

SOCIOLOGY 742

Fall 2017

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This course is organized around problems of doing field research. Many of our discussions will focus on the practical problems confronting the researcher. The seminar will serve as a venue for participants to share their field experiences and consider the processes by which field research is accomplished.

The seminar is organized informally and driven, largely, by the kinds of projects that students undertake. In addition, readings are assigned and will serve as a basis for discussion. These readings are not drawn from one main text. There is no shortage of excellent material on qualitative research methods. Sage, for instance, publishes a series devoted exclusively to this research methodology; two journals – *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* and *Qualitative Sociology* – publish in the area, and a number of excellent readers and monographs have been published over the past few years.

I expect that you will draw upon the readings selectively. You will undoubtedly find additional material that is more germane to your particular research interests. As important as this reading material may be for learning about field research, however, it is not a substitute for being actively engaged in the field.

There are two course requirements. First, each student is expected to initiate a project using field research methods, and will submit field notes regularly. These field notes and field experiences more generally, will be discussed in the seminar. This component will constitute roughly 50% of the final grade. Second, you will be required to submit a paper based on your chosen research, to constitute the remaining portion of the final grade. This submission is due by the end of the course.

N.B. ETHICS

Please note that *every researcher has an obligation to adhere to ethical standards, even when research subjects are unaware of, or unconcerned with, our ethical principles*. This is all the more imperative when observing people in public settings, who have not been instructed about the process of informed consent. As we will discuss in the seminar, you must conduct your field observations with the utmost respect for, and adherence to, the principle of “minimal risk” as outlined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct, and in the procedural recommendations for course-related research established by the MREB.

You may review the guidelines at: <http://reo.mcmaster.ca/guidelines/courses.htm>
In any materials you submit, please make sure you create pseudonyms for all participants, and uphold participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

READINGS

Week 1 - An Introduction

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

Becker, H.S. 1965. "Whose Side Are We On?" Social Problems 14: 239-247.

Filstead, W.J. (ed.) 1970. Ch. 1 in Qualitative Methodology: Firsthand Involvement with the Social World. Chicago: Markham.

W. Shaffir and R. Stebbins (eds.) 1991. Introduction to Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Taylor, S.J. and R. Bogdan. 1984. Ch. 1 in Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings. New York: Wiley.

Week 2 - Ethical Issues

Tri- Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

Davis, F. 1961. "Comment on 'Initial Interaction of Newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous'." Social Problems 8: 364-365.

Erikson, K.T. 1965. "A Comment on Disguised Observation in Sociology." Social Problems 14 (4): 366-373.

Goode, E. 1996. "The Ethics of Deception in Social Research: A Case Study." Qualitative Sociology 19 (1): 11-33.

Roth, J. 1960. "Comment on Secret Observation." Social Problems 9: 283-286.

Weeks 3&4 - Doing Field Research

Becker, H.S., B. Geer, E.C. Hughes, and A.L. Strauss. 1961. Ch. 2 in Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gans, H. 1962. Appendix in The Urban Villagers. New York: Free Press.

Humphreys, L. 1975. Ch. 2 in Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places. Chicago: Aldine.

Liebow, E. 1967. Appendix in Tally's Corner. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.

Whyte, W.F. 1955. Appendix in Street Corner Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weeks 5&6 - Starting Out

Gans, H. 1968. "The Participant Observer as Human Being: Observations on the Personal Aspects of Field Work." Pp. 300-317 in Becker, H.S. et. al., eds. Institutions and the Person. Chicago: Aldine.

Geer, B. 1964. "First Days in the Field." Pp. 322-344 in P. Hammond (ed.) Sociologists at Work. New York: Basic Books.

Schutte, G. 1991. "Racial Oppression and Social Research: Field Work Under Racial Conflict in South Africa." Qualitative Sociology 14 (2): 127-146.

Shaffir, W. and R. Stebbins (eds.) Part 1 in Experiencing Fieldwork. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Smith, C.D. and W. Kornblum (eds.) Part 1 in In the Field: Readings on the Field Research Experience. New York: Praeger.

Wax, R. 1971. Chs. 2, 4 in Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weeks 7&8 - Field Research Dynamics: Gaining Access/Leaving the Field

Adler, P. 1984. "The Sociologist as Celebrity: The Role of the Media in Field Research." Qualitative Sociology 7(4): 310-326.

Adler, P.A. and P. Adler. 1987. Membership Roles in Field Research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Douglas, J. 1976. Ch. 8 in Investigative Social Research: Individual and Team Field Research. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Gold, R. 1958. "Roles in Sociological Field Observation." Social Forces 36: 217-223.

Shaffir, W. and R. Stebbins (eds.) Part 4 in Experiencing Fieldwork. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Week 9 - Field Research Dynamics: Learning the Ropes/Maintaining Relations

Johnson, J. 1975. Chs. 4, 5 in Doing Field Research. New York: Free Press.

Kasper, A.S. 1994. "A Feminist, Qualitative Methodology: A Study of Women with Breast Cancer." Qualitative Sociology 17(3): 263-281.

Polsky, N. 1969. Pp. 109-143 in Hustlers, Beats, and Others. New York: Doubleday.

Reinharz, S. 1993. "Neglected Voices and Excessive Demands in Feminist Research." Qualitative Sociology 16(1): 69-76.

Shaffir, W. and R.A. Stebbins (eds.) 1991. Parts 2, 3 in Experiencing Fieldwork. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Smith, C.D. and W. Kornblum (eds.) 1989. Parts 2, 3, 4 in In The Field. New York: Praeger.

Wichroski, M.A. 1996. "Breaking Silence: Some Fieldwork Strategies in Cloistered and Non-Cloistered Communities." Qualitative Sociology 19(1): 153-170.

Week 10 - Issues of Reliability and Validity

Becker, H.S. and B. Geer. 1957. "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison." Human Organization 16: 28-32.

Becker, H.S. 1970. Pp. 39-62 in Sociological Work: Method and Substance. Chicago: Aldine.

Glaser, B.G. and AL. Strauss. 1967. The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Chicago: Aldine.

Olesen, V.L. and E.W. Whittaker. 1968. The Silent Dialogue. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Trow, M. 1957. "Comment on 'Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison.'" Human Organization 16: 33-35.

Week 11 - Summary

Preparing Grant Applications/Getting Published

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.