Interviewing

Some of the most interesting and inspiring sociological studies have utilized interviewing as their principal methodological approach to the subject of interest. Moreover, the vast majority of social scientific research employs interviewing in one form or another. Given its central place within the toolkit of sociological approaches to research, this course is designed to deepen students’ knowledge of interviewing as a research method. We will look at the ethical dilemmas and research challenges it poses, as well as become familiar with the details of employing it as one’s methodology.

Since the best way of learning about a methodology is to practice using it, students will be required to conduct a research project during the course of the semester that relies primarily upon interviewing. Thus, students will begin by conceiving of a research question, relating it to the relevant theoretical literatures, and defining the precise methodology that will be employed in studying it. They will, then, move on to carry out the research (including at least 8 interviews during the Spring 2023 semester), code and analyze the data, and prepare a final paper based upon the project. A brief description of the research question/project is due by 9:00 AM on Thursday, 26 January; a project proposal with sample questions will be due on 13 February; a short paper based upon interviews conducted to date will be due on 3 April; and the final paper (of no more than 20 double-spaced pages – with a font size of 12 and 1 inch margins) will be due by 12:00 noon on 8 May.

In addition, students will share their work with the rest of the seminar participants by practicing their interview questions with each other (20 February), as well as making an initial presentation about their project (between Weeks 6-8) and presenting their final results (between Weeks 12-13).

Course Materials:

-A set of required articles and book chapters 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 in electronic form, 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 library system at: https://berkeley.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991054287689706532&context=L&vid=01UCS_BER:UCB&lang=en&search_scope=DN_and_CI&adapter=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Default_UCLibrarySearch&query=any,contains,Learning%20from%20Strangers&offset=0

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

-You will need to have an audio-recorder.

Challenging times:

To say that we live in challenging times is to say the least. The following is a web-site that has many useful ideas if things start to feel overwhelming or impossible at any point in the semester: https://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/one-click-mode/one-click-graduateprofessional-students

Course Readings:
Week 1: Introduction  (23 January)

Week 2: Why Use Interviewing as a Methodology/An Example of a Research Project That Employed Interviewing  (24-30 January)

Required Reading:


*Smith, Sandra, Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor. Chapters 1 and 3 (pp. 1-26; and 56-96). New York: Russell Sage Foundation (2007).

Recommended Reading:
Week 3: How to Start the Interviewing Process/Another Example of a Research Project That Employed Interviewing  (31 January-6 February)

Required Reading:
- Smith, Sandra, Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor. Read Appendices B and C (pp. 179-193).

Recommended Reading:

Week 4: The Interviewing Process Itself/Another Example of a Research Project that Employed Interviewing  (7-13 February)

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
Week 5: Learning to Listen/Some Issues in Interviewing  (14-20 February)
Required Reading:
Weiss, Robert S., Learning from Strangers. Chapters 4 and 5 (61-150).

Recommended Reading:

Week 6: Issues in Interviewing  (21-27 February)
Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Week 7: More Issues in Interviewing  (28 February-6 March)
Required Reading


**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 8: Analysis of Data/Problem Solving** (7-13 March)

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 9: Analysis of Data/Problem Solving** (14-20 March)

**Required Reading:**


**Week 10: Analyzing a Transcript and Analyzing Your Data** (3 April)

There are no required readings, as we will have a guest speaker in class on this date.

**Week 11: Writing up your Results** (4-10 April)

**Required Reading:**

Recommended Reading:
- Strauss, Anselm, Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists. Chapter 12 (pp. 249-264).

**Week 12: Individual Presentations** (17 April)

**Week 13: Individual Presentations** (24 April)