SOCY 428 — Advanced Studies in Qualitative Methods

Schedule: Mondays, 2:30 – 5:30
Room: MC-A309 (Mac-Corry)
Instructor: Prof. Cynthia Levine-Rasky
email: clr@queensu.ca  phone: (613) 533-6000 x 74485
office: MC-D520  office hours: Mondays, 1–2 pm.
Stauffer Library sociology page: http://library.queensu.ca/research/guide/sociology

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will be of interest to senior undergraduates who have a keen interest in developing their understanding and experience with qualitative research methods. To quote from an influential reference book on the subject, qualitative research “consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3rd ed. 2005, p. 3). Qualitative work therefore involves a description of naturally occurring situations recorded during direct, first-hand observation, interviews, and other data collection techniques together with a process of making sense of such encounters.

In this three-hour seminar, students are expected to become conversant in the literature and debates related to qualitative research as they are manifest in the current historical moment. This is achieved through combining lecture, discussion, and interview practice conveying abstract ideas, practical information, and direct experience. Through reading and informed discussion, we will explore methodology and methods associated with qualitative research including ethnography (old and new), the study of lived resistance, genealogical analysis, and deconstruction among other themes. Readings will be accompanied by lectures on practical issues related to design, data collection, and evaluation. In addition, opportunities will be given to practice one’s interviewing skills, an essential component in the qualitative researcher’s repertoire.

Insight into how qualitative research is carried out will be gained through students’ presentations of published qualitative research delivered in the form of a conference presentation. The major assignment is intended to advance critical engagement with course materials and to apply them in completing a research proposal. Students will prepare for the major assignment by reading relevant sections of the Tri-Council policy statement on ethical conduct for research involving human subjects. The proposal may be valuable for students contemplating graduate study in sociology or other fields.

Students should be prepared to take an active role in this seminar course through discussions, responses to presentations, and participation in interview exercises. Details follow.
EVALUATION

1. Research proposal 40%
2. Presentation 30%
3. Participation 20%
4. Attendance 10%

(Topics for the research proposal and the presentation may be related.)

REQUIRED READINGS


**Read these sections (approximately 41 pages):**

Chapter 1–Ethics Framework (p. 7-13);
Chapter 2–Scope and Approach, Section A (p. 15-22); Section B (p. 22-25);
Chapter 3, Section A (p. 27-36);
Chapter 3–The Consent Process, Section B (p. 37-38);
Chapter 4–Fairness and Equity, Section B, Article 4.7 (p. 52-53);
Chapter 5–Privacy and Confidentiality, Sections A, B, and C (p. 55-62);
Chapter 9–Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, Section C, Articles 9.11–9.15 (p. 122-126);
Chapter 10–Qualitative Research (p. 135-145).
SCHEDULE
[Note: Due to Thanksgiving Monday, there are only 11 weeks of classes.]

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>WEEK 1</td>
<td>Rubin &amp; Rubin, ch 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
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<td>Sep 8</td>
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<td>Discuss R &amp; R</td>
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<td>Nov 3</td>
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**Guideline: Participation**

Evaluation of participation in SOCY 428 is based on thoughtful engagement with classroom activities: (1) the readings; (2) peers’ presentations and; (3) interview exercises.

For each week’s readings, students are expected to have contemplated this question and to be prepared to discuss it:
- What was the most interesting, personally significant, puzzling, problematic, or controversial thing for you in this reading?

In response to peers’ presentations, students are expected to make critical and constructive comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation, and to raise questions of the kind you might imagine hearing at a conference. For this, you may find the evaluation criteria useful (see below).

Interview exercises involve two students interviewing each other by alternating the roles of interviewer and interview participant. Using the ‘fishbowl’ format, the class will observe each other’s developing interview skills. Evaluation of participation in these exercises is based on the quality, depth, and content of what you do in the roles of interviewer and of observer.

**Evaluation Criteria: What Makes For Excellent Participation?**
- Evidence of critical analysis (eg. explaining, reading for implications, synthesizing ideas, applying ideas, raising questions, interpreting, reading for social context);
- Evidence of active learning (the process by which the ideas you encounter in reading and listening to others become integrated with your own perspective and personal experience).
Guideline: Presentation

This assignment requires students to explore the literature of qualitative research. Students will seek examples of qualitative research that demonstrate the application of some of the approaches, methods, analysis, and practices we read about in SOCY 428. You may look for a peer-reviewed scholarly journal article or book that you believe is a strong example of the methodology and methods you are choosing for your research proposal. You may also seek an article that reflects your curiosity in the subject matter, in the method, or in any other aspect of qualitative methods we may cover in class.

There are many ways of finding good publications on which to present. First are university databases, especially Sociological Abstracts. Scanning the reference lists in the reading/s for the course is another good way to start. Writers regularly refer to the work of others who integrate qualitative perspectives into their research agendas. A third way to locate a suitable publication is to review the contents of journals that specialize in qualitative research. A list of these can be found below. Finally, you may search specifically for (or within) journals in a substantive area in which you are interested, eg. criminology, surveillance, ethnicity, youth subcultures, disability, families, health.

Ensure that the authors are sociologists rather than professors in other disciplines where qualitative research is used such as business, medicine, or psychology. Political science research may not be consistent with the objectives of this assignment. Some qualitative research in sport, healthcare, and education may be relevant as long as the writers are identified as sociologists. Publications on cultural studies, communication studies, cultural geography, gender studies, and social work may be highly relevant. If in doubt, contact me.

While presenting on a book is certainly acceptable, you may find that a journal article is a more manageable length. Choose an article that you find inspiring and for which you feel enthusiasm. At the end of your presentation, we may have time for one question from the class.

In order to ensure the high quality of presentations—and to boost the interest of your audience—presentations will be delivered in FIRST PERSON in a conference presentation style. That is, students will assume the identity of the author of the study, and deliver a presentation on it to their peers who will assume the identities of scholarly conference delegates. A demonstration will be given in the first or second class.

Points to Include (Present in FIRST PERSON as though at a conference)

• A full reference to the publication
• Why you (as the author) decided to conduct this study
• The main research question/s
• A summary of the methodology used
• What, where, when, why, how the research was carried out
• Description of the participants and how they were recruited
• A summary of the data collection technique/s used
• A summary of the way the data was analyzed (if any is mentioned)
• Some examples of interview questions (if applicable)
• Ethical considerations
• Validity measures (if any are mentioned)
• The strengths and limitations of the research
• What you hope your audience learned from it
• What questions it raised for you

Journals
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies
Ethnography
International Review of Qualitative Research
Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
Qualitative Inquiry
Qualitative Research
Qualitative Sociology
Qualitative Sociology Review
Symbolic Interactionism

Duration: 20 minutes
Format: You may speak from notes, or use PowerPoint or Prezi, or you may create a poster
either electronically or on paper. You are responsible for supplying your own laptop, cables, and adapters where necessary (ie. for Macs), checking the technical capabilities of
the seminar room, and for setting up and trouble-shooting. If your article has images, diagrams, or interview transcript excerpts, you may consider including them in your
presentation.
Scheduling: Nine or ten days have been allocated for these presentations. A schedule will be
circulated in class but some flexibility will be necessary due to enrolment numbers and
the need to accommodate other activities.
Weight: 30%
Guideline: Research Proposal

This assignment requires students to apply many of the skills and knowledge acquired in the course in developing a faux research proposal inspired by those we have been reading including the preparation of Letters of Information and Consent Forms. It may be done individually or in teams of two.

Your imagined role is that of Assistant Professor intending to conduct field research in your area of specialization. You are applying for funding for a proposed qualitative research project. No proposed budget is required. In your proposal, assume sufficient funds for supplies, travel, and equipment including recording devices and transcribing services (if applicable). Assume that you intend to carry out the proposed project by yourself (or the two of you) without further research assistance. Assume that the research funding is for two years.

The Office of Research Services posts samples of consent forms and letters of information that you may use as a template for your assignment.

The assignment is due after the last class. The assignments will be evaluated and available for your review VIA EMAIL by the end of the academic term. If you prefer to submit a hard copy, contact me and I will give you my address. To save paper, you do not need to have a separate title page or reference list; you may use double-sided printing. University policy requires instructors to store final assignments and exams for a period of one year. For this reason, students will be unable to remove hard copies of evaluated research proposals from my office. Students may review my evaluation and comments in my office during office hours, or may contact me to obtain my written comments.

Components of the Research Proposal
1. Give your project a title.
2. Provide your names/s, University affiliation (make it up), rank (Assistant Professor), and Department (make it up, but presumably it will be Sociology).
3. Project Details: (1) 300-word abstract (summary). Assume that an adjudication committee will read this first and decide whether or not to approve of your proposal; (2) Method. This section can be from 8 to 15 double-spaced pages in length; it will include all of the points below.
   A) Research question/s;
   B) Background to the issue: who, what, where, when you propose to conduct the project including the duration (start date is July 1, 2015; end date is June 30, 2017). Give the number and sources of participants and how they will be recruited;
   C) Why research on this subject is necessary? What contribution do you hope to make to the body of knowledge about your topic? (Some possibilities are a wish to refine, expand, challenge, modify, confirm, or to elaborate upon existing theories about your topic.)
   D) What is your purpose? (Some possibilities are personal development, to change society, to prepare for a job, to change social policy, to pioneer new research, to educate the public, or to help people.)
   E) Brief literature review (key references and authors who have done what you propose to do);
   F) Methodology/methodologies you are using, with a rationale for your choice/s. You must refer to at least SIX OTHER sources BEYOND the required readings. One of these may be the example you presented in class. (Tip: For ideas, look at the reference lists in the
required readings for this course.) These must be scholarly books and journals; they may be obtained online and through databases in QCAT. Do not use personal blogs, Wikipedia, Google or any other internet browser or forum like Reddit.

G) Data collection methods. (References to published research that used these methods greatly strengthens an application.) Three methods are ideal. **NOTE: One of the three methods MUST be some form of interviewing:** in-depth face-to-face interviews; focus groups; online interviews. You can use a combination of interview techniques. Example: In-depth individual interviews + focus groups + participant observations + document analysis = 4 methods.

4. Validity (trustworthiness) measures. Indicate how you will assure the quality of your proposed research efforts.

5. Ethics.
   A) Are approvals or permissions required, eg. Field Safety Approval, School Board approval, Community or Institutional Approval?
   B) Give details of any remuneration or compensation you are offering to participants.
   C) Will vulnerable population(s) be recruited? If so, what special measures are you using to address their status?
   D) Will the study involve any deception? If so, describe.
   E) What are the risks for participants? Describe your plan to minimize the risks and how you will provide support to participants in the context of these risks.
   F) What are the potential benefits of the research to the participants in your project, the research community and/or to society at large?
   G) How do you intend to protect the privacy of your participants? Who will have access to the information they disclose to you? (Think about transcribers, translators, colleagues, grad students, etc.) How will the information be stored and for how long?


8. Interview questions. Use any format you prefer that corresponds to your research design, eg. for a semi-structured in-depth individual interview protocol, give a list of the main questions with a few secondary questions for each. For an oral history, the list of questions will be much shorter.

9. Reference List.

10. Check list. Include pp. 7–8 of the course syllabus showing checkmarks for each item #1–10 and parts A–G for items #3 and 5.

**PAGINATE!**

Due: noon, FRIDAY DECEMBER 5, via EMAIL to clr@queensu.ca.

Late penalty: 3% per day including weekends (ie. an assignment that would normally receive an evaluation of a B or 75% will receive a grade of B- or 72% if submitted one day late, and so on.)
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Readings – Qualitative Methods (Introductory)

Readings – Qualitative Methods (Advanced)

Readings – Selected Approaches

Journals
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies
Ethnography
International Review of Qualitative Research
Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
Qualitative Inquiry
Qualitative Research
Qualitative Sociology
Qualitative Sociology Review
Symbolic Interactionism
Classroom Protocol
1. Consistent with the principle of mutual respect for all participants in the class, electronic devices (eg. cell phones, internet use unrelated to the course, text messaging, iPods) during lectures and tutorials are not permitted.
2. Students who require academic accommodation for a disability must register with the Health, Counseling and Disability Resource Centre. The Centre provides letters requesting accommodation. Instructors receive these letters no later than fourteen days after the first day of class.
3. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation disallows the public distribution of assignments (as outside a professor’s office door), and the general posting of grades. Results of all assignments will be picked up by individual students during class or during the professor’s or TAs’ office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments personally, they can provide the professor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of their work.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulations), on the Arts and Science website and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism (defined as the representation of another person’s ideas or writing as one’s own. The most obvious form of this kind of dishonesty is the presentation of all or part of another person’s published work as something one has written. Other examples are copying and pasting from the internet, a printed source, or other resource without proper acknowledgement; copying from another student; using direct quotations or large sections of paraphrased material in an assignment without appropriate acknowledgement; submitting the same piece of work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor[s]), use of unauthorized materials, facilitation (defined as the enablement of another’s breach of academic integrity. Examples: making information available to another student; knowingly allowing one’s essay or assignment to be copied by someone else; buying or selling of term papers or assignments and submitting them as one’s own for the purpose of plagiarism), forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.
Statement on Copyright
The material in this syllabus is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in [the course]. The material on this website may be downloaded for a registered student’s personal use, but shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in SOCY 428. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Grading Scheme
All assignments in this course will receive letter grades. Your final course grade will be derived from the average of your assignment grades using the formula approved by the Faculty of Arts and Science.

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