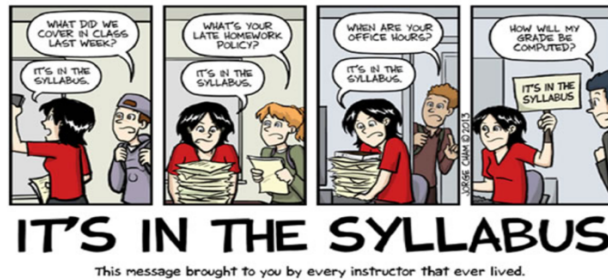


San José State University
Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences
SOCI 105: Qualitative Research Methods
SPRING 2024 Course Syllabus



“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and are mindful that San Jose State University sits on the land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people, who trace their ancestry through Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose. We remember their connection to this region and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, learn, and play on their traditional homeland.

Course and Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Yolanda Wiggins (she/her/hers)

Email: yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu

Class Days/Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30AM-11:45AM

Course Prerequisites: SOCI 1, SOCI 100W SOCI 101, Upper Division Standing

Course Description

Why do we use qualitative research methods? What kinds of questions should we answer with these methods? What are different types of qualitative research methods? How do we conduct content analysis and in-depth interviews? How do we conduct ethical research? How does our background influence what we can learn from others? How do we analyze our data and write it up in a paper?

This course explores the questions described above. Students will use their sociological imagination and become sociological detectives to explore research questions of their design independently. The readings have been selected to give you examples of how to do qualitative research and what we can learn from qualitative research, both empirically and theoretically. The texts have also been selected to explore dilemmas qualitative researchers confront, such as how to conduct research ethically and how their backgrounds influence their findings and analysis. Ultimately, knowing how to collect data, analyze it, and present it to others, are skills that are extremely valuable in the “real world.”

Conducting qualitative research is labor, time, and writing-intensive. It takes time to collect data, critically analyze data, write-up preliminary memos, and then complete a final paper. Through your research projects, you may learn things that confirm your hunches about ‘how things work,’ but you should also be prepared to encounter things that challenge those hunches.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will learn how to:

1. Observe their social world carefully and systematically, with an understanding of how one's social identities (race, class, gender, etcetera) can impact data collection and analysis.
2. Understand how and why to use content analysis and in-depth interviews, among other qualitative research methods.
3. Understand and identify ethical issues in engaging in qualitative research.
4. Learn how to conduct content analysis and in-depth interviews.
5. Collect/record and organize data from their content analysis and interviews.
6. Analyze data, think inductively, and write-up their findings and analysis in a well-written and organized report.
7. Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Required Books and Texts

No textbook is required. All readings will be made available on Canvas.

Method of Evaluation

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1) Content Analysis Paper | (25%) |
| 2) Interview Paper Project (includes research question & interview guide) | (25%) |
| 3) Ethnography Critique | (15%) |
| 4) Method Memos | (15%) |
| 5) In Class Quizzes (6) | (10%) |
| 6) Class Participation/Facilitation | (10%) |

Evaluation Breakdown and Detailed Information

94-100% = A	80-82% = B-	60-65% = D
90-93% = A-	76-79% = C+	< 60% = F
86-89% = B+	73-75% = C	
83-85% = B	70-72% = C-	

A+ 97-100; A 94-96; A- 90-93

Distinguished Work: The student writes at an exemplary level with work that is error free (proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure), demonstrating logical organization, proper documentation and appropriate supporting evidence. Distinguished work requires a consistent application of concepts with original analysis integrating literature and concepts into course work. The student initiates and effectively responds to questions.

B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83

Superior Work: The student completes substantial work including analysis, integration, and application of learned concepts in both written and oral activities. Writing is more a review or summary of materials than a critical analysis. The student attends regularly and participates in class.

C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73

Average Work: The student satisfies minimum requirements and demonstrates limited integration, application, and analysis.

D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62

Unsatisfactory Work: The student satisfies only some minimum requirements. The student completes all assignments but demonstrates a lack of understanding in regard to core knowledge.

F 59-below

Failure: The student does not meet minimum requirements.

LATE WORK POLICY

I want you to be successful in this course. As such, assignments are made available well within advance. I will also make announcements in class regarding upcoming assignments. **In order to be fair to all students a part of this class, late work will not be accepted under any circumstances.** Further, it is unethical for me to grant special advantages to individual students. If you leave your assignment until the last day, and have a technical problem or other issue before the due date/time, you will not be given an extension. Once the assignment portal closes on Canvas (at 11:59PM), I will not reopen the assignment portal. I do not accept emailed work. Please also ensure that your document is successfully uploaded and submitted. Please also ensure that the document that you upload is not mistakenly an assignment for another class as this will automatically warrant a grade of "0." I do not accept Google Docs links as submissions. Please be sure that your document is either in a Microsoft Word or PDF format. Please be advised that I do not issue incompletes for this course.

Please note: I do not discuss grades via email. I am happy to chat virtually or in person during a scheduled appointment. If you seek to contest a grade, you must wait **48 hours** and do so in writing, explaining in specific and substantive terms why you think your grade should be reconsidered. You must submit grade contestations within one week of the assignment being returned. Upon review, your grade may be adjusted up, down, or remain the same. *

OFFICE HOURS

I would like meet with each of you in office hours each. While not required, office hours are a great opportunity to ask additional questions about the course and discuss your research projects and educational career goals. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please email me to set up a different time to meet.

CONTACTING ME

I am available over email if you need to contact me. Please refer to the course name and topic of your email. (105: TOPIC OF EMAIL) in the subject line of your message. You should expect to wait **at least 24 hours** to hear back from me. If you email me on Friday or over the weekend, please do not expect a response until Monday. Please use professional language, tone, and style in your correspondence. For example, do not use texting language. DO use standard greetings – Dear Dr. Wiggins/Prof. Wiggins.

ASSIGNMENT COMPONENTS

METHOD MEMOS (1-2 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES)

Over the semester, you will read 11 examples of empirical research using qualitative research methods. The purpose of these methods memos is to expose you to a range of research projects using qualitative methods, to learn how questions are structured how methods are implemented, and how data is collected and analyzed. The aim

of these assignments is also to get you to think about your ethnographic critique and content analysis and interview paper projects. These assignments are also meant to encourage you to read the course materials.

The following questions are a guide for you as you do your readings for the course. You must respond to each of the questions in your method memo. In the event that there is more than one reading, you are required to respond to each assigned reading. You should not simply choose one reading to respond to. I encourage you to take a look at sample method memos to get a sense of how to structure your paper:

1. What is the central research question or topic of this article?
2. What method(s) does the researcher use to collect data? (Please be specific in order to showcase that you've read the material)
- 3.
4. What are the article's main findings? (Please be specific in order to showcase that you've read the material)
5. Provide a response to the article. For example, what did you learn about qualitative research from the article(s)? What surprised you? Intrigued you? Confused you?

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

This semester you will conduct two independent research projects: one using content analysis and one using interviews. I have spaced the components out so you can get feedback from your peers and from me through peer review and during in-class workshops. It is impossible to cram this work into a weekend or pull a dreaded all-nighter at the last minute. Some of our class sessions will be conducted as work sessions where you swap your newly collected data and discuss it with each other. I will grade this work on both process and product.

ASSIGNMENT: CONTENT ANALYSIS PAPER PROJECT (7-10 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES)

The purpose of this assignment is to give you hands-on experience doing content analysis. You will choose one type of document focused on a topic to answer a specific research question. You will develop a selection criterion that will be used to select 15-20 documents that will comprise your sample. Before choosing your documents, you will submit a research proposal describing your research question and the type of documents you will be examining. Your total sample size should be between 15-20 (no less than that!). We will discuss your preliminary coding process of these documents during in class activities, so it is important that you are able to save your documents and upload them for peer review activities. These documents will be the data you analyze to write your paper, so it is extremely important that you take necessary time to collect them, code them, and upload them to the assignment portal on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENT: INTERVIEW PAPER PROJECT (7-10 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES)

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Students will interview **TWO** individuals of their choosing on a topic of your choosing. Interviews are required to last a minimum of 30 minutes. Prior to conducting your interviews, students will develop an interview guide and submit the interview guide to me in advance for review and feedback. During the interviews, students are required to audio record the conversation and take brief notes. The audio recordings of the interview will also be submitted to me. **Please note that interviews cannot be conducted over email.** Following the interview, students will write a paper that also incorporates course material and highlight prevalent findings using direct quotes. I will provide a detailed rubric for this assignment so that you are aware of the expectations.

- **Research Question and Interview Guide:** We will spend time discussing how to choose a research topic, formulate a research question, and using the best methods to answer the question. This assignment requires you to develop and write up a research question that you will explore for your

interview project assignment (more details will be posted on Canvas). The expectation for this assignment is that you have a clearly thought-out research question. Along with your research question and interview, you should also include a brief explanation for doing the research (i.e., what you can hope to learn from your interview).

- The paper interview should have the following elements:
 - 1) Introduction/Statement of the research question or problem
 - 2) Literature Review Section - This will include at least 5 peer-reviewed sources that will be included in the review of literature section of your paper (at the beginning)
 - 3) Description of the methodology/research design— This will include a discussion of the method(s) you used to collect data, why you used them, the problems you encountered during data collection, and any ethical issues that you encountered. You will also talk about how you analyzed your data. You will document how you recruited your study's participants, how you gained access to your sample, how long the interviews were, and what the coding and analysis process entailed.
 - 4) Data presentation/Findings section- Here you will present your findings. What did you find? How does this relate or not to past research? What were the limitations of the study? What are the implications for future research or takeaways for public policy?
 - 5) Conclusion – Where you draw together the threads of your project and also critically reflect about your own use of methods in your project.
- **Final Research & Career Exploration Presentation** – On the last few weeks of class, you will present findings from one of your research projects in a short presentation (5-7 minutes). In this presentation you will describe your research question, the methods you used to collect data, ethical considerations, your findings, your conclusions, and what you would do differently. Additionally, Presenters must research a career path of their choosing that explicitly requires applicants to possess a number of skills related to research. Note that this particular job doesn't have to be that of a researcher, per se – Get creative! Sociology majors can work in a range of careers including, but not limited to: tech, business, finance, social work, teaching, etc. For this portion of the presentation, please find an open job position and be sure to provide me with a link. Explicit instructions will be made available to students on Canvas as the presentation dates come closer. Presentations must be conducted in person. Presentation dates cannot be made up.

ASSIGNMENT: ETHNOGRAPHY CRITIQUE (1500 words)

The purpose of this assignment is for you to critically evaluate an ethnography. Here I use the term ethnography in a wide sense to include traditional monographs (i.e., Street Corner Society), anthropological studies, ethno-dramas, or postmodern ethnographies. You can choose any stand-alone study as long as ethnography is the primary methodological approach used by the researcher(s). You are not required to summarize the work. Instead, you are to evaluate the ethnography by outlining the question that it sets out to answer, assess the appropriateness and use of qualitative methodology used to answer the question, and how the overall argument coheres or not. The expected length of the ethnography critique is 1,500 words (no less).

IN CLASS QUIZZES

Periodically, I will administer in class quizzes. Quizzes will be administered either at the start of each class or at the end and will be time-limited. There will be no make-up quizzes, however, I will drop the lowest quiz grade. There will be seven quizzes and I will count six of them. Quiz days will be unannounced so please make an effort to attend class regularly.

CLASS PARTICIPATION/FACILITATION

One time during the course of the semester you will be assigned to a group and asked to facilitate a class session. This presentation will demonstrate your knowledge on the reading, create discussion for the class and present on qualitative research on a related topic using the same qualitative research method. More details will come as the course begins. These presentations will begin around Week 4 and run until Week 15.

****** LATE PAPERS, PROPOSALS, METHOD MEMOS, AND PRESENTATIONS WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT. IF TIME PERMITS, I WILL GIVE YOU FEEDBACK *****

Our Learning Community

Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form study groups to discuss course material, share information, and peer edit assignments. I recommend that you exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two other students the first week of class.

San Jose State University is committed to providing an environment consistent with the academic nature and core values of the institution in which students can participate in learning as a humanizing, social activity. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. As such, please:

- behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies.
- refrain from disrupting the ability of fellow student to learn.
 - Examples of disruption include:
 - Technological use that significantly or repeatedly distracts others
 - Interrupting class by arriving late or leaving early
 - Not allowing others to participate in discussion; cutting people off during discussions
- communicate in a respectful fashion when interacting online.

Feel free to email me and even better, drop by during in-person or virtual office hours. If those hours do not work with your schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment. Consider yourself warmly invited to discuss the readings, career possibilities/opportunities, or anything else! There are aspects about college that can be confusing. Professors can appear intimidating or scary. I am here to help. Please utilize me as a resource!

Student Resources

The Writing Center provides individualized support to assist you in better understanding course material and to aid you on your path to success. Services are free and include one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, interactive writing conferences, and academic skills coaching to discuss effective study strategies. Online tutoring services have been expanded significantly. Please see the [Center's website](#) or call: (408) 924-2308 to schedule an appointment.

Accessible Education Center (AEC) provides comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students. If you are a student in need of academic accommodations, please contact ACE within the first week of class. From there we can discuss your learning needs and appropriate accommodations. For more information, please visit <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> or call: (408) 924-6000.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call (408) 924-5910 for an initial consultation appointment or see their [website](#) for more information.

Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault

As your professor, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning space. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on SISU's campus with the University. For information and resources regarding sexual misconduct or assault visit the [Title IX/Gender Equity Issues website](#) or [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website](#).

Academic Integrity

All academic work for this course must meet the University's standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on tests, using previous work submitted to a class without the instructor's approval (even if it's your own!), and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the [university's policies on academic integrity](#). **By turning in assignments, you are consenting to the Honor Pledge.**

For this course, all of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course Canvas page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

I have outlined the readings and assignments in the syllabus before the start of the semester, but I may modify the syllabus if the need arises. Please note all readings should be completed by the date listed.

UNIT ONE

Why do Qualitative Research? What are different types of qualitative methods? Why conduct research ethically?

Our goal for the first unit is to have several brief introductions. We will be introduced to each other.

I will also give you an introduction to the course by providing an overview of the course goals and the course assignments. We will be introduced to the idea of being a sociological detective. We will also be introduced to why we do qualitative research and different kinds of qualitative research methods. We will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We will consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were violated or questioned.

Jan. 25

Welcome Week and Introductions

Course Overview. Review of Syllabus and Course Canvas Webpage

Jan. 30-Feb. 1

Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (Continued)

How to read academic research articles? What are different types of qualitative research methods. Why should we care about social science research? What are careers utilizing social science research methodology?

UNIT TWO

How Do We Conduct Ethical Research?

In this unit, we will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were questioned.

Feb. 6-8

Do No Harm and Informed Consent

READINGS

Kathleen M. Blee. 1993. "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan." *Journal of American History*, 80(2): 596-606.

Alan Brandt. 1978. "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study." *The Hastings Center Report*, 8(6):21-29

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #1 Due Sunday, February 4th by 11:59PM (Yes, read and respond to both readings – this memo should be 2 double-spaced pages)

UNIT THREE

How Do We Conduct Participant Observation? Gaining Access and Taking Notes

In this unit, you will learn about participant observation/ethnographic research methods and leverage the information you learn to write a thorough ethnographic critique. We will discuss issues of gaining access to field sites observe, the roles ethnographers assume, the mechanics of taking field notes and analyzing data, and how a researcher's background might impact the collection of data and analysis.

Feb. 13-15

Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography

READING

Goffman, *On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto*

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #2 Due Sunday, February 11th by 11:59PM

Group 1 Class Facilitations

Feb. 20-22

Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography (Continued)

READING

Gretchen Purser. 2016. "The Circle of Dispossession: Evicting the Urban Poor." *Critical Sociology*. Vol. 42(3):393-415.

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #3 Due Sunday, February 18th by 11:59PM

Ethnographic Critique Due Sunday, February 18th by 11:59PM

Group 2 Class Facilitations

Feb. 27-29

Moving from observation to analysis

READING

John Van Maanen. 1983. The moral fix: On the Ethics of Fieldwork. *Contemporary Field*

Research 269-287.

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #4 Due Sunday, February 25th by 11:59PM

Group 3 Class Facilitations

UNIT FOUR

How Do We Do Content Analysis? How We Impact and Analyze Our Data?

Students will learn about content analysis in this unit and will execute an independent research project using this method. We will discuss issues of crafting a research question, selecting documents to analyze, deciding on a sampling frame, analyzing your data, developing a coding scheme, and writing your results in a report.

Mar. 5-7

Constructing a Research Question and Selecting Data, Coding Data

READING

Slakoff & Brennan, The Differential Representation of Latina and Black Female Victims in Front-Page News Stories: A Qualitative Document Analysis

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #5 Due Sunday, March 3rd by 11:59PM

Content Analysis Proposal Due Sunday, March 3rd by 11:59PM

Group 4 Class Facilitations

Mar. 12-14

Constructing a Research Question, Selecting Data, Coding Data (Continued)

READING

Medley-Rath, "Am I Still a Virgin?": What Counts as Sex in 20 years of Seventeen

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #6 Due Sunday, March 10th by 11:59PM

Peer Review for Content Analysis Due by 11:59PM

Group 5 Class Facilitations

Mar. 19-21

Analyzing Data, Creating a Coding Scheme, and Writing Results

READING

Binder, 1993, "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #7 Due Sunday, March 17th by 11:59PM

Content Analysis Paper Due Sunday, March 17th by 11:59PM

Group 6 Class Facilitations

UNIT FIVE

How Do We Conduct Research Interviews? Executing Interview Projects

In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in a second independent research project of your choosing for which you will interview two individuals. This project may build on your content analysis project or

can be something completely different. You will learn about different types of sampling often used for interview-based research and how to move a research interest to a research question. We will discuss issues related to finding participants, obtaining informed consent, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up your findings. You will be exposed to various examples of research using interviews as a primary data source. As you read these examples, you should consider how they might inform your research and the kinds of data used to support the author's analysis.

Mar. 26-28 **Creating an interview guide, types of interviews, formulating questions, conducting interviews**
READING

Yolanda Wiggins. Blair Harrington. Naomi Gerstel. 2022. Families and Financial Support: Comparing Black and Asian American College Students.

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #8 Due Sunday, March 24th by 11:59PM

Group 7 Class Facilitations

Apr. 2-4 **SPRING RECESS – NO CLASS THIS WEEK!**

(Method Memo Due on Sunday April 7th even though there's no class this week! Mark your calendar now.)

Apr. 9-11 **Sampling or Who Do We Interview? Building Rapport, Interviewing Across Difference, Do's & Don'ts**
READING

Marjorie DeVault. 1995. Ethnicity and Expertise: Racial-Ethnic Knowledge in Sociological Research. *Gender & Society*. 9:5

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #9 Due Sunday, April 7th by 11:59PM

Group 8 Class Facilitations

Apr. 16-18 **Moving from codes to categories to concepts, Dissemination of Research Findings**
READING

Amy Schalet. 2000. Raging Hormones, Regulated Love. *Body & Society* 6:1

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #10 Due Sunday, April 14th by 11:59PM

Research Question & Interview Guide Due Sunday, April 14th by 11:59PM

Group 9 Class Facilitations

Apr. 23-25 **Moving from codes to categories to concepts, Dissemination of Research Findings (Continued)**
READING

Robert Weiss. 2004. In their own words: Making the most of qualitative interviews

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

Method Memo #11 Due Sunday, April 21st by 11:59PM

Group 10 Class Facilitations

Apr. 30-May 1 NO READINGS – GROUP PRESENTATIONS THIS WEEK

May 7-9 NO READINGS – GROUP PRESENTATIONS THIS WEEK

May 13 **FINAL INTERVIEW PAPER DUE ON MAY 13TH BY 11:59PM**