

Sociology 108  
Fall 2021

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Office hours:  
Tues. 4:00-5:00 PM (remote)  
Wed. 4:00-5:30 PM (in person)  
<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/jobii>

### Advanced Methods: In-Depth Interviewing

Scientists often use observation to gather data in conducting research. However, social scientists may go beyond observation to also incorporate interviews with those they are studying. This allows for the possibility of learning about people's motivations, attitudes, feelings, and their lived experience more generally. These kinds of information are best obtained through interviews, although this methodology can be combined with other methodologies for triangulation purposes, as well as to expand the range of information generated through the research process.

This course will train students in how to carry out research-oriented interviews. In the process, you will learn how to develop a researchable question, how to identify and recruit people to interview regarding it, how to prepare a comprehensive set of interview questions, how to conduct the interviews themselves, issues that can arise while conducting interviews, how to code and analyze interviews, and how to present one's findings at the end of a project. A keystone of this course is writing a sociological research paper using interview data that you gather for this class. You must gather new data – by conducting at least 8 interviews - as part of the course. This course requires a substantial amount of out-of-class individual work, and is most relevant for students who have a research question that they are interested in exploring.

#### Pre-Requisites:

Successful completion of Sociology 5; or, with the permission of the instructor, completion of an equivalent course.

#### Course Requirements:

Developing, completing, and writing up a research project is challenging. In order to keep you on track through this process, a number of tasks and steps are required of you (where due dates are relevant, they are listed in the week-by-week schedule for the course):

#### Grade breakdown:

- |                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| - Class attendance and participation | 10% |
| - Research proposal                  | 5%  |
| - Literature Review                  | 5%  |
| - Draft of interview guide           | 10% |
| - Completion of CITI modules         | 5%  |
| - Transcription of an interview      | 5%  |

- Preliminary coding assignment 10%
- Analytical memo 5%
- In-class presentation 10%
- Final research paper 35%

*Assignments:* All assignments worth 5% will be evaluated on a simple “check,” “check+” or “check-” basis. Assignments worth 10% or more will be given grades.

*Seminar participation:* This course is organized as a seminar. Seminars depend on the engaged and active participation of their members. Please bear in mind that the quality of that participation will be more important than quantity, as we discuss the readings and the research of the students in the course. If at some point this course shifts to the remote modality, and if internet connectivity keeps you from attending class, you will need to communicate with me at least 24 hours before any given absence so that we can develop an alternative contribution to the class’s learning experience. Missing more than two classes will affect your grade. If you are present, you will be expected to participate in class discussions.

*Research proposal:* This short proposal (1-2 pages, double-spaced) will introduce your research question. Explain why the topic is of interest to you and why you think qualitative interviews are the best approach to researching it.

*Literature review:* Identify at least 3 books or articles that are relevant for your research question and *how they speak to one another*. In doing so, please provide a short description of each and discuss how they relate to one another (i.e. this is *not* an annotated bibliography). Make sure your Review specifies if and how interview data are used in the research project the authors are writing about. Do not just copy and paste this information from another source. At the end of the Review, please also provide full bibliographic references for each of the sources you write about.

This assignment is a building block for the elaboration of a more developed and comprehensive literature review for your final paper, the latter of which will need to draw on at least 10 academic sources.

*Draft of interview questions:* You will hand in a draft of your interview questions. Bring a copy to class to share, discuss, and receive feedback on.

*CITI course:* These are training modules completed online. For this class, you will complete the social and behavior research course - which should take 3-4 hours. More instructions to follow.

*Transcription of an interview:* Transcribe an entire interview, word for word. This can easily take several hours, depending on how long the interview goes. Bring a copy to class. We will discuss some of your results, reflections, and insights, and make suggestions to each other about how to improve our interviewing skills.

*Preliminary coding assignment:* On that transcript itself, identify codes, as well as themes, that are emerging from your interview data. More instructions to follow.

*Analytical memo:* After completing, transcribing, and coding several interviews, please write a two to three page (double-spaced) analysis of promising themes, processes, patterns, etc.. This will, hopefully, become a piece of your final paper.

*Presentation:* You will give a short presentation that: states your research question, your methodology, some of the themes that have emerged from coding, and some of your analysis.

*Final paper:* The final product from your research project will be a complete paper that includes an introduction, a literature review, a methods section, a data analysis/findings section, and a conclusion. It should be between 12-16 double-spaced pages (12 point font, 1 inch margins). It will be due by mid-night on 13 December.

Academic honesty will be taken very seriously in this course. Please see the last page of this syllabus if you have any questions about what academic dishonesty consists of.

#### Materials for class:

-A set of *required articles* has been put together for the course, which can be found on our b-course site. They are listed in alphabetical order in the section for “Files.” (These are indicated with an \* in the Course Readings listed below.)

-In addition, *one required book* can be purchased through ASUC Bookstore; but it can also be found in either hard copy or electronic form elsewhere on line. It is: Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. New York: The Free Press (1994).

There are also several electronic copies available through the UCB library system at: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4934792&query=Learning+from+Strangers%3A+The+Art+and+Method+of+Qualitative+Interview+Studies>

However, only three students will have access to them at any given time (much as if they were materials on reserve).

-You will need to have *an audio-recorder*.

Mental Health and Wellness: All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning. These issues include, but are not limited to, strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. Such mental health concerns can diminish both academic performance and the capacity to participate in daily activities. In the event that you need mental health support, or are concerned about a friend, UC Berkeley offers many services, such as free short-term

counseling at University Health Services.

An excellent campus website having links to many resources is: <http://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/>

Another campus website addressing mental health services in specific reference to this time of the coronavirus pandemic is: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/student-mental-health>

Remember that seeking help is a good and courageous thing to do — both for yourself and for those who care about you.

### Course Readings and Assignment Dates

#### Week 1: Introduction (25 August)

##### *Assignment:*

-Brainstorm ideas of research projects you want to do for this class; they must use qualitative interviews as the core methodology.

##### *Readings:*

\*No required readings – start on the readings for next week now!

#### Week 2: How do we use in-depth interview data? (1 September)

##### *Readings:*

\*Hochschild, Arlie, The Second Shift. Read Chapters 1 and 2; skim Chapters 4 and 6; and read the Appendix: My Study - A Naturalistic Approach (Pp. 1-21; 33-58; 75-94; and 289-293). New York: Avon Books (1989).

\*Luker, Kristin, Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood. Read the Introduction; skim Chapter 6; and read the Appendix 1: Methodology (pp. 1-10; 126-157; 247-256). Berkeley: University of California Press (1984).

For each reading: 1) Identify the author's key research question(s); 2) How she characterizes the existing empirical research (that is, what data exist and what are the problems with these data?); 3) How she justifies the use of in-depth interviews (explicitly or implicitly); and 4) Identify how in-depth interview data are used by the author to develop her argument. Be prepared to discuss your analysis in class.

#### Week 3: Uses of interviewing/Literature Review (8 September)

##### *Assignment:*

- **Research proposal due**

##### *Readings:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14). New York: The Free Press (1994).

\*Hart, Chris, Doing a Literature Review. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-12). London: Sage Publications (2018).

Week 4: Who do we interview? (15 September)

*Assignments:*

- Begin finding study participants
- Submit literature review**

*Readings:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapter 2 (pp. 15-37).

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

Week 5: How do we develop questions? (22 September)

*Assignment:*

- **Interview Guide due (be sure to do the readings before you prepare this).**

*Readings:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapters 3 (51-59) and 4 (read pp. 61-83; skim pp. 83-119).

\*Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Chapters 9-10 (pp. 131-169). Los Angeles, CA: Sage (2012).

\*Smith, Sandra, Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor. Skim Appendices B and C (pp. 179-193). New York: Russell Sage Foundation (2007).

Week 6: How do we protect those we interview? Ethical Imperatives (29 September)

*Assignment:*

**Complete Citi Training:** Submit a screen-shot of the screen showing you have completed it.

*Readings:*

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

\*Adler, Emily S., and Roger Clark, An Invitation to Social Research: How it's Done. Chapter 3 (pp. 39-71). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (2011).

Week 7: How do we conduct a productive interview? Gaining entrée (6 October)

*Assignment:*

- **Complete one interview this week (it will be helpful to do the reading first).**

*Readings:*

\*Hermanowicz, Joseph C., "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed," Qualitative Sociology 25, 4 (Winter 2002): 479-499.

\* Lofland, John, and Lyn H. Lofland, Analyzing Social Settings. Chapter 3 (pp. 31-45). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (1995).

Week 8: Interviewing dilemmas and challenges (13 October)

*Readings:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapter 5 (pp. 121-150).

\*Riessman, Catherine Kohler, "When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women," Gender and Society 1, 2 (June 1987): 172-207.

\*Khan, Shamus, and Colin Jerolmack, "Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege," Sociological Quarterly 54 (1): 9-19.

Week 9: Coding and analysis: Transcription (20 October)

*Assignment:*

– **Transcription of first interview due**

*Reading:*

\*Auerbach, Carl F., and Louise B. Silverstein, Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 31-53). New York: New York University Press (2003).

\*Lofland, John, and Lyn H. Lofland, Analyzing Social Settings. Chapter 9 (pp. 186-197). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (1995).

Week 10: More on coding and analyzing data (27 October)

*Assignment:*

- **Code your first interview**

- Complete *at least* two more interviews.

*Readings:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapter 6 (pp. 151-182).

Week 11: Analyzing data (3 November)

*Assignments:*

- Move forward in your interviews

- Move forward in your transcribing and coding

*Readings:*

\* Borland, Katherine, "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research." In Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, pp. 63-75. New York: Routledge (1991).

\*Roth, Wendy D., and Jal D. Mehta, "The Rashomon Effect: Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches in the Analysis of Contested Events," Sociological Methods and Research 31, 2 (2002): 131-173.

Week 12: No class meeting (10 November)

- **Analytical memo due**

- Complete your remaining Interviews.
- Move forward in your transcribing and coding.

Week 13: Writing up your Findings (17 November)

*Assignment:*

- Move forward in your transcribing and coding.
- Bring in first two sections for your presentation (in the form of print outs of Power Point slides): 1) Research question and its place in the existing literature; 2) Methods (Sampling, recruitment, etc.)

*Reading:*

Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapter 7 (pp. 183-206).

Week 14: No class (24 November)

- Move forward in your coding and data analysis.

Week 15: Presentations – sharing early results (1 December)

*Assignment:*

- Bring in your presentation about your project.**

**Final Paper due by mid-night on 13 December.**

## Academic Dishonesty - Definition

Academic dishonesty consists of any deliberate attempt to falsify, fabricate or otherwise tamper with data, information, records, or any other material that is relevant to the student's participation in any course, laboratory, or other academic exercise or function. Most, although not all, such attempts fall into one or more of the following three categories:

Plagiarism: Deliberately presenting work, words, ideas, theories, etc., derived in whole or in part from a source external to the student as though they are the student's own efforts.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to the following:

- Failing to use proper citations as acknowledgment of the true source of information included in a paper, written or oral examination, or any other academic exercise.
- Presenting any work completed in whole or in part by any individual or group other than the student, as though the work is the student's own, in any academic exercise.
- Buying, selling, bartering, or in any other fashion obtaining or distributing material to be used fraudulently as part of any academic exercise.

Cheating: Disseminating or receiving answers, data, or other information by any means other than those expressly permitted by the instructor as part of any academic exercise. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to the following:

- Copying answers, data, or other information (or allowing others to do so) during an examination, quiz, laboratory experiment, or any other academic exercise in which the student is not expressly permitted to work jointly with others.
- Assuming another individual's identity or allowing another person to do so on one's own behalf for the purpose of fulfilling any academic requirement or in any way enhancing the student's grade or academic standing.
- Using any device, implement, or other form of study aid during an examination, quiz, laboratory experiment, or any other academic exercise without the faculty member's permission.

Other Academic Misconduct: Falsifying or fabricating data, records, or any information relevant to the student's participation in any course or academic exercise, or tampering with such information as collected or distributed by the faculty member. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to the following:

- Falsifying, or attempting to falsify, attendance records, graded exercises of any kind, or any information or document intended to excuse the student from participation in any academic exercise.
- Inventing, fabricating, or falsifying data as part of the completion of any academic exercise.
- Knowingly furnishing false information (or facilitating the furnishing of false information) to a faculty member. The foregoing list of offenses is not intended to be fully exhaustive of all potential instances of academic dishonesty. Faculty and administrators may identify cases of academic dishonesty not herein contemplated.