San José State University

Fall 2015

SOCI 105, Qualitative Research Methods (Sec. 4)

Instructor: Steve Nava, Ph.D.
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Course time: TTh 3:00pm-4:15pm  Room MH 222
Office location: DMH 223
SJSU office hours: OFFICE M 4:00pm-4:25pm; TTh 12pm-1pm

Final Exam: Thursday, December 10, 12:15pm

Other Key Dates: Last day to drop without a student record entry is Sept 1st; Monday Labor Day (off) Sept. 7th; Last day to add course Wednesday Sept. 9th; Veteran’s Day (off) Wednesday Nov. 11th; Thanksgiving (off) Thursday Nov 26th; Last Day of Instruction, Tuesday Dec 8th

Course Description

This course is designed to engage with the process and ethical issues in performing qualitative research methods. We critically explore the meanings people give to their worlds and experiences. This course explores the “[p]hilosophy and logic of research design, interviewing techniques, field methods, issues of participant observation, theoretical perspectives, content analysis and qualitative microcomputer techniques.”

Required for Sociology majors.

Prerequisite: SOCI 1 or equivalent, SOCI 100W, SOCI 101 and upper division standing.”

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:
Any added Online Readings will be posted on Canvas: (Canvas readings will be listed by author’s last name)

Canvas
You are automatically added the Canvas course website. Login regularly for: updates on assignments, readings in pdf format, and for posting course questions and stimulating class discussions online. Check Canvas daily.

Attendance:
Class attendance is vital to a vibrant and critically engaged classroom community. The learning in this course is experiential and collaborative; therefore, your contributions will be needed each session. Students that do not discuss material in class do not tend to make an ‘A’ in this course. You are expected to attend all class meetings unless a compelling reason (e.g., serious illness or documented family emergency) requires your absence. You are also expected to be on time and ready to take notes for each class meeting.

If you MUST be absent for any reason:
1. Contact Dr. Nava class at steve.nava@sjsu.edu if you are to miss your class presentation or you will be late.
2. Contact another student in the class to find out what you have missed.
3. If you miss more than 3 classes for any reason, make arrangements with the instructor to explain your predicament.
4. If you must miss a class due to the celebration of religious or cultural holidays not observed by the university, please discuss this with me in advance so we can make any necessary arrangements.

Participation:
The readings are listed by the date they will be covered in class on the grid at then end of this syllabus. You will be expected to attend all class meetings on time, complete assigned readings, bring your syllabus to class everyday, book and writing materials, and regularly participate in class discussions. I will conduct the class on the assumption that you have read the assigned materials and are prepared to discuss the materials in a thoughtful manner. You should also be prepared to do a written analysis on the day’s readings during some class meetings.

Classroom Norms:
We will develop these norms as a group, but I have several expectations for classroom behavior: 1) respectful and engaged participation; 2) cell phones turned off or silenced and put away; 3) no use of portable computers unless I ask you to work on a project in class; 4) Bring all readings to class that are listed for the week. If I have to repeat the rules to you twice I will ask you to leave and not return until we have a conference about your rule infraction.

Course Requirements and Assignments
SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at http://www.sjsu.edu senate/docs/S12-3.pdf.

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 from the list and write a reflection paper. Options: café culture; mall culture (a declining culture); skateboard or surfing culture; library culture; restaurant server culture; gentrifier culture; workingclass culture; middleclass culture; masculine culture; feminine culture; arts community culture; yoga culture; sports culture; academic culture (2 Observations = 10% and Paper = 10%. Total = 20% of final grade)

2. **Interview Project:** You will choose a topic and develop a research question (most likely the same one from your observation project). Then you will design an *interview guide* including 20 questions you will ask the interviewees/respondents. Finally, you will perform digitally recorded interviews with two people, and write a final analysis paper based on the interviews. Note that you will be expected to develop interview questions and ‘follow-up question options’ for each potential response, which is included in the 20 questions minimum. You will trade interview guides with a partner and do a peer review. Also note, the annotated bibliography will contain 5 ethnographic studies on your chosen topic (Interview Guide = 5%, Annotated Bibliography = 5%, 2 Interviews = 10%, Final Paper = 20%. Total = 40% of final grade)

3. **Tuesday Quotes-n-Questions:** *Group-Led Discussions* (20 percent): You will purchase a pack of large notecards. Each student in the class will bring a notecard per reading/ *film clip* for the week. You will first write the thesis sentence of the reading. Second, you will write your favorite key quote from the current reading and/or film clip that relates directly to qualitative research methods on the front of the card. Fill out a card for each reading and/or film clip for each week. Film clips (linked on your syllabus along with the reading schedule) must be watched by clicking the links and the thesis must be ascertained through your own analysis of the clip. Finally, on the back of the cards you must write a discussion question per card. Be sure your name and course title, full name of the reading/film clip is on each card before turning it in to class on Tuesdays. You will be asked to read the notecards in front of class and your peers will be asked to answer your discussion questions when your group is called upon.

Note: Choose questions that you are really interested in finding out the answers to. Explain what interests you in the reading and what you find relevant to your own social life.

4. **Final Exam** (10 percent): The final exam is comprehensive and will consist of several essay questions. You will receive a list of potential questions to prepare for prior to the exam. (10% 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).

I will subtract 2/100 percentage points for each missed classroom activity. I allow for one missed activity without penalty.

**The breakdown of your final grade looks like this:**
- Observation Project (2 observations and Final Paper): 20%
- Interview Project: 40%
- Weekly *Quotes and Questions*: 20%
Reading Comprehension Quizzes: 10%
Final Exam: 10%

Total: 100%

Important note: An extra credit reward of 5% will be added to all students’ grades that highly and mindfully engage daily in classroom discussions. This means the student raises their hand each day of class attendance and offers a productive question or insight and do not break the classroom rules: no disrespect, no cell phone, and laptop usage during lecture or discussions.

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

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

University Policies

General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU’s policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See University Policy S90-5 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the SJSU catalog, at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as a next step.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester’s Catalog Policies section at http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The Late Drop Policy is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

University Policy S12-7, http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf, requires students to obtain instructor’s permission to record the course lectures. Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.
Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf requires 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 Student Conduct and Ethical Development website is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

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 at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) at http://www.sjsu.edu/aec to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See University Policy S14-7 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center at http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/ located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving
your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit Peer Connections website at http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR Reader to scan this code.)

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit Counseling Services website at http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

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

**Thursday, 8/20: Week 1**

Topic: Class introduction

Situating Qualitative Research Within Social Science Research

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**Week 2:**

**Tuesday, 8/25:** Topic: Introduction to social science research: What is fieldwork or ethnography? What are we looking for in qualitative fieldwork? What questions can ethnography answer that quantitative research cannot answer? How does a research question evolve from observation?

Syllabus Overview

Film Clip: *Sidewalk*, a Documentary film by Mitchell Duneier and Barry Alexander Brown: In-class written reflection: What might have sparked Duneier’s interest in this topic? What is meaningful about his ‘representation’ of street booksellers? What social forces are shown to stimulate the choice to sell books on the street? What does Duneier have to say about the relationship between agency and structure through his ‘editing choices’ and ‘interview questions’ in his ethnographic film? Which interview responses were ‘sociological’ and which were ‘cultural or mythical’ representations of the sidewalk vendors?

**Thursday, 8/27:** How do I choose a site and develop an initial research question?  
Read: Text: Preface and CH 1 Introduction to Qualitative Methods (Quotes-n-Questions due for each reading on the date listed)

**Reading Comprehension Quiz #1**

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**Week 3:**

**Tuesday, 9/1:** Topic: Introduction to ethnography and observation: What makes for a ‘thick description’ in field study/ethnography? Is it possible to claim ‘culture’ influences social agency without analyzing ‘power relations’ in your research site?  
*Reading on Canvas: Springs, Danny. 2007. “Thick Description vs. Power”* (Quotes-n-Questions due)

**Thursday, 9/3:**

*Reading Comprehension Quiz #2*

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**Week 4:**

**Tuesday, 9/8:** Topic: Conducting observations and taking field notes: How do I choose my setting? How do I gain access to the information I want to learn? What are my ‘embodiments’ and how do they effect my entrée?  
Read: Text: CH 3 Field Research: Setting and Entrée (Quotes-n-Questions due)

**Thursday, 9/10**

*Embodiments essay:* In-Class written reflection: What are my ‘embodiments’ and how might they effect my entrée into the ____ I am studying? (2-page in-class essay)  
Peer review of embodiments essay  
**Reading Comprehension Quiz #3**

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**Week 5**

**Tuesday, 9/15:** Topic: Conducting observations and taking field notes: What is worth recording in your field notes? What information should I leave out of my final write-up? How does one achieve a ‘thick description’ of their chosen research site?  
Read: Text: CH 5 Writing Field Notes *(Quotes-n-Questions due)*

**Thursday, 9/17**

*Quiz #4: Thick description: In-class Practice Observation Assignment:* You will write a ‘thin description’ (one sentence) of a site on this campus then, you will write a ‘thick description’ of
the same site (two paragraphs). We will then, discuss (in class) your reflection on why thick description is important for the reader’s interpretation of what is meaningful to record at your chosen site. Peer Review Work and Feedback Session: Trade papers and give 2 paragraphs of feedback of the student’s thick description.

DUE: Observation #1 (5%): Write a 3-page thick description of an event at a chosen research site. Be sure to include a final interpretation of your written descriptions in your conclusion in which you address the difficulties of seeking both immersion into the group and the critical distance needed to make sociological observations. (Please bring 2 hard copies to class and upload a copy to Canvas by Monday 9/21 by 11:59pm)

**Week 6**

**Tuesday, 9/22:** Topic: Ethical issues: What ethical issues might I encounter in my research? How can I be sure to maintain safety for my research subjects and for my self?
Read: Text: CH 2 The Law, Politics and Ethics of Qualitative Research (Quotes-n-Questions due)

**Thursday, 9/24** Topic: Roles, relationships, and issues in the fieldwork: How does one maintain both immersion in their site and a critical distance from any one standpoint?
Read: Text: CH 4 Roles and Relationships in Field Research (Quotes-n-Questions due)

DUE: Observation #2 (5%): Write a 3-page thick description of an event at a chosen research site that is similar to the one in Observation #1. You will write a full comparative Interpretive Paper (10%) of your two written descriptions (site #2 to site #1) connecting to the difficulties of seeking both immersion into the group and the critical distance needed to make sociological observations. This paper will be due (Please bring 2 hard copies to class and upload a copy to Canvas by Monday 9/28 by 11:59pm)

**Week 7**

**Tuesday, 9/29:** Topic: Roles, relationships, and issues in the fieldwork: Topic: Introduction to interviewing: How does the researcher design a research project and develop a research question?
Read: CH 6 The Interview: From Research Questions to Interview Questions (Quotes-n-Questions due)

**Thursday, 10/1**

Interview & coding in-class exercises
Reading Comprehension Quiz #6

**Week 8**

**Tuesday, 10/6:** Topic: Research Questions: How do I fine-tune my research questions? Do I use the same interview schedule for all my respondents? Should I take the respondent’s words at face value?
Read: Text: CH 7 The Interview: Interaction, Talk, and Text

**Thursday, 10/8**

Activity Quiz #5: In-class Practice Interview: First, write down your research question. Then, write 5 questions that gauge your research topic. Finally, find a spot on campus where you can interview a fellow student about their opinions about your research topic, recording their responses using a pencil, laptop, or recording device. Discuss how effective the questions were for gauging your research question. Transcribe all the written portions and upload to Canvas by Tuesday of next week, 1pm.
- Week 9
  **Tuesday, 10/13:** Topic: How do I treat historical documents, images, and internet materials in my research? Discuss: CH 8 The Textual and the Visual as Qualitative Data: Documents, Images, and the Internet (Quotes-n-Questions due)

  **Thursday, 10/15**
  **Interview Guide Due:** Turn in a draft of your interview questions (15 questions) for your research project to Canvas by **1pm today.**

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- Week 10
  **Tuesday, 10/20:** Topic: Interviewing: How do avoid leading questions? How do I develop ‘follow-up questions’ and use them in the interviews? **Interview Guide Peer Review:** Bring 2 copies of your Interview Guide. Read another student’s interview guide and make 5 bullet points of comments on the effectiveness of their questions and strategy to get answers to their research question. Turn in the guide with your comments after discussing them with the student. Be sure to put your name on their paper.

  **Thursday, 10/22:** Topic: Interviewing: What makes for an effective interview?

  **DUE:** Final Revised Copy of Interview Guide (Upload to Canvas by 11:59 a.m. 10/22)

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- Week 11
  **Tuesday, 10/27:** Topic: Coding Interviews
  Discuss: CH 9 Analyzing Qualitative Data: Fieldnotes, Transcripts, Documents, and Images (Quotes-n-Questions due)

  Coding and analysis exercise

  **Thursday, 10/29**
  Coding and analysis exercise continued

  **DUE:** **Annotated Bibliography** (connected to your Interview topic) (5-ethnographic entries based on your Interview topic) (Upload to Canvas by 11:59 p.m.)

- Week 12
  **Tuesday, 11/3:** Topic:
  Visual Ethnography examples and critique

  **Thursday, 11/5**
  Visual Ethnography examples and critique

- Week 13
  **Tuesday, 11/10:** Topic: Analyzing Interviews
  **DUE:** Interview #1 Recording (upload to Canvas by Tuesday noon) and Transcript
  Please **bring 2 hard copies** of materials for Interview #1 to class and upload copies to Canvas
  Activity: Interview #1 Peer Review

Tuesday, 11/17: Week 14 Topic: Analyzing Interviews
DUE: Interview #2 Recording (upload to Canvas by Tuesday noon) and Transcript
Please bring 2 hard copies of materials for Interview #1 to class and upload copies to Canvas
Activity: Interview #2 Peer Review

Thursday, 11/19
Continue: Activity: Interview #2 Peer Review

Tuesday, 11/24: Week 15 Topic:

Thursday, 11/26 OFF Thanksgiving

Tuesday, 12/1: Week 16 Topic: Share final interview project conclusions
Due: Interview Project (all parts together): (Upload to Canvas by 1:00 p.m.)
- Pass out Potluck Signup Sheet

Thursday, 12/3 Study Session; Q/A Session

Tuesday, 12/8: Last Class Meeting: Potluck

Final Exam: Thursday, December 10, 12:15pm (10% of grade)