

**Sociology 600: *Qualitative Research Methods 1***  
Winter 2017

*Class Location:* LEA 819  
*Class Meeting Time:* Mondays 10:35 a.m. – 12: 25 p.m.  
*Professor:* Elaine Weiner  
*Office Address:* Leacock 732  
*Office Hours:* Wednesdays 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. or by appointment  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

Students are introduced the craft of qualitative inquiry via relevant readings and ‘hands on’ training. The early phases of qualitative inquiry are mainly considered from research design to data collection. The core objectives are:

- 1) to appreciate the ethical issues implicated in ‘human subjects’ research;
- 2) to apprehend the epistemology of qualitative research;
- 3) to develop some familiarity with common qualitative research techniques and the practicalities of their use;
- 4) to learn how to code qualitative data using qualitative data analysis software;
- 5) to begin the process of data ‘sense-making’ via memo-writing.

**Course Materials**

All assigned readings are available for download on *MYCOURSES*.

**Course Organization and Requirements**

**Class format:** Seminar format (supplemented by lab exercises).

Note: There is no scheduled class in week #12. In place of this, you are expected to attend at least one open lab session (scheduled outside of our regular class time). Two open labs will be held in LEA 212 on Tuesday, February 21 and Thursday, February 23 from 4:15 until 5:15 p.m.

**Course Requirements:**

There are two different grading rubrics that are based on whether you work with primary or secondary data in this course.

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Participation = 20% ( <i>attendance = 5%, preparedness 5%, discussion contribution 10%</i> )	Attendance/Participation = 20% ( <i>attendance = 5%, preparedness 5%, discussion contribution 10%</i> )
Discussion Facilitation = 15%	Discussion Facilitation = 15%
Exercises	Exercises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Interviewing – 20%</i></li><li>• <i>Coding – 10%</i></li><li>• <i>Memoing – 15%</i></li><li>• <i>Assessing Quality – 15%</i></li><li>• <i>Challenge ‘Chat’ – 5%</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Coding – 15%</i></li><li>• <i>Memoing – 30%</i></li><li>• <i>Assessing Quality – 15%</i></li><li>• <i>Challenge ‘Chat’ – 5%</i></li></ul>

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

**Data**

You are required to work with qualitative data as part of this course. This may entail primary data you collect or secondary data (available in the public domain). Importantly, all research involving human subjects must be reviewed by one of McGill’s Research Ethics Boards (REBs). **You are not permitted to conduct any research UNTIL you have a McGill REB’s approval (as well as any other necessary approvals).** For more on

McGill's policies regarding research involving 'human participants,' please see <https://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human>. Requisite forms and guidelines, pertinent to this course, are available on *MYCOURSES*. Examples of required application materials (e.g., consent form, draft interview guide) are also provided to you via *MYCOURSES*.

Alternatively, you may rely on a secondary data source of your choosing. Use of such material generally does not require REB approval. You might elect to go directly to an archive of material (e.g., oral history interviews, documents) such as:

- Alive in Truth: The New Orleans Disaster Oral History and Memory Project <http://www.aliveintruth.com/stories.html>
- American Institute of Physics Oral History Interviews <https://www.aip.org/history-programs/niels-bohr-library/oral-histories/browse/a>
- Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project <http://www.densho.org/archives/>
- Genocide Archive of Rwanda Collection <http://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php/COLLECTIONS>

You might also search some of the compilations of such sites for material of interest. For example, see History Matters at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/online.html> or the Oral History Association site at <http://www.oralhistory.org/centers-and-collections/>. **Please note that some sites only provide recordings (versus transcripts) and thus, will necessitate transcription.**

### Software & Equipment

I recommend **EXPRESS SCRIBE** (available for free download at [www.nch.com.au/scribe/](http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/)), should you require transcription software. You are welcome, however, to explore other options. We will be using **MAXQDA 12** for data analysis. We will spend some time in and outside the classroom learning to use this software; additionally, [www.maxqda.com](http://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. You will also be given a 70-day student trial version of the software for home use (you should download the trial version in the 30-days prior to). This software is also available for use on computers located in the Ferrier building (840 Dr. Penfield) for up to five users at a time. The Department of Sociology also holds seven 'portable' licenses available for loan to its graduate students.

If you are collecting primary data, you may require an audio recorder. Mobile phones are frequently equipped with recording capacity. Software is also available for computers and tablets for such purposes. Or, you may consider investing in a digital voice recorder.

### Exercises

This seminar is, in part, intended to develop your qualitative research skills. Towards this end, you are required to engage in a number of skill-building exercises (e.g., coding). Details on each exercise are located on the last page of this syllabus. You will be graded on each exercise. All exercises should be completed (and submitted) by the final day of class. Submission deadlines for the exercises are somewhat flexible because progress on data collection and analysis will vary (e.g., due to timing of REB approval, interview scheduling). You should aim, however, for the following in terms of deadlines: 1) Interviewing (weeks 6-8) 2) Coding (weeks 7-9) 3) Memoing (weeks 10-13) and 4) Assessing Quality (weeks 11-13).

### 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 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.

### Discussion Facilitation

Every student is required to act as part of a discussion facilitation team once during the semester. Listed below are some guidelines as to how to prepare for this role.

#### Guidelines:

Facilitating a discussion requires that you be familiar with the assigned materials. Familiarity does not, however, mean mastery. The main purpose of class discussion is to move everyone together towards mastery. In order to prepare yourself to facilitate you should:

- read and study the assigned materials (e.g., underlining important and/or interesting points, writing notes/comments/questions in the margins)

- contemplate and jot down the main issues raised by the author(s) and a few questions relating to these issues (e.g., what do you find provocative, controversial, confusing, etc...?)
- prepare a ~10-15 minute presentation which:
  - summarizes the main points/issues/arguments of assigned readings (*providing an outline to your classmates may be helpful*)
  - relates the readings to ideas covered in previous discussions, etc...
  - ends with the identification of several discussion questions/issues in order to launch the class discussion (*again, providing a list of questions/issues to your classmates might be beneficial in facilitating discussion*)

General  
Academic  
Policies

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).*

*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.*

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: January 9

**Topic(s):** *Course Introduction/Overview*

NO READINGS

### Week 2: January 16

**Topic(s):** *Positionality: Ethics and Power*

- Allen, Charlotte. 1997. "Spies Like Us: When Sociologists Deceive Their Subjects." *Lingua Franca* 7(9): 31-39.
- Baca Zinn, Maxine. 1979. "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations of an Insider." *Social Problems* 27(2): 209-19.
- Blee, Kathleen and Ashley Currier. 2011. "Ethics Beyond the IRB: An Introductory Essay." *Qualitative Sociology* 34: 401-13.
- Clark, Carolyn and Barbara Sharf. 2007. "The Dark Side of Truth(s): Ethical Dilemmas in Researching the Personal." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(3): 339-416.
- McCorkel, Jill and Kristen Meyers. 2003. "What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field." *Qualitative Sociology* 26(2): 199-231.
- Robertson, Jennifer. 2002. "Reflexivity Redux: A Pithy Polemic on 'Positionality.'" *Anthropological Quarterly* 75(4): 785-92.
- Tolich, Martin. 2004. "Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants." *Qualitative Sociology* 27: 101-6.

### Week 3: January 23

**Topic(s):** *Methodological Approaches: Ethnography and Extended/Case Study*

- Burawoy, Michael. 2000. "Introduction: Reach for the Global." Pp. 1-39 in *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, edited by Michael Burawoy et al. Berkeley: University of California Press. (For download, see <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/books.htm#GE>)
- Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16(1): 4-33.
- DeVault, Marjorie. 2006. "Introduction: What is Institutional Ethnography?" *Social Problems* 53(3): 294-98.
- Haney, Lynne. 2000. "Global Discourses of Need." Pp. 48-73 in *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, edited by Michael Burawoy et al. Berkeley: University of California Press. (For download, see <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/books.htm#GE>)
- Markham, Annette. 2013. "Fieldwork in Social Media: What Would Malinowski Do?" *Qualitative Communication Research* 2(4): 434-46.
- Wang, Leslie. 2013. "Unequal Logics of Care: Gender, Globalization, and Volunteer Work of Expatriate Wives in China." *Gender & Society* 27(4): 538-60.

### Week 4: January 30

**Topic(s):** *Methodological Approaches: Discourse (Text) and Narrative (Story)*

- Haney, Lynne and Miranda March. 2003. "Married Fathers and Caring Daddies: Welfare Reform and the Discursive Politics of Paternity." *Social Problems* 50(4): 461-81.
- Oberhuber, Florian and Michal Krzyzanowski. 2008. "Discourse Analysis and Ethnography." Pp.182-203 in *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzankowski. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Saurette, Paul and Kelly Gordon. 2013. "Arguing Abortion: The New Anti-Abortion Discourse in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46(1): 157-85.
- Somers, Margaret and Gloria Gibson. 1994. "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity." Pp. 37-99 in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, edited by Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weiner, Elaine. 2005. "No (Wo)Man's Land: The Post-Socialist Purgatory of Czech Female Factory Workers." *Social Problems* 52(4): 572-92.

### Week 5: February 6

**Topic(s):** *Sample and Site in Qualitative Research; Collecting Qualitative Data*

- Curtis, Sarah et al. 2000. "Approaches to Sampling and Case Selection in Qualitative Research: Examples in the Geography of Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 50: 1001-14.

- Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There...and There...and There! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography* 4(2): 201-16.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "'How Many Cases Do I Need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10: 5-38.
- Reybold, L. Earle et. al. 2012. "Participant Selection as a Conscious Research Method: Thinking Forward and the Deliberation of 'Emergent' Findings." *Qualitative Research* 13(6): 1-18.

#### Week 6: February 13

##### **Topic(s):** *Collecting Qualitative Data*

- Harrington, Brooke. 2002. "Obtrusiveness as a Strategy in Ethnographic Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1): 49-61.
- Lofland, John et al. 2005. "Data Logging in Intensive Interviewing: Guide and Write-Ups." Pp. 99-117 in *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* by John Lofland et al. California: Thompson.
- Peabody Robert et al. 1990. "Interviewing Political Elites." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23(2): 451-55.
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Herbert. 2005. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." Pp. 152-172 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)* by Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin. California: Sage.

#### Week 7: February 20

##### **Topic(s):** *Collecting Qualitative Data; Analyzing Qualitative Data – Coding*

- Gibbs, Graham. 2008. "Thematic Coding and Categorizing." Pp. 38-55 in *Analyzing Qualitative Data* by Graham Gibbs. California: Sage.
- Miles, Matthew, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldana. 2014. "Fundamentals of Qualitative Data Analysis." Pp. 69-103 in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* by Matthew Miles, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldana. Sage: California.
- Rapley, Tim. 2008. "Exploring Documents." Pp. 111-24 in *Doing Conversation, Discourse and Document Analysis* by Tim Rapley. California: Sage.
- Richards, Lyn. 2005. "Coding." Pp. 84-103 in *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* by Lyn Richards. California: Sage.
- Weston, Cynthia et al. 2001. "Analyzing Interview Data: The Development and Evolution of a Coding System." *Qualitative Sociology* 24: 381-400.

STUDY BREAK – February 27-March 3

#### Week 8: March 6

##### **Topic(s):** *Analyzing Qualitative Data – Memo-Writing*

- Birks, Melanie et. al. 2008. "Memoing in Qualitative Research: Probing Data and Processes." *Journal of Research in Nursing* 13(1): 68-75.
- Miles, Matthew et al. 2014. "Drawing and Verifying Conclusions." Pp. 275-321 in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* by Matthew Miles, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldana. California: Sage.
- Richards, Lyn. 2005. "Up From the Data." Pp. 66-83 in *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* by Lyn Richards. California: Sage.
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "The First Phase of Analysis" and "Analyzing Coded Data." Pp. 201-45 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* by Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin. California: Sage.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2009. "Writing Analytic Memos." Pp. 32-44 in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Johnny Saldana. California: Sage.

#### Week 9: March 13

##### **Topic(s):** *Theorizing Qualitative Data*

- Eisenhart, Kathleen. 1989. "Building Theories from Case Study Research." *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 532-50.
- Maxwell, Joseph. 2004. "Using Qualitative Methods for Causal Explanation." *Field Methods* 16(3): 243-64.
- Richards, Lyn. 2005. "Seeing the Whole." Pp. 163-81 in *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* by Lyn Richards. California: Sage.
- Snow, David, Calvin Morrill and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory." *Ethnography* 4(1): 41-61.

- Timmermans, Stefan and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30(3): 167-86.

Week 10: March 20

**METHODS SHOWCASE**

Week 11: March 27

**Topic(s):** *Writing Up Qualitative Findings: Audience, Voice, Structure*

- Gilgun, Jane. 2014. "Writing Up Qualitative Research." Pp. 658-76 in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Golden, Biddle, Karen and Karen Locke. 1993. "Appealing Work: An Investigation of How Ethnographic Texts Convince." *Organization Science* 4(4): 595-616.
- Pratt, Michael. 2009. "For the Lack of a Boilerplate: Tips on Writing Up (and Reviewing) Qualitative Research." *Academy of Management Journal* 52(5): 856-616.
- Tracy, Sarah. 2010. "Qualitative Quality: Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(10): 837-51.

Week 12: April 3

**NO CLASS**

Week 13: April 10

**THE CHALLENGE 'CHAT'**

## EXERCISES

### 1. INTERVIEWING (*only pertains to students collecting primary data involving interviews*)

You must design (and refine) an interview guide – that is, a list of questions and/or topics – that you intend explore with your research participants. You should craft your guide and obtain my feedback on its design prior to your first interview. Ideally, following the first interview, you should submit a copy of the transcribed interview to me for feedback. Should this not prove feasible, we must at least discuss your initial interview experience prior to any further interviews being undertaken.

### 2. CODING

**If you are collecting primary data**, you are to code at least two transcripts/texts. **If you are relying on secondary data**, you are required to code at least four transcripts/texts. Ideally, you can code multiple transcripts which will better allow you to develop a proper coding schema. You are required to submit your first coded transcript to me **before** going on to code further transcripts/texts. You should wait for my feedback on how you are coding before you resume (and complete) your coding exercise.

### 3. MEMOING

**If you are collecting primary data**, you are required to write at least one memo in which you begin the process of making sense of your data (~4-5 pages each, double-spaced); **students relying on secondary data** are required to write at least two memos. A memo can serve as a theory-building exercise, for instance, it might entail reflecting on a relationship between different pieces of your data (e.g., if studying a social movement, you might compare the leadership styles of its leaders and potentially relate your observations to the literature on leadership in social movements). A memo can also constitute a methodological reflection in which you consider your data in some methodological regard (e.g., ethical dilemma, epistemological tension). I would encourage you to write different types of memos.

### 4. ASSESSING QUALITY (in Qualitative Scholarship)

You must select one article that relies principally on qualitative data published (in the past decade) in one of the three following journals, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces* or *Social Problems*. You may also choose an article from a top-tier journal in a given subfield such as ‘gender’ (e.g., *Gender & Society*) or social movements (e.g., *Mobilization*); however, in this instance, please obtain my approval as to your chosen journal. Your assessment should be ~3-4 pages, double-spaced.

*You should answer/discuss the following:*

1. What research question(s) did the researcher(s) seek to answer?
2. What method(s) of data collection were used? Did the method(s), in your view, best ‘fit’ the question? Why (or why not)?
3. How did the researcher(s) select who to talk to/interview, what to observe, etc...? How convincing/compelling was the sampling, analysis (e.g., coding), etc...? Explain why.
4. How did the researcher(s) present the data (e.g., quotes in text, tables)? How convincing/compelling was the mode of presentation? Explain why.
5. How well did the interpretation(s) extend from the data (i.e., did you ‘buy’ the conclusions drawn)? Explain.

### 5. THE CHALLENGE ‘CHAT’ (slides due by noon Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>)

You are to prepare one to three PowerPoint slides (**absolutely NO more than three**) that lays out, in brief, your ‘project’ and identifies one challenge that you encountered. You will have 5-7 minutes to summate the challenge and how you were able (or unable) to resolve it. This could be a methodological challenge (e.g., gaining access) or a more analytic one.