Instructor: Michael M. Bell 340c Agricultural Hall, 265-9930 michaelbell@wisc.edu Fall, 2009 Tu/Th 1:00-2:15 University of Wisconsin-Madison

SOCIOLOGY/RURAL SOCIOLOGY 754 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY

"Sociology...is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences."—Max Weber, 1920.

What is the difference between a wink and a twitch? What do "equality," "nature," and "God" mean to different people? How does it feel to be discriminated against? What is life like in the small towns and small neighborhoods of rural and urban Wisconsin? What is the significance of the *Harry Potter* books and movies for their audience? What is really going on behind the front doors of families today? How do people themselves understand how and why they do what they do?

This course provides some of the research tools for answering questions such as these, the tools often described as *qualitative* methods of social inquiry. Generally speaking, qualitative methods are those that seek, as Max Weber put it, an "interpretive understanding of social action." The goal of this class is to broaden and hone students' interpretive skills by presenting a range of qualitative methods, their epistemological standing, their sociological utility, and the practical and ethical problems associated with them. To this end, our course will pass through three parts:

methods of knowing (the epistemological and ethical foundations of qualitative research);
methods of gathering (the many means of encountering qualitative social evidence);
methods of telling (performing qualitative research through writing and other means).

The format of the course will be a cross between a seminar and a workshop. We will meet once a week in seminar format to discuss the readings, and once a week to try out various qualitative methods for ourselves. Our focus, then, will be both on the intellectual underpinnings of qualitative methods and on the practical doing of the stuff. Along the way, there will be numerous small workshop assignments, as well as a weekly intellectual journal of 500-600 words, all of which students should keep gathered in a course portfolio. A few times during the semester I will collect and grade the portfolios. The final assignment will be to write up a qualitative research proposal on something you might actually study, or are already studying. There will also be three short assignments to help you develop your thoughts on your proposal, and to loosen your mind and your pen. The course will conclude with a series of workshops on the research proposals.

Course Readings

Books

Bell, Michael M. 1994. *Childerley: Nature and Morality in a Country Village.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1999 (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terry Hume Oliver, eds. New York: Norton.

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. Sidewalk. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Meyerhoff, Barbara. 1980 (1979). Number Our Days. New York: Touchstone (Simon and Schuster).

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin.

Books are available at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 West Gilman St.

Other Readings

All other readings for the course will be available in a course pack, available at Bob's Copy Shop, 1401 University Ave.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following: your portfolio (50%), your research proposal (25%), and your class participation (25%).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction

9/3 Introduction

Max Weber. 1968 (1920s). "The Definition of Sociology and of Social Action: A. Methodological Foundations." In *Economy and Society*, Guenther Ross and Claus Wittich, eds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pp. 4–22.

Methods of Knowing

Week 2 The Promise of Qualitative Methods: Two Qualitative Classics

9/8 Seminar

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. Sidewalk. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. Pp. 1-317.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic. Pp. 412-453.

9/10 Workshop: Observing a Scene

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2: "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research" and "In the Field."

Workshop assignment (one week): 400-500 words of fieldnotes on an hour or so of observations of a social scene, with a partner from the class.

Week 3 The Case for Thick Cases Studies

9/15 Seminar

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*_12(2): 219-245.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic. Pp. 3-30.

Mitchell, Clyde J. 1983. "Case and Situation Analysis." Sociological Review 31:187-211.

9/17 Workshop: Participating in a Scene

Emerson et al. Chapters 3, 4, and 5: "From Field to Desk," "Creating Scenes on the Page," and "Pursuing Members' Meanings"

Workshop assignment (two weeks): 700-800 words of fieldnotes on an hour or so of participation in a social scene, with a partner from the class.

Week 4 Standpoints and Representations

9/22 Seminar

Churchill, Christian J. 2005. "Ethnography as Translation." *Qualitative Sociology*, 28(1): 3-24.

Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." Pp. 1-26 in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Berkeley: University of Cal. Press.

McCorkel, Jill A. and Kristen Myers. 2003. "What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field." *Qualitative Sociology* 26(2): 199-231.

Simmel, Georg. 1971 (1908). "The Stranger." In *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, Donald N. Levine, ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 143-149.

9/24 Workshop: Taking Yourself into Account

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. Sidewalk. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. Pp. 318-357.

No new workshop assignment.

Week 5 Grounding Research

9/29 Seminar

Burowoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." Sociological Theory. 16: 4-33.

Devault, Majorie. 2006. "Introduction: What Is Institutional Ethnography?" *Social Problems* 53 (3): 294-298.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2000. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods." Pp. 509-536 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. London: SAGE Publications.

Marcus, George, E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.

Ruth Wodak or Norman Fairclough reading on critical discourse analysis—TBA.

10/1 Workshop: Autoethnographic Methods Reading TBA

Workshop assignment (two weeks): 800-1000 words based on the following: conduct an hour of participation in a social scene while a partner from the class observes you; reverse roles; write up 400-500 words on your observations of yourself and 400-500 words on your observations of your partner; compare observations.

Week 6 Action, Participation, and Objectivity

10/6 Seminar

Bartle, Phil. 2007. "Methods of Participatory Appraisal: A Review of PAR/PRA Methods and Techniques." *Community Empowerment*. On-line reading at http://www.scn.org/cmp/modules/par-tech.htm. Skim only.

Becker, Howard. 1967. "Whose Side Are We On?" Social Problems 14(3): 239-247.

Stoecker, Randy. 1999. "Are Academics Irrelevant? Roles for Scholars in Participatory Research." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42:840-854.

Work Group for Community Health and Development. 2009. *The Community Tool Box*. University of Kansas. On-line reading at http://ctb.ku.edu/en/Default.htm. Skim only.

10/8 Workshop: Ethics and Institutions

Martin, Deborah G. 2007. "Bureaucratizing Ethics: Institutional Review Boards and Participatory Research." *Acme* 6 (3): 319–328.

Johnson, Tara Star. 2008. "Qualitative Research in Question: A Narrative of Disciplinary Power With/in the IRB." Qualitative Inquiry 14 (2): 212-232.

Halse, Christine and Anne Honey. 2007. "Rethinking Ethics Review as Institutional Discourse." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13 (3): 336-352.

No new workshop assignment.

Methods of Gathering

Week 7 Observing

10/13 Seminar

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Introduction, Chapters I, II, III, VI, VII, and VIII; whole book recommended.

10/15 Workshop: Studying Situations

No reading.

Workshop assignment: Audio and video recorded in-class exercise on the presentation of self; no write-up

Research proposal topic statement due.

Week 8 Participating

10/20 Seminar

Bell, Michael M. 1994. *Childerley: Nature and Morality in a Country Village.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

10/22 Workshop: Participating in Situations

No reading.

Workshop assignment: 800-1000 word analysis of the previous week's exercise, based on in-class discussion of the audio and video of the previous week's exercise

Week 9 Investigating

10/27 Seminar

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin.

10/29 Workshop: Investigating Situations

No reading.

Workshop assignment (two weeks): 800-1000 words on something social you found out, based on investigations conducted with a partner from the class

Week 10 Interviewing

11/3 Seminar

Arendell, Terry. 1997. "Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men." *Qualitative Sociology* 20, 3, 341-368.

Corbin, Juliet and Janice M. Morse. 2003. "The Unstructured Interactive Interview: Issues of Reciprocity and Risks When Dealing With Sensitive Topics." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(3): 335-354.

Devault, Marjorie L. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1):96-116.

Kvale, Steinar. 2006. "Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(3): 480-500.

Vitus, Kathrine. 2008. "The Agonistic Approach: Reframing Resistance in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14(3): 466-488.

11/5 Workshop: Conducting and Transcribing an Interview

MacLean, Lynne M., Meyer, Mechthild, Estable, Alma. 2004. "Improving Accuracy of Transcripts in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 14: 113-123.

Workshop assignment: Audio and video recorded in-class exercise on interviewing; no write-up

Research proposal epistemological statement due.

Week 11 Mixing Methods

11/10 Seminar

Readings TBA.

11/12 Workshop: Coding Qualitative Evidence

Emerson et al., "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Meaning," pp. 142-168.

Workshop assignment: transcribe 250 words from the previous week's exercise, and provide a short *interview summary* and short *interview notes*

Methods of Telling

Week 12 Performing a Narrative

11/17 Seminar

Meyerhoff, Barbara. 1980 (1979). Number Our Days. New York: Touchstone (Simon and Schuster).

11/19 Workshop: Voicing Qualitative Evidence No reading.

Workshop assignment: rewrite the 250 words from the previous exercise in two voicings, one positivist and one novelistic

Week 13 Narrative as Artform

11/24 Seminar/Workshop

Bell, Michael M. 2002. "Sentences and Commitments," *International Journal of Humanities and Peace*, 18(1): 58.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1999 (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terry Hume Oliver, eds. New York: Norton.

Another research poem example—TBA.

Research poem due. No workshop assignment.

Weeks 14, 15, and 16 Proposal Writing Workshops

12/2, 12/4, 12/9, 12/11, 12/15: Workshops on student research proposals.

Reading for this period will be each seminar member's draft proposal, due electronically 48 hours before the class in which it is discussed.