

## **Theory and Practice of Qualitative Methods**

**Professor: Dr. Marie Le Clainche - Piel, CNRS Researcher**

*Contact:*

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### **COURSE PRESENTATION**

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What does it mean to pursue a qualitative research methodology and why is it central to sociology? This introductory course seeks to teach students how to conduct qualitative research in a reflexive and thorough way. It focuses on the stakes and strategies of in-depth interview and off-line observations. Whether it is the choice of a fieldwork, the ethics of inquiry, the formulation of a research question, the researcher-informant relationship, the validity of data and methods of analysis, etc., this course examines each issue from the perspective of both epistemological and practical concerns.

Theory and practice are interdependent throughout each class. We will closely read and discuss important papers based on qualitative research methods, and you will pursue experiments on your own through in-depth interviews and ethnographic descriptions. Although each of you will develop your own project, throughout this course you will form a group for research and collective support for research initiation. *Be prepared to read, try, stumble and learn along the way!*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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**Weekly Commentaries and Class Participation (40%).** Weekly commentaries on the readings are due by 6PM the day before class. These should focus on questions for discussion, confusions, points for clarification, and comparisons between readings. Your commentaries need to be submitted through an online document established for the course so that everyone will benefit from reading each other's responses prior to class discussion.

**Conducting fieldwork** is also central to your participation in this course. The Short Paper and the Research Paper will both be based on your own (preliminary) investigation.

**Short Paper (20%).** One 3-5 pages paper will be due on Week 8 (Times New Roman 12, 1.15 spaced). It will focus on your ongoing research experiment and methodological dilemmas. Specific parameters for the assignment will be given during class.

**Research Paper (40%).** The course will culminate with one 12-15 pages research paper tailored to each student's theoretical and thematic interests (Times New Roman 12, 1.15 spaced – this length does not include interview transcripts and appendixes).

It will be due one week after Week 12 and be submitted to [leclainchepiel@gmail.com](mailto:leclainchepiel@gmail.com), with a copy to [marie.leclainchepiel@sciencespo.fr](mailto:marie.leclainchepiel@sciencespo.fr)

The final paper will comprise three parts:

1. The formulation of the subject matter and the process leading to the choice of the interviewee/observation site;
2. A reflexive analysis of the interview/observation process;
3. An examination of the information delivered by the interviewee/observation.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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I recommend that you immerse yourself in at least one book based on a qualitative methodology during the semester. Here is a list of non-exhaustive suggestions:

CROWLEY-MATOKA, Megan. 2016. *Domesticating Organ Transplant: Familial Sacrifice and National Aspiration in Mexico*, Durham: Duke University Press.

GOFFMAN, Alice. 2014. *On the Run. Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

GOFFMAN, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*, New York, NY: Anchor Books.

KHAN, Shamus Rahman. 2011. *Privilege. The making of an adolescent elite at St. Paul's school*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

WALDBY, Catherine. 2019. *The Oocyte Economy: The Changing Meaning of Human Eggs*, Durham: Duke University Press.

WHYTE, William Foote. 1993 [1943]. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. 4th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Methodological manuals are useful tools. Here is a list of recommended ones for master and PhD research:**

BECKER, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about your Research while You're Doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

EMERSON, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LUKER, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

SHARAN, Merriam. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

WEISS, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

## COURSE SCHEDULE WITH READINGS

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### WEEK 1\_31/08 **INTRODUCTION: WHY AND HOW TO START A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Please come to class prepared to talk about your research interests and how they might take shape through this course. This introduction to research begins with you.

### WEEK 2\_07/09 **EPISTEMOLOGY**

BECKER, Howard S. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research", In *Ethnography and Human Development*, edited by Jessor, Richard, Colby, Anne, Shweder, Richard A. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 53-71.

MALINOWSKI, Bronislaw. 1922. "Foreword by the Author" and "Introduction: The Subject, Method and Scope." In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London: Routledge, pp.xi-20.

ALFORD, Robert R. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods and Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.11-20.

### WEEK 3\_14/09 **POSITIONNALITY**

LAMONT, Michèle. 2004. "A Life of Hard but Justified Choices: Interviewing Across (too) Many Divides", in *Researching Race and Racism*, edited by Martin Bulmer and John Solomos, London: Routledge, pp. 162-171.

ZAVELLA, Patricia. 1996. "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with 'Chicana' Informants", In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, ed. Diane L. Wolfe, Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 138-169.

HARAWAY, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3):575-599.

## **WEEK 4\_21/09\_CONTEXT MATTERS**

GEERTZ, Clifford. 2001. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", In *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*, edited by R. Emerson. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp. 55-75.

JEROLMACK, Colin and KHAN, Shamus. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Falacy", *Sociological Methods and Research*, 43 (2):178-209.

VENKATESH, Sudhir. 2002. "'Doin' the Hustle': Constructing the Ethnographer in the American Ghetto", *Ethnography*, 3 (1):91-111

## **WEEK 5\_28/09\_IN DEPTH INTERVIEW IN ACTION**

In-class preparation of your interview guide.

Supporting documents:

- BOURDIEU, Pierre. 1996. "Understanding", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13 (2):17-37
- Harvard Sociological Department Guide, "Strategies for Qualitative Interviews".
- 12 Handy Tips, from HEALEY-ETTEN, Victoria., and SHARP, Shane. 2010. "Teaching Beginning Undergraduates How to Do an In-depth Interview: A Teaching Note with 12 Handy Tips", *Teaching Sociology*, 38 (2):157-165.

## **WEEK 6\_05/10.LEADING THE INVESTIGATION AND CIRCUMSCRIBING THE FIELD**

SMALL, Mario. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research", *Ethnography*, 10 (1):5-38.

LAMONT, Michèle, SWIDLER, Ann. 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing", *Qualitative Sociology* 37 (2):153-171.

BOELLSTORFF, Tom. 2008. "Chapter 3. Methods" In *Coming of Age In Second Life. An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp. 60-86.

## **WEEK 7\_12/10\_ETHERICAL GUIDELINES, LAW AND POLITICAL DILEMMAS**

NEWMAN, Katherine S. 2002. "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy", *Sociological Methods and Research*, 31 (2): 123-130.

SMITH, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. "Introduction" In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2nd Edition, New York: St Martin's Press, pp. 1-17.

KHAN, Shamus. 2019. "The Subpoena of Ethnographic Data", *Sociological Forum*, 34:253-263.

Supporting document:

*American Sociological Association*, Code of Ethics, 2018:  
[https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa\\_code\\_of\\_ethics-june2018a.pdf](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa_code_of_ethics-june2018a.pdf)

## **WEEK 8\_19/10\_REPORTS FROM THE FIELD** *Short paper due this week*

No reading material this week.

Each student presents the state of their research, the construction of the question and progress of the investigation. The research group formed by the class discuss it collectively.

## **WEEK 9\_26/10\_ANALYZING DATA**

Bring a transcript of at least one of your interviews in class.

COLLINS Patricia Hill. 1986. "Learning From the Outsider Within: the Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought", *Social Problems*, 33 (6):14-32.

SHARAN, Merriam. 2009. "Chapter Eight. Qualitative Data Analysis" In *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 195-236.

Supporting document:

ANSELM, Strauss. 1987. "Codes and Coding," in *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 55-81.

*Holiday Break*

**WEEK 10\_09/11\_ADDING LAYERS: QUANTITATIVE DATA, DRAWINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS**

BAZELEY, Pat. 2002. "Issues in Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Research", Presented at 1st International Conference - Qualitative Research in Marketing and Management, University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna.

HENDRICKSON, Carol. 2008. "Visual Field Notes: Drawing Insights in the Yucatan", *Visual Anthropology Review*, 24 (2):117-32.

CROWLEY-MATOKA, Megan. 2016. "Living Organ Donation, Bioavailability, and ethical domesticity" In *Domesticating Organ Transplant: Familial Sacrifice and National Aspiration in Mexico*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 33-64.

**WEEK 11\_16/11\_WHAT MAKES A GOOD RESEARCH PAPER?**

MUSTO, Michela. 2013. "Athletes in the Pool, Girls and Boys on Deck: The Contextual Construction of Gender in Coed Youth Swimming", *Gender & Society*, 28 (3):359-380.

RIVERA, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms", *American Sociological Review*, 77 (6):999-1022.

WALDBY, Catherine. 2015. "'Banking time': egg freezing and the negotiation of future fertility", *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17 (4):470-482.

**WEEK 12\_23/11\_CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE STAND AND WHERE DO WE GO?**

It's time to wrap up.

Collective reflection on what you have learned, how you stumbled, what you could do to continue your research experience.

*Final paper due on December 6<sup>th</sup>*