## **Research Methods in Sociology: Stories and Qualitative Research**

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**Course Description**

Every day, people chat; they share their stories to express their thoughts and feelings. Stories, therefore, are crucial tools for investigating our social world—helping us better understand how our day-to-day lives are shaped by “meanings” and “interpretations.”

This course will explore how to investigate the meanings and interpretations embedded in stories. During the first two weeks, we will begin with a warm-up on why stories matter in social research and the importance of qualitative research. After discussing research ethics, we will learn and practice methodologies—from data collection to evaluation.

Active participation is key in this course. But don’t worry! There won’t be a “big” final project. By the end of this course, you will learn how to analyze meanings in everyday experiences and interpret them, providing valuable insights for your future research in sociology.

**Learning outcomes**

1. Students will understand the philosophy behind qualitative methodologies and their significance in social research.
2. Students will be able to use the language and tools of qualitative methodologies in social research.
3. Students will design individual research projects with attention to research ethics.
4. Students will analyze their collected data and interpret the results effectively.
5. Students will evaluate their analytical outcomes and write a comprehensive research proposal.

**Requirements**

Students are required to submit four assignments and a final paper. Through these assignments, students will practice the process of qualitative research—from designing a study to collecting data.

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| 1st memo | 15% | Interview practice | Students will submit:  (1) summary of interview methods,  (2) interview questions,  (3) interview fieldnote |
| 2nd memo | 20% | Observation practice | Students will submit a short fieldnote after observing scenes related to their own research. Observation materials may vary upon the research topics. |
| 3rd memo | 15% | Autoethnography | Students will submit a short autoethnography essay. The topic of the essay will be provided in advance. |
| 4th memo | 20% | Analysis | Students will do a mock analysis. The sample data will be provided one month before the submission date. |
| Final paper | 20% | Research Report | Students will write a research report based on their previous submissions. This includes:  (1) research question,  (2) research plan,  (3) the need of research,  (4) a list of related literature |
| Attendance/ Participation | 10% |  |  |

**Required Readings**

*# All readings will be available on the course online board.*

**Course Schedule**

***Why do stories matter?***

Introduction: Why qualitative research?

Stories, meanings, interpretation

Feelings, nonverbal expressions, ambivalence

Thick description

Readings:

*Listening to people* Chp 1, 2

Maslen, S. (2022). Between narrative and practice: Storytelling as a way of knowing how to be in nature. *Ethnography*, *23*(4), 433-449.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture.

Goodwin, J., & Horowitz, R. (2002). Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology. *Qualitative sociology*, *25*(1).

***Before Entering the Field: Ethics of Research***

Research triangle and the ethic of research

(Dual) interpretations

How to design research

Readings:

*Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation.* Chp 4, 5

*Listening to people* Ch. 3

Liamputtong, P. *Researching the Vulnerable: A Guide to Sensitive Research Methods. Chp 1,2.*

***Collect data – how to collect it?***

***Interview***

In-depth interviews

Phone interviews/Zoom interviews

Focus group

Surveys

Readings:

*Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation.* Chp 7, 9

*Listening to people* Ch. 4, 5

Small, M. L. (2009). How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography*, *10*(1), 5-38.

*# 1st Submission (Interview)*

***Unobtrusive Measure***

Text analysis

Audio record

*The Unobtrusive Researcher: A Guide to Methods.* Ch. 1, 4, 5.

***Observation***

Traditional observation

Participant observation

Online observation

Readings:

*Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation.* Chp 9.

*Listening to people* Ch. 6, 7

*Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* Ch. 1, 2.

*# 2nd Submission (Observation)*

***Embodied Methodology***

Life history/autoethnography

Photo elicitation/Photovoice

Participatory action research

Reading:

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual studies*, *17*(1), 13-26.

Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 191-222.

Jager, A. D., Tewson, A., Ludlow, B., & Boydell, K. (2016). Embodied ways of storying the self: A systematic review of body-mapping. In F*orum: Qualitative social research* (Vol. 17, No. 2).

Wall, S. (2008). Easier said than done: Writing an autoethnography. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *7*(1), 38-53.

*Researching the Vulnerable: A Guide to Sensitive Research Methods.* Chp. 6

*# 3rd Submission (Autoethnography)*

***Analysis – how to analyze?***

Narrative analysis

Media content analysis

Grounded analysis

Interpretative phenomenology analysis

Reading:

*Listening to people* Ch. 8

*Researching the Vulnerable: A Guide to Sensitive Research Methods. Chp. 8*

*Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* Ch. 5, 6

Baily, J. (2007) *First Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis: Transcribing.*

Charmaz, K. and Thornberg, R. (2021). The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 18(*3*): 305-327.

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods*, *1*(1), 218-240.

# 4th Submission (Analysis)

***Writing***

Evaluation of analysis results

Writing a research proposal

Reading:

*Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation.* Chapter 13

*Listening to people* Ch. 9, 10

*Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* Ch. 8

Iversen, R. R. (2009). Getting out'in ethnography: A seldom-told story. *Qualitative Social Work*, *8*(1), 9-26.

*# Final Paper*