

**SOCI 382 – Sociological Methods: Qualitative Research**  
Fall 2022 (WT1)

**Instructor:** Lily Ivanova  
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**Class Hours:** Mon and Wed, 5:00 – 6:30 pm  
**Class Location:** MATX 1100

**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 3:30 – 4:45 pm  
**Office Location:** ANSO 2322

**TA:** Madeline Renner  
**Email:** Message through Canvas

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 4-4:45 (ANSO 2322)  
or by appointment

**Course Description**

What is the role of qualitative research in sociology? How does qualitative research inform sociological theory, and how are theories adapted to account for new empirical findings? This course takes students through the process of thinking through sociological ideas and doing research through an applied qualitative lens. Throughout the course, we will be using an age-old sociological question as a “case concept” to practice our theoretical and methodological skills: *How do people experience a sense of belonging in communities, and how do they experience disconnection?*

**Part 1** of the course looks at how researchers produce sociological knowledge. How do we move from our personal knowledge worlds to creating sociological knowledge? We’ll also look at classical sociological literature on communities and belonging to get a sense for how researchers have explored this question, and what types of methods and data they developed to test their ideas. At the end of Part 1, you will be choosing a community to study for the remainder of the course. **Part 2** will take us through the applied art of doing qualitative research. We’ll look at foundational qualitative works and the principles that underlie their research processes, from asking questions, to creating an interviewer persona, and observing social processes. During this part of the course, you will be practicing your qualitative research skills by studying the community you chose in Part 1. Finally in **Part 3**, we’ll be coding and theorizing our data in preparation for a Research Symposium in the last week of the course.

**Course Format:**

Each class will be divided into a first half, consisting of lecture and discussion about the topics and readings, and a second half, which will apply these ideas through hands-on workshop activities. These activities will be handed in at the end of each class and will count towards your participation grade.

This class does not have a midterm or final exam which will test your knowledge retention. In contrast with a substantive course, qualitative research is an applied methodological skill, so we will be spending the majority of our time in the course practicing and reflecting on our process. At the end of the course, in lieu of a final exam, we will hold a Research Symposium where you will present your

data and findings about the community you studied. Your final research paper will be due one week after our last class meeting.

### **Course Evaluation**

|   |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|
| Workshop Assignments (In-class) Assignments | 20%            | Due at the <b>end</b> of every class     |
| Choosing a Community                        | 15%            | Due <b>September 28</b> (3 pm on Canvas) |
| Interview and Reflection                    | 15%            | Due <b>October 26</b> (3 pm on Canvas)   |
| Qualitative Book Study                      | 15%            | Due <b>November 21</b> (3 pm on Canvas)  |
| Final Project: Community Study              |                |  |
| Symposium Presentation                      | 10%            | December 5 & 7 (in class)                |
| Community Research Paper                    | 20%            | Due <b>December 14</b> (3 pm on Canvas)  |
| Research Journal                            | 5% (+5% bonus) | Due <b>November 30</b> (in class)        |

### **Assignments**

**Assignment 1: Choosing a community:** For your first assignment, you will be choosing a community you want to study for the remainder of the term. Throughout Part 1 of the course, workshops will be focusing on getting you to think about your own experiences with community. Based on these reflections, you will choose a community you want to study, and find 3 sociological research studies about this community that interest you. This assignment will be a reflection on your choice of community, including your conceptual interest, personal experiences, and initial impressions of the existing sociological research about this community. More detailed prompts will be provided in class.

- ❖ Specifications: 2-3 pages, 1-1.5 spaced, standard font and margins

**Assignment 2: Interview and reflection:** For your second assignment, you will be conducting a qualitative interview with someone from your community of choice. Throughout Part 2 of the course, the workshops will guide you through a number of steps in designing a qualitative research study, including identifying a research question, choosing participants, creating an interview guide, creating a consent form, and practicing interviewing. Based on these skills, you will invite someone from your community to do an interview with you. This assignment will include a transcript of your interview, including annotations on your experience and thoughts during and about the interview, as well as a reflection on your experience and the data. More detailed prompts will be provided in class.

- ❖ Specifications: Interview transcript (annotated), **and** 2-3 page reflection, 1-1.5 spaced, standard font and margins

**Assignment 3: Qualitative book study:** For your third assignment, you will choose a qualitative book to read in-depth, analyze and respond to. Throughout Part 3 of the course, the workshops will be guiding you through analyzing your interview data and beginning to write and summarize your findings. During this time, you'll be reading the qualitative book of your choice as an example text of

how a qualitative researcher comes to their findings and presents their data. This assignment will ask you to respond to a number of questions about the book, including about its research questions, methods, data, findings, your personal reflections, and elements that you can apply to your own study. For this assignment, you can choose a qualitative book from a list that will be provided, or find a qualitative book on your own (if you are interest in this option, please confirm the book with me in advance). More details will be provided in class.

- ❖ Specifications: 2-3 pages, 1-1.5 spaced, standard font and margins

**Workshop Assignments:** In the second half of every class, we will be doing a workshop activity to apply the course concepts and practice our methods skills. This will usually include an individual prompt, where you will be asked to reflect and write about your experiences, insights or ideas. You will then work with a partner, a small group, or with your community study group to pool your reflection and insights, or to practice a methods skill. For example, the assignment may be to brainstorm interview questions on your own, and then come together with your group to practice those questions. Your written reflections are due at the end of every class and graded according to a pass/fail system.

- ❖ Specifications: 1-2 pages, handwritten

**Final Project: Research Symposium Presentation and Paper.** The final project for this course is a Research Symposium – a gathering of researchers to present their data and have discussions about them in the format of a small conference. The symposium will take place during the last two classes and you will be expected to present on the community study you have been building over the past weeks. During the symposium, each group will present their research findings in a 10-minute presentation, followed by a discussion during which the rest of your classmates will ask questions and offer feedback on your methods and findings. Alongside your group presentation, you will submit an individual paper that presents and summarizes your community study, including your research questions, review of existing research, methods, data analysis, and findings. You will have most of this material already prepared through the workshops. Your final paper should incorporate feedback from your presentation and is due one week after our last class.

- ❖ Presentation: 10 minutes
- ❖ Paper: 8-10 pages, double spaced, standard font and margins.

**Research Journal:** Every class, we will start with a short (5-10 minute) writing exercise to get us into the headspace of sociological observation and thinking. You will be asked to do this exercise in a Research Journal, where you can also record any thoughts or observations about your methodological skills practice or sociological reflections throughout the week. This is meant to be a low-stakes exercise that gets you to practice sociological observations and connect with your own experiences and insights about qualitative research. At the end of the semester, your Research Journal will be graded on a 5-point scale, with a possible 5% bonus for excellence.

## Course Materials

**Weekly Readings:** There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Canvas.

*A note about readings in this course: These readings are meant as “reference texts” that you can visit to get a deeper understanding of lecture material, or as material to help you prepare for practicing various methodological skills (e.g. interviewing, coding). You will not be tested on the content of the readings; however, you will be expected to reference concepts and readings that are relevant for your community study, and to develop proficiency in the methods we are learning in the course.*

**Qualitative book study:** For this assignment, you will need to find a copy of the book you are interested in from book shop, online, or through the library.

## Course Schedule

### **PART 1 Creating Sociological Knowledge – Asking Questions about Community, Culture and Power**

#### **Lecture 1 (September 7): What is Qualitative Data? – Revisiting the Sociological Imagination**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- C.W. Mills, excerpts from *The Sociological Imagination*
- ❖ **In-Class Workshop:** The Sociological Imagination and Data

#### **Lecture 2 (September 12): Durkheim – Community, Positivism and Anthropological Methods**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Emile Durkheim, excerpts from *Suicide* (1897)
- Emile Durkheim, excerpts from *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912)
- ❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Communities and Belonging

#### **Lecture 3 (September 14): The Legacy of Durkheim – Subcultures and Civil Society**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Gary Alan Fine (1979). Small groups and culture creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams. *American Sociological Review*, 44 (5) 733-745.
- Jeffrey Alexander, “Energy and Fusion at Camp Obama” (in Chapter 3, p. 45-59) from *The Performance of Politics: Obama’s Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power* (2012)
  - Also see the talk: “Obama’s Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power”  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-5073> (2010)
- ❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Subcultures, Representations and Rituals

## Lecture 4 (September 19): The Legacy of Durkheim – Community and Exclusion

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Michael Kral (2012). Postcolonial Suicide Among Inuit in Arctic Canada. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 36(2), 306-325.
- Anne Warfield Rawls and Waverly Duck, excerpts from *Tacit Racism* (2020)
  - Also see the talk: “A Nation Divided: The High Cost of Tacit Racism in Everyday Life” (2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi0qzESAreA>

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Disruption and Exclusion

## Lecture 5 (September 21): Weber – Culture, Subjectivity and Interpretivist Methods

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Max Weber, excerpts from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905)
- Max Weber, “The Economic Ethic [‘Social Psychology’] of the World Religions” (1915)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Community Cultures

## Lecture 6 (September 26): The Legacy of Weber – Culture, Agency and Choice

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Neil Gross, excerpts from *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?* (2013)
  - Also see the talk: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?312094-1/why-professors-liberal-conservatives-care> (2013)
- Ann Swidler, excerpts from *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (2001)
- Kim TallBear, Interview: “Reviving Kinship and Sexual Abundance”, find at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGxDtuFA3Xw>

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Tracing Personal Values

## Lecture 7 (September 28): Marx and Engels – Power, Ideology and Materialism

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, excerpts from *The German Ideology* (1846; published 1932)
- David Leopold, “Marxism and Ideology: From Marx to Althusser” (Chapter 2, p 20-37) from *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (2013)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Cultural Power

**Assignment Due: \*Choosing a community\* (Sept 28)**

## Lecture 8 (October 3): The Legacy of Marx and Engels – Class and Identity

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Michèle Lamont, excerpts from *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (2000)
- Dawn Currie, excerpts from *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers* (1999)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Mapping Class and Identity

## PART 2: Qualitative Methods in Practice

## Lecture 9 (October 5): Designing a Qualitative Study I – Research Questions, Hypotheses and Methods

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Howard Becker, “What It’s All About: Data, Evidence and Ideas” in *Evidence* (2017)
- Neil Gross, excerpts from *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?* (2013) (p. 17-22)
- Joseph Maxwell, “Conceptual Framework” and “Research Questions” from *Qualitative Research Design* (2013)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Designing a Community Study

## Lecture 10 (October 10): Designing a Qualitative Study II – Case Selection and Accessing Participants

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Jennifer Platt, “Cases of Cases...of Cases” (p. 21-52) in *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, Eds. Charles Ragin and Howard Becker (1992)
- Joseph Maxwell, “Goals: Why Are You Doing This Study” and “Negotiating Research Relationships” from *Qualitative Research Design* (2013)
- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, “Gender, Race, Class and Members’ Meanings” from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Choosing a Case and Participants

## Lecture 11 (October 12): Interviews I – Asking Questions and the Interview Guide

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Ann Swidler, excerpts from *Talk of Love* (2001)
- Michèle Lamont, excerpts from *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (2000)

- Robert Weiss, “Preparation for Interviewing” in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Creating an Interview Guide

### **Lecture 12 (October 17): Ethics in Interviews and Community-Based Research**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Harold Garfinkel, excerpts from *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967)
- Charles Menzies (2001). Reflections on research with, for, and among Indigenous peoples. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(1).
- Robert Weiss, “Consent Form” in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Creating a Consent Form

### **Lecture 13 (October 19): Interviews II – Positionality and Interpersonal Dynamics**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Kerstetter, K. (2012). Insider, outsider, or somewhere between: The impact of researchers’ identities on the community-based research process. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 27 (2)
- Robert Weiss, “Interviewing” in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Practice Interviews

### **Lecture 14 (October 24): Ethnography I – Phenomenology and Description**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Howard Becker, excerpts from *Becoming a Marijuana User* (1953)
- Harold Garfinkel, excerpts from *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967)
- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, “The Complexities of Description” from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Observation and Description

### **Lecture 15 (October 26): Ethnography II – Note-Taking and Interpreting Meanings**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Erving Goffman, excerpts from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)
- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, “Pursuing Members’ Meanings” from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Note-Taking and Meanings

**Assignment Due: \*Interview and reflection\* (Oct 26)**

**Lecture 16 (October 31): Ethnography III – Institutional Ethnography and Seeing Power**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Dorothy Smith, excerpts from *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005)
- Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Noticing Power

**Lecture 17 (November 2): Discourse Analysis – Working with Texts**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Dawn Currie, excerpts from *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers* (1999)
- Jeffrey Alexander, excerpts from “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama” (2002)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Doing a Discourse Analysis

**PART 3: Honing Our Analytical Skills**

**Lecture 18 (November 7): Coding Data I – Open Coding and Thematic Analysis**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, “Open Coding” from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995)
- Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
  - Also see the talk: *Thematic Analysis – An Introduction* (2018)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zFcC10vOVY>

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Open Coding

**November 9<sup>th</sup> – University Break – No Classes.**

**Lecture 19 (November 14): Coding Data II – Deductive Coding and Inter-Coder Reliability**

*Lecture and Reference Texts:*

- Robert Weiss, “Data Analysis” in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994)
- Dawn Currie, “Appendix B” in *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers* (1999)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Deductive Coding



## Lecture 20 (November 16): Theorizing Data I – Grounded Theory

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, excerpts from *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967)
- Wilson, W. J., & Chaddha, A (2009). The role of theory in ethnographic research. *Ethnography*, 10 (4), 549-564.
- Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw, “Pursuing Members’ Meanings” from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Grounded Theory

## Lecture 21 (November 21): Ethics and Positionality in Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Borland, K. (2002). ‘That’s not what I said’: Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research. In *The oral history reader* (pp. 334-346). Routledge.
- Mitchell Duneier, excerpts from *Sidewalk* (1999)
- Joseph Maxwell, “Validity” from *Qualitative Research Design* (2013)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Researcher Power and Consultation

### **Assignment: \*Qualitative book study\* (Nov 21)**

## Lecture 22 (November 23): Theorizing Data II – “Abductive” Analysis

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological theory*, 30(3), 167-186.

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Abductive Analysis

## Lecture 23 (November 28): Writing I – Engaging with the Literature

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Howard Becker, Chapter 8: “Terrorized by the Literature” in *Writing for Social Scientists* (2007)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Writing about the Literature

## Lecture 24 (November 30): Writing II – Presenting Your Findings

### Lecture and Reference Texts:

- Robert Weiss, “Writing the Report” in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994)

- Joseph Maxwell, “A Model for Proposal Structure” from *Qualitative Research Design* (2013)

❖ **In-Class Workshop:** Writing Up Your Findings

**Lecture 25 (December 5): \*Research Symposium\***

**Lecture 26 (December 7): \*Research Symposium\***

**Course Policies:**

**Late Assignments:** There is a grace period of 5 days for late assignments. After this, the assignment will receive a 2% deduction per day. If you are facing medical or personal issues that are making deadlines unattainable, please get in touch with me as soon as these issues arise.

**Accommodation:** All UBC students can register with the Centre for Accessibility to receive support for diverse needs, including mental health conditions, learning disabilities, chronic health conditions, physical disabilities, emergencies, and more. If you require support, please get in touch with the Centre for Accessibility (<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>) to register, make a plan, and keep me in the loop. If you require support or accommodation for cultural and religious needs, please let me know.

**Preferred Names and Gender Pronouns:** If your name or gender pronoun is different from the one on record with the university, please let me know so I can update my records.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism violates university policy and has to be reported to the Dean’s office. Plagiarism includes borrowing ideas from others’ academic works, even if you do not quote them word-for-word, borrowing ideas from a tutor or classmate, etc. Please make sure to cite academic work properly and give credit to others for their ideas. If you’d like to know more about plagiarism, you can go to UBC’s website: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/guide-to-academic-integrity/>.