“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 play on their traditional homeland.

Course and Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Yolanda Wiggins (she/her/hers)
Email: yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu
Class Days/Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30AM-11:45AM
- Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH) Room 226A

Office Hours:
- BY APPOINTMENT ONLY: Mondays 10-11am
- MODALITY:
  - You may either attend in person (Come to my office at DMH 211) or online via Zoom
  - ZOOM LINK
  - If you wish to meet in person, please be sure to send me an email beforehand.

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

Course Description

Welcome to Sociology 105! This course will give students an introduction to a range of qualitative research methods. 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: What is research? Why do we use qualitative methods? What kinds of questions should be answered by qualitative research methodologies? What are different kinds of qualitative research methods? How do we conduct ethnographic research? How do we conduct an in-depth, semi-structured interview? How do we conduct ethical research? How does a researcher’s background and positionality influence how they conduct qualitative research, interacting with research participants, collecting data, and what can a qualitative researcher learn from others? How do qualitative researchers analyze data and write it up in a paper? How are qualitative research findings disseminated to the larger public? What purpose does sharing qualitative research serve? What influence can social science research have on public policy? How can qualitative research methodological skills be leveraged in a career (whether research focused or not)?

**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. Determine which method(s) are best suited for answering a particular research question.
3. Observe their social world carefully and systematically.
4. Engage in participant observation/ethnographic observations.
5. Record and analyze data gathered from ethnographic participant observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.
6. Critically read, critique, and assess existing qualitative research.
7. 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” and literally any career field you enter into following your time here at SJSU.

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 laborious, time consuming, 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 develop a greater understanding of the qualitative research process, 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.
**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 read the week’s readings beforehand and have them 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, how time in the field impacts the kinds of data collected, how one’s background influences research findings and analysis, etc. In order to do well in this course, thorough engagement with 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: midterm exam, papers, presentations, class discussions, etcetera. How will the course be taught? This course is not exclusively lecture-based. Learning will also happen through large group discussion, collaboration with your peers, and hands-on practice of qualitative methods in the field.
- 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/full-time employment, undergraduate research assistantships, enrichment programs/workshops, 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:**

- 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! Please participate fully and meaningfully in class. Listen actively to others and respond in ways that reflect what you’ve heard. **Ask questions. Challenge our thinking. Challenge your own.** 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, short 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 earn a good grade. Please note that I do not ‘round up’ grades at the end of the semester.

**YOU WILL LEARN BY DOING!**

You will have the opportunity to gain qualitative research skills through a research project (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 collecting data, to analyzing and evaluating data, and presenting findings to an audience of your peers.

**Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness**

Towards the end of the course, you will receive an email from the Office of Institutional Research reminding you to provide feedback on the course. You will receive consistent reminders throughout the period when the evaluation is open.

- The evaluation is completely anonymous. When the results are released, I will not be able to tell which student provided the individual feedback.
- Because it is anonymous and the results are not released to faculty or departments until after grades have been submitted, the feedback will not impact a student’s grade.

The feedback is important so that I as a professor can gain insight in to how to improve my teaching and learn how to best shape the curriculum.

**Course Components**

- **Methods Memos** (25%) – Each week you will turn in a short methods memo on the assigned reading. Your response should be no more than 250 words. Your memo should paraphrase what you see as the author’s central question(s) and main argument(s), method(s), and research findings. Next provide a response to the article. For example, what did you learn about qualitative from the article? What surprised you? Intrigued you? Confused you? Response memos are due each Sunday on Canvas by 11:59PM on the Sunday prior to Tuesday’s class.

- **Video Ethnography Assignment** (15%) – This semester, you will work in pairs to create a video ethnography which highlighting aspects of the college experience for San Jose State University students. Rather than an extensive paper, this assignment will allow you to creatively understand the nature of ethnographic fieldwork, cultural representation, and interpretation.

Your assignment is to create an ethnographic video that should be no longer than five minutes. While your video may be humorous, keep in mind that this will be a public representation and interpretation of aspects of student life here at SJSU. Sample student videos will be uploaded on to Canvas.
I realize that students possess varied video production skills. That’s totally okay. Keep in mind that you will not be graded on the basis of that, but rather you will be graded on your ability to apply the principles that we’ve discussed in class related to this qualitative research method.

**Video Ethnography Class Presentation** You and your partner will be given 10-15 minutes to present your video clip. After showing the video clip, allow time for a brief discussion of your approach to representing and interpreting aspects of college life. The link to your video clip and a 1-2-page reflection paper will be due within one week of your class presentation. The co-written reflection paper should discuss the process behind your approach to making the video and based on the class presentation and discussion, what you have learned about representing the human experience through video.

- **Take Home Exam (25%)** In this class, students will also complete a mini midterm. This exam will assess your knowledge on broad components of qualitative research methods and components of participant observation/ethnography. The midterm exam will be a combination of multiple-choice and definitional questions. This exam will cover material from lecture and assigned readings. The midterm exam will be administered online (via Canvas) to allow for students to complete the exam in a comfortable environment of their choosing. Please note that there will be no make-up exams.

- **Interview Paper Project (30%)** – This semester you will conduct one independent research assignment 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).

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Students will interview TWO individuals of their choosing on a topic of their choosing. 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.

- **Research Question and Interview Guide (10%)**: 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 and interview, you should also include a brief explanation for doing the research (i.e., what you can hope to learn from your interview).

- **Final Presentation: Interview Guide and Career**: On the last few weeks of class, students will briefly present (for no more than 7-10-minutes) the findings from your interview paper project in a short presentation and briefly research a career/job opening of their choosing that requires applicants to possess many of the research skills that we have discussed over the course of the
semester in this class and your other sociology methods courses (i.e., statistics, etc.). This is a great opportunity to practice oral communication skills!

- **Structure of Interview Presentation:** Presenters must use PowerPoint slides to engage the audience and incorporate direct quotes from their interviewee during the discussion of research findings. I will provide students with more direction on how to conduct a mini research presentation. Explicit instructions will be made available to students on Canvas as the presentation dates come closer.

- **Structure of Career Exploration Presentation:** Presenters must research a career path of their choosing that explicitly requires applicants to possess a number of skills related to research. Note that this particular job doesn’t have to be that of a researcher, per se — Get creative! Sociology majors can work in a range of careers including, but not limited to: tech, business, finance, social work, teaching, etc. For this portion of the presentation, please find an open job position and be sure to provide me with a link. Explicit instructions will be made available to students on Canvas as the presentation dates come closer.

**Important Course Assignment Submission Deadlines (Mark Your Calendar Now!)**

- October 22—Video Ethnography Project Reflection Paper Due
- October 29—Take Home Exam Due (via Canvas)
- November 5th—Submit Research Question and Interview Guide
- November 14-16—Group 1 Student Interview Presentations
- November 28-30—Group 2 Student Interview Presentations
- December 5—Group 3 Student Interview Presentations
- December 8—Final Interview Paper Project and Interview Audio Upload

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
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**Our Learning Community**

Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form 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 in-person or 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/aec/ 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, using previous work submitted to a class without the instructor’s approval (even if it’s your own!), and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the university’s policies on academic integrity. 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**

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.

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**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.

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**Week 1**

Aug. 22-24

**Welcome Week and Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods**

Course Overview. Review of Syllabus and Course Canvas Webpage

**Week 2**

Aug. 29-31

**Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography**

**READING**


**RECOMMENDED**


**DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD by 11:59PM**

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**Week 3**

Sept. 5-7

**Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography (Continued)**

**READINGS**

Yolanda M. Wiggins. 2021. “We Do Way More Than Just Clean Up Puke...We Connect With Students”: Custodial Staff as Informal Mentors at a Large Public University in *Campus Service Workers in Supporting First-Generation College Students: Informal Mentorship and Culturally Relevant Support as Key to Student Success and Retention*.

**RECOMMENDED**

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

**DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH by 11:59PM**
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. 12-14
Do No Harm and Informed Consent
READING

RECOMMENDED


DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH by 11:59PM
SUBMIT PAIR SELECTIONS FOR VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY BY SUNDAY

(***** NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH *****)

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. 19-21
Gaining Access. Choosing Your Site
READING

RECOMMENDED

DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH by 11:59PM
**Week 6**  
Sept. 26-28  
**Moving from observation to analysis**  
**READING**  

**RECOMMENDED**  

**DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1ST by 11:59PM**

**Week 7**  
Oct. 3-5  
**How do we impact our data?**  
**READING**  

**RECOMMENDED**  

**DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8TH by 11:59PM**

**Week 8**  
Oct. 10-12  
**Introduction to Interviews**  
**READING**  

**RECOMMENDED**  
**DUE THIS WEEK: REFLECTION PAPER — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15TH by 11:59PM**  
**GROUP 1 VIDEOETHNOGRAPHY PRESENTATIONS ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY**

**UNIT FOUR**  
**How Do We Do Interviews? Designing a Research Project**
In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in second independent research where you will assume the role of interviewer. 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.

**Week 9**
Oct. 17-19

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

**READING**

**DUE THIS WEEK:** REFLECTION PAPER & VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY PROJECT REFLECTION PAPERS – SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22ND by 11:59PM
GROUP 2 VIDEOETHNOGRAPHY PRESENTATIONS ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

**Week 10**
Oct. 24-26

**Creating an interview guide, Common Mistakes When Formulating Questions, Who Do We Interview? (Continued)**

**READING**

**DUE THIS WEEK:** REFLECTION PAPER – SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29TH by 11:59PM
TAKE HOME EXAM DUE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29TH by 11:59PM

**Week 11**
Oct. 31-Nov. 2

**Dissemination of Qualitative Research Findings and Its Impact on Public Policy**

**READINGS TO BE DETERMINED**

**DUE THIS WEEK:** Submit Research Question & Interview Guide AND Sign Up for Presentation Time Slot no later than SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH BY 11:59PM

**Week 12**
Nov. 7-9

**NO READINGS**

**Week 13**
Nov. 14-16

**GROUP 1 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 14**
Nov. 21-23

**NO CLASS THIS WEEK – THANKSGIVING RECESS (OPTIONAL ZOOM CHECK IN)**

**Week 15**
Nov. 28-30

**GROUP 2 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 16**
Dec. 5

**GROUP 3 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**
Week 17

FINAL INTERVIEW PAPER DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8TH BY 11:59PM (NO EXTENSIONS; NO EXCEPTIONS)