

**SOC 2203  
QUALITATIVE METHODS  
SPRING, 2004**

Dr. Kathleen Blee  
Department of Sociology  
2J20 WWPH  
412-648-7590  
email: kblee@pitt.edu  
Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Objectives**

This graduate course is designed to introduce graduate students to empirical qualitative work in the social sciences, with particular attention to in-depth interviewing and observational/ethnographic approaches. We will discuss a wide range of issues, including conceptualization, operationalization, data collection, analysis, and interpretation and complete a number of in-class and out-of class exercises.

**Course Content**

The course is divided into three sections:

The first section examines the research process and ethical issues involved in qualitative sociological research and introduces document analysis.

The second section focuses on in-depth interviewing techniques.

The third section focuses on observational and ethnographic techniques.

The fourth section consists of student presentations of their major research project.

**CourseWeb**

Documents for the course, including extra copies of the syllabus, will be posted on CourseWeb: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu>. Students may also post data and text for the class to consider on this site.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

There are no prerequisites for this course although knowledge of research methods in the social sciences will be helpful. Some background in the social sciences will be assumed.

Course assignments consist of (1) weekly reading and periodic homework assignments; and (2) an empirical research project and oral presentation of the project. Additionally, you are required to attend **all** class sessions, prepare for classes by completing the required reading and reviewing your notes **before** class, and participate actively in class

discussions.

The grading policy is:

(1) Empirical research project and oral presentation = 50%. Oral presentation dates will be assigned. Bring copies of a one page outline of your oral presentation for all class participants. The paper should be about 15-20 pages, including bibliography and is due on April 19. No late papers. The specific nature of the project will be negotiated with the instructor, but it must include original empirical data collection and data analysis and, at a minimum, discussion of ethics, reflectivity, theoretical paradigm, sampling/site selection, data collection, and data analytic techniques. No late papers. A proposal for this project is due in class on Jan 26. This project may be done with a partner; each person will be given the same grade.

(2) Weekly homework =30% . Due in the class immediately following assignment. No late papers. There are two kinds are homework: (1) assessments of all assigned readings. These should be 1 page for each assigned reading, with a short summary of the main points of the reading, bullet points indicating useful ideas/lessons for your own research project, and questions you want to discuss in class or pursue with further reading; (2) research exercises, assigned in class and due the following class period. Some of these will be done with a partner or partners and given a joint grade.

(3) Preparation for and critical participation in class discussions = 20%. Attendance at all classes is assumed (see policy below) since projects will be completed in class. This grade will be determined by your advance preparation for class and your courteous contributions to class discussion. Participation can raise or lower your final grade.

### **Policies**

1. Class attendance is required. Absences are justifiable only with advance permission by instructor or written medical or other official excuse after the class. Each unexcused absence will lower the final grade by one-half point.
2. All written work must be submitted on time. No late papers.
3. Written work must be typed. It may not be submitted by email.
4. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability, Resources, and Services, 216 William Pitt Union (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

## **Required Reading**

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street*. W.W. Norton.

Becker, Howard S. "How I Learned What a Crock Was" [Originally printed in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (April, 1993), 28-35] and available at <http://www.home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/crocks.html>

Becker, Howard S. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research" [Forthcoming in Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard Schweder, eds., *Essays on Ethnography and Human Development*. University of Chicago Press], available at <http://www.home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/qa.html>

Blee, Kathleen. 2002. *Inside Organized Racism*. University of California Press.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Sage Publications (L); **2<sup>nd</sup> edition only**.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2003. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Sage Publications (C); **2<sup>nd</sup> edition only**.

Fine, Gary Alan. 2003. "Toward a Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life" *Ethnography* 4 (1): 41-60. Can be downloaded from PittCat; select journal title.

Snow, David and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory" *Ethnography* 4 (1): 41-60. Can be downloaded from PittCat; select journal title.

Weiss, Robert. "Interviewing" Chapter 4 in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (on reserve at Hillman Library and in Sociology, 2G03 WWPH)

Other reading may be assigned during the semester

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All books are on reserve at Hillman Library. The full *Handbook of Qualitative Research* by Denzin and Lincoln is on reserve; it contains all the chapters in the 2 assigned Denzin/Lincoln volumes. Some articles are also on reserve in the Sociology

Department, 2G03 WWPH.

**Course Schedule and Required Readings [subject to change, including additional readings]**

**PART I: RESEARCH PROCESS AND ETHICAL ISSUES**

Jan 5            **Introduction**  
**Institutional Requirements for Research on Human Subjects**

Jan 12            **Overview and History of Research on the “Other”**  
**Ethical considerations and obligations**

Reading:       Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research” In both (C) and (L), chapter 1

Arthur Vidich and Stanford Lyman, “Qualitative Methods: Their History in Sociology and Anthropology” (L), chapter 2

Howard S. Becker, “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research” [Forthcoming in Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard Schweder, eds., *Essays on Ethnography and Human Development*. University of Chicago Press], available at <http://www.home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/qa.html>

Jan 19            **No class/ Martin Luther King holiday**

Jan 26            **Reflexivity, Identity, and Responsibility**

Reading:       Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Susan Weseenn, and Loonmun Wong, “For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities” (L), chapter 4

Clifford Christians, "Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research" (L), chapter 5

Virginia Olesen, "Feminisms and Qualitative Research At and Into the Millennium" (L), chapter 8

Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies" (L), chapter 9

Joshua Gamson, "Sexualities, Queer Theory, and Qualitative Research" (L), chapter 12

**\*\* Proposal for final empirical project is due today**

Feb 2      **Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemologies of Qualitative Research Document Analysis**

Reading:      Yvonne Lincoln and Egon Guba "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences" (L), chapter 6

Thomas Schwandt "Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructionism" (L), chapter 7

Howard S. Becker, "How I Learned What a Crock Was" [Originally printed in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (April, 1993), 28-35] and available <http://www.home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/crocks.html>

Norman Denzin, "The Practices and Politics of Interpretation" (C), chapter 13

Ian Hodder, "The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture" (C), chapter 4

Recommended, Not Required:

Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research" (L), chapter 10

John Frow and Meaghan Morris, "Cultural Studies" (L), chapter 11

## **PART II: INTERVIEWING METHODS**

Feb 9           **Designing Social Research: Sampling and Interviewing Strategies**

Reading:     Kathleen Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*

Feb 16           **Interviewing Methods: Data Collection**

Reading:     Andrea Fontana and James Frey, "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text" (C), chapter 2

Robert Weiss, "Interviewing" Chapter 4 in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (on reserve at Hillman Library and in Sociology, 2G03 WWPH)

Feb 23           **Interviewing Methods: Coding and Analysis**

Ester Madriz, "Focus Groups in Feminist Research" (C), chapter 10

David Silverman, "Analyzing Talk and Text" (C), chapter 9

## **PART III: OBSERVATIONAL METHODS**

Mar 1           **Designing Social Research: Site Selection and Observational Strategies**

Reading:     Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street*

Mar 8           **No class/ spring break**

Mar 15

**Observational Methods: Data Collection**

Reading:       Gary Alan Fine, 2003. "Toward a Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life" *Ethnography* 4 (1): 41-60. Can be downloaded from PittCat; search journal title

Michael Angosino and Kimberly Mays de Perez, "Rethinking Observation: From Method to Context" (C), chapter 3

Mar 22           **Observational Methods: Coding and Analysis**

Reading:       Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject" (C), chapter 6

David Snow and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory" *Ethnography* 4 (1): 41-60. Can be downloaded from PittCat.; search journal title.

**PART IV: INTERPRETATION AND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

Mar 29           **Coding Knowledge and Interpreting Meanings**

Reading:       John Smith and Deborah Deemer, "The Problem of Criteria in the Age of Relativism" (C), chapter 12

Laurel Richardson, "Writing: A Method of Inquiry" (C), chapter 14

Gery W. Ryan and H. Russell Bernard, "Data Management and Analysis Methods" (C), chapter 7

Mary Gergen and Kenneth Gergen, "Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions and Transformations" (L), chapter 13

Yvonne Lincoln and Norman Denzin, "The Seventh Moment of the

Past" (L), chapter 14

Apr 5      **Student Presentations**

Apr 12 **Student Presentations**

Apr 19      **Student Presentations**

**\*\* Final projects due**