San José State University  
Department of Sociology—Fall 2013  
SOCl 105, Qualitative Research Methods (Sec. 4)

Instructor: Dr. Amy Leisenring
Office Location: DMH 224
Telephone: 408-924-5756
Email: Via Canvas: [https://sjsu.instructure.com](https://sjsu.instructure.com)
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 2:45 to 4:00 p.m.  
Thursdays: 1:00 to 1:30 p.m. and 2:45 to 3:15 p.m.
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 to 2:45 p.m.
Classroom: DMH 226A
Prerequisites: SOCI 1, SOCI 100W

Course Description

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are important to social research, yet they are significantly different. While quantitative research methods help us to explore and understand social processes that can be measured, qualitative research methods help us to understand those social processes that are unquantifiable. For example, while quantitative research can help us to determine how many people in a particular setting have experienced racism, it cannot tell us a lot about how it feels to be a victim of racism. For that we would need to turn to qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are used to address questions of meaning: how people experience and interpret both their own lives and the social world they live in.

This course is designed to provide sociology students with an introduction to qualitative methods of social research. Not only will we learn about the various types of qualitative social science research methods, but we will discuss the many issues that accompany conducting research with human subjects. This course will provide you with the opportunity to actually “do” sociology.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

This course will also help allow you to:

1. Understand the role of qualitative methods in social science.
2. Explore various types of qualitative research methods
3. Critically analyze examples of qualitative-based sociological work.
4. Examine the various issues surrounding fieldwork such as: ethics, the relationship between the researcher and the people s/he studies, trust and rapport, and researching sensitive topics.
5. Gain hands-on experience with: collecting various types of qualitative data; designing and conducting an independent research project; and using basic data analysis techniques (such as coding).
6. Explore ways in which qualitative data is analyzed, evaluated, presented, and disseminated.
Required Texts/Readings


2. **Online Readings posted on Canvas:** (Listed as “Online” in schedule)

Canvas

There is a Canvas site for this class and you will be automatically added. You will take all of your quizzes on the readings via Canvas and turn in all assignments here. I will also use Canvas to post important notices and announcements, handouts and assignments, readings, and additional information about assignments and send group email messages should the need arise. Canvas will also be a place for you to ask questions to other students in the class for which everyone might want the answer. I highly recommend that you either check Canvas regularly for important messages and announcements and/or that you link your Canvas email to your regular email.

Classroom Protocol

This is a skills course, meaning that one of the central objectives of the course is to teach you how to do something (in this case, qualitative research methods). The best way to learn how to do something is through hands-on experience. Thus, I have designed this course around the concept of active, participatory learning. I view the classroom as a space where we, together, can explore how to conduct qualitative research while also examining some of the central issues surrounding this type of research. Thus, while I will lecture on occasion, the majority of the course will be based on in-class activities and exercises, group work, and discussions.

For an active learning model to be successful, it is important for each student to make the commitment to:

1. **Attend class regularly.** During some classes I will spend some time presenting new material that relates to the readings. However, the bulk of each class period will be comprised of in-class activities, exercises and discussions; we will also spend some class time working on portions of class assignments. Thus, a large portion of the work in this course will take place in class. We will also at times design assignments, change assignments and make other important decisions as a class. If you miss class on a regular basis, not only are you depriving yourself of key learning experiences and important information, but you are depriving the rest of the class of your voice, experiences, and input. If you do miss a class, it is up to you to obtain any notes or information from someone else in the class, as I do not make my notes available to students or answer emails from students asking me to recap what we covered in class.

2. **Complete the readings assigned for each day.** Engaged discussion of the readings cannot happen unless students read. There is not an excessive amount of reading in this course in order to help ensure that students have time to complete all readings. The online reading quizzes are meant to encourage students to read.

3. **Participate in class discussions and activities and give full attention to the material.** I view our classroom as a collaborative learning environment where we all have something to learn from each other. I understand that it is sometimes uncomfortable or even painful for some people to speak publicly. I will do my best to create an environment where people feel comfortable speaking. I ask you to help create a positive classroom atmosphere by refraining from sleeping, reading outside materials, repeatedly coming to class late and/or leaving early, having side conversations with classmates, using a cell phone, listening to headphones, surfing the web, etc. Engaging in rude or disruptive behaviors will result in a lowered participation grade at the end of the course and may lead to other disciplinary action(s).
A note about technology in the classroom: I have no problem with students using laptops during class to take notes. However, surfing the web during class is often distracting to other students in the class. I reserve the right to ask students to turn off their computers if web-surfing becomes an issue.

4. Respect others in the classroom. It is imperative for our classroom to be a space where no one is made to feel embarrassed or ashamed. I will not tolerate disrespectful behavior. This includes rude interruptions, yelling, insults, and personal attacks. A major tenet of active learning is to have an open mind.

5. Complete assignments in a thoughtful and timely manner. The activities and writing assignments for this course are designed to help you better learn and understand qualitative research methods. I encourage you to put the time and energy into your work that is necessary for you to produce something that you can be proud of. Further, turning assignments in on time ensures that I will have adequate time to evaluate your work and give you necessary feedback.

You need to upload assignments to the Canvas assignment folder by 5:00 p.m. on the day they are due in order for work not to be counted late. I will accept late work for 1 week after an assignment is due. However, late work will be dropped a third of a letter grade for each weekday it is late after the due date. For example, a grade of B- would become a C+ if turned in one day after it is due and a C if turned in two days after it is due. After one week, a missing grade becomes a zero (there are NO exceptions to this except for in cases of extreme emergencies, which you must communicate to me ASAP). Please backup your work to a computer disk in case you lose the original copy or your paper becomes misplaced. Having computer problems is NOT a valid excuse for turning in work late. Finally, if you turn work in late you forfeit the right to receive detailed and timely feedback from me.

6. Keep in touch with me if you are struggling or having problems. If you are having ongoing personal or academic problems impacting your success in the class, I request that you let me know as soon as possible. You cannot disappear for days or weeks and expect that you will be able to make up everything that you have missed. (You do not, however, need to let me know if you will miss one or two classes.) I do not give incompletes except for in the case of an extreme emergency, and even then a student must have completed at least 70% of the course work (according to University Policy).

The best way to reach me is via Canvas as I check my email account there every weekday. If you have a legitimate question or concern than I will try my best to respond to your email within 24 hours (excluding weekends). Please note that I do not answer my phone during office hours if I am meeting with another student.

By following these six principles you give yourself the best opportunity to both learn and succeed in this course. You will severely limit your ability to both learn and succeed in this course if you fail to regularly come to class on-time and keep up with readings and assignments. If you are not prepared or able to make this level of commitment you may wish to drop the class and take it at another time (I won’t be offended!). If you decide to take the class, I’ll assume that you’re aware of your responsibilities and are willing to make this level of commitment. In this case, I welcome you to the course and I pledge to do my part to help you learn and develop your skills and abilities.

Dropping and Adding
Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html. Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.
Assignments and Grading Policy

The assignments and activities for this course are designed to enhance understanding of course material. Your final grade in this class will be based on the following:

1. **Observation Project:** You will make two separate observations in a setting of your choice and write a reflection paper. (2 Observations = 10% and Paper = 10%. Total = 20% of final grade)

2. **Annotated Bibliography:** You will find four articles addressing your interview project topic, summarize them, and briefly discuss how they relate to your topic. (5% of final grade)

3. **Interview Project:** You will choose a topic/research question, design an interview guide, recruit and interview two people, and write a final paper. (Research Question = 3%, Interview Guide = 7%, 2 Interviews = 10%, Rough Draft = 5%, Final Paper = 20%. Total = 45% of final grade)

4. **Online Reading Quizzes:** Quizzes are online and are comprised of 10 multiple choice and true/false questions. They are open-book and timed (you will get 15 minutes for each quiz). They will be posted on Canvas one week prior to when they are due. They must be completed by the time class starts. There are 15 quizzes and I will drop your three lowest quiz grades. (15% of final grade)

5. **Class Participation and Activities:** Because this is a workshop-style course, student participation is vital for the success of the class. I will evaluate your class participation based on the following:
   a. Participation in course discussions
   b. Successful completion of various in-class activities (i.e. interview & coding exercises, writing exercises, small group activities, and peer review work and feedback).

   Please note: You cannot make up in-class activities and exercises. However, when I calculate your final participation grade I will allow for a bit of “cushion room” which means if you miss a day of in-class activities it will not adversely impact your grade. (15% of final grade)

Information and specific details about each assignment will be provided at a later date. (All handouts will always be posted to Canvas, as well).

The breakdown of your final grade looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Project</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Reading Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

- A   = 93 – 100%
- B   = 83 – 87%
- C   = 73 – 77%
- D   = 63 – 67%
- A-  = 90 – 92%
- B-  = 80 – 82%
- C-  = 70 – 72%
- D-  = 60 – 62%
- B+  = 88 – 89%
- C+  = 78 – 79%
- D+  = 68 – 69%
- F   = 59% or less
University Policies

**Academic integrity**

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

**Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule, as needed, with fair notice.

Thursday, 8/22
**Topic:** Class introduction

**Situating Qualitative Research Within Social Science Research**

Tuesday, 8/27
**Topic:** Introduction to social science research
*Practice Online Reading Quiz (Syllabus)*

Thursday, 8/29
**Topic:** Differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches
**Read:** Text: CH 1
*Online Reading Quiz #1*

**Collecting Data: Ethnography and Observations**

Tuesday, 9/3
**Topic:** Introduction to ethnography and observation
**Read:** Online: Magolda, “The Campus Tour…..” and Duneier, “Sidewalk”
*Online Reading Quiz #2*

Thursday, 9/5
**Topic:** Ethnography and observation

Tuesday, 9/10
**Topic:** Field Research: Setting and entrée
**Read:** Text: CH 3
*Online Reading Quiz #3*

Thursday, 9/12
**Topic:** Conducting observations and taking fieldnotes
**Read:** Text: CH 5
*Online Reading Quiz #4*

Tuesday, 9/17
**Topic:** Conducting observations and taking fieldnotes

Thursday, 9/19
**Topic:** Conducting observations and taking fieldnotes
**Read:** Online: Ronen, “Grinding on the Dance Floor”
*Online Reading Quiz #5*

**Ethics and Fieldwork Issues**

Tuesday, 9/24
**Topic:** Ethical issues and concerns
**Read:** Text: CH 2
*Online Reading Quiz #6*
Thursday, 9/26
Topic: Roles, relationships, and issues in the fieldwork
Read: Text: CH 4
Online Reading Quiz #7

Tuesday, 10/1
Topic: Roles, relationships, and issues in the fieldwork
Online Reading Quiz #8
Have first observation completed and be prepared to discuss

Collecting Data: Interviews

Thursday, 10/3
Topic: Introduction to interviewing
Read: Text: CH 6
Online Reading Quiz #9

Tuesday, 10/8
Topic: Designing a research project and developing a research question
Read: Text: CH 7
Online Reading Quiz #10

Thursday, 10/10
Topic: Research Questions
DUE: Observation Project (Upload to CANVAS)
Please come to class with an interview project topic/question in mind

Tuesday, 10/15
Topic: Interviewing
DUE: Interview Project Topic/Question (Upload to CANVAS)

Thursday, 10/17
Topic: Interviewing

Tuesday, 10/22
Topic: Interviewing

Thursday, 10/24
Topic: Interviewing
DUE: Interview Guides (Upload to CANVAS): Please bring 2 copies of your interview guide to class

Tuesday, 10/29
Topic: Finding qualitative literature
MEET IN KING LIBRARY, ROOM 213

Unobtrusive Measures: Visual and Textual Sociology

Thursday, 10/31
Topic: Textual Sociology
Read: Text: CH 8
Online Reading Quiz #11
Tuesday, 11/5
**Topic:** Texts; Format of Final Paper
**Read:** Text CH 10
**Online Reading Quiz #12**

Thursday, 11/7
**Topic:** Visual Sociology
**Read:** Online: Lorenz, “Visual Metaphors of Living with Brain Injury”; Hagen et al. “Graffiti on the Great Plains” (and interview w/author at end)
**Online Reading Quiz #13**
*Please have completed at least 1 of your interviews by this date and be ready to discuss in class*

**Working with and Making Sense of Data: Coding and Analysis**

Tuesday, 11/12
**Topic:** Coding and analysis
**Read:** Text CH 9
**Online Reading Quiz #14**

Thursday, 11/14
**Topic:** Coding and analysis
**Due:** *Annotated Bibliography (Upload to Canvas)*

Tuesday, 11/19
**Topic:** Coding and analysis

**Action Research**

Thursday, 11/21
**Topic:** Introduction to Action Research
**Read:** Online: Rios, “Navigating the Thin Line between Education and Incarceration”
**Online Reading Quiz #15**

Tuesday, 11/26
**Topic:** Action Research

Thursday, 11/28
**NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY)**

Tuesday, 12/3
**Topic:** Discuss interviews/peer feedback
**Due:** *Rough Draft of Interview Project (Upload to Canvas)*

Thursday, 12/5
**Topic:** Discuss interviews/peer feedback
(Last Day of Office Hours)

**FINAL PAPER DUE:**
Uploaded to Canvas by Thursday, December 12th at 5:00 p.m.