

SOC254H1F: Intermediate Qualitative Methods
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Fall 2019

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30 am – 1:30 pm or by appointment
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Lectures: Tuesdays 4 - 6 p.m.
Room: SS1083 (Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St George St)

Tutorials: Thursdays 4 – 5 p.m. / Thursdays 5 – 6 p.m.
Tutorial Room: BL 114 (Claude T. Bissell building, 140 St George St)
Course Website: Quercus

PREREQUISITE

Students are required to have completed SOC204H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course teaches you the distinctive logic of qualitative research by examining debates between its major paradigms and approaches. We go beyond comparing techniques of qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, etc) to examine questions of generalizability, ethics and reflexivity. What are the uses and limits of qualitative methods for producing generalizable knowledge about society? What are researchers' ethical responsibilities towards the researched? Is the necessary closeness between researcher and study participant an asset or a liability? Should our data "speak for itself", or does theory reveal things in our evidence we might otherwise miss?

You will find answers to these questions by examining debates in scholarship, studying how sociologists have answered them in practise, and by "doing sociology" through a collaborative interview project on social experiences of work. By the end of this class you will be able to design and carry out your own qualitative research projects, and evaluate the research designs of published work.

FORMAT AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Instruction is split between weekly lectures and skills-based tutorials. Lectures do not summarize assigned readings but facilitate your understanding of the issues and debates they

illustrate. Tutorials support you in fieldwork, data analysis and critical reading. You are expected to keep up with assigned readings, attend all lectures and tutorials.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify and distinguish between positivism, post-positivism, constructivism and critical method as paradigms of social research
- Understand how different paradigms imply different approaches to generalizability and different relationships between the researcher and the researched
- Explain the strengths and limitations of qualitative methods to conduct research in different paradigms
- Assess completed qualitative research through critical reading of a study's methodology and findings
- Conduct semi-structured interviews to gather rich narrative data
- Understand and follow ethics protocols for social research
- Solve a research problem by interpreting and analyzing primary data

COURSE MATERIALS

Weekly assigned readings are detailed in the course schedule below. All required materials will be made available through Quercus.

Required Readings:

1. September 10 Introduction

Syllabus

Terkel, S. 1974. "Introduction" in *Working*. New York: The New Press. xi-xxiv

Tutorials September 12 (critical reading I)

Module 1: Qualitative logic(s) of inquiry

2. September 17: Epistemology & Paradigm

Prompt: How are Goodwin & Horowitz's and Small's arguments about the value of qualitative research different? Which do you find more persuasive?

Goodwin, J and F. Horowitz. 2002. "The methodological strengths and dilemmas of qualitative sociology" *Qualitative Sociology* 25: 33-47.

Small, M. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research" *Ethnography* 10(1): 5 – 38.

Tutorials September 19 (critical reading II)

3. September 24: Research Ethics

Prompt: Describe the dilemma posed by one of Fine’s “Lies of Ethnography” and explain how it applies to either of Turkel’s interviews. How do you think he resolved that dilemma, and what might you have done differently?

Fine, G. A. 1993. “Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22: 267-293.

Terkel, S. 1974. “Renault Robinson (policeman)” and “Anthony Ruggiero (industrial investigator)” in *Working*. New York: The New Press: 137-153.

Tutorials September 26 (ethics)

4. October 1: Positioning the researcher and the researched

Prompt: What are the advantages of being an “insider” and an “outsider” to your research participants? Which do you think is the better position for a researcher?

DeVault, M. L. 1995. “Ethnicity and Expertise: Racial-ethnic Knowledge in Sociological Research” *Gender and Society* 9(5): 612-631.

Ellingson, L. 1998. “‘Then You Know How I Feel’: Empathy, Identification and Reflexivity in Fieldwork” *Qualitative Inquiry* 4(4): 492-514.

Tutorials October 3 (interview skills)

****case selection due****

5. October 8: Research Questions and Paradigms

Prompt: What are the empirical and theoretical entry points into Huets and Mol’s research question? What paradigm are they working in, and how does their research problem/question reflect the assumptions of that paradigm?

Alford, R. 1998. “Designing a Research Project” (Chapter 2) and “in *The Craft of Inquiry*. New York: Oxford University Press. 21-31.

Huets, F. and Mol, A. 2013. “What is a Good Tomato? A Case of Valuing in Practice” *Valuation Studies* 1(2): 125-146.

Tutorials October 10 (interview preparation)

****interview guide due****

Module 2: Classic approaches to qualitative research

6. October 15: Grounded Theory

Prompt: How does a grounded theory approach help Worts et al. uncover gendered strategies of resistance to public sector cutbacks? What are the limitations on the generalizability of their findings, and how could either 1) another grounded study or 2) research in a different paradigm improve them?

Corbin, J. and A. Strauss. 1990. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria" *Qualitative Sociology* 13(1): 3-21.

Worts, D, B. Fox and P McDonough. 2007. "'Doing Something Meaningful': Gender and Public Service During Municipal Government Restructuring" *Gender, Work and Organization* 14(2): 162-184.

Tutorials October 17 (coding)

7. October 22: Extended Case Method I (The Berkley School)

Prompt: Why does Burawoy describe reflexive and positive science as "Siamese twins"? How does Chun's comparison of cases embody reflexive science? How does it embody positive science?

Burawoy, M. 1998. "The Extended Case Method" *Sociological Theory* 16(1): 4-33.

Chun, J. 2005. "Public Dramas and the Politics of Justice: Comparison of Janitors' Union Struggles in South Korea and the United States" *Work and Occupations* 32(4): 486-503.

Tutorials October 24 (research memos)

****coded transcript due****

8. October 29: Extended Case Method II (The Manchester School)

Prompt: Provide one example each of a statistical inference and a logical inference we might draw from Kim (2012). Why would Mitchell argue we can trust the logical inference but not the statistical inference?

Mitchell, C. 1983. "Case and Situation Analysis" *Sociological Review* 31(2): 187-211

Kim, E. 2012. "Call Me Mama: An Ethnographic Portrait of an Employer of Undocumented Workers" *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 642(1): 170-185.

Tutorials October 31(writing skills I)

**** Reading week November 4 - 8, no class ****

9. November 12: Institutional Ethnography

Prompt: Discuss one example of how Campbell uses the experience of nurses to analyze the “ruling relations” of Dogwood Villa. How does Campbell’s analysis rely on the standpoint of the nurses? How does it rely on Campbell’s own interest in the “increasingly rationalist stance towards [health care] management” (p.58)? Which is more important to her argument?

DeVault, M. 2006. “Introduction: What is institutional ethnography?” *Social Problems* 53(3): 294-298.

Campbell, Marie L. 1998. “Institutional Ethnography and Experience as Data” *Qualitative Sociology* 21(1): 55-73.

Tutorials Nov. 14 (group share)

****preliminary research report due****

Module 3: From data collection to analysis

10. November 19: Reflexive analysis: Sense-making and the self

Prompt: What are Doucet’s and Barne’s opinions on the role of the researcher in interpreting evidence? Why do they disagree so strongly? Who do you find more persuasive?

Doucet, A. 2008. “‘From Her Side of the Gossamer Wall(s)?’: Reflexivity and Relational Knowing” *Qualitative Sociology* 31: 73-87.

Barnes, Donelle. 1996. “An Analysis of the Grounded Theory Method and the Concept of Culture.” *Qualitative Health Research* 6(3): 429-441.

Tutorials November 21(writing skills II)

****peer feedback due****

11. November 26: Writing up research

No prompt

Pratt, M. 2009. “For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up qualitative research” *Academy of Management Journal* 52(5): 856-62

Tutorials November 28 (group check-in)

12. December 3: Conclusion

(no tutorials)

HELP AND RESOURCES

There are proactive steps you can take early in the course to make sure you start and finish strong in this class:

- 1) Scheduling:** Set aside a regular, predictable time to review assigned readings and complete assignments. Plan to attend seminars regularly. Look ahead and if there are classes you might miss, plan accordingly. If there are significant issues in your schedule please contact me as soon as possible
- 2) Make friends:** Learning is a social process. Attending lecture and participating actively is important to learning and understanding the material, but having someone to discuss ideas and problems outside of class time can be invaluable. You are already collaborating in the design and data gathering of your research projects: while your work in the end should be your own, you can also support each other by talking out ideas and obstacles.

If you feel lost or overwhelmed there are supports available to help you succeed in the course:

- 1) Come and see me:** Visit me in office hours to discuss questions you have about the material or the assignments. The class will schedule a regular office hour in our first seminar to make it accessible to as many students as possible. If you can't meet during regular office hours, we can schedule an appointment or resolve questions via email.
- 2) Use the Writing Centre:** The UC Writing Centre exists to provide extra support and guidance to students that want to improve their writing and research skills. You will find links to specific resources in the assignment guidelines, but the centre also offers skills workshops and one-on-one consultations. <https://www.uc.utoronto.ca/writing-centre>
- 3) Visit Health & Wellness:** It's hard to perform your best in class if you don't take care of your mind and body. The health and wellness centre has a wide range of supports to help you manage stress, stay organized during a demanding school year, and keep physically and mentally healthy. <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/contact-us>
- 4) Consult your registrar:** The Registrar's Office is here to help if difficult or unexpected situations are getting in the way of your academic success. <https://www.future.utoronto.ca/current-students/registrars>

EVALUATION:

Evaluation Format	Due Date	Weight
Reading responses (3)	start of lecture	5% x 2, 10% x 1
Case selection	October 3	5% (pass/fail)
Interview guide (group)	October 10	5%
Coded transcript	October 24	5%
Preliminary research report	November 14	15%
Peer feedback on RR	November 21	10%
Research paper	December 5	30%
Tutorial participation	ongoing	10%

Reading responses are two (2) page essays that reflect on the assigned readings of the week, answering the prompt from the syllabus. You are required to submit three (3) responses between weeks 2 and 10 (September to November 19); which three weeks is up to you, but I encourage you to write at least one before the fieldwork assignments start coming due. ****Reading responses will not be accepted after the lecture on a given week****

Responses will be graded according to your ability to present an argument addressing the prompt and defend with the evidence from the assigned readings. Clarity of writing (grammar, spelling, paragraphing) and a logical structure are also important.

Your best response over the term will be worth 10% of your grade; the other two responses will be worth 5% each.

5=excellent 4=good 3=adequate 2=marginal 1=poor 0=unacceptable

Research Project Over the term, you will design and carry out a group interview project into peoples' social experiences of work. You will interview someone about an aspect of their work history, share your data in groups of 5-6 and write up a research report that interprets these interviews to find an answer to a research problem.

There are five (5) components of this project due at different stages of the research process (see the table above). These are low-stakes opportunities for you to receive continuous feedback on the project and develop skills at data gathering and analysis. You are expected to incorporate feedback into later assignments and your group members are counting on you (and you are counting on them!); **these deadlines are strict and it's important you don't fall behind.**

Case selection – This is a two page essay that describes the social experience of work your group is studying, (what do your interview participants have in common?) what you want to know about this experience and why this is an important experience to study. You will also briefly describe your interview participant, how their biography fits your study and why you think they will be a valuable addition to your project.

Interview guide – THIS IS A GROUP ASSIGNMENT. Using interview techniques workshopped in tutorial, your group will submit a list of 5 – 7 questions (plus prompts) that you plan to ask your interview participants.

Coded transcript—You will submit a copy of your own interview transcript, which has been open- and focused-coded. ****Please ensure your participant’s name and names of any companies they work for have been changed in this transcript****

Preliminary research report—Using your own interview transcript, you will write up a 4-5 page preliminary analysis addressing the research problem your group posed in your case selection. This report should identify a new research problem that emerges from your single interview – what puzzle or additional question do you have about your initial problem, based on this one interview?

Final research report—Your final research report will extend your preliminary analysis to all the interview transcripts in your group to answer your new research problem. This is a 10-12 page paper structured like an academic paper with an introduction, theoretical framework, methods section, findings and conclusion.

Peer Feedback You will be assigned to read and comment on one preliminary research report from a student outside your group. Your feedback should be constructive, and apply what you have learned in this class to assess their use of data and their analysis.

Tutorial participation Weekly tutorials are designed to practise skills and provide experiential learning that supports you in your research project and the learning outcomes of the class. Brief written exercises will be collected to assess your engagement throughout the term. Students who do not attend a tutorial are given an automatic grade of zero for that class

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments (except participation exercises) should be uploaded to Quercus. Assignments submitted by email will not be accepted.

Assignments submitted to Quercus will automatically be screened for originality through Turnitin.com **unless a student provides, along with their assignment,** sufficient secondary material (i.e.: reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice.

1. Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential.

AccessAbility Services is located at Suite 400, 455 Spadina Avenue (Phone: 416-978-8060; email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) . Please consult <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> for more information.

2. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>).

3. Turnitin

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

4. Email policy

In most cases, I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. Please note that I do not check email after 7 pm, so emails sent in the evening will be considered received the following morning. I will not respond to emails that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Do not submit assignments via email. Email submissions will be ignored and will not count against deadlines.

It is important that any email you send complies with the following standards:

- You must use a valid “utoronto” email address. If you do not have a valid “utoronto” email address, you will not receive email correspondence sent from Quercus. (Instructions for getting an address are available on ACORN).
- Please include the course code (Sociology 254) in the subject line.

5. Electronics Policy

Cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate. Laptops or tablet devices are acceptable for notetaking but should not be used in ways that may distract your classmates.

6. Quercus

The course website is a Quercus site. Visit the site frequently to check announcements, to download the course materials, and to submit written assignments.

7. Assignments/late penalties

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a 5% penalty per day. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline.

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact me unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor 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 start and anticipated end of the illness. The form or note must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to me during 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 me during office hours.