Overview
This course is designed to introduce you to a variety of qualitative research methods. Focus is placed on field methods and on gathering and analyzing multiple forms of qualitative data. The course begins with a discussion of qualitative research design, including research ethics, literature reviews, and case selection. We will pay particular attention to the place of qualitative methods in sociology by examining qualitative methods as a form of knowledge production and through understanding what assumptions undergird qualitative analysis. We will also spend time discussing specific methods, including, but not limited to, content analysis, interviewing, and ethnographic observation. The course then turns to the tasks of coding and analyzing data as well as disseminating findings. We will discuss the evaluation of evidence, and we will cover debates, controversies, and dilemmas in qualitative methods. Throughout the course, there will be activities that will help you hone qualitative research skills and create qualitative research tools. By the end of this course, you should be able to effectively evaluate the benefits and limitations of qualitative research approaches as well as understand how to craft and implement a qualitative research project.

Readings
There are three books required for this course, listed below. All other readings will be posted on Blackboard or are available electronically via the FSU Libraries site.


Requirements
You will be evaluated in the course based on the following major components:

*Attendance and participation*: This is a seminar and workshop, and your participation, attendance, and active engagement with the course material,
assignments, and class discussions will be critical to its success. I expect attendance at all sessions; if you need to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time if at all possible. You should have completed all readings before the start of each class and bring your notes, along with any assignment that is due, to class, with discussion points in mind. Given that we all come to research with different backgrounds, training, and epistemological assumptions, I expect students to engage in thoughtful and respectful discussions in class.

**CITI training:** You will be expected to complete a Responsible Conduct of Research training course sponsored by FSU. Once you have finished the training, you should turn in a printout confirming your completion. Please visit the following FSU site to begin the process: [http://gradschool.fsu.edu/Academics-Research/Research-and-Scholarly-Integrity/FSU-s-CITI-Courses](http://gradschool.fsu.edu/Academics-Research/Research-and-Scholarly-Integrity/FSU-s-CITI-Courses)

**Journal article review:** You are expected to provide a one-page single-spaced memo reviewing a journal article that uses qualitative methods. The choice of article is up to you, but preferably it should come from a well-respected sociology journal. You should attend to the following questions in your memo: What are the author’s research questions? What are the methods used by the author? Are these methods appropriate for the research questions? How so? What conclusions does the author reach? Do the data support these conclusions? What, if anything, would you do differently if you were to tackle this research project? Do the research methods in this article inform your own research at all?

**Situational map:** You will turn in a one-page situational map of your research topic along with a very brief memo. More details will be discussed in class.

**Interview schedule:** You will draft an interview schedule, practice interviewing skills in class, and revise the interview schedule. More details will be covered in class.

**Ethnographic observation memo:** You are expected to observe interactions within a public place (preferably a place that might be relevant to your research interests) for at least one hour and draft an ethnographic observation memo. More details will be covered in class.

**Critical reflection:** For week 8, you are to turn in either a one-page single-spaced critical reflection of the readings for week 8 or a one-page single-spaced review of the methods used in Dr. Armstrong’s colloquium lecture. More details will follow.

**Research proposal:** The major project for this course is to propose an independent research project (which does not necessarily have to be qualitative) that may serve as a roadmap for your Masters paper, grant proposal, or journal article. Your research proposal should include clear research questions, discussion of previous literature and how your research will fill a gap or elaborate previous research, an explanation of the data to be collected and how the data will be analyzed, and a reflection on the broader significance of the project (e.g., theoretical and/or
empirical contributions, policy engagement). Importantly, your final research proposal should include a one-page single-spaced addendum explaining how you plan to proceed logistically with data collection and data management, which would include your plan for an IRB submission for this project if you plan to study human subjects. We will talk more at length about all of these requirements in class, and you will work on and revise segments of this project throughout the semester.

**Assessment**
Your final grade in this course will be based on the following:

- **Attendance and participation**: 20%
- **Exercises and small assignments**: 30%
  - CITI training completion (5%)
  - Journal article review (5%)
  - Situational map and memo (5%)
  - Interview schedule (5%)
  - Ethnographic observation memo (5%)
  - Week 8 critical reflection (5%)
- **Research proposal**: 50%
  - Draft of research questions (2%)
  - Revised draft of research questions (2%)
  - Annotated bibliography (6%)
  - Rough draft of literature review (5%)
  - Rough draft of proposal (5%)
  - Final draft of proposal (30%)

**Policies**

*University Attendance Policy*

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children or close family members experience illness.

*Academic Honor Policy*

In the academic setting it is critical that the work you present is original and that you cite outside sources rigorously and appropriately. Please see me if you have a question about plagiarism. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “…be honest and truthful and…[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy](http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy)).
Disabilities Policy
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center as well as bring me a letter indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

Syllabus Change Policy
Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation of your performance in this course, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Introductions and Course Overview
January 6

Week 2: Orienting to Qualitative Research Projects
January 13  Guest Lecture: Harry Barbee

Readings:
  - “General Guidance for Developing Qualitative Research Projects” (pp. 9-16)
  - “Recommendations for Designing, Evaluating, and Strengthening Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences” (pp. 17-19)
  - “Designing Qualitative Research Projects” by Susan S. Silbey (pp. 121-125)
• “A Note on Science and Qualitative Research” by Sudhir Venkatesh (pp. 141-144)

  - pp. 10-14, 17

**Due in class:**
- Draft of research questions (What are your broad interests? Write down five or six questions associated with your research interests.)

**Week 3: Research Ethics**

*January 20*

**Readings:**
- American Sociological Association Code of Ethics
- Review FSU’s Institutional Review Board site

**Due in Class:**
- Revised draft of research questions (Revised research ideas from week 2: write down two or three research questions in addition to a paragraph that details how you might approach these questions, such as through fieldwork, use of existing data, etc. How might qualitative methods help you answer your research question(s)?)

**Week 4: Reviewing the Literature**

*January 27*  
Meet in Strozier, Instructional Room 107A

**Readings:**

**Due in Class:**
- CITI completion certificate
Week 5: Research Design, Case Selection, and Gathering Data
February 3

Readings:

Due in class:
- Journal article review

Week 6: Content Analysis and Using Text as Data
February 10

Readings:

Due in class:
- Annotated bibliography of at least 10 sources related to your research question(s)

Week 7: Introduction to Interviewing
February 17  

Guest Lecture: Dr. Irene Padavic

Readings:

*Note: Professor Elizabeth A. Armstrong from the University of Michigan will be presenting a seminar in the department on February 18. Details to follow.

Due in class:
- A copy of your draft interview schedule along with a brief statement about goals for the interview (what do you want to accomplish; what do you want to know?)

Week 8: Interviewing, Continued
February 24
Readings:

Due in class:
- Week 8 critical reflection
- Revised interview schedule

**Week 9: Ethnographic Observation and Field Notes**  
**March 2**

Readings:

Due in class:
- Ethnographic observation memo

**Week 10: NO CLASS. Happy Spring Break!**  
**March 9**

**Week 11: Coding, Analysis, and Memos**  
**March 16**

Readings:


Due in Class:
- Situational map assignment
Week 12: Concepts, Theory, and Analysis  
March 23

Readings:

Due in class:
- Literature review draft, which should include at least 20 sources

Week 13: Dilemmas and Debates in Qualitative Research  
March 30

Readings (choose one of the following three cases):
Case A

Case B

Case C

Due in class:
- None
Week 14: Writing, Publishing, and Engaging the Public
April 6

Readings:
- Becker, Howard S. 1986. “One Right Way” (Chapter 3) and “Getting It out the Door” (Chapter 7) of *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. The University of Chicago Press.

*From the following three, pick the one that is most relevant to your project:*

Due in class:
- None

Week 15: NO CLASS. Southern Sociological Society Conference!
April 13

Week 16: Writing Workshop
April 20

Readings:
- None

Bring to class:
- Proposal draft

Final draft of proposal due April 27 by 2pm.