SOC 610: Methods of Qualitative Analysis
Colorado State University
Spring Semester 2016
Mondays – 3:30-6:20 p.m.
118 Eddy Building

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Email: lori.peek@colostate.edu
Web Page: http://wsnet.colostate.edu/CWIS584/Lori_Peek/home.aspx
Office: B-237 Clark Building
Office Hours: Mondays – 1:00-2:30 p.m. and By Appointment

Course Description:
This graduate seminar offers an introduction to qualitative field research methods. The course is designed to give you an overview of the logic of qualitative research, process of research design, major approaches to qualitative data collection methods, and techniques of data analysis. Through the readings, discussions, exercises, and assignments, we will explore:

- the assumptions and theoretical traditions of qualitative research;
- ethical issues associated with research involving human participants;
- the identity and role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry;
- typical qualitative data collection methods with a specific focus on non-participant and participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic content analysis, participatory mapping, and photovoice;
- techniques for describing, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data; and
- ways to ensure rigorous, rich, theoretically-informed, and sociologically-relevant qualitative studies.

I deeply enjoy teaching this course, and I am looking forward to working with each of you. I am dedicated to giving you the best possible education in qualitative methods that I can. In turn, I expect that you will be committed to the course. This class is reading, writing, and field work intensive. That means that you need to do the readings in advance of the weekly meetings, be a regular and active seminar participant, contribute to class discussions in meaningful ways, and complete all of the assignments thoroughly and on time.

By the end of the course, you should be familiar with the modes of thinking, specific practices, and the language and logic associated with the qualitative paradigm. You will become certified by the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research. You will also learn how to formulate sociological research questions, choose the best methodological approach to answer them, and design your own qualitative research project. Finally, you will have the opportunity to conduct preliminary field research, in the form of observations and in-depth interviews, and thus will gain experience with the actual practice of doing research.

Required Course Materials:
- Additional required readings are available electronically via Canvas.
Recommended Course Materials:
The following books are recommended, but not required. In order to conduct research and write well, you must be thoughtful, organized, persistent, and consistent. These additional recommended books offer helpful suggestions for organizing and presenting content, learning to write as a professional, developing your style and voice, and figuring out how to start and finish a scholarly project. They also review elementary rules related to the proper use of the English language and provide specific guidelines for how you should cite academic sources.


Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (30 pts.): This course will be run in a seminar format with the intent of promoting an active learning environment. Thus, your attendance and thoughtful participation is vital to the success of this course. I expect that you will be on time and that you will attend every class session in its entirety. In addition, you should read the assigned materials prior to class and come prepared to contribute to the discussion.

Weekly Reading Summaries (100 pts.): This course is organized around a set of readings that will be used to guide class discussions and inform your various research assignments. Prior to 10 seminar meetings of your choosing, you will submit a one- to two-page, single-spaced, paper that summarizes and integrates the key themes from each of the week’s readings. You are also encouraged to raise questions and to critique the assigned material. As the class progresses and you develop your research topic of interest, you should increasingly make connections between the readings and your own project. Therefore, I expect that the summaries will evolve over the course of the semester. These summaries should be submitted to the entire class via Canvas by no later than 1:00 p.m. on the Sunday before seminar meetings. This should help us focus on common critiques, concerns, and questions during our Monday seminar. Again, students must submit 10 one- to two-page summaries, worth up to 10 points each, throughout the semester.

Homework Assignments (30 pts.): During the semester, I ask that students complete three brief homework assignments, worth 10 points each. These assignments include writing up an interview recruitment script (due March 28), drafting an interview guide (due March 28), and creating a fieldwork protocol document (due April 4). Additional assignment details will be discussed in class.

Research Topic Write-Up (25 pts.) and Written Critiques (25 pts.): We will spend the first few weeks of the semester discussing some of the general issues in the conduct of qualitative research. We will also cover how to choose a topic and setting, formulate a research question, and use the best methods to answer the question. By no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 11, you should submit a two-page, double-spaced paper via Canvas that identifies the: a) problem or topic; b) sociological research question(s) that you will address in your final proposal; c) research setting; d) population of interest and possible sampling strategy; e) research method(s); f) rationale for doing the research and possible bodies of literature to frame and guide the study; and g) timeline. The expectation for this assignment is that you have a clearly thought-out research topic, either based on a gap in prior research or an as yet undiscovered contribution to the field.
On Monday, February 15, you will receive feedback on your research topic write-up from your classmates. Prior to this class session, you will be divided into small groups, and each student will be responsible for preparing a written critique of two other research write-ups. You should bring duplicate copies of each marked copy and written critique (one for each of your group members, and one for me) to class on February 15.

Institutional Review Board Training (40 pts.): All social scientists should be aware of ethical standards that must be adhered to in everyday professional activities. The American Sociological Association’s Code of Ethics sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie our professional responsibilities and conduct. At Colorado State University, all published or publicly presented research involving human subjects (including master’s theses and doctoral dissertations) must have prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This semester, you will complete a web-based training program through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). This self-paced course consists of several modules focusing on defining research with human subjects, the history of human subjects protection, regulatory compliance in the social and behavioral sciences, ethical principles, privacy and confidentiality concerns, informed consent, and research with vulnerable populations. You must log on to the CITI website (https://www.citiprogram.org/) and register to complete the modules for social and behavioral science researchers. Each training module contains relevant information and ends with a brief question quiz. It will take you about 10-20 minutes to complete each module, and an overall passing score of 80% must be achieved to obtain the CSU training certificate. You should complete and pass each module and bring a printed copy of your training certificate to class on Monday, February 22.

Observations and Fieldnotes (100 pts.): The purpose of this project is to familiarize you with the practice of conducting field observations and writing up observational fieldnotes. For this assignment, you will conduct observations for at least one hour. If possible, you should try to observe interactions in a setting that is related to the place where you plan to conduct your actual thesis or dissertation research. Before you carry out this exercise, we will discuss observational techniques and the practice of recording and analyzing fieldnotes. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. On Monday, March 21, you will submit your typed fieldnotes and a 5-8 page reflection paper.

Transcribed and Theme Coded Interviews (100 pts.): The purpose of this project is to familiarize you with the practice of conducting, analyzing, and writing up qualitative interviews. For this assignment, you will develop an interview guide and conduct qualitative interviews with two informants. Your informants should be persons who are connected to the topic that you plan to research for your thesis or dissertation. You will then transcribe a portion of at least one of the interviews, code and analyze your recorded data, and write a report on your experiences. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. On Monday, April 11, you will submit the interview guide, verbatim transcription, coding scheme, and 5-8 page reflection paper.

Draft Research Proposal (25 pts.) and Written Critique (25 pts.): By no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 28, you will submit a draft research proposal via Canvas that includes a plan for conducting a qualitative research project. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. You and a partner will exchange research proposals and will provide written feedback to one another. You should bring the marked copy of the proposal and two copies of your written critique—one for me and one for your partner—to class on Monday, May 2.

Final Research Proposal (20%; 100 pts.): Students will have the opportunity to revise their research proposals based on peer feedback. Final proposals, which should be approximately 15 pages, are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 9. You should submit a hard copy of your proposal to my Sociology Department mailbox.
### Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Reading Summaries</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Homework Assignments</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Topic Write-Up and Critiques</td>
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<td>IRB Training</td>
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<td>Observations and Fieldnotes</td>
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<td>Transcribed and Theme Coded Interviews</td>
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<td>Draft Research Proposal and Critique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Proposal</td>
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Total Points Possible 600

### Grading Scale:

- 600-540 = A
- 539-480 = B
- 479-420 = C
- 419-360 = D
- 359-Below = F

### Statement on Class Attendance, Late Work, and Incompletes:

This graduate seminar meets only one time per week, and we will cover much material in each class session. Therefore, I expect that you will arrange your schedule so that you will attend every class in its entirety. Failure to attend a class session will result in a 10% reduction (one letter grade) of your final grade for the class. Exceptions to the aforementioned rule will only be granted in the case of a documented emergency or other legitimate professional reason. If you know that you are going to have to miss class, please contact me immediately so that we can make arrangements for you to complete an alternate assignment.

Assignments are considered late if they are not submitted by the time and date outlined in the syllabus. I will subtract 10% from your assignment grade for each day your assignment is late, starting with the time and day the assignment was due.

I do not allow graduate students to take incompletes in this course. If you are unable to complete the requirements for this course during the spring 2016 semester, you should reconsider your enrollment in the class.

### Statement on Electronic Devices:

I care deeply about this class, and as such, I want all of my students to be fully engaged in every minute of every class session. As such, you should please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices at the beginning of class. I also ask that no laptops or tablets be used in the seminar room.

### Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the intellectual vitality of the university and the ideals of education. I expect students to be honest and to conduct themselves with integrity in all aspects of the course. Dishonest conduct—which includes cheating, plagiarizing, or lying for the purpose of influencing a grade or for other academic gain—undermines the educational experience and is simply not acceptable. Any student found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to academic penalty and/or university disciplinary action. See the Colorado State University General Catalog for statements on academic integrity and student conduct (http://catalog.colostate.edu/).

### Disabilities Statement:

If you are a student who will need accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation. You may also want to contact Resources for Disabled Students for additional support (970-491-6385; http://rds.colostate.edu/).
Course Outline:

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>January 25</th>
<th>Introduction and Course Overview</th>
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**In-Class Activities:**
- Self-introductions.
- Review syllabus. Discuss assignments, expectations, and outcomes.
- Identify research topics, settings, and populations of interest.
- Review course calendar and work on personal time management strategies.
- Discuss graduation timelines.

**Required Reading:**
- Course Syllabus

Week 2 | February 1 | The Logic of Qualitative Research |

**Topics:**
- Promises and challenges of qualitative research.
- Qualitative genres, paradigms, and epistemologies.
- Issues of causality, validity, reliability, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and generalizability.
- Evaluating qualitative research.

**Required Reading:**
- Ravitch and Carl (chapters 1, 6)

**Further Reading:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>February 8</th>
<th>Designing Qualitative Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Building a conceptual framework.</td>
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<td>❖ Selecting topics, posing research questions, and reviewing the literature.</td>
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<td>❖ Identifying field settings.</td>
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<td>❖ Gatekeepers, research participants, sampling, and data saturation.</td>
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<td>❖ Data collection methods.</td>
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<td>❖ Mixed methods.</td>
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<td><strong>In-Class Activities:</strong></td>
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<td>❖ Form five small groups of three students each to complete the research topic write-up critiques.</td>
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<td>❖ Practice writing sociological research questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Reading:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Ravitch and Carl (chapters 2-5, 10)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>February 11</th>
<th>Research Topic Write-Up Due</th>
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<td><strong>Assignment Due:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Submit your two-page research topic write-up to the class email list via Canvas by no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 11. The class will be divided into small groups, and each student will be responsible for reading, marking up via track changes, and preparing a written critique for two research write-ups prior to the February 15 class session.</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>February 15</th>
<th>Situating the Self</th>
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<td><strong>Assignment Due:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Bring duplicate copies of each of your marked copies and written critiques to class. You will give one copy of your comments to your group members and one copy to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topics:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Membership roles in field research.</td>
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<td>❖ Issues of class, gender, race, religion, age, and other identity characteristics.</td>
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<td>❖ Insider/outsider debates.</td>
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<td>❖ Gaining access to field settings.</td>
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<td>❖ Offering research accounts.</td>
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<td>❖ Working alone and/or in teams in ethnographic settings.</td>
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<td><strong>Required Reading:</strong></td>
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**Further Reading:**

**Week 5  February 22  Politics and Ethics in Field Research**

**Assignment Due:**
- You should have completed the web-based IRB training program prior to this class session. Please bring a printed copy of your training certificate, verifying that you passed each of the modules with a score of 80% or higher.

**Topics:**
- Research ethics, institutional review boards, and professional codes of ethics.
- Power relations and special protection of vulnerable populations.
- Physical and ethical dangers in field research.
- Gaining entrée and exiting a field setting.
- Informed consent and deception.
- Ethical landmines and the concept of the ethical toolkit.
- The research bargain and taking sides.

**Required Reading:**
- Ravitch and Carl (chapter 11)

**Further Reading:**
Week 6  February 29  Field Observations – I

Topics:
- Why we conduct observations.
- Techniques and strategies for conducting non-participant and participant observation.
- Classic and contemporary observation studies and statements by researchers about how they went about conducting their research.

In-Class Activities:
- Discuss observation assignment and review assignment guidelines.
- Engage in a practical exercise in observation.

Required Reading:
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapter 1)

Further Reading:

Week 7  March 7  Field Observations – II

Topics:
- How to conduct field observations.
- Jottings in the field and writing full fieldnotes at the desk.
- Imposing exogenous meanings.
- Making sense of observational data: coding and memoing.
- The importance of keeping up with fieldnotes.

Required Reading:
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapters 2-6)
Week 9  March 21  Interviewing – I

Assignment Due:
❖ Observations and fieldnotes assignment.

Topics:
❖ Why we interview.
❖ Differences between survey and qualitative interviewing.
❖ Preparation for interviewing and developing an interview guide.
❖ Choosing and recruiting respondents. How our own identities and positionality influence recruitment.
❖ Developing an interview recruitment “script” and setting up interviews.

In-Class Activities:
❖ Discuss interview assignment and review assignment guidelines.
❖ Discuss upcoming homework assignments.
❖ Review sample interview recruitment scripts and interview guides.

Required Reading:
❖ Weiss (chapters 1-2)

Further Reading:

Week 10 March 28  Interviewing – II

Assignments Due:
❖ Interview recruitment script.
❖ Interview guide.

Topics:
❖ How and where we interview. Sites for interviewing: in-person, telephone, on-line.
❖ Conducting unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews.
❖ Issues in interviewing.
❖ Picking up on “markers.”
❖ Interviewing special populations.
❖ Gathering rich data.
❖ Empathy and emotion-work in interviewing.
❖ Ending the interview.
In-Class Activities:
- Review interview recruitment scripts and interview guides and provide feedback to one another.
- Review sample field protocol documents.

Required Reading:
- Weiss (chapters 3-5)

Further Reading:

Week 11 April 4 Data Analysis and Constructing Grounded Theory

Assignment Due:
- Field protocol document.

Topics:
- Organizing audio files and preparing transcripts.
- Initial, focused, and axial coding and memo-writing.
- Preparing codebooks. Theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting.
- Constructing grounded theory.
- Qualitative data analysis software.

In-Class Activities:
- Review field protocol documents during class and provide feedback to one another.
- Review sample codebooks.
- Work together as a class to analyze a portion of a sample transcript.
- During part of this class session, I will demo Atlas.TI and discuss other data analysis software programs.

Required Reading:
- Saldaña (chapters 1-6)
Week 12  April 11  Focus Groups

Assignment Due:
- Transcribed and theme coded interview assignment.

Topics:
- Why we conduct focus groups.
- Designing and implementing focus groups in diverse settings and with various population groups.
- The importance of interaction in focus groups.
- Analyzing focus group data.

Required Reading:

Further Reading:

Week 13  April 18  Ethnographic Content Analysis and Other Unobtrusive Measures

Topics:
- Ethnographic content analysis as method and approach.
- Why we use unobtrusive measures in social science research.
- Textual, visual, and archival research.
- Sampling documents and other secondary data.

Required Reading:


Further Reading:

Week 14 April 25 Participatory Action Research and Participant-Centered Methods

Topics:
- The logic and practice of participatory action research.
- Photovoice, participatory mapping, drawing, visualization, and other interactive and creative methods.

In-Class Activity:
- Pair up into groups of two to complete research proposal critiques.

Required Reading:
- Knigge, LaDonna and Meghan Cope. 2006. “Grounded Visualization: Integrating the Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Data through Grounded Theory and Visualization.” Environment and Planning 38: 2021-2037.

Further Reading:
Week 14 April 28 Draft Research Proposals Due

Assignment Due:
- Submit your draft research proposal to the class email list via Canvas by no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 28. Each student will be responsible for reading, marking up, and preparing a written critique of one other research proposal prior to the May 2 class session.

Week 15 May 2 Crafting Proposals and Writing Up Qualitative Research

Assignment Due:
- Bring the marked proposal that you reviewed and two copies of your proposal critique to class. You will give one copy of the marked proposal and your written comments to your partner and one copy to me.

Topics:
- Planning time for writing.
- Articulating value and logic.
- Outlining and organizing a research proposal/article.
- Getting started, revising, and submitting the final draft.

In-Class Activity:
- Discuss the proposal reviews and respond to outstanding questions.

Required Reading:
- Ravitch and Carl (chapter 9)
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapter 7)

Further Reading:

Finals Week May 9 Final Research Proposals Due

Assignment Due:
- Please submit a hard copy of your final research proposal to my Sociology Department mailbox by no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 9.

“It would be nice if all of the data which sociologists require could be enumerated because then we could run them through IBM machines and draw charts as the economists do. However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

~William Bruce Cameron, Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to Sociological Thinking, 1963