

**Field Research and Methods of Data Collection – Sociology 329**

**Dr. Karrie Ann Snyder**

**Winter 2015**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays: 9:30 - 10:50am**

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**Office hours for Dr. Snyder: Tuesdays 11-12 and Wednesdays 2-3**

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Office hours: Thursdays from 11-12:30 pm in 1812, Room 202

The goal of this course is to give students experience in qualitative research methodologies. Qualitative methods are a primary way that sociologists learn about the larger social world, test and develop theories and hypotheses, and make sense of complex situations and interactions. Qualitative methods allow sociologists to understand the world from the perspective of the individual and their experiences and to gain a better understanding of how the social world operates.

**Learning objectives for this course:**

- 1) To understand the distinction between qualitative and quantitative analyses and learn when a particular method is appropriate.
- 2) To examine the various qualitative methods that sociologists use to study the social world including the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- 3) To conduct hands-on research using qualitative methods: ethnography, interviewing and content analysis.
- 4) To develop an independent research plan including a proposal, data instruments, analysis, data collection procedures, and dissemination of results.

**This is an intensive research class! No extensions for late work. It is very important to stay on top of deadlines. Delays will prevent you from doing your best possible research!**

**Grading:**

All students are required to conduct original research throughout the quarter. Grades will be based on the following:

**20% - Class participation**

- Includes participation during lecture, small group work (including in-class assignments such as the content analysis group assignment (#9) during class on Thursday, Week 6), and any Canvas discussion assignments.

**20% - Midterm - Week 6, Tuesday, February 9th.**

**10% - Mandatory participation/poster presentation for our mini-conference! - Week 9, Thursday, March 3rd.**

- Students will create poster presentations and present their preliminary findings at a mini-conference the last day of class. This session is mandatory! Templates and guidelines will be discussed later in the quarter and will be available on Canvas.

**50% - Final Project Portfolio - Due Tuesday of finals week - March 15th, Tuesday, 10am to Dr. Snyder's Mailbox**

- Final project portfolio will include an analysis paper where you present your methodology and key research findings. The portfolio will also include your interview guide, field notes, interview profiles and other key information. Portfolio guidelines will be on Canvas. Portfolio must be complete in order to be graded.

- Assignments #1, #6 and #7 will count toward your Final Project Portfolio grade. If these assignments are not complete or late, your overall project grade will be lowered.

## **Required texts and readings:**

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Levy. *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.  
(Listed as Hesse-Biber and Levy in reading list.)

Readings marked with \*\* will be available on Canvas through Course Reserves.

(Additional materials may be required and added throughout the semester. Any additional materials will be available electronically through the course's Canvas site.)

## **Canvas site:**

The Canvas site is a fundamental part of this course. All templates, guidelines etc. will be available on the site. Important announcements and helpful hints will be posted regularly. Students should check the site at least a couple times a week.

***Note: I will post any PowerPoint presentations the night before lecture by 9pm on Canvas.***

## **Academic Integrity:**

Issues regarding academic integrity will be immediately referred to the Dean's Office. For further information regarding the academic integrity policy at Northwestern, please consult the *Student Handbook* and <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/uniprin.html>.

## **Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD):**

*Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class.) All discussions will remain confidential.*

## **Laptop Policy**

Laptops (along with other forms of technology including cell phones, iPods, etc.) are not to be used during lecture. This includes no texting during class.

***\*\*This syllabus is as of January 5, 2016. If there are any modifications to the assignments, course policies, or criteria for evaluation, any updates will be posted on the course's Canvas site. Students are responsible for any changes and additions to the syllabus and course assignments.***

### **Important Course Policies!**

- The research conducted for this class will abide by guidelines for ethical research. However, this research is for educational purposes only. No data can be presented or published outside of this class. The research will not have the approval of Northwestern's IRB (Institutional Review Board).
- Research must be original and conducted for this class only. Your 329 project may inspire future projects, such as a senior research project or research grant. But remember this project is not IRB approved! Meaning that if you go on to do more research on your topic that is IRB approved (such as an Undergraduate Research Grant - URG), you cannot use data from 329 as part of that project (***Translation – this data can never be published or presented outside of this course!***)
  - You can use the tools you develop for your qualitative research project for this course (such as interview guides, field note guides, and so forth) for future IRB-approved projects.
- Previous research (including the tools for doing qualitative research including interview guides) cannot be substituted for the assignments outlined below. You may choose a topic related to previous projects, but you must collect new data (i.e., additional fieldwork and interviews) and create new research tools (including interview guides).

## I. Introduction to Qualitative Methods

### Week 1

#### **Tuesday (January 5)**

Introduction to course – No readings

#### **Thursday (January 7) - Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods**

\*\*Snyder and Green, 2008. "Revisiting the Glass Escalator: The Case of Gender Segregation in a Female Dominated Occupation." *Social Problems* 55: 271-299.

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 1, "An Invitation to Qualitative Research"

## II. Developing a Research Plan and Doing Ethical Research

### Week 2

#### **Tuesday (January 12)**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 2, "Approaches to Qualitative Research"

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 3, "Designing Qualitative Approaches to Research"

#### **Thursday (January 14)**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 4, "The Ethics of Social Research"

Swauger, 2011. "Afterword: The Ethics of Risk, Power, and Representation." *Qualitative Sociology* 34: 497-502.

**Assignment #1 (due Thursday, January 14 by 6pm)** - Students will submit a 2 to 3-page proposal for their research for the quarter. The project will have both ethnographic and interview components.

**Proposal Guidelines** are on Canvas (and were given out during lecture the first week of class).

\*\*\*PLEASE USE LAST NAME AS FILE NAME and upload the proposal to Canvas by deadline.

\*\*\*We will give you the okay to continue on with your research plan after we review your proposal. We may ask for revisions, if necessary.

## III. Ethnography/Participant Observation

### Week 3

**Assignment #2 (ongoing, Weeks 3 through 8)** – Start collecting ethnographic data! Students should spend 2-3 hours per week (Weeks 3 through 8) at their research site. 12 hours minimum of ethnographic observation/participation required. Students must take field notes. An optional field notes template is available on Canvas (you can edit the template to better suit your project). Notes may be handwritten.

#### **Tuesday (January 19)**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 8, "Ethnography"

Rios, *Punished*, Chapter assignment will be posted to Canvas

#### **Thursday (January 21)**

Rios, *Punished*, Chapter assignment will be posted to Canvas

## Week 4

### **Tuesday (January 26)**

\*\*Duneier, Excerpts from *Sidewalk*

\*\*Zinn, 1979. "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological, and Political Observations by an Insider." *Social Problems* 27: 209-219.

**Assignment #3 (due no later than Tuesday, January 26)** – Must return signed *Ethnography Site Research Permission Form (on Canvas)* to Dr. Snyder (IF REQUIRED) before beginning collecting ethnographic data. The sooner you can turn this in – the sooner you can start your ethnographic research! Dr. Snyder will let you know after reading your proposal if you need to have signed permission from your ethnographic site.

## **IV. Interviewing**

### **Thursday (January 28)**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 5, "In-Depth Interviews"

\*\*Snyder and Pearse, 2010. "Crisis, Support, and the Family Response: Exploring the Narratives of Young Breast Cancer Survivors." *Journal of Psychosocial Oncology* 28: 413-31.

Snyder and Pearse, Interview Guide (will be distributed during class)

## Week 5

### **Tuesday (February 2)**

\*\*Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010. "Teaching Beginning Undergraduates How to Do an In-depth Interview: A Teaching Note with 12 Handy Tips." *Teaching Sociology* 38: 157–165. (Only read the Appendix starting on page 162).

**Assignment #4 (due Tuesday, February 2)** – Bring 1 copy of field notes to class!

**Assignment #5 (due Tuesday, February 2)** – Bring your interview guide draft to class! You will do practice interviews. You are not collecting data at this point – even if your topic is on college students. Practice interviewees should not give truthful answers. This exercise is to help you practice interviewing, including the testing of questions for clarity, timing, and so forth – not to collect data.

### **Thursday (February 4)**

\*\*Berkowitz and Marsiglio, 2007. "Gay Men: Negotiating Procreative, Father, and Family Identities." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69: 366–381.

\*\*Goldberg & Kuvalanka. 2012. "Marriage (In)equality: The Perspectives of Adolescent and Emerging Adults With Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Parents." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74: 34-52.

**Assignment #6 (due Thursday, February 4, 6pm)** – After revising interview guide based on practice/feedback from Tuesday's class (February 2), submit revised version to Dr. Snyder for approval prior to interviewing! Please upload interview guide to Canvas by 6pm on Thursday, February 4 (label file with your last name please!). If you submit it earlier, we will get back to you sooner! Cannot start interviews until we approve your interview guide.

**Assignment #7 (due Friday, February 5, 5pm)** – Students should submit 1 set of field notes for comments to Canvas. If field notes are hand written, please scan and submit a copy to Canvas.

**Assignment #8 (ongoing, Week 5 through Week 9)** – You will conduct interviews with 8 respondents. Students must fill out an Interview Profile form for all interviews and students must have an Interview Consent Form initialed for each interview. (We will discuss both of these issues during Weeks 4 and 5.) **Reminder: Interview data MUST remain confidential - Do not record names or other identifying information on the data itself, which includes the interview guide, audio files etc.**

## Week 6

### **Tuesday (February 9) - Midterm Quiz**

**Midterm - Tuesday, February 9.** Midterm is open book and open notes. Can work in groups (students will submit separate midterms). Can use laptops. Exams are due 9pm on February 9.

## **V. Making Sense of It All! – Analyzing and Presenting Data**

### **Thursday (February 11) – Content Analysis**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 9, “Content Analysis and Unobtrusive Methods”  
Content Analysis packet (see Assignment #9 below).

**Assignment #9 (During class Thursday, February 11)** – In teams of 3-4 students during class, students will do a content analysis project. All materials will be provided during class on February 11.

## Week 7

### **Tuesday (February 16) - Integrating Ethnography/Participant Observation & (Structured) Interview Data**

\*\*Lareau, 2002. “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families.” *American Sociological Review* 67: 747-776.

\*\*Bettis, 2002. “Exceptions to the Rule: Upwardly Mobile White and Mexican American High School Girls.” *Gender & Society* 16: 403-422.

### **Thursday (February 18) - Creating Memos and Being Reflective**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 12: “Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data”

\*\*Maxwell, Chapter 3, “Conceptual Framework: What Do You Think is Going On?,” from *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2nd Edition.

## Week 8

### **Tuesday (February 23) - Coding! Categories! 2x2 tables! etc.**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 12: “Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data”

### **Thursday (February 25) - Revisiting Validity**

\*\*Maxwell, Chapter 6, “Validity: How Might You Be Wrong,” from *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2nd Edition.

**Assignment #10 (During class Thursday, February 25)** – During class, we are going to start analyzing your data! Should have 10 hours worth of field notes and at least 4 (preferably 5-6) interviews by March 2. Interactive workshop on how to approach your data! Students must bring data to analyze.

**Week 9**

**Tuesday (March 1)**

Hesse-Biber and Levy, Chapter 13: "The Writing and Representation of Qualitative Research"

**Thursday (March 3)**

***Mini-Conference Poster Session!!!!*** – Students will present posters of their preliminary research findings. Posters should cover central research questions, methodology, along with preliminary findings. Template for poster presentation is available on Canvas.  
*Remember to keep data confidential (no names!)*  
*This presentation counts for 10% of your grade. Attendance is mandatory. No exceptions.*

**FINAL PROJECTS ARE DUE TUESDAY March 15 BY 10am  
TURN INTO DR. SNYDER'S MAILBOX – 1810 CHICAGO AVENUE  
NO EMAILED PROJECTS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

**Sociology Department is open from 9-5, Monday through Friday**

**\*\*\*Remember - Backup data and files!! No extensions will be given for lost data.**