

SOCI 600 Qualitative Research Methods I
McGill University, Department of Sociology
Winter 2018
Tuesday 13:35-15:25
LEA 917

DRAFT – FINAL VERSION AVAILABLE ON JANUARY 9TH, 2018, ON MYCOURSES

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Office: Leacock 825

Office Hours: Thursdays, 14:00-15:30 or by appointment

Course Description and Goals

Sociology has been described famously as a “craft” (by Howard Becker) and a “martial art” (by Pierre Bourdieu). Both terms capture the essence of what researchers need to do in order to conduct original research that makes sense of our social world: 1) identify why one would bother to “craft” something or engage in “combat” in the first place; 2) learn, practice and apply established techniques; and 3) understand when it makes sense to choose one technique over another as well as the advantages and disadvantages that follow from that choice.

This course is the first of a two-part qualitative methods sequence (which includes SOCI 601). In this class, you will be introduced to the basics of qualitative inquiry and prepare for research. We will discuss the theory, logic and ethics of qualitative research as well as research design. We will also examine and conduct practical exercises with a range of popular methods (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, discourse analysis). You will be given the opportunity to bring all of these course components together by creating a research proposal that can be used to conduct research over the summer. At the end of the course, you will not be a master research “craftsperson” or a “black belt” in your chosen research technique, as achieving that kind of status comes with years of experience. However, you should be ready to make your first cabinet or fight in your first tournament, depending on your preferred metaphor.

Required Course Materials

Many of the required readings for the course are scholarly articles that will be made available free of charge on MyCourses. We will also draw on the following three books:

- 1) Luker, Kristen. 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Science: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 2) Aurini, J., Heath, M. and S. Howells. 2016. *The How To of Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- 3) Bloemraad, I. 2006. *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada*. Berkeley: University of California Press

If you would like to own them for future reference, copies of Luker (2008) and Aurini et al. (2016) can be purchased at Paragraphe Bookstore, 2220 McGill College Avenue. One copy

each of all three books has been placed on 3-hour reserve at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library (Bloemraad 2006 is also available as an e-book in the McGill library system).

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Understand the theoretical underpinnings of qualitative social research
- 2) Describe a range of common methods and the issues associated with them
- 3) Design a qualitative research project with a view to implementing it
- 4) Evaluate existing examples of social scientific research, particularly with regard to their methodological soundness
- 5) Give and respond to constructive criticism generated through peer evaluation

Evaluation

Evaluation Component	Date	% of final grade
Reading Responses (10)	Throughout	50%
Attendance & Participation	Throughout	12%
Draft Research Proposal	6 April	13%
Final Research Proposal	17 April	25%
TOTAL		100%

Evaluation Component Details & Accommodation

- 1) *Reading responses (10 x 5% = 50% of final grade)*

Justification: The reading responses are designed to allow you to produce a record of your thoughts as you move through this course: something you can look back on later as you are conducting your research. They are also meant to ensure that everyone comes to class have read and critically reflected on the required readings.

Content: Imagine that all the readings for a given week are bound together as one book. Reconstruct the structure and logic of the argument holding this “book” together. (Sometimes the “book” will hold opposing viewpoints.) Discuss what is important about the contents of this “book”, the word “important” being defined according to whichever criteria (logical, empirical, historical, and/or normative) you choose to emphasize. Discuss the limitations or weaknesses of this “book” (again, according to whichever criteria you choose to stress). For some responses, I will add prompts for you to address as a part of your response.

Format: Responses should be roughly 2 pages in length, single-spaced (with an extra space between each paragraph), written in 12 point Times New Roman font, and fully justified. Your name, the date, and the Reading Response # should appear in the top, right-hand corner of the first page.

Due Dates: Responses must be uploaded to MyCourses by 12:00 noon the day before class. Here is an overview of the due dates:

Reading Response #1: Monday, January 15th
Reading Response #2: Monday, January 22nd
Reading Response #3: Monday, January 29th
Reading Response #4: Monday, February 5th
Reading Response #5: Monday, February 12th
Reading Response #6: Monday, February 19th
Reading Response #7: Monday, February 26th (Special instructions: In addition to the response, include a draft interview guide for an interview component of your project.)
Reading Response #8: Monday, March 12th
Reading Response #9: Monday, March 19th
Reading Response #10: Monday, March 26th
Reading Response #11: Monday, April 2nd (Special instructions: Response should address the issues you anticipate will arise when applying for ethics approval for your project.)

Accommodation: You must submit 10 out of a possible 11 weekly Reading Responses. There is no response due on the first or last day of class, and you have one “free pass” (i.e. you can choose not to hand in a reading response one other time in the course). Responses will be penalized 20% for each day they are late, starting at 12:05 on the due date (i.e. a response handed in on the Tuesday after it is due would lose 40%).

2) Attendance and Participation (0.5% each x 12 weeks = 12% of final grade)

Since this is a seminar, not a lecture, how much you take away from the course will depend on how much you buy in.

Accommodation: Attendance and participation marks will be counted for 12/13 teaching weeks. This allows each student one unexcused absence. No further accommodation will be provided.

3) Draft Research Proposal (13% of final grade) & Final Research Proposal (25% of final grade)

The research proposal gives students the opportunity to apply what has been learned in the course. Ideally, the final version should serve as an operable blueprint for conducting research over the summer and/or the methodology section of your dissertation proposal. Proposals must contain: a research question; a discussion of the motivation behind the research question (the literature review) and the potential significance of the contribution; a discussion of case selection and how key concepts will be operationalized; a discussion of

the choice of qualitative research method; and details on how the method will be applied (e.g. sampling, number of interviews, duration in the field, choice of texts for a discourse analysis). In addition to submitting the draft research proposal, each student is expected to read the draft proposals submitted by their classmates and to come to the last class prepared to discuss the proposals. It is expected that the final research proposal will represent and improvement on – and extension of – the draft proposal, based on feedback received in class. Rubrics will be provided in advance.

Format: The draft research proposal should be between 2-3 single-spaced pages, not including bibliography. The final research proposal should be 5-6 single-spaced pages, not including bibliography. Please use 12pt Times New Roman font and standard margins.

Due Dates, Late Penalty & Accommodation: The draft proposal is to be uploaded to MyCourses by 12:00pm (noon) on April 6th. The late penalty is 10% per day, starting at 12:05 pm on April 6th (i.e. a draft proposal handed in on April 7th would lose 20%). The final proposal is to be uploaded to MyCourses by 12:00pm (noon) on April 17th. The late penalty is 5% per day, starting at 12:05 pm on April 17th. Final proposals submitted after 12:00 pm on April 24th will not be accepted for grading and will receive a mark of 0. No 'K' grades will be given in this course.

Course Outline (Subject to change at the discretion of the instructor)

9 January – Introduction

PART 1 – THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

16 January – Epistemology

- Becker, H. (1996). "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." In *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 53-71.
- Sprague, J. (2016). *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, 2nd Edition. New York: Rowman and Littlefield. (Chapter 2)

23 January – Methodology (Grounded Theory, Extended Case Method, Institutional Ethnography)

- Corbin, J. and A. Strauss. (1990). "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13(10): 3-21.
- Burawoy, M. (1998). "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16(1): 4-32.
- DeVault, M. and L. McCoy. (2002). "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations." In *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*. Ed. D. Smith. Pp. 15-44.
- Walby, K. (2007). "On the Social Relations of Research: A Critical Assessment of Institutional Ethnography." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(7): 1008-1030.

30 January – Ethical Issues

- Goffman, A. (2014). *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 2 & Methodological Appendix)
- Campos, P. (2015). "Alice Goffman's Implausible Ethnography." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/alice-goffmans-implausible/232491>
- Hochschild, A. (2016). *Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press. (Chapter 1, Appendix A, Appendix C)
- Bhambra, G. (2017). "Brexit, Trump, and 'Methodological Whiteness': On The Misrecognition of Race and Class." *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): S214-S232.

PART II – WHAT AM I GOING TO DO AND WHY SHOULD ANYONE CARE?

6 February – Literature Reviews, Research Questions & Contributions

- Aurini et al. (2016): Chapter 2
- Luker, K. (2008): Chapters 4 & 5
- Thompson, P. (2017). "Avoiding the Laundry List Literature Review." Blog Post. <https://patthomson.net/2017/09/11/avoiding-the-laundry-list-literature-review/>

13 February – From Research Puzzle to Research Design

- Aurini et al. (2016): Chapter 3
- Bloemraad, I. (2006): Introduction & Conclusion (and as much of the book as needed to get an impression of the work)
- Bloemraad, I. (2012). "What The Textbooks Don't Tell You: Moving from a Research Puzzle to Published Findings." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Ed. C. Vargas-Silva. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. Pp. 502-520.

20 February – Sampling & Operationalization (In-class exercise: operationalizing "race" in analyses of census forms)

- Luker, K. (2008): Chapter 6
- Brubaker, R. (2002). Ethnicity without groups. *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 43(2), 163-189.
- Loveman, M. (1999). "Is 'Race' Essential?" *American Sociological Review* 64(6): 891-898.
- Roth, W. (2017). "Methodological Pitfalls of Measuring Race: International Comparisons and Repurposing of Statistical Categories." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Online First.

PART III – METHODS OVERVIEW

27 February – Method #1: Interviews (In-class exercise: discussion of draft interview guides)

- Aurini et al. (2016): Chapter 4

- Lamont, M. and A. Swidler. (2014). "Methodological Pluralism and The Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37: 153-171.
- Choose an interview-related case study from the Case Studies folder on MyCourses

6 March – Reading Week (no class)

13 March – Method #2 Focus Groups

- Aurini et al. (2016): Chapter 5
- Morgan, D. (1996). "Focus Groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-52.
- Choose a focus group related case study from the Case Studies folder on MyCourses

20 March – Method #3 Ethnography

- Aurini et al. (2016): Chapter 6
- Wacquant, L. (2002). "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and The Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(6): 1468-1532.
- Chama, K. (1990). "Discovering Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory." *Social Science and Medicine* 30(11): 1161-1172.
- Parvez, Z. F. (2017). *Politicizing Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Appendix A).

27 March – Method #4 Content & Discourse Analysis

- Phillips, N. and C. Hardy. (2002). *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. London: Sage. (Chapter 1)
- Neuendorf, K. (2017). *The Content Analysis Guidebook, 2nd Edition*. London: Sage. (Chapter 1)
- Dworkin, S. and F. Wachs. (2004). "Getting Your Body Back: Postindustrial Fit Motherhood in Shape Fit Pregnancy Magazine." *Gender & Society* 18(5): 610-24.
- Choose a content analysis related case study from the Case Studies folder on MyCourses

3 April – Putting Together a Research Ethics Board Application

- Documents from the McGill Research Ethics Office (TBD)

10 April – Wrapping Up

- No readings. Come prepared to discuss your classmates' draft research proposals.

The Fine Print

Language of Evaluation

"In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded."

(approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 – see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

«Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).»

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

«L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).»

Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities

If you need any accommodation please contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/398-6009>). You may also contact me directly. I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate you.

Copyright

Instructor generated course materials (e.g. Power Point slides, handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. Recording and distributing recordings of lectures is prohibited unless the instructor gives written consent.

Course Changes in Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Grade appeals

Instructors and teaching assistants take the marking of assignments very seriously, and we work diligently to be fair, consistent, and accurate. Nonetheless, mistakes and oversights occasionally happen. If you believe that to be the case, you must adhere to the following rules:

- If it is a mathematical error simply alert the instructor.
- In the case of more substantive appeals, you must:
 - Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark;
 - Carefully re-read your paper/assignment/test, all guidelines and marking schemes, and the grader's comments.

- Within 10 working days after results are available, submit to the instructor a one-page explanation of why you think your grade should be changed. Please note statements such as “Because I worked very hard on this” and “I need a higher grade to apply to X” are not compelling.
- Make an appointment to meet with the instructor during office hours, at which time the instructor will give you a decision on the appeal and explain the outcome. After that, students are entitled to a re-read or re-assessment by a professor not teaching the course should they request it.
- Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up.