“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison

**Land Acknowledgement**
We acknowledge and are mindful that San Jose State University sits on the land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people, who trace their ancestry through Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose. We remember their connection to this region and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, learn and pray on their traditional homeland.

**Course and Contact Information**

Professor: Dr. Yolanda Maria Wiggins  
Email: yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu  
Virtual Class Meeting Day: Tuesdays, 4:00PM–5:15PM  
Office: Dudley Moorhead Hall, Room 211  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30PM or by appointment (NOTE: Please stop by my office hours in person or virtually – I will provide a recurring Zoom link on Canvas)

***I will treat a number of students, who are nearby, to a cup of coffee during the first two weeks of the semester! I will send out an email and sign-up with dates/times for those of you who may be interested! Looking forward to connecting both virtually and in-person for those who feel comfortable doing so.

**Please note that this semester, we will only be meeting virtually once a week. I have designated Tuesdays as our class meeting day. Reading reflection papers as well as all other assignments are due on Sundays by 11:59PM.**

**Prerequisites:** SOCI 1, SOCI 100W SOCI 101, Upper Division Standing

**IMPORTANT:** You are responsible for regularly checking the course Canvas page as well as your email for notifications relevant to the course.
Course Description
Welcome to Sociology 105! This course will give students an introduction to a range of qualitative research methods. We will all be sociological detectives. Over the course of the semester, we will cover strategies for data collection and analysis of data approaches such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and ethnography. Students will learn how to propose research questions that can be investigated using qualitative methods, develop an understanding for how to respond to ethical issues related to human subjects, explore the different data gathering techniques associated with particular methods, investigate multiple analytic approaches, and become familiar with various styles of interpretation of qualitative data.

We will be asking ourselves the following questions throughout the course: Why do we use qualitative methods? What kinds of questions should we answer with these methods? What are different kinds of qualitative research methods? How do we conduct ethnographic research/participant observation? How do we conduct an in-depth, semi-structured interview? How do we conduct ethical research? How does our own background influence what we can learn from others? How do we analyze our data and write it up in a paper? How are research findings then disseminated to the larger public? What influence can social science research have on public policy?

Student Learning Outcomes
A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:
1. Understand what makes for a good “sociological puzzle,” and how to put that puzzle in dialogue with the existing literature.
2. Engage with and critically assess key qualitative methods used to address sociological puzzles and social science research questions more broadly, and know how to determine which method or methods are best suited for answering a particular question.
3. Observe their social world carefully and systematically.
4. Engage in participant observation/ethnographic observations.
5. Formulate a research question that can be answered using qualitative methods.
6. Conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews.
7. Record and analyze data gathered from ethnographic participant observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.
8. Critically read, critique, and assess existing qualitative research.
9. Understand the common denominator of what makes for “good” research across the various approaches by reading exemplars of high caliber qualitative research.
10. Write-up research findings in well-written and organized reports.

Ultimately, I hope that what you learn in this course is information that you will carry with you into whatever career field you enter. Whether or not you realize it, knowing how to collect data, analyze it, and present it to others, are skills that are extremely valuable in the “real world.”

I believe my role is to help you understand what it means to “learn to see” as a qualitative researcher. My goal is that you will leave this class having an appreciation for qualitative inquiry as well as an understanding for why it is needed. I want this course to open a pathway for you to become a strong qualitative researcher. With that being said, conducting qualitative research is labor, time, and writing intensive. It takes time to collect data, critically analyze data, write-up preliminary memos, and then complete a final paper. Trust me, I know! Earning a Ph.D. involves writing a dissertation. I’m happy to talk more about this process and will share research that I have conducted on the experiences of college students as they juggle competing demands of family and college. Before you get to the writing stage of a research project, you must conduct original research, which can take years to collect, transcribe, code, and analyze. This course only lasts for a semester and is a survey course of qualitative methodology, so don’t worry, we will fast-track the research and writing phase. As you complete your research project assignments, you may learn things that confirm your hunches about “how things work”
but you should also be prepared to encounter things that challenge those hunches. I am here to guide you on your qualitative research journey.

**Teaching and Learning During a Pandemic**

While some of things have slowly been shifting back to normal, the pandemic is also still present and the future remains uncertain. Together, we’ll get through this. Here are some guiding principles for our efforts;

1. **Nobody signed up for this.**
   - Not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives together on campus
   - Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for mastering new technologies, not for varied access to learning materials

2. **The humane option is the best option.**
   - We are going to prioritize supporting each other as humans
   - We are going to prioritize simple solutions that make sense for the most

3. **We cannot just do the same thing online.**
   - Some assignments are no longer possible
   - Some expectations are no longer reasonable
   - Some objectives are no longer valuable

4. **We will foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation.**
   - Accessible asynchronous content for diverse access, time zones, and contexts
   - Synchronous discussion to learn together and combat isolation

5. **We will remain flexible and adjust to the situation.**
   - Nobody knows where this is going and what we’ll need to adapt
   - Everybody needs support and understanding in this unprecedented moment

**Required Texts**

There is no required textbook for the class. Rather than building this course around a textbook, I have carefully selected empirical research articles that nicely pair with the topics we will be exploring. The readings for each week are uploaded on Canvas (our course’s webpage). You should have the week’s readings handy with you at every class session. It is my hope that the selected reading material is both informative and engaging. The readings have also been selected to explore dilemmas qualitative researchers confront such as how to conduct research ethically and how their background influences their findings and analysis. In order to do well in this course, thorough reading/listening/watching of the assigned material is required.

**What to Expect from me as a Professor this Semester:**

- I believe that you as a student should, at all times, know what you are expected to do in the course and also know where you stand in terms of your grade. This syllabus provides a detailed explanation of the course expectations, and I will regularly update Canvas with your course grades in a timely manner.
- In regard to the format of the course, I recognize that there are many types of learners. Therefore, I will assess your learning in a variety of ways: papers, presentations, discussion forums, etcetera. How will the course be taught? This course is not exclusively lecture-based. I will lecture when appropriate, but much of the learning will happen through large group discussion and collaboration with your peers.
- I really enjoy working with and talking to students. If you have concerns or questions regarding the course or your educational/professional goals more generally, I invite you to make an appointment to speak with me. If I learn about external opportunities (i.e., internships, part-time employment,
undergraduate research assistantships, enrichment programs/workshops, and interesting
talks/presentations, etcetera), I will be sure to share them with you. I believe that learning takes place in
a variety of spaces—not simply the classroom—and diversifying your learning experiences and the
spaces for which they occur, helps you grow intellectually, professionally, and personally!

*** NOTE: I reserve the right to make changes to the course syllabus and will always notify you if that
Happens

What I expect from you this semester:

• ATTENDANCE: This semester, our course will be meeting virtually. As indicated above, Tuesdays are
designated as the day that I will hold virtual, “in-person” classes. I expect you to attend each virtual
class session. Come to class ready to discuss the readings. To encourage active participation, please
have the day’s readings handy. We will also use class time to make connections between course
materials and real-world issues and personal experiences. Please ask questions, express confusions, and
share understandings! In class, participate fully and meaningfully. Listen actively to others and respond
If you tend to talk a lot in class, use the opportunity to listen and observe more. If you tend to be quiet in
class, push yourself! To facilitate active reading and participation, we will have in-class polls, two-
minute journaling exercises, short, in-class video clips, and structured activities based on the assigned
reading material.

• Please feel free to email me, but make sure to use proper email etiquette: Put “SOCI 105 Section
[number]” in the subject line, address the email to me, Dr. Wiggins, check your spelling, etcetera. Also,
if you ask a question that can be answered by referring back to the syllabus, I will probably tell you to
reread the syllabus. It is important to become familiar with the syllabus as it contains all of the important
course information you will need to know. I will respond to your email within 24 hours. If you have not
received a response after that time, please send me another email.

• Be respectful in your emails and the classroom. This respect should not only be for me, but for your
peers as well. I welcome differing opinions, but rudeness, bigotry, homophobia, transphobia,
xenophobia, etcetera is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any time, both on my part and yours.

• I expect your best effort. As your professor, I will do my best to make the course material
understandable and engaging. With that being said, this course will be what you make it. If you put
effort into the course, you will learn a great deal, have an enjoyable experience, and also be able to get a
good grade.

YOU WILL LEARN BY DOING!
You will have the opportunity to gain qualitative research skills through research projects (to be completed
outside of class) as well as by examining and critiquing real qualitative studies of a broad range of qualitative
scholarship. Conducting hands-on qualitative research will allow you to enhance your skills across the entire
design process, from developing research questions and an interview guide, to proposing an ethnographic field
site, to collecting data, to analyzing and evaluating data, and presenting findings to an audience of your peers.
You will receive detailed feedback on each step of the research process.

Course Components

• Reading Response Papers (10%): Over the course of the semester, you will read examples of
empirical research using qualitative research methods. Each Sunday, you are required to submit a
reading response paper via Canvas by 11:59PM. The reading response papers are intended to expose
you to a range of research projects using qualitative methods and are also meant to encourage you to
read and critically engage with the course materials. If I find that students are not keeping up with the course readings, I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes.

Your reading response papers should be no longer than one or two double-spaced pages written in 12-point Times New Roman font. Reading response papers should contain the following three parts:

1) A concise summary of the main point(s) and methods of the reading. (1 paragraph) Ex: Annette Lareau studied how parents reproduced their class status... She and two research assistants did this using interviews and participant observation of middle-class and working-class Black and White American families over x period. She found that middle-class parents used x approach, which is characterized by a, b, and c and working-class parents used y approach which is characterized by d, e, and f. Note: This paragraph that discuss the article’s qualitative method(s) is weighted more heavily than paragraphs 2 and 3.

2) A brief response to the article. (1 paragraph) Here you might comment on something you found interesting or that you learned from the reading. You might also comment on how this reading connects to some aspect(s) of your personal experience or in our larger society.

3) A description of any questions about the reading or something you would like discussed in class. (1 paragraph)

**READING GUIDE**
The following questions are a guide for you as you do your readings for the class. Not every question, however, will apply to every reading on the syllabus.

1. What is the central research question or topic of this article?

2. What method(s) does the researcher use to collect data?

3. What are the sources of data? What alternative or additional sources of data might have been useful?

4. How would you characterize the relationship between the researcher and the people in the research setting? How might this relationship impact her data or analysis?

5. Were ethical considerations addressed? Which ones? How?

6. How does the researcher use the data presented to support her findings?

7. What concepts does the researcher use or create to summarize her findings? What do these concepts mean?

8. Was it clear what source the data came from? Was the method of presentation effective? Why or why not?

9. If multiple methods were used, how well were these aspects integrated?

10. How well did the conclusions match the data presented?

11. If you were conducting the study, what would you have done differently?

12. What were the strengths of this paper? How well were these methods applied?
13. What were the overall merits of the study?

*** Late reading response papers will not be accepted. ***

- **Mini Ethnographic Field Site Proposal (5%)**: Prior to going out into the field you will submit a mini research proposal (no more than one double-spaced page) describing the setting you will visit and why you are interested in that setting. You will also describe how you will gain access to your particular site and discuss your role in that setting (i.e., participant and/or observer).

- **Research Question and Mini Interview Paper Proposal (5%)**: We will spend time discussing how to choose a research topic, formulate a research question, and using the best methods to answer the question. This assignment requires you to develop and write up a research question that you will explore for your interview project assignment (see extensive details below). The expectation for this assignment is that you have a clearly thought-out research question. Along with your research question, you should also include a brief explanation for doing the research (i.e., what you can hope to learn from your interview).

- **Ethnographic Field Notes (5%)**: Each observation session should be at least 1-hour long during which you will record a detailed description of what occurred in your fieldnotes. These notes will be the data you analyze to write your paper so it is extremely important that you take the necessary time to write them.

**Independent Research Projects: Participant Observation/Ethnography and Interviewing**
This semester you will conduct two independent research assignments: one using participant observation/ethnography and one using interviews. I have spaced the components of these assignments out over the semester so that you have time to collect your data and so that you can receive extensive feedback from me. It is impossible to cram this work into a weekend or pull a dreaded all-nighter at the last minute. I will grade this work on both process (your collection and analysis of data) and product (your presentation of the research in written and oral form).

- **Ethnography Participant Observation Paper (40%)**: The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting participant observation/ethnography. You will choose one setting (or type of setting) where you can conduct two sessions of observations and/or participant observations. Prior to going out into the field you will submit a mini research proposal (no more than one double-spaced page) describing the setting you will visit and why you are interested in that setting. You will also describe how you will gain access to your particular site and discuss your role in that setting (i.e., participant and/or observer). Each observation session should be at least 1-hour long during which you will record a detailed description of what occurred in your fieldnotes. We will discuss these notes in class activities so it is important that you bring them to class on the relevant dates listed on the syllabus. These notes will be the data you analyze to write your paper so it is extremely important that you take the necessary time to write them. I will provide you with example fieldnote formats on Canvas.

- **Interview Paper Project (40%)**: The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Students will interview an individual of their choosing (that is currently enrolled in college) about an aspect of the college experience (focusing on diverse aspects of the college experience, including, but not limited to, the amount of support students receive from or provide to various family members during college, the ways in which students balance both academic obligations and family responsibilities, how first-generation college students from mixed-status families experience college, etcetera). Interviews are required to last a minimum of
30-minutes. Prior to conducting your interviews, students will develop an interview guide and submit the interview guide to me in advance for review and feedback. During the interviews, students are required to audio record the conversation and take brief notes. The audio recordings of the interview will also be submitted to me. **Please note that interviews cannot be conducted over email.** Following the interview, students will write an interview reflection paper that also incorporates course material and highlight prevalent findings using direct quotes. I will provide a detailed rubric for this assignment so that you are aware of the expectations.

On the last three days of class, students will briefly present the findings from one, or both (if related), of their independent research projects in a short presentation. Presentations should be ~5-7 minutes and speakers must use PowerPoint slides to engage the audience and incorporate quotes and/or ethnographic field notes during the discussion of research findings. I will provide students with more direction on how to conduct a mini research presentation. This is a great opportunity to practice oral communication skills!

**Important Course Assignment Submission Deadlines**
- Aug. 22 —30-Second Selfie Video
- Sept. 19—Mini Field Site Proposal
- Oct. 3—First Set of Fieldnotes
- Oct.17—Ethnography/Participant Observation Paper, Second Set of Field Notes, and Picture of Interesting Aspect at Field Site
- Oct. 24—Research Question and Interview Project Proposal
- Oct. 31—Interview Guide
- Nov. 9—Group 1 Student Presentations
- Nov. 16—Group 2 Student Presentations
- Nov. 30—Group 3 Student Presentations
- Dec. 6—Final Interview Paper Project and Interview Audio Upload

Final grades will be computed on the following basis:

- 94-100% = A
- 90-93% = A-
- 86-89% = B+
- 83-85% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 76-79% = C+
- 73-75% = C
- 70-72% = C-
- < 60% = F

**Our Learning Community**
Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form virtual study groups to discuss course material, share information, and peer edit assignments. I recommend that you exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two other students the first week of class.

San Jose State University is committed to providing an environment consistent with the academic nature and core values of the institution in which students can participate in learning as a humanizing, social activity. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. As such, please:

- behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies.
- refrain from disrupting the ability of fellow student to learn.
  - Examples of disruption include:
    - Technological use that significantly or repeatedly distracts others
    - Interrupting class by arriving late or leaving early
    - Not allowing others to participate in discussion; cutting people off during discussions
• communicate in a respectful fashion when interacting online.

Feel free to email me and even better, drop by during virtual office hours. If those hours do not work with your schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment. Consider yourself warmly invited to discuss the readings, career possibilities/opportunities, or anything else! There are aspects about college that can be confusing. Professors can appear intimidating or scary. I am here to help. Please utilize me as a resource!

**Student Resources**

The Writing Center provides individualized support to assist you in better understanding course material and to aid you on your path to success. Services are free and include one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, interactive writing conferences, and academic skills coaching to discuss effective study strategies. Online tutoring services have been expanded significantly. Please see the Center's website or call: (408) 924-2308 to schedule an appointment.

Accessible Education Center (AEC) provides comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students. If you are a student in need of academic accommodations, please contact ACE within the first week of class. From there we can discuss your learning needs and appropriate accommodations. For more information, please visit https://www.sjsu.edu/acc/ or call: (408) 924-6000.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call (408) 924-5910 for an initial consultation appointment or see their website for more information.

Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault
As your professor, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning space. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on SJSU’s campus with the University. For information and resources regarding sexual misconduct or assault visit the Title IX/Gender Equity Issues website or Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website.

**Academic Integrity**

All academic work for this course must meet the University’s standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on tests and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the university's policies on academic integrity. Per departmental policy, all students will submit written assignments to TurnItIn.com (via Canvas), a website that helps check the originality of student work. By turning in assignments, you are consenting to the Honor Pledge.

**Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict.

**Course Outline and Reading Schedule**

NOTE: Please complete the reading assignment before the listed class, except for the first day.

I have outlined the course readings and assignments in the syllabus prior to the beginning of the term but I reserve the right to modify the syllabus if the need arises. I also encourage your feedback, so please let me know if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

**UNIT ONE**
Why do Qualitative Research?
Our goal for the first unit is to have several brief introductions. We will be introduced to each other. We’ll be working together throughout the semester in large and small groups so it is extremely important that we get to know one another. I will also give you an introduction to the course by providing an overview of the course goals and the course assignments. We will be introduced to the idea of being a sociological detective. We will also be introduced to why we do qualitative research and different kinds of qualitative research methods.

Week 1  
Aug. 19

Welcome Week and Introduction to the Course (NO VIRTUAL CLASS TODAY)
Course Overview. Review of Syllabus and Course Canvas Webpage

Upload 30-second selfie video – Due Sunday, August 22nd at 11:59PM
Please introduce yourself with the name (preferred name, if applicable), your preferred pronoun, how do you think this class informs/connects to your long-term personal/professional goals, ways that I can support you as a student in this course, and/or anything else that you’d like me to know about you in thirty seconds or less. Please upload this video on to Canvas.

What are different types of Qualitative Research?

Week 2:  
Aug. 24-26

Participant Observation/Ethnography
READING

Submit Reading Response Paper #1 (on the above reading)– Due Sunday, August 29th at 11:59PM

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

Week 3  
Aug. 31- Sept. 2

Interviews
READING

Submit Reading Response Paper #2 (on the above reading) – Due Sunday, September 5th at 11:59PM

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS
“I’m Not a Racist But…” Mapping White College Students’ Racial Ideology in the USA

UNIT TWO
How Do We Conduct Ethical Research?
In this unit, we will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were questioned.
Week 4  
**Sept. 7-9**  
Do No Harm and Informed Consent  
**READING**  
Submit Reading Response Paper #3 (on the above reading)—Due Sunday, September 12th at 11:59PM  

**SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS**  

**UNIT THREE**  
How Do We Conduct Participant Observation? Gaining Access and Taking Notes  
In this unit, you will learn about participant observation and will engage in an independent research project of your choosing. We will discuss issues of gaining access to places to observe, the role you plan to take during your observations, the mechanics of taking notes and analyzing your data, and how your background might impact your data and analysis.

Week 5  
**Sept. 14-16**  
Gaining Access. Choosing Your Site  
**READING**  
Submit Reading Response Paper #4 (on the above reading) & Mini Field Site Proposal—Due Sunday, September 19th at 11:59PM  

**SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS**  

Week 6  
**Sept. 21-23**  
Moving from observation to analysis  
**READING**  
Submit Reading Response Paper #5 (on the above reading) – Due Sunday, September 26th at 11:59PM  

**SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS**  

UNIT FOUR
How Do We Do Interviews? Designing a Research Project

In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in a second independent research where you will be paired with a classmate in the class and will take on the role of interviewer and then of interviewee. You will interview your partner about the ways in which their families are involved in their college experience (you may focus on diverse aspects of the college experience, including, but not limited to, the amount of support students receive from or provide to various family members during college, etcetera). You will learn about different types of sampling often used for interview-based research and how to move a research interest to a research question. We will discuss issues related to finding participants, obtaining informed consent, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up your findings. You will also be exposed to various examples of research using interviews as the primary data source. As you read these examples, you should consider how these readings might inform your own research and the kinds of data used to support the author’s analysis.

Creating an interview guide, Common Mistakes When Formulating Questions, Who Do We Interview?

UNIT FOUR
How Do We Do Interviews? Designing a Research Project

In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in a second independent research where you will be paired with a classmate in the class and will take on the role of interviewer and then of interviewee. You will interview your partner about the ways in which their families are involved in their college experience (you may focus on diverse aspects of the college experience, including, but not limited to, the amount of support students receive from or provide to various family members during college, etcetera). You will learn about different types of sampling often used for interview-based research and how to move a research interest to a research question. We will discuss issues related to finding participants, obtaining informed consent, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up your findings. You will also be exposed to various examples of research using interviews as the primary data source. As you read these examples, you should consider how these readings might inform your own research and the kinds of data used to support the author’s analysis.

Creating an interview guide, Common Mistakes When Formulating Questions, Who Do We Interview?
Week 10  
Oct. 19-21  
NO READINGS  
Submit Research Question & 1-Page Interview Project Proposal – Due Sunday, October 24th at 11:59PM

Week 12  
Oct. 26-28  
Dissemination of Qualitative Research Findings and Its Impact on Public Policy  
NO READINGS  
Submit Interview Guide & Sign Up for Presentation Time Slot – Due Sunday, October 31st at 11:59PM

Week 14  
Nov. 2-4  
Now You Have Qualitative Research Skills—Ways to Apply Them in the Real World (NO READINGS)

Week 14  
Nov. 9-11  
Group 1 Student Presentations— (Please upload your PowerPoint presentation by Sunday, November 7th by 11:59PM)

Week 15  
Nov. 16-18  
Group 2 Student Presentations— (Please upload your PowerPoint presentation by Sunday, November 14th by 11:59PM)

Week 16  
Nov. 23-25  
NO CLASS THIS WEEK – UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO READINGS/PAPERS DUE

Week 17  
Nov. 30- Dec. 2  
Group 3 Student Presentations & Farewells— (Please upload your PowerPoint presentation by Sunday, November 28th by 11:59PM)

Week 18  
Dec. 6  
Submit Final Interview Paper Uploaded Audio File of Interview – Due Monday, December 6th by 11:59PM