

## Syllabus and Schedule

### Qualitative Research Methods Sociology 584

Spring 2009  
Thursdays, 4-7 SH 109  
Lab times arranged

#### Contact Information

Instructor	Office, Phone & Email
Dr. Mary E. Virnoche Associate Professor and Chair Department of Sociology	Office Hours: T&W, 10-Noon Other meetings by appointment BSS 520C Phone Number 826-4569 Email <a href="mailto:Mary.Virnoche@humboldt.edu">Mary.Virnoche@humboldt.edu</a>

#### Course Description

This course will introduce you to the theoretical, interactional, ethical and practical aspects of qualitative research with a focus on interviewing and focus group methodologies. We will also discuss field research methods, unobtrusive methods such as content analysis and orientations to research including community action research. Centered in much of the reading and discussion will be issues of subjectivity, reflexivity and power. Related to these issues are the intersecting social locations and identities of researchers and participants and the implications for research design, data collection, analysis and the content and form of findings.

You will work on your own original research study. Applied research projects are welcome and encouraged when appropriate. You will become competent working with data in ATLAS.ti and understand the logic of this software. ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data analysis software program that can assist you with the organization, analysis and reporting of your research.

## Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, you should be able to demonstrate the following course learning outcomes, as well as progress toward final department and university-related learning outcomes:

### Course Learning Outcomes

1. Describe, compare, and critique approaches to qualitative research design.
2. Discuss issues related to social location and identity (including race, class & gender) as they relate to research design, data collection, analysis and the content and form for presentation of research findings.
3. Discuss issues of subjectivity, reflexivity and power in the research process.
4. Design and carry out a research project involving interviews and/or focus groups.
5. Set up a qualitative project in ATLAS.ti and carry out foundation level analysis.
6. Be familiar with forms of presenting qualitative research and their politics and power.
7. Begin writing about qualitative data (this is not the focus of this course).

### Related MA in Sociology Program Learning Outcomes

1. A solid foundation in sociological methods and related methodological theory.
2. Professional socialization, including an understanding of ethical issues.

### Related HSU Learning Outcomes

1. Effective communication through written and oral modes.
2. Critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad base of knowledge and applying it to complex issues.
3. Competence in a major area of study.
4. Appreciation for and understanding of an expanded world perspective by engaging respectfully with a diverse range of individuals, communities, and viewpoints.

## Required Reading

Berg, Bruce L. 2009 (7<sup>th</sup> edition). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. 2008 (3rd edition). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. 2008. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Gubrium, Jaber F. & Holstein, James A. 2002. *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage (selected chapters – on library reserve)

Lofland, John & Lofland, Lyn H. 2006 (4<sup>th</sup> edition). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Krueger, Richard A. & Casey, Mary Anne. 2008 (4<sup>rd</sup> edition). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Stringer, Ernest T. 2007 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). *Action Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

## **Grade Considerations**

### **Components and Weight**

- Participation (15%)

Your consistent attendance and participation are critical to the success of this class and your learning experience as a student. As a professional, you have a responsibility to yourself and others to come prepared, participate, listen, ask questions, create space for others to participate, challenge omissions and offer alternative frameworks. We all share responsibility for democratic and interesting class discussions.

- Attending all meetings: C
- Attending all meetings and making thoughtful contributions pretty regularly: B
- Attending all meetings and making thoughtful contributions consistently: A

- Midterm and Final Essay Exams (35%)

Essay questions for exams will be drawn from your “list” of questions. You will collect a list of essay questions over the course of the semester. I encourage you to keep an ongoing log or journal on each question, as new readings and discussions will help you develop nuanced responses over the course of the semester. Ongoing writing on several of these questions may also become draft texts for parts of your methods chapter for your thesis. For that reason, I encourage you to write and provide citations (including page numbers when appropriate) for your ideas as you compile them. “Traditional” academic methods narratives not only detail the process of research, but also situate your work in a particular theoretical (methods theory) literature.

- Jigsaw Participation (5%)

We will jigsaw distinctive population readings and qualitative methods exemplary articles. You will be graded on your jigsaw participation by both your peer group and your expert group.

- Research Project (25%)

You will early on commit to and contract for work over the semester related to your own qualitative research project. I will provide additional information regarding requirements and point distribution regarding project elements.

- ATLAS.ti One-to-One Exam (10%)  
You will sign up to walk me through your project in ATLAS.ti. I will provide a rubric by which I will evaluate your proficiency with the software, as well as the extent to which you've applied the software in analyzing your data.
- Postmodern Project and Presentation (10%)  
You will make a 5-7 minute postmodern presentation based on your project work for the semester. Your presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of Q&A. We will read about and discuss appropriate types of postmodern representations. I will provide a rubric that I will use to evaluate your presentation.

### Grading Scale

A = 93-100 %	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76	C- = 70-72	D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- 60-62	F = 0-59

### Minimum Grade

Sociology graduate students must earn a grade of B or above to meet degree requirements. The grade of B- is a failing grade for graduate students and triggers suspension from the graduate school.

### Estimated Outside Class Time

Students hoping to earn an "A" in this class can anticipate spending an average of 12-15 hours each week on outside class activities: reading, writing and editing, researching, and thinking about material in preparation for our class meetings. I encourage you to schedule and use this preparation time starting in the first week so that you can make the most of this seminar.

### Late Work and Extra Credit

As a general rule, late work will not be accepted and I do not assign extra credit assignments. *However, it is always best to communicate with me about a life crisis.*

### Students with Disabilities

This syllabus was designed using recommended practices for creating accessible word documents. If you have suggestions regarding improving the accessibility of this document or other content for this class, please contact me. Persons who wish to request disability-related accommodations should contact the Student Disability Resource Center in House 71, 826-4678 (voice) or 826-5392 (TDD). Some accommodations may take up to several weeks to arrange.

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~sdrc/>

### **Add Drop Policy**

Students are responsible for knowing the University policy, procedures, and schedule for dropping or adding classes.

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~reg/regulations/schedadjust.html>

### **Emergency Evacuation**

Please review the evacuation plan for the classroom posted on the orange signs and review

[http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/emergencyops/campus\\_emergency\\_preparedness.php](http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/emergencyops/campus_emergency_preparedness.php) for information on campus Emergency Procedures. During an emergency, information can be found campus conditions at: **826-INFO** or [www.humboldt.edu/emergency](http://www.humboldt.edu/emergency)

### **Academic Honesty**

Students are responsible for knowing policy regarding academic honesty:

[http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/judicial/academic\\_honesty.php](http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/judicial/academic_honesty.php) or <http://www.humboldt.edu/~humboldt/catalogpdfs/catalog2007-08.pdf>

### **Attendance and Classroom Behavior**

Students are responsible for knowing policy regarding attendance and disruptive behavior: [http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/judicial/attendance\\_behavior.php](http://studentaffairs.humboldt.edu/judicial/attendance_behavior.php)

### **Applied Sociology & Program Evaluation Experience Possibilities**

1. Redwood Coast Energy Authority – Customer Research (requires application)
2. Scientific Leadership Scholars Evaluation -- Focus Groups with Students
3. HSU Engineering Majors and Retention
4. MA in Sociology Evaluation – Focus Groups
5. BA in Sociology -- Focus Groups
6. Healthcare Access and the Obama Initiative – Community Conversations

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Class Focus & Readings to be Discussed	Assignments Due
1	January 22	Opening Business, Project Discussion, History of Interviewing	
2	January 29	Thinking Qualitatively & Ethnography  Berg (2009) Chapters 1, 2, 6 Lofland & Lofland (2006) Chapters 1-5 Denzin & Lincoln (Landscapes) Chapter 1  Paperwork for Data Analysis Lab Access	Project Proposals for In-class peer review
3		Skim journals for a methods section presenting depth or semi-structured interview methodology and/or ethnography. Link one to the Moodle discussion forum "Methods Examples." If article does not easily link, paste in methods section and provide citation. Comment on methods section posted by another student in the class. See forum for more information and journal ideas.	Link methods section
	February 5	IRB, Ethics & Politics of Research  Berg (2007) Chapter 3 Denzin & Lincoln (Landscapes) Ch 7 Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) 8, 13, 14 HSU IRB Materials Linked to Research & Graduate Studies: <a href="http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/Human_Subjects_Form_Page.php">http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/Human_Subjects_Form_Page.php</a>  Peer work on methods Select jigsaw groups and Gubrium & Holstein readings for week 5	Project Proposal For grade
4	February 12	Collecting & Focusing Data – The Interview & More  Berg (2007) Chapter 4 Gubrium & Holstein (2002) 4, 5 -- Qualitative & In-Depth Lofland & Lofland (2006) Chapters 6 & 7 Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) 2, 4, 7 & 9	Draft Methods for in-class peer review
5	February 19	Participant Contexts: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality and more  Jigsaw: Gubrium & Holstein (2002) 9-18 & 22  All Read: Denzin & Lincoln (Land) 3-5 Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) 13 & 14 Class posted "methods examples" on Moodle  Group Work – What makes a good journal methods section?	Draft Methods for grade  (IRB if contracted)
6	Monday February 23	First take home exam posted on Moodle	
	February 26	Discuss methods drafts and revisions still needed Atlas.ti Database Set Up – Lab Demo	First Exam Due Typed (20 points)

Week	Date	Class Focus & Readings to be Discussed	Assignments Due
7	March 5	Paradigms and Perspectives in Contention  Denzin & Lincoln (Land) Chapters 8-14	
8	March 12	Focus Groups  Berg (2007) Chapter 5 Krueger & Casey (2009) all chapters  (Target for first exam return and discussion)	Methods Revision for grade
9	March 19	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
10	March 26	Action Research & Community Program Evaluation  Berg (2009) Chapter 7 Stringer (2007) all chapters Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) Chapters 3, 5 & 19 Denzin & Lincoln (Land) Chapter 2	Transcript 1
11	April 2	The Art and Practice of Interpretation and Presentation  Gubrium and Holstein (2002) Chapter 32 "Grounded Theory" Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) Chapters 15-18  Review transcript comments & peer review in class & discuss	Transcript 2
12	April 9	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> – Complete Interviews & Transcriptions Or go to the Pacific Sociological Association Meeting in San Diego	
13	April 16	Coding & Writing  Lofland & Lofland (2006) Chapters 8 & 9 Denzin & Lincoln (Land) 15- Epilogue Berg (2009) Chapter 12 In class – data analysis and coding – bring copies of all data	Transcripts 3 & 4
14	April 23	Content Analysis, Oral Histories, Case Studies etc.  Berg (2009) Chapters 8-11 Denzin & Lincoln (Collecting) Chapter 6	
15	Monday April 27	Second take home exam posted on Moodle	
	April 30		Second Exam Due Typed (15 points)
16	May 7	Postmodern Research Presentations (12) Course Evaluation Administered	
Finals	Thursday May 14 (3-6)*	Postmodern Research Presentations (10) Potluck Dinner	Data Analysis

**\* note time change for final exam period**