 1993/1943. Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum. Introduction. Cornerville and its People. Chapter 1. Doc and His Boys. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R. and Shaw, L. (1995). Writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1&2

6. Oct. 17                    **Interviews**

Lamont and Swidler. Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing. Qualitative Sociology 37, 2: 173-188.

Pugh. Allison. 2013. What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? AJCS. 1: 42-68.

Twine, France Winddance. 2004. A White Side of Black Britain: The Concept of Racial Literacy. Ethnic and Racial Studies. 27(6): 878-907

Oliffe, John and Lawrence Mroz. 2005. Men interviewing Men about Health and Illness: Lessons Learned. JMHG: 2:257-260.

7. Oct. 24                    **Focus Groups**

Taylor, Johnston, Whitehead. 2016. "A Corporation in Feminist Clothing? Young Women Discuss the Dove "Real Beauty" Campaign. Critical Sociology. 42: 123-144.

Howarth, Caroline. 2002. So You're from Brixton? The Struggle for Recognition and Esteem in a Stigmatized Community. Ethnicities. 2: 237-260.

Benoit, Cecilia, Dena Carroll, Munaza Chaudhry. 2002. In Search of a Healing Place: Aboriginal Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Social Science and Medicine. 56: 821-833.

8. Oct 31. **Contemporary Ethnography**

Elijah Anderson. The Cosmopolitan Canopy.  
<https://citythroughthebody.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/cosmopolitancanopy.pdf>

Jooyung Lee. 2009. Battlin' on the Corner: Techniques for Sustaining Play. Social Problems. 56: 578-598.

Brown-Seracino. 2014. From Methodological Stumbles to Substantive Insights: Gaining Ethnographic Access in Queer Communities. Qualitative Sociology. 37: 43-68.

Fields, Mamo, Gilbert, Lesko, et. al. Beyond Bullying. Contexts. 13(4): 80-83.

9. Nov. 7 **Life History**

Stephen, Valocchi. 2013. Activism as a Career, Calling and a Way of Life. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 42:2 169-200.

Sugiman, Pamela. 2004. Memories of Internment. CJS. 29 (3): 359-388

Stein, Arlene. 2018. Unbound: Transgender Men and the Remaking of Identity. NY: Pantheon. Chapters 2-4.

10. November 14. **Discourse, Content, Narrative Analysis**

Corrigal Brown, C and R Wilkes. 2012. "Picturing Protest" American Behavioral Scientist. 56: 223-243.

Marjorie L. DeVault. 1990. "Novel Readings: The Social Organization of Interpretation." *American Journal of Sociology* 95: 887-921

Baumann and Ho. 2014. "Cultural Schemas for Racial Identity." *CRS*. 51: 152-169.

McKenrick, Norah. 2010. "Media Framing of Body Burdens." Sociological Inquiry 80: 126-149.

11. November 21. **Analysis and Writing**

Luker, Chapter 10

Becker

12. November 28. **Analysis and Writing**

TBA

Appendix:

### Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.



