

**University of California, Berkeley**  
**Department of Sociology**  
Sociology 108  
Advanced Methods: In-Depth Interviewing

Spring 2020  
Wednesdays 10a-12p  
Barrows 402

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Offices hours: Mondays 1-2:30p; Wednesdays 9-10a  
Room: Barrows 474

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 deeply about people's motivations, attitudes, feelings, and their lived experiences 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, we will learn how to develop research questions and determine the appropriate methods to explore them, with specific attention to qualitative research. Because the focus of this course is interviewing, we will learn how to identify and recruit people to interview for your particular research questions, how to prepare a comprehensive set of interview questions, how to conduct interviews, how to address 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 primary data (as opposed to relying on secondary data), by conducting at least 8 interviews for your project, as part of this 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 pursuing.

### **INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS**

This course requires you to think creatively about how to study social life. The assigned readings will help us to think critically about research methods and ethical conduct of research. A commitment to working through these readings will help you develop critical reading and analytic skills along with a deeper understanding of the course material and research methods. Given that this is a seminar style course, it is expected that you will come to class prepared to discuss the readings. This means reading all assigned readings **PRIOR** to class on the date they are assigned, as well as engaging them in the context of your own project.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

In this course, you will read excerpts from many research methods books along with peer-reviewed articles. Additionally, there is one required book for the course, which you want to purchase. This book

will also be on reserve at the library. All readings will be made available to you on bCourses with the exception of those assigned from the required book.

### **CODING SOFTWARE**

A number of qualitative coding software packages exist that you can use to code and analyze qualitative data (eg. MAXQDA, Dedoose, NVivo, and ATLAS.ti). **You are not required to purchase any of these for the purposes of this class.** However, if you intend to do qualitative analyses in the future and would like to try them you are welcome to use them in this class. Please note that if you chose to use one of these packages, the instructor will not provide technical assistance for using the software.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Developing, completing, and writing up a research project is a challenging process. In order to keep you on track through this course, 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). As such, your grade will be comprised of the following components:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>	<b>Grade Type</b>
Participation and Attendance	10%	Point
Research Proposal	5%	✓( +/ - )
Literature Review	5%	✓( +/ - )
Draft of Interview Guide	10%	Point
Completion of CITI Module	5%	✓( +/ - )
Analysis Assignments (3)	30%	Point
(1) Transcription & memo assignment	(10%)	
(2) Preliminary coding assignment	(10%)	
(3) Analytic memo assignment	(10%)	
In Class Presentation	5%	Point
Final Research Paper	30%	Point

### **Grade Distribution**

A+ 97-100%	B+ 86-89%	C+ 76-79%	D+ 66-69%	F <60%
A 94-96%	B 83-85%	C 73-75%	D 63-65%	
A- 90-93%	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%	D- 60-62%	

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

All assignments in this course help you build your way to writing your final research paper. More details about each of these assignments will be given in class.

#### Research Proposal (5%)

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 (5%)

Identify at least 5 books or articles that are relevant for your research question. Please provide the full bibliographic reference and write a short abstract of each (do NOT copy and paste the abstract from another source). Make sure your abstract specifies how interview data are used in the research project the author(s) are writing about, as well as how each reference speaks to the others in your literature review.

### Draft Interview Guide (10%)

Based on the guidance provided in course readings and class sessions, you will develop a draft interview protocol. Interview guides will be assessed on the crafting of your research questions (e.g. open ended questions) as well as their potential to answer the research questions you proposed in the research proposal. Please bring three paper copies of the interview guide to class. We will workshop these in class. Wait until you have received feedback on the interview guide to begin conducting interviews.

### Completion of CITI Modules (5%)

Training in research ethics and the responsible conduct of research is essential to building a more just research enterprise. Ethics and the consideration of potential ethical issues in all human subjects research are of utmost importance. In addition to course readings and discussion, you will be required to complete two basic trainings in human subjects research ethics using the CITI platform.

### Analysis Assignments (3, each is worth 10%)

#### 1. Analysis Assignment 1: Transcription & Memo

Following your first interview, you will be asked to transcribe the interview and reflect on it in a brief memo. There are many software programs that offer both human and automated transcription. These are huge time savers. However, for the first interview, I ask that you transcribe this verbatim by hand (unless there is an accommodation, in which case please see me). You will turn in the transcription along with a memo that reflects on (1) the experience of conducting the first interview and (2) transcribing and reading back the interview. To get the most out of this memo exercise, I suggest you draft your reflection on your experience interviewing following your first interview. Then, once you have transcribed the interview, reflect on the experience of transcribing the interview and reading back the interview. (For example, are there questions you wished you had asked differently, probed more, want to add to future interviews etc.?)

#### 2. Analysis Assignment 2: Preliminary Coding & Memo

After you have conducted 2-3 interviews (we will address this in class), you will do your first coding exercise. You will read through your transcript in word format and begin to code sections of the interview. After you have coded the interview, write a brief memo (500 word maximum) about what you are seeing and hearing in the data, new threads to follow up on in upcoming interviews, etc.

#### 3. Analysis Assignment 3: Analytic Memo

After you have conducted approximately half of your interviews, you will write an extended analytic memo. You will need to spend time with multiple pieces of data to write this memo, and the memo should include some data (eg. interview excerpts) in order to demonstrate your analysis. This memo should discuss early hunches and findings in your data, and stick closely to the data.

### Final Paper (30%)

The final paper will be a complete research paper based on your project that includes an introduction, a literature review, a methods section (including a demographics table that describes your sample), a data analysis/findings section, conclusion, and a personal reflections section (mirroring the format of an academic journal article, with the exception of the final section). The final paper will be between 14-16 pages (12-point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins). You must use proper ASA style guide formatting.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Late Policy**

Late policies for SOC 108 are as follows:

- Assignments graded on a check/check plus/check minus basis will not be accepted late under any circumstances.
- Assignments graded (point basis) are subject to the following penalties: 10 pts per 24 hrs late, and will not be accepted beyond 48 hrs after the deadline.
- Late final papers will lose 10 pts per 24 hrs, and will not be accepted beyond 72 hrs after the deadline.

### **Email Policy**

Before emailing me with a question about the course, please first make sure that your answer is not answered in the syllabus. I am happy to discuss course material, should you have a question, during office hours. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. Do not email me asking what you missed – course content and structure are outlined in the syllabus, and you are responsible for making up that work.

### **Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Use of electronic devices during class time is not permitted. Please silence your cell phones and refrain from using any electronic devices—including phones, tablets, and laptops—except on designated breaks. Though this policy may seem severe, it is for your benefit – even if you are trying hard to pay attention, devices will distract you and your classmates. Should you have special reasons (e.g. a learning accommodation) for needing to take notes on a laptop, please discuss this with me in office hours.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Do not turn in any work that is not your own effort and thinking: plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated as such. We will discuss what plagiarism is and how to avoid it in class. Any suspected offense will be investigated, and if necessary reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Find more information about plagiarism guidelines here: <https://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity/definition>

You are a member of an academic community at one of the world's leading research universities. Universities like Berkeley create knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the lab of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and the respect for the intellectual property of others. Researchers don't use one another's research without permission; scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer's permission; and

students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi, or any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor. Any assignment, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or paper, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor beforehand. Finally, you should keep in mind that, as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school—are simply not worth it.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Please see me as soon as possible if you need particular accommodations, and we will work out the necessary arrangements.

### **H\*E\*A\*L\*S**

In the event that something comes up in class (verbally or otherwise) that you feel is offensive or taken out of context, please bring this to the attention of the class right away. Should you prefer, you can always talk to the instructor after class, or bring it up anonymously at a later time. These conversations are important and help everyone in the class learn how to create a more inclusive environment. The HEALS framework, developed at the UCSF School of Nursing, can help us have a productive class discussion about the situation. More information is provided here:

<https://nursing.ucsf.edu/about/DIVA-HEALS>

**Halt** - the discussion.

**Engage** - with the issue - Who is/could be affected?

**Allow** - trading opinions/stories/perspectives/articles/reactions

**Learn** - listen to one another

**Synthesis** - why does this discussion matter?

### **WRITING RESOURCES**

Writing is crucial not only to your success in this class, but also in your future career. UCB has a writing center where you can work with writing tutors online and in person to improve your papers. For more information see: <https://slc.berkeley.edu/writing>

### **A NOTE ON THIS SYLLABUS**

A syllabus provides a roadmap for a given course for both the students and the instructor. The instructor reserves the right make changes to the syllabus—including due dates and content—as necessary. Students will be notified right away and given an updated version.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 (January 22): Introduction – Course Overview**

There are no assigned readings for Week 1. Please begin reading next week's readings.

Assignment(s):

- Brainstorm ideas for research project, bring 1-2 ideas to our first day of class
- Introduction Memo (see instructions on bCourses)
- Begin readings for next week!

### **Week 2 (January 29): Introduction – Why do Sociologists use Interviews?**

Reading(s):

- Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 1 (p. 1-14).
- \*Joyce, Kelly and Jeske, Melanie. 2019. Revisiting the Sick Role: Performing Regimes of Patienthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Sociological Viewpoints* 33: 70-90.
- \*Shim, Janet, Sonia Rab Alam and Bradley E. Aouizerat. 2018. Knowing Something versus feeling different: the effects and non-effects of genetic ancestry on racial identity. *New Genetics and Society* 37(1): 44-66.

*\*For each of these readings, consider the questions posted on bCourses. Come to class prepared to discuss your responses.*

Assignment(s):

- Continue brainstorming projects

### **Week 3 (February 5): Developing Research Questions**

Please note we will NOT meet this week. You will participate in discussion on bCourses in lieu of class and submit all assignments on bCourses.

Reading(s):

- Creswell, John. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Chapter 6: The purpose Statement, pp. 111-116; Chapter 9 Qualitative Procedures pp. 173-182.
- Hart, Chris. 1998. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Chapter 1: The Literature Review in Research (pp. 1-12). London: Sage Publications.

Assignment(s):

- Research proposal due online 10am Wednesday 2/5

### **Week 4 (February 12): Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research**

Reading(s):

- Newman, Katherine S. 2002. "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy," *Sociological Methods and Research* 31(2): 123-130.
- Childress, James F. 2000. Nuremberg's legacy: Some ethical reflections. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 43(3): 347-61.

Recommended Readings:

Mulla, Sameena and Heather Hlavka. 2011. Gendered violence and the ethics of social science research. *Violence Against Women* 17(12): 1509-20.

Clark, James J. & Robert Walker. 2011. Research ethics in victimization studies: Widening the lens. *Violence Against Women* 17(12): 1489-1508.

Assignment(s):

- Submit draft literature review via bCourses by 10am on Friday 2/14
- Complete CITI trainings by Wednesday, 2/12 and submit completion certificates via bCourses

**Week 5 (February 19): Selecting your Sample & Interview Guide Design**

Reading(s):

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 2 (pp. 15-37).

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

Assignment(s):

- Begin working on interview guide; determine sample for study

**Week 6 (February 26): Preparing for Interviews**

Reading(s):

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapters 3 (51-59) and 4 (read pp. 61-83; skim pp. 83-119).

Assignment(s):

- Draft interview guide due (NOTE: do not start conducting interviews until this has been approved and feedback incorporated as necessary)

**Week 7 (March 4): Conducting Productive Interviews**

Reading(s):

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

Lofland, John and Lyn Lofland. 1994. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Chapter 3: Getting In.

Assignment(s):

- Conduct first interview

**Week 8 (March 11): Interviewing Challenges and Dilemmas**

Reading(s):

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 5, pp. 121-151.

- Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1987. "When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women," *Gender and Society* 1(2): 172-207.
- Khan, Shamus, and Colin Jerolmack. 2016. "Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege," *Sociological Quarterly* 54 (1): 9-19.

Assignment(s):

- Transcription & Memo of first interview due
- Continue conducting interviews

**Week 9 (March 18): Beginning Analysis – Qualitative Coding**

Reading(s):

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 6, pp. 151-182.

Assignment(s):

- Coding of first interview
- Continue conducting interviews (goal: 3 complete)

**SPRING BREAK (March 25) – No Class**

**Week 11 (April 1): Data Analysis**

Reading(s):

Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Chapter 5: "The logic of grounded theory coding practices and initial coding. pp. 109-136.

Assignment(s):

- Continue conducting interviews
- Preliminary Coding & Memo due

**Week 12 (April 8): More Data Analysis**

Reading(s):

Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Chapter 7: Memo Writing. Pp. 162-191.

Assignment(s):

- Continue conducting interviews (goal: 5 completed)
- Analytic Memo due

**Week 13 (April 15): Managing Data Collection and Iterative Analysis**

Reading(s):

Borland, Katherine. 1991. "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.

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

Assignment(s):

- Continue conducting interviews (goal: all 8 completed)
- Begin writing final paper

**Week 14 (April 22): Writing & Representing Participants**

Guest Lecture:

Approaches to Qualitative Interview Studies: Developing Black Feminist Methodology, Dr. Jennifer James (UCSF Institute of Health and Aging, Bioethics Program).

Reading(s) / Media:

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 7, pp. 183-206.

Watch TED Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Available here:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en)

Assignment(s):

- Continue writing final paper

**Week 15 (April 29): Presenting Research – Sharing Early Findings**

**In Class Presentations:**

Submit PowerPoint presentations no later than 8am on Wednesday, April 29.

**FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE ON WEDNESDAY MAY 13 by 11:59 PM.**