

Sociology 104: Field Research

Spring 2017
Tuesday 2-5pm
SSB 101

Instructor: Lindsay DePalma
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OH: Tuesday 12-2 or by appointment, SSB 489

Welcome!

This course introduces you to qualitative field methods in sociological inquiry. Rather than learning about these methods by reading and analyzing the work of those who've performed them, you will primarily learn by practicing them yourself. Over the next 10 weeks, you will conduct a research project based on a sociological question that you devise. The class will be run as a workshop, with students actively planning and discussing ongoing projects. We will practice particular methods, explore commonly encountered problems, and discuss ways of doing academic writing based on fieldwork. Specifically, throughout the quarter you will:

- Learn how to develop and frame sociological research questions that can be examined using field methods
- Choose a field site and conduct research at that site
- Learn about, practice, and reflect on your experiences with observation, participant observation, and interview
- Experience and discuss practical and ethical dilemmas that can arise in qualitative research
- Enhance your ability to collect data, think critically, write clearly and sociologically, evaluate academic work, and communicate orally

The lectures, readings, assignments, and discussions are designed with these goals in mind.

Course Materials:

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. 4th Edition. Belmont: Thomson and Wadsworth.

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

Readings are available on course reserves at Geisel, the UCSD bookstore, or Amazon.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation: 15%
Short Paper #1: 10%
Short Paper #2: 10%
Short Paper #3: 10%

Reflection Paper: 10%
Final Presentation: 15%
Final Paper: 30%

Your letter grade for the course will be determined as follows:

97→ = A+	90–92 = A–	80–82 = B–	70–72 = C–
93–96 = A	87–89 = B+	77–79 = C+	60–69 = D
	83–86 = B	73–76 = C	below 60 = F

Participation:

This course is formatted as a workshop modeled on learning by *doing*. Each week we will discuss the assignment that is due that day (in most cases returning to the previous week's topic). The discussion will be student-

centered, based on your experiences in the field and execution of the assignment. As such, perfect attendance and participation is crucial for success in this course. If you anticipate missing a session, please talk with me.

In addition to any participation reductions, the attendance policy is as follows:

1 absence: 5% reduction

3 absences: 30% reduction

2 absences: 20% reduction

4 or more: 0 for participation grade

Schedule:

4.4 WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION: FIELD METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN—PLANNING A PROJECT AND ENTERING A FIELD SITE.

DUE TODAY:

- *Come prepared to discuss a research question that you might want to pursue during this course. Remember, it must be reasonably feasible and a question that can be answered with observation, participant observation, and interviews!*

4.11 WEEK 2: BUILDING A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SITUATING YOUR WORK IN SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

*Meet in Geisel Library @ 2pm, Library Classroom I

DUE TODAY:

- Lofland pgs. 7-53
- *Come prepared to discuss your finalized research question, your research site, and how you accessed it/plan to access it.*

4.18 WEEK 3: OBSERVATION.

DUE TODAY:

- Two articles or books relevant to your research question. *Come prepared to discuss the RQ and methods in each, and how you think your RQ fits in.*
- Short paper #1: 2-3 page double-spaced report including 1) a clear statement of your research question 2) a brief description of your research site and 3) arguments in two relevant sociological sources and how your project could contribute.
- Lofland pgs. 54-98; 108-117

4.25 WEEK 4: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION.

DUE TODAY:

- Field notes from observing your field site. Should be several single spaced pages, include everything—you never know what will become interesting or crucial data! *Be prepared to speak about your observation experience and data.*
- Lofland pgs. 121-143

5.2 WEEK 5: INTERVIEW

DUE TODAY:

- Field notes from participating at your field site, including a few questions you will ask in your interview based on your experiences in the field. *Be prepared to speak about your participant observation experience and data.*
- Short paper #2: 2-3 page double-spaced report including: 1) a discussion of your ethnographic data (where did you go and why) and 2) at least 1 argument that uses relevant data to address your research question.
- Weiss pgs. 1-14, 39-59, skim 61-119 (mostly transcripts)

5.9 WEEK 6: CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD: ETHICS, EMOTIONS, ACCESS, POSITIONALITY, CONFIDENTIALITY

DUE TODAY:

- Read ONE of the following—your choice:
 - Satterlund, Travis and Christine Mallinson. 2006. "Practical Realities and Emotions in Field Research: The Experience of Novice Fieldworkers." *Social Thought & Research* 27:123-152.
 - Goode, Erich. 2002. "Sexual Involvement and Social Research in a Fat Civil Rights Organization." *Qualitative Sociology*. 25 (4): 501-534.
- Reflection Paper: 2-3 page double-spaced reflection in which you critically engage with the week's reading. A good paper will be one that demonstrates clear understanding of the reading and a careful reflection that provides evidence of original thought (not mere regurgitation) and connections to your own fieldwork experiences where appropriate. *Be prepared to discuss these with the class.*

5.16 WEEK 7: ANALYSIS AND BUILDING HYPOTHESES

DUE TODAY:

- Use your final interview guide to complete at least 3 interviews, lasting at least 30 minutes each.
- A full transcription of at least 1 interview, coded
- *Come prepared to discuss some hypotheses based on your coded interview data and other data*
- Weiss pgs. 151-182
- Lofland pgs. 193-219 (skim for analytic strategies that might be helpful to you)

5.23 WEEK 8: MAKING ARGUMENTS AND STRUCTURING YOUR PAPER

DUE TODAY:

- Lofland pgs. 168-192
- Weiss pgs. 183-206
- Short paper #3: 2-3 double spaced report including: 1) a discussion of your interview data (who did you talk to, why, what types of questions did you ask) and 2) at least 1 argument that uses relevant interview data to address your research question (state argument clearly, present data to defend it, and connect it to your RQ)
- *Come prepared to discuss your arguments and the data that support them.* Think about the relationship between the data you need and the methods we practiced this quarter.

5.30 WEEK 9: IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

DUE TODAY:

- Project Presentations, approximately 10 minutes each. Power-Points/Prezzi/Google Slides **REQUIRED**
- *Come prepared to listen, question, and offer productive feedback to your peers.*
- Keep working on your final papers! Make sure to incorporate any useful feedback from your final presentation.

6.6 WEEK 10: IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

DUE TODAY:

- Project Presentations, approximately 10 minutes each. Power-Points/Prezzi/Google Slides REQUIRED
- *Come prepared to listen, question, and offer productive feedback to your peers.*
- Keep working on your final papers! Make sure to incorporate any useful feedback from your final presentation.

Final Presentation weeks 9 and 10, including:

Background Introduction: Why were you initially interested in this project? Discuss your positionality, or background.

Research Question: What is the puzzle you are interested in? What question does the data you are about to present help answer?

Theory: What previous scholarship is your research connected to? Where is it situated? What literature are you contributing to? What bigger social phenomenon is your study a case of?

Methods: Where did you observe, why? Where did you participate, why? Who did you interview, why? Any limitations?

TWO Findings: What are your arguments and data to defend them? Present each one by one.

Discussion: Summarize your findings. How do your arguments tie together to create a coherent argument that answers your research question? What can you add to the theory with your data?

Most time should be spent on your findings, followed by your methods and discussion.

FINAL PAPER due in hard copy and electronically on Tuesday June 13th by 6pm

Papers can be submitted directly to me during the final exam period (3-6pm) in SSB 489, or before the final exam period to the front office of the sociology department—time stamp required! Papers must also be submitted to turn-it-in via TritonED. Both must be submitted on time. No late papers will be accepted.

The final paper will draw on the work you've done throughout the quarter. Following the format of typical sociological articles, it should include: a brief introduction including your research question, theory (situating your research in existing scholarship), your research methods, findings, discussion (part I: connect to theory; part II: reflect on your qualitative experience), and a brief conclusion. You are required to cite at least 2 relevant sociological sources, and both required texts for this course. Use evidence from all 3 methods. More directions to follow.

Final paper format:

10-15 pages, double-spaced, Times New Romans, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins. In text and full citations must be in APA format. Footnotes, end-notes, or a reference page required.

With your final paper you will also turn in:

- At least 2-3 single spaced pages of field notes from your observation
- At least 2-3 single spaced pages of field notes from your participant observation
- Your interview guide
- 1 transcribed interview, coded

Late Work:

No late work will be accepted unless approved *before it is due* by me.

Email:

Please check your UCSD email regularly for announcements regarding this course. If you email me, please expect up to 24 hours for a response and reserve email inquires for short questions only. I am happy to talk in more detail during office hours or by appointment!

Community Standards:

This classroom is dedicated to maintaining UCSD's principles of community, which include: fair treatment for the instructor and students, a climate of fairness, cooperation, and professionalism, an environment of inclusion, respect, and welcome, and collaborative attitudes and actions.

Academic Integrity:

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to UC San Diego policy on academic integrity.

Special Needs and Accommodations:

Students who need special accommodation or services should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), University Center 202, email osd@ucsd.edu, tel 858.534.4382. You must register and request that the OSD send me official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. Please meet with me to discuss accommodations and how the course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Note: The details in the syllabus are subject to change, as needed.

CHEERS TO A GREAT QUARTER!