Syllabus and Schedule

Qualitative Research Methods
Sociology 584

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

Contact Information

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

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


**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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/](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 for information on campus Emergency Procedures. During an emergency, information can be found campus conditions at: 826-INFO or www.humboldt.edu/emergency

Academic Honesty
Students are responsible for knowing policy regarding academic honesty:
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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Focus &amp; Readings to be Discussed</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Opening Business, Project Discussion, History of Interviewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Thinking Qualitatively &amp; Ethnography&lt;br&gt;Berg (2009) Chapters 1, 2, 6&lt;br&gt;Lofland &amp; Lofland (2006) Chapters 1-5&lt;br&gt;Denzin &amp; Lincoln (Landscapes) Chapter 1&lt;br&gt;Paperwork for Data Analysis Lab Access</td>
<td>Project Proposals for In-class peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Link methods section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Participant Contexts: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality and more&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Jigsaw:</strong> Gubrium &amp; Holstein (2002) 9-18 &amp; 22&lt;br&gt;<strong>All Read:</strong> Denzin &amp; Lincoln (Land) 3-5&lt;br&gt;<strong>Class posted “methods examples” on Moodle</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Group Work – What makes a good journal methods section?</strong></td>
<td>Draft Methods for grade (IRB if contracted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monday, February 23</td>
<td>First take home exam posted on Moodle</td>
<td>First Exam Due Typed (20 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Discuss methods drafts and revisions still needed&lt;br&gt;Atlas.ti Database Set Up – Lab Demo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Class Focus &amp; Readings to be Discussed</td>
<td>Assignments Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7    | March 5    | Paradigms and Perspectives in Contention  
Denzin & Lincoln (Land) Chapters 8-14                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                       |
| 8    | March 12   | Focus Groups  
Krueger & Casey (2009) all chapters  
(Target for first exam return and discussion)                                                                                                                                                                                        | Methods Revision for grade            |
| 9    | March 19   | SPRING BREAK                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                       |
| 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    | NO CLASS MEETING – Complete Interviews & Transcriptions  
Or go to the Pacific Sociological Association Meeting in San Diego                                                                                                                                                                      |                                       |
| 13   | April 16   | Coding & Writing  
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                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Second Exam Due Typed (15 points)    |
|      | April 30   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                       |
| 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