

**SOCI 104Q**  
**Qualitative Interview Methods**  
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SSB 450  
Office hours: Monday 1:30-3:30  
(or by appointment)

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Qualitative Interviewing Methods are commonly used by sociologists to conduct research. In this course, you will learn the intellectual and practical aspects of interviewing methodology. You will also design and carry out your own interview study with hands-on guidance and feedback from your instructor and classmates. This course will be taught as a seminar with periodic lectures, so come to class prepared to contribute your ideas and experiences to the discussion. You will also work with a small group of your classmates to develop your expertise in your sociology subfield (gender, race & ethnicity, immigration, medicine, etc.) of choice. At the end of the quarter you will present your study to your classmates and turn in a formal write-up of your results as a final paper.

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**COURSE MATERIALS & TEXTS**

There are two required texts for this course. I will provide you with PDF copies of all other weekly readings.

**Required Texts**

Weiss, Robert S. (1994). *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, & Joseph M. Williams (2008). *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Optional Text**

The following text may be helpful to you, and we may read excerpts from it during the course. If you plan to pursue an honor's thesis or graduate degree in the social sciences, this will be a good investment:

Becker, Howard S. (2007) *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

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## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Qualitative Interviewing Methods will be taught as a seminar-style, workshop-based course. Because this course meets once a week for three hours per session, missing one session is equivalent to missing one week of a M/W/F or T/Th course. Due to the regularity of homework assignments and emphasis on participation, it will be difficult for you to succeed in this course if you miss more than one session. Please come see me if this applies to you; it may be more appropriate for you to take this course during another quarter.

### **Collegiality & Participation**

This class will involve regular small group work and large group discussions—discussing your progress on your research project will be enjoyable and helpful, and you will learn a lot from helping your classmates and being helped by them. Out of respect for your classmates, please come to class prepared to discuss and work together. The grading scheme is structured to reward you for good preparation and participation. We will have occasional reading quizzes at the beginning of class; if you have done the reading, these should be very easy.

### **Research Ethics**

Projects carried out during this course will not be filed with the university's Institutional Review Board; however, we will still abide by (and learn about) the standards for the ethical conduct of human subjects research. In order to ensure that all projects are appropriate, I must approve your project before you begin your research. This will happen during the first three weeks of the course, so you will still have enough time to carry out your project. If your idea is unsuitable for this course, we will work together to come up with an idea that both interests you and meets ethical standards.

### **Academic Integrity**

All written work (including homework assignments) will be held to the university's standards for academic integrity: in short, do your own work, don't do anyone else's work, and acknowledge other researchers' ideas through proper citation. Visit [academicintegrity.ucsd.edu](http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu) to be sure that you are knowledgeable about what constitutes an academic integrity violation. Visit <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/locations/ssh/reference-resources/citation-guides-and-style-manuals.html> (or google "UCSD academic citation style") to learn about different forms of academic citation. We will also discuss proper citation style in class.

### **Accessibility & Accommodations**

Please send me an email or come to my office hours before Week 3 if you need assistance arranging accommodations through the Office for Students with Disabilities or if you would like to discuss accessibility issues as they relate to your performance in this course.

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## GRADING POLICY

### Final Grade Composition

Participation—26%

Reading Quizzes—5%

Homework Assignments—24% (4% x 6 assignments)

Project Presentation—15%

Final Paper (25%) & Supporting Documents (5%)—30%

### Grading Scale

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	F	below 60

### Late Assignment Policy

If you cannot complete a homework assignment by the due date and you would like an extension, you must request one in advance. All missed homework assignments with approved extensions are due by midnight on the Friday directly following the Wednesday class session on which they are due. Please be aware that failure to complete assignments by class time, regardless of extension, will limit your ability to participate in class sessions and small group work. There will be no extensions for final presentations or papers except in the case of emergency. Emergency situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: DESCRIPTIONS & GUIDELINES

### Assignment #1: Initial Project Proposal

**Due date:** in class on Week 2, bring a hard copy to class

**Details:** Before you start this assignment, read the “Final Project: Descriptions, Guidelines & Rules” section of this syllabus. In 1 to 2 pages (typed, double spaced) describe your idea for your final project. In the first page, clearly state your topic, preliminary research question, why you chose this topic, what population you are planning to interview, and any books or articles you have already read that relate to this topic. In the second page, explain why the population you have chosen to interview is a good population for your research question. In other words, why will interviewing members of this particular group of people help you answer your research question? Think broadly about the types of questions you would ask in an interview to help you answer your research question, and the types of answers you might expect. Feel free to include some of those questions, although this is not a requirement.

Keep in mind that this is a preliminary project proposal and that the details will become clearer as the quarter progresses. This assignment has two purposes: 1) to get you thinking in a directed way about the logistics of your project and to prompt you to think ahead to connecting interview data to sociology concepts, and 2) so that I can approve the appropriateness of your project. If your project is not appropriate for this course, you and I will work together to come up with a new idea. Do your best on this assignment so that you can pinpoint problems early and get the most helpful feedback possible.

## **Assignment #2: Annotated Bibliography**

**Due date:** in class on Week 3

**Details:** In this assignment, you will begin to tie your research question to the existing literature and sociology concepts associated with your topic. For this assignment, please find five articles of the following types: one review article that gives a broad overview of your topic (from *Annual Review of Sociology*), two or three articles that are very close to your research question and use qualitative methods (interview methods, ethnography, participant observation, etc.), and one or two articles close to your topic that use survey methods or large database quantitative methods. The reason for this assignment is to give you an opportunity to develop initial expertise in your topic and to understand the advantages and disadvantages of using different methods to collect data about your topic. You will write an annotated bibliography for these articles. This means that you will give the full citation for each article (as you would in a formal bibliography) and below the citation you will write a paragraph-long summary of the author's research question and claims, their data source, method of analysis, and conclusions. After that you should discuss how the article relates to your research question. For the quantitative articles, consider how answering the researcher's question with an interview study would add to or enhance the results? For the qualitative articles, discuss how your research question builds on previous research and what your study could add to the field in general.

## **Assignment #3: Final Project Proposal & Initial Interview Guide**

**Due date:** in class on Week 4

**Details:** Based on the feedback you received on your initial project proposal and annotated bibliography, you will write a final project proposal. This brief proposal (2 to 4 pages, typed and double spaced) should include the title of your research project, and a description of your topic and research question, theoretical rationale for conducting the project, general theoretical context, interview sampling method, description of your study population, and project hypotheses (general claims). Attach a copy of your preliminary interview guide to this assignment.

## **Assignment #4: Final Interview Guide**

**Due date:** in class on Week 5

**Details:** Based on the feedback you received on your initial interview guide, project proposal and during in-class discussions, write up your final interview guide. If any of your questions are specifically designed to replicate or challenge specific articles from your annotated bibliography or your further reading, feel free to note this. Remember that you should have a reason for asking every question on the interview guide, whether methodological (building rapport, getting demographic information) or theoretical (relating to the past literature or building your contribution by supporting your hypotheses).

## **Assignment #5: Interview Transcription**

**Due date:** in class on Week 6

**Details:** Transcribe your first interview (word for word) and bring a hardcopy of it to class along with the interview report (I will hand out the template in class). Clearly note who is speaking in each turn; the format should resemble examples from class lectures.

## **Assignment #6: Interview Reports**

**Due date:** in class on Week 8

**Details:** You will fill out a brief interview report after each interview. You will conduct a total of 5 interviews, and your compiled 5 interview reports will count as your 5<sup>th</sup> homework assignment. Although you turned in a copy of your first interview report in Assignment 5, please turn in another copy with this assignment. Hardcopies can be stapled together to form a packet.

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## **FINAL PROJECT: DESCRIPTION, GUIDELINES & RULES**

The final project in this class is an original research report, written in sociology article style and based on an interview study that you design and conduct. As an appendix to your final paper, you will submit (via email) the following supporting documents: all five of your interview transcriptions, as well as your coding scheme and any other supporting materials or raw data. You will also present your results to your classmates during the last weeks of the course (time slots will be determined randomly). You will receive more specific guidelines about the paper and presentation as the course progresses.

**Your final paper is due on Tuesday, March 18. You must deliver a hardcopy of your paper to my office (SSB 450) AND email me your supporting documents by 5pm.**

### **Topic choice guidelines**

Your argument, your interview questions, and your general approach to your topic must be grounded in sociological theory. We will discuss what this means in class, and you will have homework assignments and small group work to help you find a suitable body of theory in which to nestle your project.

For both methodological reasons and for your intellectual growth as a sociologist, I encourage you to choose a research setting that you are not already intimately familiar with. We will discuss the methodological advantages and disadvantages of familiarity with your research site in class.

### **Project rules**

You may not design an interview study where the interviewees are: under 18 years of age, prisoners or inmates, in an environment where you will be exposed to HIPAA-protected personal health information, in a population that may not be able to make an informed decision about whether to consent to your interview (e.g. very ill people, people with certain cognitive or developmental disabilities), or in other vulnerable populations as laid out in Institutional Review Board guidelines.

There are other interview studies that may technically be ethical to carry out, but I may not approve them. If this is the case, I will have a one-on-one discussion with you about my rationale and we will work together to design a work-around.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1 (Jan 8)      **INTRODUCTION**

**Readings for today:** Weiss, Ch 1

**Homework for next week:** Prepare Assignment #1

### Week 2 (Jan 15)      **RESEARCH ETHICS & INTERVIEWER CONDUCT**

**Readings for today:** Weiss, Chs 2, and 4

**Assignment #1 due:** Initial Project Proposal

**Homework for next week:** Prepare Assignment #2

### Week 3 (Jan 22)      **THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Readings for today:** Booth, Chs 3, 4, and 6

**Assignment #2 due:** Annotated Bibliography

**Homework for next week:** Prepare Assignment #3, begin scheduling interviews

### Week 4 (Jan 29)      **RESEARCH DESIGN & INTERVIEW GUIDES**

**Readings for today:** Grounded theory articles (TBA)

**Assignment #3 due:** Final Project Proposal & Preliminary Interview Guide

**Homework for next week:** Prepare Assignment #4

### Week 5 (Feb 5)      **DATA ANALYSIS**

**Readings for today:** Weiss, Ch 6

**Assignment #4 due:** Finalized Interview Guide

**Homework for next week:** Begin conducting interviews, transcribe the first 15-20 minutes of your first interview and bring a hardcopy of the transcription to class on Week 6

### Week 6 (Feb 12)      **TRANSCRIPTION & CODING**

**Readings for today:** None

**Assignment #5 due:** Interview Transcription & First interview report

**Homework for next week:** Keep conducting and transcribing interviews! Try to have all interviews conducted by the end of Week 6 so that you have time to transcribe over the weekend and during Week 7.

### Week 7 (Feb 19)      **ACADEMIC WRITING**

**Readings for today:** Weiss, Ch 7; Booth, Ch 7

**Homework for next week:** Prepare Assignment #6, prepare presentation, finish transcribing interviews

### Week 8 (Feb 26)      **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Assignment #6 due:** Remaining 4 Interview Reports

**Helpful readings for Weeks 8-10:** Booth Ch 12, 13, 14, 16, 17

### Week 9 (Mar 5)      **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Helpful readings for Weeks 8-10:** Booth Ch 12, 13, 14, 16, 17

### Week 10 (Mar 12)      **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Helpful readings for Weeks 8-10:** Booth Ch 12, 13, 14, 16, 17