

## Methods of Research and Analysis for Urban Social Institutions

Urban Studies/ Sociology 979  
Spring 2008

Professor A. L. Greer  
Office: Bolton 712  
Office hours: W Th 4:30-5:30  
& appointment  
Telephone:  
Office: 229-6944  
Home: 351-1617  
E-Mail: <[agreer@uwm.edu](mailto:agreer@uwm.edu)>

### Overview

The focus of this course is on qualitative methods of research and analysis, especially as these methods are used inductively, that is to create new theory. The goal of the class is that you learn to conduct sociological field work including the collection, management, analysis and presentation of data. The principal methodologies of qualitative research, participant observation and in-depth interviewing, will consume the largest portion of the semester but course readings will help us to locate inductive research within the larger social science enterprise and to examine the practical, ethical and logistical aspects of field research. In addition to course texts covering basic topics of qualitative research, we will discuss exemplary and classic work. The course will function as a seminar and a workshop where students will share their ongoing research experiences and problems with the other members of the class. Each student will engage in data collection, inductive analysis and presentation of the findings to the class and in a final paper.

This course is a seminar in which participation is a central component. Therefore, it is essential that you come to class each week well prepared.

**Week-by-week discussion** of materials will be structured in two ways.

- ◇ Presentations of readings: Students will share responsibility for presenting the readings each week. Presentations should consist of a brief (5-10 minute) overview of the reading highlighting major methodological points. When empirical studies are discussed critique them in terms of the persuasiveness of the argument made and evaluation of method and supporting data
- ◇ Reaction pieces: For each assigned reading, all students are required to prepare a paragraph containing comments or questions that can be used as a basis for contributing to class discussions. You should pay particular attention to methodological issues, themes, or questions which are raised by the readings. Reaction pieces may include a brief summary of the reading, but they should focus principally on reacting to the material rather than summarizing it. Reaction pieces should be between 1 and 2 pages (single-spaced) in length. They will be due at the end of each class session.

**Independent Research:** Each student will undertake independent field data collection. This

entails identifying a research site, recording observations and handing in field notes and preparing a proposal and a final report on your findings.

- ◇ Proposal. Prepare a 5 page proposal describing the research you intend to undertake, why it is worth doing, and why a qualitative methodology is appropriate to answering it.
- ◇ Class presentation. Oral presentations of the findings of field work will take place during the last three weeks of the class. These will occupy about 20 minutes each with the time divided between an oral presentation (of ongoing or completed research depending on date of presentation) and class discussion.
- ◇ Research papers, approximately 15 pages, in length will be due the last day of class.

It is also expected that, as your research unfolds, it will enable you to bring substantive information to the class that will give body to the methodological topics being discussed.

### **Grading**

Each of the above components will account for the following proportions of your final grade:

Readings and Reaction pieces; class discussion: 50%

Research Proposal: 10%

Oral presentation of study: 10%

Research paper: 30%

Assignments will include two short essays, regular submission of field notes, a final paper based on your field work, and a presentation of the results to the class. The first essay assignment will ask you discuss the nature of science itself and to place of qualitative research in the context of the scientific enterprise. In the second, you will describe the validity requirements of inductive research in contrast to deductive research. The most important assignment of the course is your own field data collection. Each student will select a field research site, record field notes, code the data, and organize it for systematic retrieval and analysis. Students will submit field notes and codes for inspection and advice to the instructor. The final assignment presentation at the end of the semester of a seminar paper that reports the results of the semester's field research.

### **Course schedule**

January 24: Introduction

January 31: First Days in the Field

Amir B. Marvasti, "What is Qualitative Research?" pages 1-12 [Electronic reserve]

Blanche Geer, "First Days in the Field: A chronicle of Research in Progress,"  
from Philip E. Hammond (ed.), *Sociologists at Work*, Basic Books, 1964

(electronic reserve)

William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, Methodological Appendix (electronic reserve)

Howard S. Becker, "How I Learned What a Crock Was," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (April 1993):28-35.  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/crocks.html>

DUE: Identification of your site of observation—exactly  
Identification major study to read and appraise

February 7      The Logic of Exploration and the Logic of Verification: Misplaced Concreteness

Patton, *Strategic Themes and Conceptual Issues*, pages 33-80  
Scott Greer, *Origins of Science and Abstraction and Innovation, Logic of Social Inquiry* (Chapters 6 & 7, pages 63-82) Electronic reserve

Field notes due

February 14: Generating Theory

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967

Carolyn L. Weiner, *The Elusive Quest*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, "Theoretical Stance," 5-8.

Field notes due:

February 21: Gathering data

Patton, Chapter 6: Fieldwork Strategies and Observation Methods, pages 259-332.

Howard S. Becker and Blanche Geer, "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison," *Human Organization* (1957) 16 #3:28-32 (electronic reserve)

Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, "Foundations of Qualitative Interviewing," In Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. London: Sage, 1995.

Recommended : Marvasti, Chapters 2-4

February 28: Ethics and IRB

Invited speaker

Readings TBA

March 7: Constructing an Interview Schedule and selecting a sample

Patten, "Question Options," paged 348-384

Patten, "Purposeful Sampling," Pages 230-247

W. S. Robinson, "The Logical Structure of Analytic Induction," ASR (1951) 16, 812-818 [Electronic Reserve]

March 13: Interpretation of Data: Validity and Reliability

Reading:

Patton, Part 3: pages 429- 502

Marvasti, In chapter on Data Analysis), pages 81-89 [Electronic reserve]

Howard S. Becker, "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," ASR (1958) 12: 652-660

Ralph Turner, "The Quest for Universals in Social Research," ASR (1953) 18, 604-611

Lipsky, Michael, "The Assault on Human Services: Street Level Bureaucrats, Accountability and the Fiscal Crisis," in S. Greer, et al, (eds.), Accountability in Urban Society. Sage Publications, 1978.

Herbert J. Rubin, "Shoot Anything that Flies; Claim Anything that Falls: Conversations with Economic Development Practitioners." *Economic Development Quarterly* 2: 236-251, 1988.

Reference:

Miles and Huberman, Chapter 10 "Making Good Sense: Drawing and Verifying Conclusions, pages 245-287.

March 20: Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation: Writing

Reading: Patton, pages 502-515

Recommended:

Marvasti, p 124-131

Lofland and Lofland, Chapter 8 "Arousing Interest"

March 7 Spring Break

April 3: Coding and Data Management

This class is a workshop.

- 1) Bring field notes with you for in-class code development
- 2) Software demonstration

Recommended: Marvasti, Chapter 5: Data Analysis

Reference:

Miles and Huberman, pages 50-7

April 10: Social Science and Social Action: The Good, the True and the Beautiful

Greer, "Social Science and Values, Part 4; pages

Greer, Introduction to the Transaction Edition of Logic of Social Inquiry [electronic reserve]

Marvasti, Chapter 7: 132-144 [Electronic reserve]

April 17: Values, Evaluation, Participatory Research

Greer, "Social Science and Values, Part 4; pages

Greer, Introduction to the Transaction Edition of Logic of Social Inquiry [electronic reserve]

Marvasti, Chapter 7: 132-144 [Electronic reserve]

Moore, Joan, Learning to Work Together

<http://gangresearch.net/Archives/documents/moore.html>>

Refer again to:

William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, Methodological Appendix (electronic reserve)a

Wolcott, Writing Up Qualitative Research 177-206

April 17: Exemplary studies for class discussion  
TBA

Due: Proposal

April 24 Presentations of research studies

May 1 Presentations of research studies

May 8 Presentations of research studies

### Course books

Required:

Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: 2002

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, originally published by Aldine Press in Chicago. Old editions (1967-1970)

are fine if you find used ones. Currently published by Sociology Press

Recommended:

Scott Greer, *The Logic of Social Inquiry*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1989

Amir B. Marvasti, *Qualitative Research in Sociology*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004.

Norman K. Denzin, ed. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000.

John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings: A guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, Third Edition, Belmont CA: Wadsworth, 1995.

Harry F. Wolcott, *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, Second edition

Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967

Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994

Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 2003

George J. McCall and J.L. Simmons, *Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader*, Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1969

Philip Hammond (ed. ) *Sociologists at Work*, New York: Basic Books, 1964

Douglas Harper and Helene M. Lawson, *The Cultural Study of Work*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

John Brewer and Albert Hunter, "Multi method Research: Synthesizing Styles," Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications: 2005.