

SOCI 503
Qualitative Research Design and Techniques
2020-2021, Term 1
Schedule: Wednesdays 9am-11:30am

Acknowledgment: UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. I will be teaching this course from campus and am grateful to work and live on this land.

Professor: Sinikka Elliott
Email: Sinikka.elliott@ubc.ca

Virtual Office hours: Wed. 1pm-3pm
<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/4735162209?pwd=C6uN3oL8k38>
Meeting ID: 473 516 2209
Passcode: 411695

Informal office hours will also be held in our virtual classroom after class from 11:30-12pm on Wednesdays

Pandemic Changes: Given the COVID-19 pandemic state, the University of British Columbia has directed all UBC programs to postpone or redesign courses to be delivered online (COVID-19 – Status of summer terms, UBC Broadcast March 25, 2020). As a result, this course has been redesigned to be delivered online.

Course Description: This course is an introduction to qualitative research methods in sociology, focusing predominantly on participant observation and in-depth interviewing. The course will provide the tools needed to get started on a qualitative study. The goals of this course are 1) to examine the philosophy and epistemology of qualitative methods, 2) to explore the strengths and limitations of this approach, and 3) to develop the skills to design a qualitative research project, gather qualitative data, and begin to analyze qualitative research. The course is designed as the first of a two-course sequence together with SOCI 515, which focuses on data analysis.

Course Objectives: After completing this course, you should be able to:

- 1) Explain the underlying assumptions of qualitative research methods;
- 2) Identify research questions and the appropriate method(s) to answer them;
- 3) Evaluate the quality of study design in the social science work you read;
- 4) Develop the skills to conduct and begin to analyze field research, including participant observation and in-depth interviews;
- 5) Design your own qualitative research project.

Required Texts:

- 1) Charmaz, Kathy, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- 2) Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- 3) Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 4) Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- 5) Additional readings will be available on the course website (www.canvas.ubc.ca) under Modules.

Note about ebooks and book purchasing: I realize purchasing books may be more complicated these days and some students have switched to ebooks. I have looked into ebook options from the library and here is what I've learned: An ebook version of #3 can be borrowed from the UBC library under an unlimited use license (an unlimited number of users can check out the book simultaneously). The library can allow three simultaneous users to check out an ebook for #4. Unfortunately, ebooks are not available to borrow from the library for the other two books. However, the librarian has informed me that both Kindle Books and Kobo Books have reasonably priced ebooks for purchase for #1 and #2. Other ebook vendors include: [Amazon.ca](#), [Red Shelf](#) and [VitalSource](#), etc. In addition, some students may prefer to order a used print copy via [abebooks.com](#), etc.

Canvas: [Canvas](#) will be used for announcements, assignments, and readings. Log in to Canvas with your CWL to access the course webpage. The learning platform **Collaborate Ultra** (which can be accessed in Canvas) may be used as a backup if there is a Zoom outage or other issue with Zoom access or Zoom is not effectively meeting our class needs.

Zoom: Barring technical, access, or other difficulties, the video communication platform [Zoom](#) will be used for course lectures (whether these are recorded is still to be determined) and office hours. Zoom can be accessed through Canvas and I will send out invitations through Canvas.

* Other web-based educational platforms may be adopted during the course of the term, TBA.

Course Requirements: Course grades will be based on the following:

1. Weekly Discussion Questions and Facilitating In-class Discussion (10%)
2. Organizing Posted Discussion Questions into a Class Handout to Guide Discussion (10%)
3. Participant Observation Assignment (20%)
4. Interview Assignment (20%)
5. Final Research Proposal (30%)
6. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Posting Discussion Questions and Leading Discussion

Each week, by no later than noon on Tuesday prior to Wednesday's class, you are required to post 1 to 3 discussion questions on the week's readings to the Discussion forum on the course website on Canvas. Discussion questions designed to generate a lively discussion are broad, topical questions rather than narrow questions with a simple "right" answer. Think about the topic of the week's readings as you construct your question(s). Sometimes a discussion question requires a bit of context, but generally, try

to keep each question short (no more than 3 sentences). *During class discussion, be prepared to lead the class in a discussion of at least one of your posted questions.* Leading discussion requires a balance between flexibility and guiding the group in a certain direction.

The evaluation of this assignment is based on:

1. Your knowledge of the reading material and topic for each class (25%)
2. The clarity and thoughtfulness of your weekly discussion questions (50%)
3. Your ability to facilitate discussion and engage the entire class (25%)

Organizing Posted Discussion Questions into a Class Handout to Guide Discussion

Near the beginning of the term, you will be asked to sign up for a week when you will be responsible for organizing your classmates' discussion questions into a handout to facilitate our discussion that week. The idea is to synthesize (i.e., combine similar questions) and thematically organize the submitted discussion questions, adding your own discussion questions as necessary to encourage a thorough and interesting discussion, aiming for approximately 10-12 questions. Additionally, you should contribute your own questions or activities that you think will help us cover all the necessary ground (i.e., important topics to be discussed) and stimulate discussion that week. Email the handout to me (Sinikka.elliott@ubc.ca) as a Word or PDF attachment **by no later than 8:30am on the day of class**.

The evaluation of this assignment is based on your ability to:

1. Synthesize the discussion questions (30%)
2. Thematically organize discussion questions (50%)
3. Add discussion questions or activities as needed for a well-rounded discussion (20%)

Participant Observation Assignment (due Wed. Nov. 11th by 5 pm)

The purpose of this assignment is for you to a) gain some insight into field research techniques by participating in (optional and only in line with [UBC Covid-19 Research Restrictions](#)) and observing social behaviour in public places, b) get experience with writing jottings and fieldnotes, and c) reflect analytically on those processes.

You should choose a public setting for your participant observation. Examples of appropriate settings might be a shopping mall food court; a park or beach; the Seawall; the UBC bus loop; a sky train station; an online public forum; etc. *Any locations which are not public settings of this type should be approved by me first.*

Participate (optional and following physical distancing and other public health measures) and conduct observations in this location over approximately 3 hours. If possible, try to make observations on more than one day or time. Write up your fieldnotes as soon as possible after your observations. Ideally, you should take jotted notes, but don't write the full fieldnotes as you're observing.

Because fieldnotes may be handwritten, please hand in a typed copy of this assignment at the beginning of class on the due date.

Your assignment should include two components:

- 1) An analytical synopsis (~ 3 pages, single spaced) including:
 - a) A statement of what you chose to observe, why, and how
 - b) A discussion of your reflections and analytic impressions
 - c) The research question you would address if you were to continue this study, and a brief discussion of how you would go about answering it. Would you continue with the same participant observation strategy? How would you modify, expand, or vary the procedure? What additional methods, if any, would you supplement it with, and why?
 - d) A discussion about the advantages and limitations of participant observation as a method, based on your experience.
- 2) An appendix consisting of a 5-page excerpt of your full fieldnotes (can be single spaced)
 - a) Include in the notes the date and time in which the visit was made and when the fieldnotes were written.
 - b) If you took rough or jotted notes while observing or immediately after and before writing up your fieldnotes, please attach these as well.

The evaluation of this assignment is based on:

1. Following the assignment instructions (15%)
2. The depth of description in your full fieldnotes (30%)
3. An appropriate focus in observations given what you chose to observe (15%)
4. Thoughtful answers in the analytical synopsis, drawing on class readings and discussions (40%)

Interview Assignment (due Wed., December 2nd by 5 pm)

The purpose of this assignment is to help you design an interview guide, develop interviewing skills, and gain experience conducting in-depth interviews:

- 1) Conduct two interviews on a topic related to your interests. These may serve as pilot interviews for upcoming research, but you may not use any previously conducted interviews for this assignment. You must discuss your interview plan with me and get approval by Wed. Nov. 4. The following materials for your project must be uploaded to the course website on Canvas by the date below:
 - a. Fri. Nov. 13: Consent form
 - b. Fri. Nov. 13: Interview guide

You will receive feedback on these by the following class.

For the assignment you will audio record two interviews you conduct and transcribe both interviews verbatim. You will submit a) the 2 audio files, b) all interview forms (e.g., consent form, facesheet), c) 2 transcribed and de-identified interview files, and d) 2 interview sketches that describe the setting of the interview (including over Skype, Zoom, Facetime, phone, etc), the participant, the emotional tone of the interview, any methodological or personal challenges you encountered, your feelings during and about the interview experience, and any insights and reflections the interview engendered.

It is strongly recommended that you transcribe the first interview before conducting the second one. Transcription, while sometimes tedious, is an important way to reflect on and learn from the interviewing process.

The evaluation of this assignment is based on:

1. Your interviewing skills, including: building rapport, setting a good pace, appropriate probing, phrasing of questions, guiding the discussion, and writing the post-interview sketch (50%)
2. Following assignment instructions, disguising identifiable information, and assigning coded titles to all files (15%)
3. Accuracy of transcription (15%)
4. Improvement between the first and second interviews (20%)

Final Research Proposal (due Monday, December 14th by 4pm)

Your final assignment for this class is to write a research proposal for a qualitative research project. You may use this assignment to work out the details of the proposal you will submit for your Master's or Ph.D. thesis. If your MA or Ph.D. proposal has already been approved by your UBC advisory committee, you must write a proposal for a different project for this class. It can be a follow-up project on the same topic, but it must be substantively different. You will be required to submit both your approved MA/Ph.D. proposal and your research proposal for this class.

The proposal should be approximately 20-25 pages long (double spaced; appendices may be single spaced). It should be highly polished, with the details of the research design and data collection worked out in advance. Think of this proposal as one you could submit to either your MA/Ph.D. committee for approval or to a funding agency such as SSHRC. It should include the following:

1. The goal of the study, including the research question(s) and their significance/value (why should people care about your proposed study?);
2. Background/Context/Theoretical Framework discussion that locates the project within the relevant theoretical and empirical literature and justifies why your study is needed and how it will advance scholarly (and public) knowledge;
3. Detailed description of research methodology, including, justification for your method(s), description of your method(s), which may include: sampling considerations or case selection, access to research site/populations (e.g., recruiting participants), examples of interview questions for in-depth interviews or questions you might ask informally in the field, ethical issues, reflections on your social position and why you chose this topic of study, issues of confidentiality, and when and how you will begin data analysis.
4. Bibliography;
5. Appendix 1: Interview guide (if appropriate);
6. Appendix 2: Consent form;
7. Appendix 3: A detailed budget (optional).

The evaluation of this assignment is based on:

1. The coherence of and justification for the research question or focus (15%)
2. The appropriateness of the literature review for framing and justifying the study (15%)

3. Integration of course material in guiding the justification of research method(s), research design, and supporting materials (30%)
4. Sufficient detail provided to assess project feasibility (25%)
5. Grammar, clarity and coherence of writing (15%)

Class Participation: This course is a discussion-based seminar which means attendance and active participation are essential and are expected in graduate-level courses at UBC. You should come to class prepared to discuss in a thoughtful and detailed manner the weekly readings and your classmates' posted discussion questions. My goal is for this class to be a safe, communal space where we can all learn from one another and feel secure about discussing the triumphs, anxieties, and challenges we encounter doing qualitative research. Your participation grade will reflect the extent to which you are able to do this. The class participation component of your mark will be based on your attendance (20%), preparation (30%), and participation (50%).

University Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is crucial to your success in graduate school. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to complete all reading ahead of time. We will be holding classes online. The remote learning context will present new opportunities and challenges for us but the goal should be to strive to create an engaged and supportive learning community. We will spend the beginning of the term learning how best to run the course given the situation we all face.

Open Learning Environment: One way we can make sure this class is an environment in which everyone feels comfortable sharing their opinions is to treat one another with respect. At a minimum, respect entails active and intent listening and thoughtful and informed commentary. It means being reflexive about our positionality and viewpoints. You can respect someone and disagree with them, so respectful classroom interactions don't preclude active classroom debate and engagement.

Technology in the Classroom: Despite the irony of conducting the class online and having a no technology in the classroom policy, I'm maintaining my commitment to the value of taking notes on paper, not on a laptop or other electronic device. **If you would**

like to use a laptop or other device in class, please come talk with me about this.

Although I agree with the argument that it is easier to type than to write, and many students prefer the organizational benefits of typing class notes, mounting evidence to date demonstrates that laptops and tablets reduce learning. Studies document lower levels of learning not just for the student using the laptop/tablet, but also for those around that individual. In other words, using a laptop in class harms your education as well as your classmates'. The classroom should be a place of learning and mindfulness; we all benefit when everyone is fully present to engage with ideas and with others. [Evidence](#) points to the best way to learn: write notes by hand and, ideally, later transfer those notes onto a computer (you can also take a picture of the notes with a smartphone or tablet so that you have an electronic copy, although this doesn't improve comprehension and retention the way typing up handwritten notes does). Please silence (*silent*, not vibrate mode) and put away all cell phones before the start of class. My hope is that, even in our online context, we can all still be engaged and immersed in the class discussion.

Accommodations: The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Centre for Accessibility office. Please submit your electronic letter outlining your academic accommodations to me at the beginning of the term and schedule a meeting so we can discuss how best to accommodate your learning needs. The University also provides accommodation to students whose religious obligations conflict with scheduled examinations or class attendance. If you will require accommodation on these grounds, please let me know in advance.

Mental Health: During your time in this course, if you encounter medical, emotional, or other personal problems that affect your attendance or academic performance, please notify me, as well as your Academic Advisor. Please refer to the UBC Calendar for a discussion of academic concession.

Early Alert Program: I participate in the Early Alert Program which helps me support students who are facing difficulties that are interfering with school. **If you are feeling stressed, please notify me** and indicate that you would like assistance. While I am not trained to help with personal problems, I can get you help from people who can assist you. Any information that they receive from you or me is strictly confidential and is in the interest of your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit earlyalert.ubc.ca.

Canvas: You will find the syllabus, forums, assigned readings (other than books), and announcements here: www.canvas.ubc.ca
We will also use the course website throughout the term for posting discussion questions, uploading assignments, and accessing course readings.

Statement on Academic Integrity: The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. All work that you turn in for grading must be your own prepared for this course. This means it is an independent and original creation by you. Purchasing or copying work from others violates the code of academic integrity, this includes representing short passages of someone else's writing as your own. If you turn in a paper in this class that generously borrows from previous work **you** have done (such as papers you've turned in for other

classes), this also constitutes a breach of academic integrity. **The work you submit in this course must be original work, written by you for this class.**

A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the [UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Weekly Topics and Readings

Wednesday, September 9th: Introduction and Overview (9-10 am)

Reading

Required

- The course syllabus (this document)

Wednesday, September 16th: The Epistemology of Qualitative Research. Research isn't just about the method you choose; it involves a set of taken-for-granted beliefs about how we know what we know. Basic qualitative epistemological assumptions include the premise that we must get close to and obtain detailed information about the people and phenomena we wish to understand, while reflecting on how, through our presence, social location, and decision-making, we—the researchers—shape the research process (including what we learn). Another premise is that the design and research strategies we undertake should be iterative and flexible: analysis begins in the early stages of a project and may take the research in new and unexpected directions. Qualitative researchers seek to explain some aspect of the social world with the epistemological understanding that our data, like the social world they emerge from, will contain conflicting information, contradictions, and multiple truths. Rather than viewing these as problems to overcome or push aside, we see these as evidence that we are getting close to the messiness of everyday life. These tensions are the grist of qualitative analysis. Exceptions, outliers, or deviant cases—unusual events or people who do not fit the pattern we are observing—all help us to test our burgeoning analysis by forcing us to question how and why this person, event, emotion, and so on differs from the pattern we are observing. In convincing others of the validity of a qualitative study, one must demonstrate a rigorous, systematic approach anchored in these epistemological assumptions.

Reading

Required

- Luker, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-50)
- Mario Luis Small. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-based Research," *Ethnography* 10(1):5-38.
- Annette Lareau. 2012. "Using the Terms Hypothesis and Variable for Qualitative Work: A Critical Reflection," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74:671-77.
- Annette Lareau and Aliya Hamid Rao. 2016. "It's about the Depth of Your Data," *Contexts*. <https://contexts.org/blog/its-about-the-depth-of-your-data/>

Further reading

- Howard S. Becker. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." Pp. 53-70 in *Ethnography and Human Development*, edited by Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Shweder. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Shamus Khan. 2017. "Beyond Action." *Ethnography* 18(1):88-96.

Wednesday, Sept 23rd: **Developing a Research Question(s).** Now that we understand the basic epistemology of qualitative research, we can take the next step towards undertaking a qualitative study: coming up with a research question. One generative way to develop a research question is to think about how a particular issue or social problem is being framed and then to wonder whether that taken-for-granted conceptualization meshes with what might actually be going on in the social world. This may stimulate a research question(s) or puzzle that you can then pursue through a qualitative project. For example, you hear people saying it is parents', not schools', responsibility to teach children about sex, but you also know that talking about sex can be confusing and potentially shame-inducing for people in your culture. So, you wonder how parents feel about 'the sex talk' and whether and how these conversations occur. (Posing "how" questions signals you are trying to uncover social processes, which are the patterned interactions, meanings, and relations that create and constitute the social world.) One way to answer these questions would be to design a study that involves interviewing diverse parents about how they think about their teenage children's sexuality and their experiences talking to their children about sex. The point is to approach an issue with curiosity and healthy skepticism. In developing a research question or problem, you should think of yourself as participating in and helping to advance scholarly conversations that are relevant to you. Hence, you should not assume that you are a blank slate, or *tabula rasa*; rather you have a unique background, training, and way of approaching the issue that can contribute to a new perspective on an aspect of the social world.

Reading

Required

- Luker, Chapters 4-5 (pp. 51-98)
- Kristin G. Esterberg. 2006. "Deciding What to Research" (pp. 28-33). Chapter 2 in *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Michael Schwalbe. 2000. "The Elements of Inequality." *Contemporary Sociology* 29(6):775-81.

Further reading

- Herbert Blumer. 1969. "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism." Pp. 1-6, 21-60 in *Symbolic Interactionism* (Prentice-Hall, 1969).

Wednesday, September 30th: **Grounded Theory.** Grounded theory rests on the premise that theories should be developed from research grounded in qualitative data, rather than by deductively testing hypotheses from existing theories. Therefore, grounded theory projects organize research around theory development, involving simultaneous data collection and analysis. This week, we will begin to explore Kathy Charmaz's version of constructivist grounded theory: an "approach [that] explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz 2011:17). We will discuss how to get started on a grounded theory project and the process of theory construction in qualitative research, including theoretical sampling.

Reading

Required

- Charmaz, Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-54) and 8-10 (pp. 192-284)

- Sinikka Elliott, Joslyn Brenton, and Rachel Powell. 2018. “Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers.” *Social Problems* 65(4): 442-444 (method section only).

Further reading

- Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss. 2014. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 4th Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wednesday, October 7th: Sampling, Access, Positionality, and Emotional

Considerations. Designing a study involves coming up with a research question or problem, figuring out what data you need to “answer” the question, gaining access to a research site(s) and study participants, and considering the practical and emotional implications of your study. Who do you need to talk to and/or what do you need to observe to “solve” your question/puzzle? How do you get access to the group(s) you wish to learn from and what do you owe those you learn from? What’s your social location in relation to those you intend to study? Why do you want to do this study in the first place? How will you handle the practical and emotional challenges you anticipate encountering in the field?

Reading

Required

- Luker, Chapters 6-7 (pp. 99-154)
- Christine Williams. 1991. “Case Studies and the Sociology of Gender.” Pp. 224-243 in *A Case for the Case Study*, edited by Joe Feagin, Anthony Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg. Chapel-Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Michael Burawoy. 1998. “The Extended Case Method.” *Sociological Theory* 16(1):4-33.
- Patricia Hill Collins. 1986 “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought.” *Social Problems* 33:14-32.
- Elizabeth Sumida Huaman and Peter Mataira. 2019. “Beyond Community Engagement: Centering Research through Indigenous Epistemologies and Peoplehood.” *AlterNative* 15(3):281-286.

Further reading

- Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Kathleen M. T. Collins. 2007. “A Typology of Mixed Methods Sampling designs in Social Science Research.” *The Qualitative Report* 12 (2): 281-316.
- Sinikka Elliott, Josephine McKelvy, and Sarah Bowen. 2017. “Marking Time in Ethnography: Uncovering Temporal Dispositions.” *Ethnography* 18(4): 556-576.
- Sherryl Kleinman and Martha A. Copp. 1993. *Emotions and Fieldwork*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wednesday, October 14th: Research Ethics. You may not be able to anticipate all of the ethical issues you will encounter, but you must consider your ethical obligations to your participants, your institution, your collaborators, and yourself before conducting qualitative research. What kinds of ethical dilemmas do you anticipate encountering and

what moral code will you use to address them? How will you introduce yourself in the field and describe your study? How will you protect the confidentiality of your study site and participants? Are there limits to confidentiality? How will you share findings with the communities you've learned from? How will you analyze, write, and disseminate your research in ways that do justice to the people and places you studied? Qualitative researchers must consider these and many other ethical questions before, during, and after their study.

Readings

Required

- Charlotte Allen. 1997 “Spies like us: When sociologists deceive their subjects,” *Lingua Franca*, November 1997:31-39.
- Judith Stacey. 1988. “Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 11: 21-27.
- Mario L. Small. 2015. De-Exoticizing Ghetto Poverty: On the Ethics of Representation in Urban Ethnography. *City & Community* 14(4):352-358.
- Dana R. Fisher. 2016. “Doing Qualitative Research as if Counsel is Hiding in the Closet.” *Contexts* 15(2):12-14. <https://contexts.org/blog/doing-qualitative-research-as-if-counsel-is-hiding-in-the-closet/>
- [Statement from American Sociological Association on Ethics and Black Lives Matter research: https://www.asanet.org/news-events/asa-news/ethics-and-black-lives-matter-research](#)

Further reading

- Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: CORE (Course on Research Ethics). Complete the tutorial (certificate of completion is required for all UBC BREB applications involving human subjects): <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>
- UBC Behavioural Research Guidance During the Covid-19 Research Restrictions: <https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/behavioural-research-ethics/ubc-behavioural-guidance-during-covid-19-research-restrictions>
- Isabelle Côté. 2013. “Fieldwork in the Era of Social Media: Opportunities and Challenges.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(3): 615-619.

Wednesday, October 21st: Participant Observation/Ethnography. This week we will examine the dominant theoretical approaches to participant observation/ethnography and the kinds of questions the method is best suited to investigate. At a basic level, participant observation captures people’s situated doings: how people act in any given social setting. What are the strengths and what are the limitations of this method? We will also begin to consider the practical elements of this method: how do we conduct an ethnographic field project?

Readings

Required

- Luker, pp. 155-167
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-43)
- Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans. 2009. “Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method.” *Ethnography* 10(3):243-263.

- Amy Hanser. 2008. *Service Encounters: Class, Gender, and the Market for Social Distinction in Urban China* (pp. 18-23). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Further reading

- Erving Goffman. 2001. "On Fieldwork." Pp. 153-158 in *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. 2nd Ed. Edited by Robert M. Emerson. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(2):178-209.

Wednesday, October 28th: **Participant Observation/Ethnography.** We will continue our discussion of the practice of participant observation this week. What are the practices that ethnographers develop to help them recall and record their observations in great detail? In addition to writing extensive fieldnotes and notes-on-notes (analytic asides and commentaries), how do ethnographers organize and track the data collected over time? Qualitative research projects can take multiple years from start to finish: A good ethnographer doesn't underestimate the importance of documenting in meticulous detail, and maintaining a coherent record of, their time in the field.

Readings

Required

- Emerson et al., Chapters 3-5 (pp. 45-169)
- Sinikka Elliott. 2019. "Field Research." Pp. 53-67 in *Advanced Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, edited by John E. Edlund and Austin Lee Nichols. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Monica J. Barratt and Alexia Maddox. 2016. "Active Engagement with Stigmatised Communities through Digital Ethnography." *Qualitative Research* 16(6): 701-719.

In-class activity: Prior to class, you and a classmate will be exchanging a de-identified portion of your fieldnotes from a participant observation you each conducted for Soci 503. During class, we will break into breakout rooms for 20 minutes to allow 10 minutes for you each to discuss one another's fieldnotes. I will provide more details at a later date.

Wednesday, November 4th: **In-depth Interviewing.** This week we will explore the rationales for, and the strengths and weaknesses of, in-depth interviewing. Why do interviews? Fundamentally, in-depth interviews are intended to explore people's worldviews: what, how, and why people do/think/feel from their point of view. We will examine the argument that it is by asking interview participants to talk about concrete happenings that the complex belief systems of individuals (that may be hidden even to them) emerge (e.g., through the events focused on, the interactions described, the words used, the self-concepts provided, the meanings given, the emotions elicited). We will also begin a practical guide through qualitative interviewing.

Readings

Required

- Luker, pp. 167-189
- Michèle Lamont and Ann Swidler. 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37:153-171.

- Allison Pugh. 2013 “What Good Are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? Demystifying Interpretive Analysis.” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1):42-68.
- Amin Ghaziani. 2019. “Methodological Problems and Possibilities in Gayborhood Studies.” Chapter 4 in *Imagining Queer Methods*, edited by Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim. New York: New York University Press.
- Weiss, pp. 1-45

Wednesday, November 11th: **In-depth Interviewing.** We will continue our journey through in-depth interviewing this week by considering some more of the practical how-tos of interviewing. How do you construct an interview guide, recruit participants, and conduct interviews? What do you do if an interview participant begins turning the questions back on you? According to “active interviewing” proponents, the interview itself is a meaning-making occasion. What does this mean? What are the implications of conceptualizing interviews as social encounters in which knowledge is co-constructed?

Readings

Required

- Weiss, pp. 45-150
- Charmaz, Chapters 3-4 (pp. 55-108)
- James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium. 2002. “Active Interviewing.” Pp. 112-126 in *Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Darin Weinberg. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell.
- Gail Adams-Hutcheson and Robyn Longhurst. 2017. “‘At Least in Person There Would Have Been a Cup of Tea’: Interviewing Via Skype.” *Area* 49(2): 148-155.

In-class activity: Prior to class, you and a classmate will be exchanging a de-identified portion of a transcribed interview from one in-depth interview you each conducted for Soci 503. During class, we will break into breakout rooms for 20 minutes to allow 10 minutes for you each to discuss one another’s interview. I will provide more details at a later date.

Further reading

- Sinikka Elliott and Megan Reid. 2019. “Low-Income Black Mothers Parenting Adolescents in the Mass Incarceration Era: The Long Reach of Criminalization.” *American Sociological Review* 84(2):197-219.

Wednesday, November 18th: **Unobtrusive Qualitative Research Methods.** The coronavirus pandemic has brought new challenges and opportunities for qualitative researchers. I have been impressed by the innovative research projects I have seen undertaken safely and respectfully under difficult circumstances. Professors with existing data have invited students who were unable to pursue their own in-person research to analyze their data. Students have pivoted from in-depth interview projects to archival research projects. But these shifts have also come with challenges. How do you analyze data that you didn’t conceptualize, didn’t collect and may not have a strong connection to? How do you carve out a research question from textual data? What approach do you take to the content of archival data or other textual or visual sources of content? As with all qualitative research projects, the first step in undertaking a content

analysis project requires you to figure out which content you will analyze and why (i.e., your sample and your research question).

Readings

Required

- Luker, chapter 9 (pp. 190-197)
- Ann Laura Stoler. 2002. “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance.” *Archival Science* 2: 87-109.
- Gina Marie Longo. 2018. “Keeping It in ‘the Family’: How Gender Norms Shape U.S. Marriage Migration Politics.” *Gender & Society* 32(4) 469-492 (**focus on pp. 469-477**).
- Nicole M. Deterding and Mary C. Waters. 2018. “Flexible Coding of In-depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach.” *Sociological Research & Methods* 1-32.

Further reading

- Ann Morning. 2008. “Reconstructing Race in Science and Society: Biology Textbooks, 1952-2002.” *American Journal of Sociology* 114: S106-S137.
- Leslie J. Miller. 2000. “The Poverty of Truth-seeking: Postmodernism, Discourse Analysis, and Critical Feminism.” *Theory & Psychology* 10: 313-352.

Wednesday, November 25th: **Coding and Memoing.** Data analysis should begin from the moment data collection starts. But what does this involve and how do you do it? We will examine common data analysis techniques, including constructing categories, open coding, focused coding, and writing analytic memos. We will discuss the iterative practice of data collection, analysis, reviewing the literature, and drafting up the findings.

Readings

Required

- Luker, Chapters 10-11 (pp. 198-225)
- Emerson et al., Chapters 6-7 (pp. 171-242)
- Charmaz, Chapters 5-7 (pp. 107-191)
- Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory. 2012. “Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis.” *Sociological Theory* 30(3): 167-186.

Further reading

- Weiss, Chapter 6 (pp. 151-182)

Wednesday, December 2nd: Our final class meeting will focus on discussing your research proposals. Each student will have the opportunity to briefly answer three questions: What is your research question? How is the question situated within the literature? And how do you plan to try and answer your question?