SOC 476: Interviewing and Qualitative Methods

Dr. Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz
Office hours: Wednesdays, 4:30-5:30pm or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Interviewing has long been a staple method for sociologists and social scientists. Despite this, every generation of scholarship seems to produce equally longstanding critiques about the value and validity of interview data. Based on the epistemic position that no method can provide unmediated, universal, or comprehensive knowledge about social world, this course explores the promise and practice of qualitative interviewing. The course is designed to help researchers develop qualitative interview projects and to reflect on research ethics, theory, and representation, more generally.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Please do readings in the order they appear.*

Week 1: What are Interviews and What are They Good For? (March 30 and 31)
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 1.

Week 2: Research Problems, Questions, and the Scholarly Common Sense (April 5 and 7)
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 2.

Read: Introduction and Literature Review

Week 3: Research Ethics: IRB and Beyond (April 12-14)
- Northwestern IRB Template for Social and Behavioral Research (HRP-583)
- Blee, Kathleen M., and Ashley Currier. “Ethics beyond the IRB: An Introductory Essay.” 2011. Qualitative Sociology 34: 401-413. [Read only pp. 401-408]
- Public Debate on Floating City.

Week 4: Casing and Samples (April 19 and 21)
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 3.

Read: Research Methods/Design Section
- Bell and Hartmann, “Diversity in Everyday Discourse.”
- Warikoo, “Addressing Emotional Health While Protecting Status.”
- Moss, “Voice after Exit: Explaining Diaspora Mobilization for the Arab Spring.”
• Sweet, “The Paradox of Legibility.”
• Jacobs, “Sites of Terror and the Role of Memory in Shaping Identity Among First Generation Descendants of the Holocaust.”

Week 5: Interview Instrument, Access, and Recruitment (April 26 and 28)
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 4 and Appendix C.

Week 6: Book Exemplar 1 (May 3 and 5)

Week 7: Conducting Interviews (May 10 and 12)
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 5.

Week 8: Book Exemplar 2 (May 17 and 19)

Week 9: Analysis and the Role of Concepts and Theory (May 24 and 26)

May 24
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 6.
May 26

Read: Analysis Sections
- Bell and Hartmann, “Diversity in Everyday Discourse.”
- Warikoo, “Addressing Emotional Health While Protecting Status.”
- Moss, “Voice after Exit: Explaining Diaspora Mobilization for the Arab Spring.”
- Sweet, “The Paradox of Legibility.”
- Jacobs, “Sites of Terror and the Role of Memory in Shaping Identity Among First Generation Descendants of the Holocaust.”

Week 10: Writing and Representation (May 31 and June 2)

May 31
- Gerson and Damaske, Chapter 7.

Read: Discussion and Conclusions
- Bell and Hartmann, “Diversity in Everyday Discourse.”
- Warikoo, “Addressing Emotional Health While Protecting Status.”
- Moss, “Voice after Exit: Explaining Diaspora Mobilization for the Arab Spring.”
- Sweet, “The Paradox of Legibility.”
- Jacobs, “Sites of Terror and the Role of Memory in Shaping Identity Among First Generation Descendants of the Holocaust.”

June 2

- Peer Feedback on Final Memo

REQUIRED BOOKS

**GRADED ITEMS**

*What Do You Want to Talk About? Posts*
In advance of most of our Monday discussions, post on canvas whatever specific aspects or themes from the readings you would like to discuss or debate. Also include any areas you would like clarification. These posts will guide Monday’s conversation. Due: **Every Monday, except weeks 6 and 8, no later than 12pm (CST)**.

*Memos*
We will dedicate several Wednesdays to workshop various aspects of qualitative/interview based research. To facilitate this process, you are to post the following memos:
you are to post the following:
- Research Problem and Literature (Due: **April 6, by noon**)
- Ethical Considerations (Due: **April 13, by noon**)
- Research Design (Due: **April 20, by noon**)
- Interview Schedule (Due: **April 27, by noon**)
- Coding Memo (Due: **June 1, by noon**)

These memos should be brief rather than burdensome. Try to keep them within about 1 page (single spaced). We will discuss the specifics of each of them in class.

*Practice Interview*
Conduct, transcribe, and code one interview. This assignment will feed into the coding memo (see above).

*IRB or Research Proposal*
At the end of the term, you will submit via email a proposal (10 page double-spaced, Times New Roman). By week 3, please inform me whether your plan to submit an IRB application or research proposal. If you are not planning on conducting summer research or unsure about using interview methods in your research, you are expected to develop an imaginary qualitative project, associated with your research interests. If you are planning to conduct research over the summer, you should submit your IRB proposal to IRB no later than Week 6 or 7. Research conducted with 2YP in mind should be in consultation with your first and second readers. Due: **Monday, June 7**.

**OTHER ISSUES**

*Recording*: Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](https://www.northwestern.edu/accessible/). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings—including distributing or posting them—is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials—including those resources
created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

*Intellectual honesty:* This course follows Northwestern’s code of academic conduct. As required, any incidents of plagiarism or academic misconduct will be immediately reported. Visit: [www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).

*Accommodations:* I urge any students with disabilities or in need of accommodations to connect with Accessible NU. For more information visit: [www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/](http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/). I also ask that students inform me as early as possible about their needs.

In addition, students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp [website](http://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/) and [app](http://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/app).

*Syllabus subject to change. Students will be alerted to any changes in advance.*