

Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
Illinois State University  
**SOC 472 (Sec.1) *Qualitative Research Design & Analysis*<sup>1</sup>**  
Spring 2020

Instructor: Chris Wellin  
Meets: Tuesdays, 3:25-6:25pm.  
Classroom: Schroeder 208  
Office Hours: Tues., 10-11; Thurs., 2-3:30 (& by appt.)

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Catalogue description: *An in-depth exploration of qualitative methods, both data collection techniques and data analysis. Design of qualitative research involving theoretical and methodological aspects of sociological problems.*

Qualitative methodologies, and the research based on these approaches, make invaluable contributions to our stock of knowledge about the social world. Qualitative research reflects an array of specific practices (e.g., interviewing, participant observation, immersive ethnography, archival research), and has varied theoretical roots—from the Weberian call for *verstehen* (sympathetic understanding) in depicting “meaningful social action,” to the American tradition of *pragmatism*, which informed symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School(s) of sociology in the early and mid-Twentieth Century. Notwithstanding enduring debates about the philosophical premises and practical applications of qualitative research, there is general agreement that these approaches offer insights into the meaningful, contextual, emergent and dynamic character of social life. This focus on human *agency* is essential to the richly descriptive nature of the best qualitative research and offers a corrective to accounts of social life which may otherwise be too deductive or removed from the empirical “life world” in which we live.

In a seminar of this kind, one inevitably faces choices about how to balance more abstract arguments about qualitative inquiry (e.g., engaging philosophical, theoretical, political and historical dimensions) versus more practical discussions about the “doing” of social research. In our seminar we will address both, but the emphasis will be on the latter—on refining our ability to read, evaluate, critique, integrate and carry out qualitative research. Also, while we will center our discussions in academic literature and discourse, we will be equally interested in the application of qualitative inquiry to policy debates and/or what has come to be known as *public* sociology and related fields. Well-crafted qualitative studies not only complement theoretical understanding but are equally powerful in informing policy debates and/or evaluation of social programs. The specific objectives and applications of these approaches that emerge as most salient for us this semester will reflect the agendas of seminar members. Therefore, I am committed to making our work as useful and relevant as possible for members, whatever your specific plans or goals may be—intellectually and professionally.

### **Teaching Format and Teaching Philosophy in the Digital Age**

As befits a small, advanced seminar, we will devote limited to lecture. Though my style as a teacher is informal and conversational, there will always be a clear agenda and structure for my remarks.

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<sup>1</sup> In constructing this seminar, I have benefitted from discussions and written material from several ISU colleagues. I especially thank Diane Bjorklund, Tom Gerschick, Virginia Gill, Barbara Heyl, Gina Hunter, and Maura Toro-Morn.

Our goal will be to sustain an interactive environment, in which my opening comments will help to frame our discussions of topics and readings. I will supplement these remarks with quasi-weekly memos, sent out via Reggie net; these messages will help to clarify and connect discussion topics and certainly support and elaborate on issues that appear in your notes. I'll ask you to review your notes and, always, to raise areas of confusion; this practice will help enhance the quality of my role and your learning.

Our sessions are lengthy, at nearly three-hours each, and we will vary the presentation with student-led discussions, guest speakers, and occasional videos. In the final weeks, student-led presentations will be central.

In the current age of smart classrooms and raised expectations about classroom technology and learning, it seems pertinent to affirm my teaching philosophy and what I have learned about how people learn over the years. Learning is a process that is deeply personal, multi-faceted, and takes place over time. Given that, I feel very strongly about the following issues:

1. *I do not want any open computers during class time.* During our lengthy periods (always divided by a 15-minute break) we will disconnect completely from the world and be present with each other taking about, reading, and thinking about the complexities of understanding and doing qualitative research.
2. You can bring your technology to class, but my preference is for you to put it away for most of the class unless we may need for any reason in class. The same applies to your phones. Please turn them off and put them away.
3. We will generate written notes per class, thus you will also play an important role taking notes, requiring you to pay close attention. Learning requires that you take ownership of the material discussed in class by taking notes.
4. We will always try to discuss the most relevant points of the reading, knowing that sometimes the reading may be challenging, but learning is ultimately your responsibility. I will always welcome and respond to questions (via email and directly) about course material. ***In writing to me via email, please kindly use the email channel in Reggie net; this will ensure that your important messages aren't overlooked and that all correspondence involving members is in one place.***
5. I feel personally invested in your learning and will make every effort to help you along the way, but you must be an active and responsible participant. For individual discussions and/or advising, I will honor office hours faithfully and be willing to arrange other times if/as those do not fit your schedule.

### **Disabilities Accommodations**

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

### **Assigned Readings**

Macleod, Jay (2009). *Ain't No Makin' It* (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Boulder CO: Westview Press.

*All other readings will be furnished as pdf files, distributed to members via Reggie Net email.*

*\*IF you have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of MacLeod, that's fine; we'll summarize the final follow-up chapter.*

## Assignments and Grading

Credit in the seminar will be earned through a series of writing assignments, along with the level and quality of engagement in class sessions (both through discussion and presentations). There are 1000 total points to be earned, with a conventional grading scheme (90% and above=A, etc.).

125 pts. for a personal/reflective essay on nature and value of qualitative research in your career;  
175 pts. for a review of an ethnographic book/monograph that is relevant to your interests;  
200 pts. for a draft/literature review of sources that are relevant to your interests;  
350 pts. for a “final” qualitative research proposal, including and expanding on literature review;  
150 pts. for the consistency and quality of participation (both online and in class) = 1000 pts.

*Effective, clear writing is a product of time, constructive critique, and revision. I will always accept and comment on written work, if it is submitted at least three days (72 hours) prior to the due date. This is not required, but available. All written work should be proofread for clarity and organization, and members should observe guidelines regarding length and formatting of written work.*

### Detailed Schedule of Topics, Tasks, Readings \*Qualitative methods (QMs) below.

Meeting date	Central objective(s)	Assigned readings
January 14	Introduce seminar/members	none
January 21	Place of QMs in social research	Becker (1986); Ragin (1994); Burawoy (1998 <i>Optional</i> )
<b>January 27</b>	<b>Personal/reflective essay</b>	<b>DUE by 10pm Monday via ReggieNet.</b>
January 28	Place of QMs in social research II	Weber (1968); Hendricks (1995)
February 4	Ethnography, QMs & careers	Wellin (2001); Becker (1996);
February 11	Participant observation	Goffman (1989); Becker (1993); Snow & Anderson (1993); Emerson et al. (1995)
<b>February 16</b>	<b>Review of ethnography you choose</b>	<b>DUE by 10pm Sunday via ReggieNet.</b>
February 18	Qualitative interviewing	Heyl (2001); Holstein & Gubrium (1995); DeVault (1990); Jaffe & Wellin (2008)
February 25	Ethical considerations in QMs/research	IRB forms from ISU’s website; TBA
March 3	QMs, literary tropes and controversies	Marcus & Fisher (1986); A. Goffman critique (exchange with Lubet [2015]); Diamond (1992)
<b>March 6</b>	<b>Draft lit. review for your project</b>	<b>DUE by 10pm Friday via ReggieNet.</b>
March 10	<b>Spring Break (no class)</b>	
March 17	Approaches to analysis	Glaser & Strauss (1967); Charmaz (2014); E. Wellin (1955) ( <i>Inductive analysis</i> )
March 24	Discussions/presentations of proposals	TBA

March 31	Reading ethnography	MacLeod (2009): <i>xi--153</i>
April 7	Reading ethnography II	MacLeod (2009) Part two: 157-270 (skim pt. 3)
April 14	Student proposals	(four members will present for 40 min's each)
April 21	Student proposals II	(four members will present for 40 min's each)
April 28	Conclude the semester	(four members will present for 40 min's each)

**May 10      *Qualitative research proposal (including literature review) DUE by 10pm, ReggieNet.***

Syllabi Disclaimer

Please consider this syllabus as a general outline, a work in progress document. The syllabus is meant to keep us organized, expectations clear, and provide a shared overview of our intellectual journey. But, we must always plan for the unexpected thus during the course of the semester. Further, I reserve the right to make modifications in to make our lives easier. In some cases, I may change the reading, an assignment, or make some modifications to the grading rubric. I will always announce any changes with in advance and in consultation with members.