

# SOC 705

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

**Instructor:**  
**Office Hours:**  
**Office:**  
**Phone:**  
**Email:**

*By reducing quality to quantity, Bourgeois morality economizes on intelligence: It understands reality more cheaply. (Barthes 1972)*

*The less human beings think of reality in qualitative terms, the more susceptible reality becomes to manipulation. Its objects are neither understood nor respected. (Horkheimer 1941)*

*Ethnography, especially participant observation, is the most scientific of sociology's methods because it gets closest to the people it is studying. (Gans 2010)*

*Interpretive sociology considers the individual and his actions as the basic unit...In this approach, the individual is also the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct...Hence, it is the task of sociology to reduce concepts such as "state," "association," "feudalism," and the like to "understandable" action, that is, without exception to the actions of participating individual men. (Weber 1946)*

*Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted. (Einstein)*

### **(I) COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Methods are the tools we use to select, collect, organize, interpret, and validate observations about a phenomenon we want to understand. Regardless of one's discipline, paradigmatic loyalty, or ideological positioning on the qualitative-quantitative divide, the conduct of research always entails the use of such tools. The skillful use of these tools entails two interrelated dimensions: their *mechanics* and their *logic*.

*Mechanics* refers to the "how to" aspects of tools. It includes the ability to:

- (a) design, use, calibrate, fix, and deploy them, and
- (b) interpret the information they yield

*Logic* refers to the "when" and "why" aspects of tools. It includes understanding:

- (a) which tool is most useful and appropriate to reach which objective,
- (b) what are the tools' main strengths, weaknesses, risks, and dangers,
- (c) the underlying assumptions we enact when we use those tools

Thus, the purpose of this class is to develop our knowledge of both aspects of the main qualitative methods used by social scientists and scholars in other disciplines.

### **(II) LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students successfully completing this class will:

- Understand the key differences between quantitative and qualitative research
- Be familiar with the major paradigmatic orientations in qualitative research, their

- history, and contributions.
- Recognize the ethical and political implications of different types of qualitative research.
  - Recognize the different components of a research design,
  - Develop the ability to design a qualitative research project, from start to finish.
  - Learn, understand, use, and develop command of the main qualitative research skills; understand their uses, appropriateness, strengths, weaknesses, risks, and dangers.
  - Learn and implement the Grounded Theory method on qualitative data.
  - Develop the ethnographer's mindset.
  - Learn to prepare both a written and oral professional report on your own qualitative research.

### **(III) ASSIGNMENTS**

Your grade will be based on the following:

(1) class attendance, participation:	20 points
(2) in-class responses to reading:	30 points
(3) 4 exercises:	40 points
(4) a methodology essay:	40 points
(5) an ethnography:	70 points
TOTAL:	200 points

There is a webcampus site associated with this class. It will contain links to articles, announcements about changes, discussion questions, opportunities to communicate, and other activities. Check the site at the beginning of every week.

### **(IV) TEXTS**

#### *(1) Required*

- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and L. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Fourth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Various articles on Ereserve (underlined on the syllabus) and on the webcampus site

#### *(2) Suggested*

- Denzin, N.K. and Y. Lincoln (2005). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Third Edition. Walnut Creek: Sage, and later editions.
- Rosenau, Pauline. (1992). *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Van Mannen, John (2011). *Tales of the Field*. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **(V) LECTURES AND READINGS SCHEDULE**

#### **PART 1: QUALITATIVE METHODS: KEY PRINCIPLES**

#### **JAN 21: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND THE INDUCTIVE MINDSET**

Read: Denzin & Lincoln: *The Arts and Politics of Interpretation*  
 Karp: *Social Sciences, Progress, and the Ethnographer's Craft*

**JAN 28: MAIN PARADIGMS**

Read: Rock: *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnography*  
 Suggested: Roseneau: Chs 1 & 5  
 Denzin & Lincoln: *Critical Methodologies and Indigenous Inquiry*  
 Gergen & Gergen: *Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions & Transformations*  
 Bernal: *Critical Race Theory, Critical Latino Theory*  
 Dunbar: *Critical Race Theory and Indigenous Methodologies*  
 Newmahr: *Chaos, Order, and Collaboration*  
 Kincheloe & Mc Laren: *Rethinking Critical Theory & Research*  
 Thomas: *Doing Critical Ethnography*  
 Stanfield: *Ethnic Modeling in Qualitative Research*  
 Olesen: *Early Millennial Feminist Qualitative Research*  
 Plummer: *Critical Humanism and Queer Theory*

**PART 2: QUALITATIVE METHODS WITH PEOPLE**

**FEB 4: ETHICAL & POLITICAL CONCERNS**

Read: Adler & Adler: *The Past and the Future of Ethnography*  
 Punch: *Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research*  
 Fine: *Ten Lies of Ethnography*  
 Gans: *Public Ethnography: Ethnography as Public Sociology*  
 Waskul: *Considering the Electronic Participant.*  
 Eakin: *Chagnon*  
 Nelson: *Eros and Ethnography*  
 L, S, A & L: Chs. 1& 2  
 Suggested: Kleinman & Copp: *Emotions and Fieldwork*  
 Young & Lee: *Fieldworker Feelings as Data*  
 Assignment 1: Paradigm and Methods

**FEB 11: OBSERVATIONS & PARTICIPATION**

Read: Goffman: *On Fieldwork*  
 Garcia et al.: *Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet*  
 L, S, A & L: Chs. 3 & 4  
 Harrington: *The Social Psychology of Access in Ethnographic Research*  
 Adler & Adler: *Observational Techniques*

**FEB 18: INTERVIEWING: HISTORY AND LOGIC**

Read: Johnson: *In-Depth Interviewing*  
 Suggested: Adler & Adler: *The Reluctant Respondent*

**FEB 25: INTERVIEWING: NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

Read: Ellis & Berger: *Their Story/My Story/Our Story*  
 O'Connor et al. *Internet-based Interviewing.*  
 Dunbar et al.: *Race, Subjectivity and the Interview Process*  
 Gottschalk: *The Presentation of Avatars in Second Life*  
 L, S, A & L: Ch. 5  
 Suggested Raz: *A Note on Inter-Viewing*  
 Assignment 2: Observations

**MARCH 3 – MARCH 10: MANAGING THE DATA**

Read: Charmaz: *Grounded Theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

L, S, A & L: Chs. 5, 6, 7 & 9

**MARCH 17: ASSESSING VALIDITY**

Read: Altheide & Johnson: *Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity*  
 Strauss & Corbin: *Canons and Procedures (handout)*  
 Assignment 3: Interviewing

**MARCH 24: SPRING BREAK**

**MARCH 31: WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY**

Read: L, S, A & L: Chs. 8 & 10  
 Richardson: *Writing as a Mode of Inquiry*  
 Lofland: *Spencer Cahill and the Sociological Essay*  
 Suggested: Roseneau: Ch. 7,  
 Van Maanen: *Tales of the field.*  
 Kotarba et al. *An Ethnography of Emerging Latino Scenes*  
 Roschelle & Kaufman: *Fitting in and Fighting Back*

**APRIL 7: POSTMODERN ETHNOGRAPHY & AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

Read: Ellis & Bochner: *Talking Over Ethnography*  
 Ronai: *Multiple Reflections of Child Sex Abuse*  
 Jones: *Auto-Ethnography*  
 Newmahr: *Becoming a Sadomasochist*  
 Goode: *Mixing Genres: It's a Floor Wax and a Whipped Topping!*

**MIDTERM DUE**

**APRIL 14: SENSORY & MOBILE ETHNOGRAPHY**

Read: Gottschalk: *A Sense of Time, A Sense of Place*  
 Rice: *Soundselfs*  
 Buscher & Urry: *Mobile Methods and the Empirical*  
 Pink: *An Urban Tour*  
 Kusenbach: *Street Phenomenology*

**PART 3: QUALITATIVE METHODS WITH TEXTS**

**APRIL 21 – APRIL 28: TEXTUAL ANALYSES**

Read: Liebenberg: *The Visual Image as Discussion Point*  
 McIntosh: *The Social Construction of Virtual Space*  
 Gottschalk: *The Chemical Self, or Speed Culture or Hypermodern Consumption*  
 Harper: *On the Authority of the Image*  
 Berger: *Propp, de Saussure and the Narrative*  
 Altheide: *Ethnographic Content Validity*  
 Tolson: *Signs & Meanings*

**MAY 7: CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

Assignment 4: Media Analysis

**MAY 14: FINAL PAPERS DUE AT 1PM**

Note: *There may be slight changes to this schedule over the course of the semester. You are responsible for changes announced in class.*

**(VI) EXPECTATIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RESOURCES:**

*In order to avoid uncomfortable situations where students ask faculty for special treatment, special consideration, favors, extra time, or extra resources--a situation that is unfair to both faculty and other students-- please familiarize yourself with these expectations and responsibilities.*

**(a) Attendance**

Commit now to attend each class *on time and for the full time*. If the cause for missing or incompletely attending class is an emergency situation, you *must* bring official documentation to that effect. I will *not* consider requests that are undocumented. Every missed or incompletely attended class will result in a decrease of the total grade by 5 points.

**(b) Electronic Devices**

No electronic devices will be allowed during lectures. These include: cell phones, smartphones, laptops, tablets, headphones, earphones, and other such objects.

**(c) Late Papers**

Except for documented medical reasons, I do not accept late assignments. If you need to submit an assignment late for medical reasons, please *provide the official and appropriate documentation with your late assignment*. I will not grade undocumented late assignments.

**(d) Extra Credit**

There are no extra credits for this class.

**(e) Writing**

Writing is *the* essential skill of academic work, and your grade on the written assignments will depend *as much* on form as on content. If you lack sufficiently developed writing skills, it is your responsibility to take remedial courses in this area. One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

**(f) Academic Misconduct**

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**(g) Copyright**

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves **with** and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**(h) Religious Holidays Policy**

Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

**(i) Incomplete Grades**

The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**(j) Rebelmail**

By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students’ Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV’s official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students’ e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu

**(k) Disability Resource Center (DRC)**

The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895- 0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor before or after class in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**(l) Learning Enhancement Services (LES)**

Houses Disability Services, Tutoring Services, and Learning Strategies. If you have documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact LES for coordination in your academic accommodations. LES is located in the Reynolds Students Complex, Suite 137. You also need to provide me with the appropriate documentation no later than the second week after the beginning of the semester. I will not accept undocumented request for special accommodations or documented requests which are submitted later than the deadline. The phone number is 895-0866 or TDD 702-895-0652. You may also visit their website at:

<http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les>.

**(m) Tutoring and Coaching—The Academic Success Center (ASC)** provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call [702-895-3177](tel:702-895-3177). The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**(n) Campus Advocacy Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Line:**

If you are experiencing (or have experienced) interpersonal violence The CARE Line is a 24-hour campus crisis hotline available to victims/survivors of interpersonal violence, as well as their family and friends. Trained volunteer advocates provide support, education, resources, and referrals to on and off campus services for crimes of sexual assault, domestic or dating violence, and stalking. 895-0602.  
Rape Crisis Center: 888-366-1640.

And if you experience violence on campus you can (and you should if possible) report it to campus police: 895-3668.

**(o) Student Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):**

We all have much going on in our lives these days, and integrating our lives and education can be challenging. CAPS offers many resources along with trained clinicians to help you work through problems commonly experienced by students of all ages and backgrounds. Located in the Student Recreation & Wellness Center 702-895-3627. More about programs and services at <http://www.unlv.edu/srwc/caps>

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**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

**Library statement:**

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the Subject Librarian is ([https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject)). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu>