

Sociology 477: *Qualitative Methods in Sociology*

Fall 2017

Class Location: LEA 721

Class Meeting Times: 12:35 – 2:25 p.m. Mondays

Professor: Elaine Weiner

Office Address: LEA 732

Office Hours: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment

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Course Description

This seminar provides a practical (i.e., 'how to') introduction to ethnographic research. Students, working in groups, will undertake their own 'urban ethnography,' researching the urban life and culture of a Montreal neighborhood of their choosing.* Via relevant readings, students will learn about the epistemology, execution and ethics of fieldwork. Skill development, however, constitutes the central emphasis with students gaining 'hands on' experience collecting, analyzing and writing up qualitative data.

Course Materials

- **Textbook**
 - Warren, Carol and Tracey Xavia Karner. 2015. *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Ethnography, Interviews, Documents, and Images*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- **Reader**
 - Emerson, Robert, ed. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Illinois: Waveland.
- **Coursepack**

The textbook, reader and coursepack are available for purchase at the *Le James* McGill Bookstore (Parc Avenue location). The Warren and Karner text and Emerson readers are also 'on reserve' at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library. Any supplemental course materials (e.g., handouts) will be made available on *myCourses*, so please check the site regularly.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class Format: Seminar

Participation Class participation is an integral component of this course. The goal, for all of us, is to create a mutually-respectful space in which everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas, asking questions, etc... (even if they are not, in your estimation, particularly brilliant or profound). **You are expected to come to class always prepared with at least 1-2 questions on the week's assigned readings.** At any given point, I may call on you to ask what your questions are, so be ready! **You should, of course, always bring the assigned reading materials to class** because we will spend a great deal of our time and energy discussing the readings; having the materials on hand makes for easy reference and ultimately, a much more productive discussion.

Reading These are the kinds of questions you should be thinking about as you are doing your reading for this course in order to best process the materials:

1. What point/argument is the author trying to make?
2. How does the author go about supporting his/her point/argument? What kind of evidence is s/he relying on? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his/her point/argument?

* A sincere thanks goes to Professor Vang who wholly designed the research project that undergirds this course.

3. What are the implications of the author's point/argument?

Exercises

This seminar aims to introduce you to the craft of ethnographic research. Towards this end, the course entails in a number of methodological skill-building exercises (e.g., interviewing, coding). Details on each exercise following the 'Course Schedule' section of this syllabus.

Course Requirements:

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.

<i>Attendance</i> [†]	5%
<i>Participation</i> [†]	10%
Ethnographic Research Project	
Neighborhood Walk Through Survey, Consent Form, Sampling/Recruitment Strategy, Interview Guide [‡]	10%
Neighborhood Observation Fieldnotes [†]	10%
Interviews (two) [†]	10%
Coding/Memoing [‡]	20%
'Discovery Minute' Presentation [‡]	5%
Final Report [‡]	30%

† = Individual grade assessment

‡ = Group grade assessment

Peer Evaluation: Because much of the project is realized as a 'group,' I will be asking you to do a 'peer evaluation' at the end of term regarding the 'coding/memoing' and the 'final report.' They will be weighted at 20% of the total grade for each of these requirements. Please submit the 'peer evaluation' form (available on *myCourses*).

Please proofread all submitted work, spelling errors/typos are not acceptable. You will lose 1% of your assignment grade for any such errors (=1% *per error*).

Disability Accommodation: If you have a disability and require any special accommodations, please let me know.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: For each day that an assignment is late, the assignment grade will be lowered by half a grade (e.g., if your initial grade is a B- and you submit the assignment a day late, your final assignment grade will be a C+).

Equipment & Software

You will require some kind of recording device. You may have – or want to purchase – a digital voice recorder. Cell phones are also frequently equipped with recording capacity.

You will be required to use **MAXQDA** data analysis software for the purposes of transcribing and coding your data. You will be provided with a license to use this software (can be used on either Macs or PCs), temporarily, for the purposes of this course. We will spend some time in the classroom learning how to use the software. You will be expected to then work, on your own/as a group, with it. This software has many functions and features – far more than you can ever master in this class! The goal here is to merely show you a bit of how such software can support various aspects of qualitative research. If you are keen to learn more, www.maxqda.com offers a wealth of excellent resources (e.g., tutorials, videos, manuals), most of which are free, to further assist you in learning how to use this software.

Distraction-Free Zone

Student use of mobile computing (e.g., laptops) and communication devices (e.g., cell phones, recorders) are generally not permitted in this course. There will be a some occasions when we are 'working with' project data in class (e.g., coding) for which you (and/or your group) will be asked to bring a laptop. Otherwise, you are expected to rely on 'good old fashion' pen(cil) and paper.

General
Academic
Policies

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Course Schedule

Week #1 Monday, September 11

Topic: *Introduction*

Week #2 Monday, September 18

Topic: *What is Ethnography/Field Research?*

Required Reading:

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 1 “Introduction to Qualitative Methods.”
- ❖ **Reader:**
 - Howard Becker - “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research.”
 - Robert Emerson - “Introduction: The Development of Ethnographic Field Research.”
 - Robert Emerson - “Part I: The Face of Contemporary Ethnography.”
 - Martyn Hammersley - “Ethnography and Realism.”
 - Jack Katz - “On Ethnographic Warrants.”
- ❖ (*Posted on myCourses*) Irwin, Neil. 2017. “What if Sociologists Had as Much Influence as Economists?” *New York Times* March 17.

Week #3 Monday, September 25

Topic: *Ethical Considerations*

Required Reading:

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 2 “The Law, Politics and Ethics of Qualitative Research.”
- ❖ **Reader:**
 - Maxine Baca Zinn - “Insider Field Research in Minority Communities.”
 - Richard Leo - “Trials and Tribulations: Courts, Ethnography, and the Need for an Evidentiary Privilege for Academic Researchers.”
- ❖ (*Posted on myCourses*) Sampson, Natalie. 2014. “Quebec Ruling Supports Confidentiality of Researchers’ Interviews.” *University Affairs* March 5.

Week #4 Monday, October 2

Topic: *Doing Urban Ethnography/Fieldwork in the ‘City’*

Required Reading:

- ❖ **Reader:** Mitchell Duneier - “On the Evolution of Sidewalk.”
- ❖ **Coursepack:**
 - Sampson, Robert, Jeffery Morenoff and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. 2002. “Assessing ‘Neighborhood Effects’: Social Processes and New Directions in Research.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 443-78.
 - Small, Mario and Katherine Newman. 2001. “Urban Poverty after The Truly Disadvantaged: The Rediscovery of the Family, the Neighborhood, and Culture.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 23-45.
 - Whyte, William. [1943] 1993. “Introduction” and “Appendix A.” Pp. xv-xx and 279-357 in *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (4th edition) by William Whyte. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DUE:

You, individually, must do the TCPS 2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics (CORE) (available online at <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel>). Please also note that you must also complete ‘Module

9' and 'Module 10.' You should receive a 'Certificate of Completion' which you should print in hardcopy and submit to me in class (Week #4).

Week #5 **Monday, October 16**

Topics: *Sampling, Gaining Entrée and Building Rapport*

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 3 "Ethnography: Setting and Entrée." and Chapter 4 "Roles, Status, and Relationships in Ethnography."
 - ❖ **Reader:** Erving Goffman - "On Fieldwork."
 - ❖ **Coursepack:**
 - Bernard, H. Russell. 2013. "Nonprobability Sampling." Pp. 162-76 in *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* by H. Russell Bernard. California: Sage.
 - Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral." *Sociological Methods and Research* 10: 141-63.
 - Snow, David, Robert Benford and Leon Anderson. 1986. "Fieldwork Roles and Informational Yield: A Comparison of Alternative Settings and Roles." *Urban Life* 14: 377-408.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

In class, you will have time to work with your group on your sampling and recruitment strategies.

DUE:

By the start of Week #5, please send me an email informing your group's: 1) research site (i.e., In which neighborhood will you be carrying out your research?) and 2) research question(s). Also, because each of you, individually, will be expected to carry out a one-hour observation in your neighborhood as part of your project; please include your (tentative) ideas as to where you might undertake your observations (for my approval). Finally, you should also prepare a 'draft' consent form for your project (use the fillable template provided on *myCourses*) (send as an attachment to the email).

Week #6 **Monday, October 23** ****bring your laptop to class****

Topic: *Interviewing*

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 6 "The Interview: From Research Questions to Interview Questions." and Chapter 7 "The Interview: Interaction, Talk, and Text."
 - ❖ **Coursepack:**
 - Hermanowicz, Joseph. 2002. "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Interviewing People in Bed." *Qualitative Sociology* 25: 479-99.
 - Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." Pp. 152-72 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)* by Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin. California: Sage.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY (advance preparation required)

Each of you, on your own, should prepare a first 'draft' of your (group) interview guide (please bring a hard copy to class for your group members and me). In class, you will have time to work, in your group, to begin realizing your 'group' interview guide.

DUE:

By the start of Week #6, please submit to me (via email) a 1-2 page MSWord document detailing your group's sampling and recruitment strategies. Please bring your completed 'Neighborhood Walkthrough' survey to class (in hard copy).

Week#7 **Monday, October 30**

Topic: *From (Participant) Observation to Writing 'Fieldnotes'*

- ❖ **Text:** Chapter 5 "Writing Fieldnotes."

- ❖ **Reader:** Robert Emerson and Melvin Pollner - “Constructing Participant/Observation Relations.”
 - ❖ **Coursepack:** Kawulich, Barbara. 2005. “Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method.” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6(2): Article 43.
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DUE:

By the start of Week #7’s class, your group’s ‘final’ group interview guide should be sent to me i.e., as an email attachment.

Week #8 Monday, November 6

Topic: *Theorizing, Representing and Validating*

- ❖ **Reader:**
 - Paul Atkinson - “Ethnography and the Representation of Reality.”
 - Michael Bloor - “ Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research: A Critical Commentary.”
 - Robert Emerson - “Part III Producing Ethnographies: Theory, Evidence and Representation.”
 - ❖ **Coursepack:** Lincoln, Yvonne and Egon Guba. 1985. “Establishing Trustworthiness.” Pp. 289-327 in *Naturalistic Inquiry* by Yvonne Lincoln and Egon Guba. California: Sage.
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DUE:

By the start of Week #8’s class, each of you, individually, should submit to me ‘fieldnotes’ (rough jotting and typed) from your ‘neighborhood observation.’ These should be sent to me via email as an attachment (you should scan into a file your handwritten notes).

Week #9 Monday, November 13 **bring your laptop to class (and fully transcribed fieldnotes and/or first interviews)**

Topic: *Coding*

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 9 “Analyzing Qualitative Data: Fieldnotes, Transcripts, Documents, and Images.”
 - ❖ **Reader:** Kathy Charmaz - “Grounded Theory.”
 - ❖ **Coursepack:** Richards, Lyn. “Coding.” Pp. 83-103 in *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* by Lyn Richards. California: Sage.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

In class, you will be given some time to work, in your group, on developing an open coding strategy for your fieldnotes (from neighborhood observations) and/or first interview transcripts.

Week #10 Monday, November 20 **bring your laptop to class (and MAXQDA ‘project’ file)**

Topic: *Coding*

No assigned readings

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

In class, you will be given time to work, in your group, on your coding.

Week #11 Monday, November 27 **bring your laptop to class**

Topic: *Memoing*

- ❖ **Coursepack:**
 - Saldana, Jonny. 2009. “Writing Analytic Memos.” Pp. 32-44 in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Jonny Saldana. California: Sage.

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 2011. "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing." Pp. 179-99 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Second Edition) by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. New York: Free Press.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

You will be given some time to work, in your group, on 'processing' your data.

DUE:

By the start of class in Week #11, your group's MAXQDA 'project' **containing fully coded** fieldnotes and first interview transcripts should be submitted to me via email (Note: MAXQDA files can be easily sent as an attachment).

Week #12 **Monday, December 4**

Topic: *Writing Up Findings*

❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 10 "Writing Well."

❖ **Coursepack:**

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 2011. "Writing an Ethnography." Pp. 201-42 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Second Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - Weiss, Robert. 1994. "Writing the Report." Pp. 183-205 in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* by Robert Weiss. New York: Free Press.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

You should bring your 'project' materials to class as you will be given some time to work in your groups on the preparation of your 'Discovery Minute' presentations.

DUE:

PPSlides are due for your group's 'Discovery Minute' presentations – to be submitted to me via email (by 5 p.m. Monday, December 4th). Please use the PPSlide template up on *myCourses*.

Week #13: **Thursday, December 7th**

Topic: *'Discovery Minute' Presentations*

No assigned readings

DUE:

By the start of the last class, your group's **completed** MAXQDA project is due (submitted by email to me).

EXERCISES/ASSIGNMENTS

1. NEIGHBORHOOD OBSERVATION

You should select a public place/setting in your neighborhood – relevant to your research question(s) – to do an observation (Note: a ‘public’ site is one where there is no expectation of privacy). You want to find a comfortable location from which you can make your observations discretely (i.e., people aren’t aware they are being ‘observed’ and you are not interacting with them). Then, for one hour watch and listen. In your fieldnotes record: date/time, description of setting, and what is going in the space. Here, your core task is to take note of people’s concrete, specific actions and words, not your interpretations of them (that comes later!). In other words, watch and descriptively ‘jot’ down of what people do and say (to the extent you can hear them). You want to capture as much detail as possible. Any additional personal, theoretical or methodological comments you want to make during your observation should be kept separate from your description. Without delay, you should type up your jottings, converting them into fieldnotes. Your rough and rewritten notes are due **Week #8**.

2. INTERVIEWS

Each of you must conduct two face-to-face interviews. The timing of these will vary, dependent on your success with participant recruitment and ease of scheduling. I would strongly encourage you NOT to do your interviews ‘back to back.’ You want to take some time, after the first interview, to reflect on it – on your own, with your group members and with me/class – and then apply what you learned from your first ‘go’ in your second interview.

3. CODING/MEMOING

(You should read <http://www.maxqda.com/max12-tutorial/o-teamwork/o-2-alternately-working-on-the-same-project> before undertaking this. Note: Read ONLY N1 ‘Take Turns Working on the Same Project’).

You and your group member(s) are required to develop a coding strategy and apply it to your group’s ‘neighborhood observations’ (one per group member) and ‘interviews’ (two per group member). You will also be required to ‘memo’ – these memos can be done in MAXQDA. You will be required to submit the ‘project’ in MAXQDA twice as you undertaking these modes of data processing: initially, in **Week #11** (fieldnotes and first interviews coded) for my feedback and then, in **Week #13** (all data coded and memoing completed) for a grade.

4. ‘DISCOVERY MINUTE’

During the final class (**Week #13**), you and your group member(s) will have 10 minutes and (no more than) five PP slides to present the following: first, the focus of your ethnographic research (e.g., where, who, about what); second, two or three ‘themes’ that you’ve elected to focus on in your final report.

5. FINAL REPORT

Your group’s ‘final report’ is due Thursday, December 12th by 5 p.m. (emailed to me). It should be double-spaced and in MSWord (no PDFs). There are a couple of examples of final reports on *myCourses* that you may find helpful. The final report should contain the following:

Introduction (~1 page)

- Research Question(s)
- Method (i.e., How you methodologically approached answering your research question(s)?)

Discussion of 3 Themes (~15 pages) (if you are a group of 4, you may elect to do 4 themes)

Appendices – must include (in whatever order you like) (no page limit):

1. Description of your Sample (text and table)
2. Description of ‘Your’ Neighborhood (map and pictures are permissible additions)
3. Fieldwork ‘Reflection’ = reflection on the research experience (e.g., gaining entrée, positionality/power [identity, insider/outsider], ethical issues) – *may be done individually or as a group*
4. Neighborhood Walkthrough Survey
5. Interview Guide

MONTREAL NEIGHBORHOODS†



- Ahuntsic-Cartierville
- Anjou
- Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce
- Lachine
- LaSalle
- Le Plateau-Mont-Royal
 - The Plateau
 - Mile End
 - Little Portugal
- Le Sud-Ouest
 - Griffintown
 - Pointe-Saint-Charles
 - St. Henri
- L'Île-Bizard–Sainte-Genève
- Mercier–Hochelega-Maisonneuve
- Montréal-Nord
- Outremont
- Pierrefonds-Roxboro
- Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles
- Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie
 - Little Italy
- Saint-Laurent
- Saint-Léonard
 - Città Italiana
- Verdun
- Ville-Marie
 - Downtown Montreal
 - Old Montreal
 - Chinatown
 - Gay Village

† Source (Image): “ArrondissementsQuartiersMontreal.svg” from Wikimedia Commons.

- Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension
 - Park Extension
 - Greektown
- West Island
- Westmount

ADDITIONAL READING SUGGESTIONS (ETHNOGRAPHIC)

- Anderson, Elijah. 1990. *Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Belmonte, Thomas. 1979. *The Broken Fountain*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bourgeois, Philippe. 2002. *In Search of Respect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourgeois, Phillippe and Jeffrey Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopfiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Duneier, Mitch. 1992. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Duneier, Mitch. 2000. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Halperin, Rhoda. 1998. *Practicing Community: Class, Culture and Power in an Urban Neighborhood*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Kwong, Peter. 1996. *The New Chinatown*. New York: Macmillan.
- McLeod, Jay. 1987. *Ain't No Makin' It*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Sharff, Jagna. 1997. *King Kong on 4th Street: Families and the Violence of Poverty on the Lower East Side*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Stack, Carol. 1983. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Basic Books.
- Newman, Katherine. 2000. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Random House.