NEW TOPICS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH
SEXUALITY & RESEARCH DESIGN:
SOC 485 H1F
FALL 2019
TUES 4:10-6:00
Location: FE 41, 725 Spadina Avenue

Course Director: Adam Isaiah Green: **Office Address:** 248, 725 Spadina
Office Hours: Tues 6:15-7:15 p.m. **Email:** AdamIsaiah.Green@utoronto.ca

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Research designs are much like jigsaw puzzles, but harder: they require scholars to carefully connect a variety of distinct yet intricately linked pieces into a thematically consistent, practical and defensible whole. Few tasks in the research process are as commonplace and as riddled with difficulty. This semester length course will provide a forum for students to compose a research design on the topic of sexuality using qualitative approaches that include in-depth interview and ethnography. Throughout the course, students will read a variety of works that describe the goals, procedures, and underlying logic of research design. These works will draw from articles and chapters on methodological problems and issues, and also from actual studies that use in-depth interview and ethnography in sexuality studies. In addition, in each class, students will work through problems and issues related to their own prospective research design proposals, with particular focus on the 5 sections of the research design as outlined at the back of this syllabus.

To accomplish these goals, each class will be divided into two parts: In the first part, the class will review a set of readings on a particular methodological question or issue, or a particular methodological application in a published piece of research. This discussion is designed to be both comprehensive and critical as we evaluate the logic and rigor of these readings.

In the second part of each class, students will discuss the particulars of their respective projects, using the instructor and classmates to think through their emerging research design. Roughly, the class will spend two weeks per section of the research design, including: 1) the selection of an appropriate empirical, theoretically grounded sociological question; 2) the effective placement of that question in the social scientific literature; 3) an enumeration of the methodological procedures to be used to answer this question—including a detailed outline and defense of the suitability of the method to the question at hand; a description and defense of the proposed sample / field sites, and a discussion of data analysis procedures; 4) a critical section outlining the potential methodological weaknesses of the proposed design; and 5) an appendix outlining the major themes to be incorporated into a future interview guide or field site.

Thus, at the conclusion of the course, students will have a research design in hand, a working knowledge of in-depth interview and/or ethnographic methodologies, and the tools to analyze/critique/propose future research designs.

NOTE: The prerequisite to take SOC485H1F is 1.0 SOC at the 300 or higher level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

EVALUATION: Students will be evaluated on two dimensions: First, each student will write two memos (see below) on class readings over the course of the term, submitting them to me via email no later than twenty-four hours in advance of class. The two memos combined will count for 50% of the grade (25% each). Second, a paper in the form of a research proposal (see below) will count toward the remaining 50% of the grade. The paper is due the last week of classes.

Memo: Each of the two memos (approximately 5 double-spaced pages each) will provide a summary of the readings (roughly 75% of the memo) along with a critical response AND/OR an analytic reflection (roughly 25% of the memo). The memos need not address *each* of the day's readings, though breadth of analysis is always appreciated.

Memo writers should be prepared to *lead* class discussion concerning the major themes of each reading. *NOTE: this discussion is meant not as a review of the article but as a conversation starter among class members—i.e., what are the major themes of the article?; how might the article apply to any given person's research proposal?; what questions, if any, are left unanswered by the article?; what, if anything, appears to be missing from the article or is in need of greater clarification?

Class Participation: It is expected that students will be fully prepared to discuss the readings and will bring with them all texts to class. Class participation includes both a quantitative and a qualitative measure: students are expected to participate regularly; students are expected to demonstrate a serious, active and critical engagement of course materials.

Paper: The paper consists of a research proposal that will contain **5** sections (see detailed instructions toward the back of this syllabus). Paper is due Tuesday, December 10

COURSE READINGS: A single compilation of articles is available on Quercus through portal under course reserves.

COURSE NUTS & BOLTS:

***Plagiarism*:** Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Accessibility Services*:** If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit ***http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility as soon as possible.

Communications: Students must submit assignments as specified above. Final papers must be handed in hard-copy, stapled, during the assigned drop off time to be announced in class.

***Due dates*:** Late papers will be docked 5 points per day. Make-ups for exams will require documentation of a medical or related emergency (see below). They will not be offered for any other reason.

DOCUMENTATION FROM YOUR PHYSICIAN OR COLLEGE REGISTRAR

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered.

- In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at *www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca).* A doctor's note is acceptable, but MUST indicate the start and anticipated end date of the illness. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to your TA during their office hours.
- If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to your TA during their office hours.

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 10 Introduction to Research Design

Review of course structure

What is a research design proposal?

What is a sociological question?

What is the relationship of questions to methods?

What are qualitative methods?

Students sign up for two memo weeks and discuss their research interests

September 17 Qualitative Methods: Why and How?

Denzin, Norman and Yvonna Lincoln. 2005. "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research" Pp. 1-45 in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Discussion: Articulating a sociological research question

September 24 Quantitative/Qualitative Methods and Issues

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. "The Science in Social Science" Pp. 3-33 in *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Caporaso, James. 1995. "Research Design: Falsification and the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide". *American Political Science Review* 89, 2: 457-460

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1998. "Q&A: Numbers vs. Concepts?" Pp. 279-282 in *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Discussion: Articulating a sociological research question (II)

October 1 Ethnographic Fieldwork & Life History Method

Atkinson, Paul and Martyn Hammersley. 1998. "Ethnography and Participant Observation." Pp. 110-137 in Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage.

Plummer, Ken. 1983. "Chapter 2: Sighting a Diversity of Life Stories: From Resource To Topic" in Ken Plummer (ed.), *Documents of Life*. Sage.

Discussion: Placing the question in the literature (I)

(See Green's (2006) article for literature review and method sections)

Green, Adam Isaiah. 2006. "Until Death Do Us Part? The Impact of Differential Access to Marriage on a Sample of Urban Men." *Sociological Perspectives*. 49:163-189.

October 8 The Extended Case Method

Burawoy, Michael. 1991. "Introduction". Pp. 1-7 in *Ethnography Unbound*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Zsuzsa Gille and Sean O Riain. 2002. "Global Ethnography." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 28:271-295.

Discussion: Placing the question in the literature (II)

October 15 Measuring Sexual Cultures

Gaziani, Amin. 2014. "Measuring Urban Sexual Cultures." *Theory & Society*. 43:371-393

Discussion: Placing the question in the literature (III)

October 22 *Independent Work Week: NO CLASS:*

Students will use this week to ensure they now have: 1) a sociological research question; and, 2) a working sense of the existing social scientific literature on the topic, including what is missing or is in need of remedy (please refer to the research design section on preparing a Literature Review).

October 29 Critical Qualitative Approaches in Sexuality Studies

Gamson, Josh. 2000. "Sexualities, Queer Theory, and Qualitative Research" Pp. 347-365 in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Edwards, Tim. 1998. "Queer Fears: Against the Cultural Turn". *Sexualities.* 1: 471-484.

Tomso, Gregory. 2009. "Risky Subjects: Public Health, Personal Narrative, and the Stakes of Qualitative Research." *Sexualities* 12:61-78.

Discussion: Choosing the best method

November 5 **NO CLASS: READING WEEK**

November 12 Sampling I

Stake, Robert E. 1998. "Chapter 4: Case Studies". Pp. 86-109 in Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage.

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1998. "Theoretical Sampling" Pp. 201-215 in *Basics of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Discussion: Sampling selection (I)

November 19 Research Ethics

van den Hoonaard, Will C.. 2015. "Ethics on the Ground: A Moral Compass," Pp. 165-181 in Deborah K. van den Hoonaard (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

November 26 Sampling II

Watters, John K and Patrick Biernacki, 1989. "Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations." *Social Problems* 36 (4): 416-430.

Gerson, Kathleen. 1985. "Appendix B: Methodology". Pp 240-247 in *Hard Choices*. University of California Press.

Discussion: Sampling selection (II)

December 3 Subject Position in Research: Race, Class, Gender

Best, Amy. 2003. "Doing Race in the Context of Feminist Interviewing: Constructing Whiteness Through Talk". *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, 6: 895-914

Williams, Christine and E. Joel Heikes. 1993. "The Importance of Researcher's Gender in the In-depth Interview: Evidence from Two Case Studies of Male Nurses," *Gender & Society* 7, 2: 280-291.

Discussion: Strengths and weaknesses of research design

***Paper is due Tuesday, December 10, at 4pm in room 248 of the Sociology department, 725 Spadina Avenue.**

GREEN'S RESEARCH DESIGN INSTRUCTIONS

The research design will consist of **5** sections, including an appendix. These sections are to be used as subheadings.

1) **Introductory section***:* (maximum 2-2.5 double-spaced pages)
The introduction introduces the research question and identifies its relevance and significance for sociology. This section is designed to communicate to the reader the precise question under investigation and why this question matters for sociology and/or the more general welfare of the society. This section becomes particularly compelling when the research question is demonstrated to be: 1) socially important; and, 2) not adequately addressed in the existing sociological literature.

2) **Literature review**: (maximum 4 double-spaced pages)
The literature review places the research question in the relevant literature(s), demonstrating that the researcher has command of this literature and a sense of how her/his research will add to the literature.

"Adding" to the literature can take a variety of forms and will depend, in part, on the particular method used. Here are some of the more common ways research adds to the literature:

a) By providing an original piece of research on a topic that has received little if any research before.

b) By testing a given empirical or theoretical claim.

c) By addressing an existing tension or contradiction in the extant literature, including its empirical findings, its conceptual apparatus, or its theoretical assumptions.

d) By providing evidence of a case/phenomenon that challenges the existing body of knowledge, including its empirical, conceptual, or theoretical parameters.

Note! The literature review should offer a broad description of the major works or theories **directly relevant** to the topic of investigation, as well as an argument concerning where and how the literature is insufficient. This latter argument will typically come at the end of the literature review, and should be no longer than a paragraph or so. The latter argument should in most cases be related to one or more of the enumerated points above concerning "adding" to the literature. The object here is to alert the reader to the researcher's *point of entry* into the existing sociological literature, and to demonstrate why the reader should care about the proposed research.

3) **Methodology** (maximum 5 double-spaced pages)

The method section communicates to the reader what method will be used, how it will be implemented, why this particular method is best suited to the research question, and how the data collected will be analyzed. There must be a clear, strong and explicit *methodologic* that directly links the research question to the choice of method and its implementation.

This section must include the following elements, preferably in this order:

a) A statement that explicitly links the research question to the selected method.

b) A statement of the type of method to be used with citations that provide references to other methodologists or researchers who have written on or used this method.

c) A statement that specifies the extent to which the selected method will or will not allow for conceptual or empirical generalization.

d) A statement about sampling or field site, including:

Sampling Participants: How is the sample itself relevant to the research question? How will the sample be selected? How does the selection of the sample relate to the research goals, including conceptual or empirical generalization?

Field Sites: How is the field site relevant to the research question? How was the field site selected and why? How does the selection of this field site relate to the research goals, including conceptual or empirical generalization.

4) **Weakness of the Study** (maximum 2 double-spaced pages)

In a real research design, it is best not to highlight the weaknesses of your study (this can be done in a conclusion section of an article). But for this class I will want you to demonstrate an awareness of the kinds of methodological problems you may encounter, weakness in the data collection methods as these relate to the goals of the study, practical obstacles that may arise in conducting the study, and any potential ethical considerations.

5) **Appendix** (maximum 2 double-spaced pages)

The appendix will provide a theoretical rationale for the major themes of the interview guide or the theoretical basis for the kinds of observations to be made at a field site.

Interview guide: Provide in subheadings the major themes that guide your inquiry, and justify how and why these themes are relevant to your research question.

Field site: Provide in subheadings the major themes that will guide your fieldwork, and justify how and why these themes are relevant to your research question.