SOC6712: Qualitative Methods, Winter 2024[1]
Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
As of Jan. 8, 2024

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TA: TBA

Class Meetings
Wednesday 9am – 12pm, 100 University Place, Room 17146

<u>**COURSE DESCRIPTION**</u>
This graduate seminar is a course on qualitative methods, specifically on sociological fieldwork. The overarching goal of qualitative methods is to understand people's experiences and meaning making in their interactions and relationships. Sociologists use a wide variety of qualitative methods to study social dynamics in different settings, from small groups such as families to formal organizations to the natural world. Through qualitative research, we can explain how "the everyday" creates, sustains, and contests ideas, institutions, social structures, inequalities, and power relations of marginalization and domination. Done well, qualitative research generates in-depth knowledge by constructing meaningful, accurate representations of social life.

Sociological fieldwork is qualitative research in which researchers interact with, or come into proximity to, the people we study. Typically, it is done through observation, which is a powerful means of capturing people's *actions* and *interactions,* and through interviewing, which is especially good at uncovering people's *perceptions*.

Your primary focus in this course will be developing your skills of sociological fieldwork by collecting, analyzing, and presenting qualitative evidence. Students will work in groups of two or three to design and implement a small original, empirical research project on the theme of *social dynamics in organizational settings*. Your group will select a topic connected to the course theme and coordinate a research plan. Each member will conduct observations and interviews and collect supplemental organizational documentation. Individually and collectively, you will analyze the evidence you gather and write up what you are learning. Much of our class time will be spent workshopping your research.

By completing the course requirements, you should be well versed in the theories, techniques, problems, logistics, ethics, advantages, and disadvantages of qualitative research methods. You should have first-hand experience doing observation and interviews and presenting qualitative data in a sociological manner. I also expect and hope that you will refine and reflect upon your own abilities to do

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[1] I developed my approach to teaching qualitative methods through my own sociological training at Northwestern University, including a foundational course on fieldwork taught by Prof. Carol Heimer, as well as my experiences teaching fieldwork at University at Buffalo, SUNY, University of Denver, and University of Toronto Mississauga. This version of the syllabus is inspired by those of Prof. Jessica Fields (University of Toronto) and Prof. Judith Taylor (University of Toronto). I am grateful to Jessica Fields for giving me her consent to borrow heavily from her syllabus, with attribution; any text in quotes or in blue font is copied directly from her Winter 2023 SOC6712HS syllabus.

qualitative research as well as support other students in the course as everyone learns, experiments, and develops new skills.

Learning to do fieldwork

Doing sociological fieldwork well requires sensitivity to process and context as well as self-conscious reflection. It calls for an understanding of method, theory, ethics, and reflexivity. Writing is another essential component: it is a means of recording information, making sense of what you are learning, analyzing evidence, and communicating insights. There are foundational principles for qualitative research – such as using reliable and rigorous techniques, ensuring our engagements are ethical, and remaining open and responsive to an inherently iterative, reciprocal research process. That said, there is no one right way to do qualitative research, as Ashley Rubin (2021) writes. This course is a time to explore what approaches best suit your individual strengths, personalities, capacities, and preferences as well as the specifics of your project.

A major challenge of learning to do field research is that you need to learn everything *all at once*, as I learned from Carol Heimer, who taught my grad school fieldwork seminar. There are no clear-cut linear steps to learning and honing techniques. For the most part, people learn by *doing*, not by being taught to do. I have designed this course to give you hands-on exposure to fieldwork. Your reflections on your own experiences and those of other students, together with what you learn from the authors whose work we read, will help you as develop a repertoire of skills for this style of research.

Our class time together will primarily center on workshopping: sharing work in progress, discussing our experiences of data collection, and deciphering what we are learning as well as discussing readings and connecting them to students' projects. We will focus our energies on the nitty gritty process of collecting and making sense of qualitative evidence—on mucking through it, together, and supporting each other's explorations and growth along the way. Under ideal circumstances, your field research would be driven by a research question with grounding in sociological or social scientific literature. We would have spent more time reading qualitative studies and more time on technical issues of research design. However, in 12 weeks, our time is best spent on the on-the-ground aspects of fieldwork that are the most difficult to learn outside a class setting.

The structure of most of the course assignments mirror the syllabus created by UofT Professor Jessica Fields for this course, as do the readings and (often verbatim) the introductory summaries of the readings each week (SOC6712HS, Winter 2023). The course readings include samples from a wide range of approaches, from canonical scholarship to community-engaged work to critical race research. Many are on the Department of Sociology's Qualitative Methods comprehensive exam list. The assignments and readings set us up to explore the strengths and limitations of field methods for characterizing social conditions and our own roles as field researchers in challenging (and reproducing) power relations.

Many of the readings will push us to question and reflect on how sociology and the social sciences generally are "deeply extractive in their focus on disenfranchised people," as Prof. Judith Taylor explains in her syllabus for this course (SOC6712HS, Fall 2023). The goals of such research are, too often, "not to ease their pain, but to collect information about them and problem solve, attuned to logics of capitalism and governance. Sociologists have produced thousands if not millions of studies of suffering. Sociology however also has branches that seek to change relations of power, inequality, and exploitation, that are justice seeking in their ethos and striving. And, there are also sociologists who are just keen to explain how things work, reliant on neither people's pain nor social movements to do their research." These are essential dynamics for us to consider as you come to understand how you want to do research yourself.

READINGS
Required
The three textbooks are below. Luker is available online through the UofT library site. The other two must be purchased, although I have requested that the library put the hard copies on course reserve.

Auerbach, Carl and Louise Silverstein. 2003. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis.* New York: NYU Press. *Ebook for purchase through various sites, such as ebooks.com*
Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. *Ebook for purchase through the press website.*
Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in the Age of Info-Glut.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Other readings are accessible online in the UofT library or else in Quercus Files.

Recommended
Rubin, Ashley. 2021. *Rocking Qualitative Methods. An Irreverent Guide to Rigorous Research.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. *Challenges Luker's guidance in compelling ways.*
Davies, Martin and Nathan Hughes, 2014. *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods.* 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. – *Very pragmatic guidance. Recommended if you find project management and organization challenging.*

EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Assignment Type	Description	Date Due	Weight
1) Research Proposal Memo	appx. 500-750 words	Fri. Jan. 19, 5pm	5%
2) Research Proposal	appx. 1250 words	Fri. Feb. 2, 5pm	15%
3) Fieldnotes + Memo		Fri., Feb. 16, 5pm	10%
4) Interview transcript + Memo		Fri. Mar. 15, 5pm	10%
5) Organizational Document(s)		tbd	5%
6) Course Engagement	Facilitation	tbd	5%
	Works in Progress	tbd	10%
	Participation	ongoing	10%
7) Portfolio		Fri., Apr. 19, 5pm	30%

GROUP PROJECTS & THEME
Working in groups of approximately three people, students will collaborate on research projects that explore experiences and perceptions of *social dynamics in organizational settings*. This theme provides a common reference point and analytic approach across disparate groups and settings that each group studies.

The possible projects are many. People experience and perceive social dynamics in the context of many different formal organizations, including universities and colleges, government-managed public spaces such as trains and parks, legal institutions such as courts, and shopping malls. We often do not recognize organizational settings as such, but almost all the spaces where we spend time are owned, managed, or to some extent controlled by formal organizations. Organizational conditions can matter – or not – in expected and unexpected ways for people's behaviors, interactions, and understandings of social life.

When designing your project, above all else, **be realistic**. You should construct a study that is easy to implement, focused on people aged 18 or older, and involving an organizational context that is publicly accessible (details below). You will need to gain access by late January/early February.

Because this is a course for beginner qualitative researchers, we will aim to steer clear of both especially sensitive issues in identity research (e.g., violence, abuse, and trauma) and approaches that require organizational leaders' consent to access to a formal organization. This will help us avoid thornier ethical and methodological concerns to focus instead on (1) becoming familiar with ongoing methodological debates and (2) gaining some experience in qualitative design, data collection, and analysis.[2]

For your participant observations, please limit your group's research site(s) to either (1) those in which there is no expectation of privacy or (2) easily accessible sites in which they may be some expectation of privacy. In the latter case, you should announce your presence as researchers to participants and share an Informed Consent document with setting participants. A template for this document is available on our Quercus site. All participant observation data, no matter the research site, should not allow for the identification of the participants; should not be staged by the researchers; and should be non-intrusive. Please do not audio record, video record, or photograph participants.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
All written assignments should be in 12-pt font, one-inch margins, single or double spaced (unless otherwise noted). Include the word count at the top. Please edit for organization, spelling, and grammar.

Before beginning data collection, each group will submit two documents – a Research Proposal Memo and then a Research Proposal. These will lay out your plan for your qualitative research for the term. These two assignments will be for a shared grade.

1) RESEARCH PROPOSAL MEMO: 5%, draft due Wed. Jan. 17, final due Fri., Jan. 19, 5pm
Your group should write up a Research Proposal memo of appx. 500-1000 words about your research plan. Your memo should cover the following topics.
- Possible research interest(s) and questions, i.e. what you are studying. Your research question will evolve, but you need to start with at least a research objective (Rubin 2021).
- Proposed research site(s) and/or group(s) you will focus on and reasons for your choice.
- Methods you expect to use.
- Practical and ethical issues of this choice.

Your group has the option to elaborate your memo more fully by covering more of the content in the Research Proposal, but that is not required. Your group should prepare a draft Research Plan Memo to discuss in class on Wed., Jan. 17, then a final version that you will hand in.

2) RESEARCH PROPOSAL: 15%, due by Fri., Feb. 2, 5pm (or sooner if you prefer)
Your group should write up a Research Proposal of appx. 1250 words (5 pages double spaced but can be more or less). Your proposal should draw on feedback you have received, course readings, and seminar discussions to address each of the following topics, using headers:

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[2] That said, researchers always have a legal duty to report any suspicion of danger to a child. Since there is a remote possibility that such suspicion will arise during interviews you conduct for this course, we will address this possibility directly in our discussion of ethical concerns in class.

A. Research Objectives and Methods
- What is the group or setting? For example, who belongs, where is it, what distinguishes the group or setting from other people or places?
- What organization(s) is responsible for this setting? Provide some background information.
- What sociological questions do you already have? As you look to understand people's experiences and perceptions, consider the group, the organizational setting as a site, and/or salient processes within that organizational setting.
- What sort of access do you have to the group or setting and to the organization? What challenges do you expect to face in gaining access?

B. Data Collection Plan
Your data collection plan should ensure all group members will complete the required data collection assignments (see below) and strive toward depth (Lareau and Rao 2016). Your methods should follow from your research question; they should enable you to at least *begin* to answer your research question. Provide details such as:
- What method(s) do you expect to use and why? What makes these methods appropriate for your research question and group/setting?
- How will you strive for, and even achieve, depth in your data collection?
- Where and when do you plan to conduct (participant) observation? How often and when (eg what times or events)?
    - What is the initial focus of your observations? What balance do you expect to strike between participation and observation?
- Whom do you plan to interview? How many interviews do you plan to do?
    - What will be the focus of your interviews?
- What sorts of organizational documentation do you expect to collect?
- The "account" you will share with your research participants—meaning, your explanation of what you are doing (there).
- Any tools you will need, e.g. a digital recorder.

Include an appendix with 1) your draft interview guide and 2) a bibliography listing at least 5 sources relevant to your project that you expect to read. Do not include the appendix in the word count.

C. Ethical Considerations & Reflections on Positionality
Discuss ethical considerations of the setting or group that your group is studying. Group members also should each reflect on key relevant dimensions of their positionalities, as those may shape their engagement. Your plans should ensure voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and protection from harm:
- The multiple, perhaps conflicting group memberships and ethical systems relevant to the project and your team's plans for navigating those.
- Practices you plan to use to center the interests and needs of those you will study.
- Your understanding of the legal duty to report any suspicion of danger to a child.
- Clarification that your observations are of a sufficiently public setting that organizational consent is not necessary.
- Reflect on your positionality as it may be relevant for your engagement, approach, and/or ethics. Each student can write their own separate paragraph, if preferable (not included in word count, appx. 250 words per student).

2)   FIELDNOTES WITH MEMO: 10%, due Fri. Feb. 16, 5pm
Technicalities
Each individual student will conduct participant observation at least twice and take field notes to record observations and reflect on their time in the field. Each student will submit their own fieldnotes with a memo in mid-February. In the memo, describe "something going on" in your field site (appx. 250-500 words) and reflect on your experience as an observer/participant in the field (min. 250 words, no max). Participant observation should reflect the Research Proposal submitted earlier in the term. These fieldnotes and memo, along with fieldnotes from additional participant observation, will become part of the group's end-of-term portfolio. In class, we will discuss the process of gaining and maintaining access and guidelines for the initial fieldnotes assignment.

On Writing Ethnographic Field Notes and Doing Ethnographic/Informal Interviewing
Once you begin doing ethnographic observations, you will keep field notes (2-3 pages per visit *minimum*). Your field notes record your observations. They are your tool for tracking *everything.* They should be very detailed. Do not spend a lot of time composing well written sentences and paragraphs; that is not the point. You may be able to take notes while you are in your field site. Always plan to give yourself time, within 24 hours, to type your observations and fill in details. Expect to spend appx. one hour of writing field notes for every hour in the field. As you will soon discover, observations and ideas can seem unforgettable while you are in the field, but you can quickly forget them if you do not write them down. As a reminder: please do not audio record, video record, or photograph participants.

Early on, your field notes will probably focus on negotiating access, your role in the field site, and determining your topic (what you *hope* to learn and what, pragmatically, you *can* learn in the time you have). It is normal to feel awkward in your site and unsure what to do or what to pay attention to. Over the semester, your field notes likely will cover a more focused topic, a more nuanced understanding of the site, and possible insights and arguments that you could develop. Your observations should be informed and guided by what you have already learned. You also may end up doing one or more informal/ethnographic interviews, if you are in a setting where you are interacting with people.

3) INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH MEMO: 10%, due Fri., Mar. 15, 5pm

Technicalities
Each student will conduct at least two interviews and create transcripts. Each student will submit one transcript of an interview they conducted and a memo on that first interview (or multiple interviews, if completed) in mid-March. In the memo, describe "something going on" in your field site (appx. 250-500 words) and reflect on your experience as an observer/participant in the field (min. 250 words, no max). Interviews should reflect the Research Proposal submitted earlier in the term. The two required interview transcripts and memo (and any additional interviews conducted) from each student will become part of the portfolio the group submits at the end of the term. In class, we will discuss interviewing, write interview guides, and outline additional requirements. We will also discuss the informed consent form for the interview assignment, which is posted on Quercus.

On Interviewing, Transcripts, and Supplemental Notes
To begin, you will do a pilot interview to test out your interview guide. Early on, interviews are likely be riddled with uncomfortable (and even upsetting) experiences. *This is to be expected.* You should plan to revise and tweak your interview questions over the semester, especially after your first interview. (In a full-blown study, you typically would not change your questions dramatically after your pilot interviews). Over the semester, doing interviews should become more comfortable and your questions more refined.

Ideally, you will be able to audio record your interviews, with your interviewees' consent, then transcribe the recordings. If you are not able to audio record an interview, you should take detailed notes during the interview. Even when audio-recording, it can be very valuable to take some notes during the interview to remind yourself of key points. You also should plan to write notes, especially right after you finish an interview, to record key points as well as how you arranged the interview, the person's demeanor, location of the interview, and tone of your interactions.

4) ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTATION, 5%, due date tbd

Your group should collect some documentation on the organization(s) relevant to your project, to submit for a group grade. The documentation should enable you to describe the organizational context of your study and fieldwork. Examples include the TTC's security policy, visitor guidelines of Ontario courts, or a map of a shopping mall and descriptive information on the company that owns it. The document(s) may be specific to your field site or, if necessary, more general to that type of field site.

5) COURSE ENGAGEMENT, 25% total

Each class session, we will discuss the assigned readings. Most class sessions, we will workshop with the entire class and in small groups. You are expected to talk in class to share your experiences of fieldwork and your perceptions of your field site and interviewing. You also will share field notes, transcripts, or memos. Once the semester starts, we will create schedules for facilitation and works in progress.

Facilitation: 5%, dates TBD: All students will facilitate a seminar discussion (appx. 1 hour) of at least two assigned readings. Come to class with questions for discussion. You may organize group work and brief exercises, but please do not prepare PowerPoint slides and presentations.

Works in progress: 10%, dates TBD: Your group will sign up for one or two dates when you will describe an issue, topic, observation, concern, or quandary based on your fieldwork experiences to the class for discussion and constructive feedback. You should circulate some material – fieldnotes, interview transcript, org documents, and/or a short memo - on the week you share your work in progress. These will be due Mon. 9am that week (or another date/time the class agrees to).

Participation aka "Scholarly Attitude": 10%, ongoing: Students are expected to attend all the class meetings in their entirety and remain engaged throughout the discussion. More generally, I encourage you to adopt – in the words of Prof. Neda Maghbouleh - a "scholarly attitude" in this course. This means taking the role of graduate student and the work of field research seriously: engaging actively with the readings and other course content, sharing your fieldwork experiences, providing support and constructive feedback for other students, and generally going beyond the course requirements.

6) FINAL PORTFOLIO: 30%, due Fri., April 19, 5pm

Groups will submit a single project portfolio for a shared grade including:
- Revised Research Proposal that incorporates feedback and insights learned.
- Fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and documentation collected by group members as well as individuals' memos.

Each student also will submit the following for an individual grade:
- A pie chart indicating the relative contributions of all group members.
- Reflections on accomplishments and mistakes, individually and/or as a group.
- Preliminary research report: a 15-page (double-spaced) paper. Instructions will be provided.

COURSE SCHEDULE[3]

Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule,
but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor

January 10
introductions + forming groups/projects
Readings by Kleinman, et al. and Piper, et al help us think about the experience of being a beginner and not knowing, whether in qualitative research or in Indigenous methodologies. These readings, along with Behar, help us begin clarifying the epistemological particularities— understandings of how we know what we know—of qualitative research. Behar will elaborate a theme that carries across this week's readings: the importance of reading, writing, and imagination for creative and incisive qualitative research. Carroll critiques technical approaches to qualitative methods (a major focus of later readings) and outlines a critical strategy for doing social research. Ybema et al introduce organizational ethnography as fieldwork on the everyday complexities of organizational life; they provide important guidance as you brainstorm topics for your research project. Mushtaq's *Contexts* "field note" is the first of many we will read for quick glimpses into field work, in lieu of reading longer publications based on fieldwork. These field notes, which were a regular section of *Contexts* in its early years, illuminate salient ethnographic experiences that are significant for the researcher and revealing for their findings.

reading
appx. 80 pages
- Behar, Ruth. 2020. "Read More, Write Less." Pp. 47-53 in *Writing Anthropology: Essays on Craft & Commitment*, ed. Carole McGranahan. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Carroll, William K. 2004. "Introduction: Unpacking and Contextualizing Critical Research Strategies." Pp. 1-14 in *Critical Strategies for Social Research.* Toronto: Canadian Scholars.
- Kleinman, Sherryl, Martha Copp, and Karla Henderson. 1997. "Qualitatively Different: Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 25(4):469-99.
- Piper, Daniel, Jacob Jacobe, Rose Yazzie, and Dolores Calderon. 2019. "Indigenous Methodologies in Graduate School." Pp. 86-100 in *Applying Indigenous Research Methodologies: Storying with Peoples and Communities*, eds. Sweeney Windchief and Timothy San Pedro. Milton: Taylor & Francis.
- Ybema, Sierk, Dvora Yanow, Harry Wels, and Frans Kamsteeg. 2009. "Studying Everyday Organizational Life." Pp. 1-9 in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life.* London: SAGE Publications.
- Mushtaq, Faiza. 2007. "A Day with Al-Huda." *Contexts.* 6(2):60-61.

optional:
This chapter situates qualitative research in relation to quantitative and comparative research designs. It will be useful if you want to better understand how the goals of qualitative methods overlap with, and are distinct from, other sociological methods.
- Ragin, Charles C and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2019 (1994). <u>Constructing Social Research</u>: The Unity and Diversity of Method. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. <u>Chap. 2</u>, pp. 29-49.

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[3] Again, content borrowed from Prof. Jessica Field's graduate qualitative methods course (SOC6712HS, Winter 2023) is indicated with blue font.

January 17

asking questions in qualitative research

We will continue to explore the epistemology of qualitative research as we begin to identify research interests and research objectives and frame the research questions that will occupy us for the remainder of the term. The chapters we read this week from Luker considers concerns central to qualitative research: the position of the researcher, rigor and integrity, and the interplay between uncertainty and systematic inquiry as well as formulating qualitative research questions in relation to quantitative norms. Rubin revisits the process of formulating research questions with a critical perspective on Luker's guidance (between Luker and Rubin, focus on the author who speaks most to you). These readings help us appreciate research questions as an issue of feasibility, value, and interest—our own and others'. The excerpt by Geertz is a foundational statement on how to conceptualize culture as the subject of ethnographic study. Anderson's article, based on his book of the same title, provides an empirical example of an ethnography of a public organizational setting; he does not center organizational analysis but rather treats the organization as the scene of the study.

reading

appx. 110 pages + skimming 15 pages

- Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing:*
  - "Salsa Dancing? In the Social Sciences?" Pp. 1-21
  - "What's It All About?" Pp. 22-39
  - "What Is This a Case of, Anyway?" Pp. 51-75
- Rubin, Ashley T. 2021. *Rocking Qualitative Social Science:*
  - "Picking Your Proj: Identifying Your Research Question," pp. 35-58.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Choose a Subject You Love." Pp. 9-22 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2000 [1973]. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," Chap. 1 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. *Just read pp. 3 – middle of 7 on his concept of thick description of culture and his analysis of twitching and winking.*
- Anderson, Elijah. 2004. "The Cosmopolitan Canopy." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.* 595(1): 14-31. *To skim. Also check out his two maps on the first few pages (pp. x-xi) of his book on google books.*
- Review Ybema et al from last week.

assignment due by Fri., Jan. 19, 5:00pm: Research Proposal Memo

January 24

data, cases, and evaluative standards for qualitative methods

With a sense of our research question, we are ready to consider what data or information we need to answer that question. What ideas are central to our study? What and who will be the objects of our study? What can those objects teach us? How will we render the complexities of social life intelligible through data? Luker will complicate taken-for-granted ideas about concepts and cases and help us notice and articulate what we're trying to understand. Our first readings from the Auerbach and Silverstein textbook explain hypothesis-generating qualitative research and introduce standards of evaluation tailored to qualitative research. Lareau & Rao (and Small, optional) similarly consider sampling, operationalization, and generalization in qualitative research that speaks across methods, fields, and disciplines. Tuck & McKenzie propose another conception of validity and also point to the insights to be gained through a mindful approach to what might seem like mundane considerations like place. Smith and Griffith elaborate a feminist framework that centers people as subjects, not objects, of

study. The two fieldnotes by Castellano and McCorkel illustrate what depth can look like as well as the insights into organizational and institutional processes that depth can generate.

reading
appx. 100 pages
- Auerbach, Carl and Louise Silverstein. 2003. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis:*
    - Chap. 1: "Intro to Qualitative Hypothesis-Generating [Interview] Research," pp. 3-9
    - Chap. 2: "Designing Hypothesis-Generating Research," pp. 13-21
    - Chap. 8 "Convincing Other People: The Topics Formerly Known as Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability," pp. 77-87
- Lareau, Annette, and Aliya Hamid Rao. 2016. "It's About the Depth of Your Data." *Contexts*.
- Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing.* "On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalization." Pp. 99-128.
- Smith, Dorothy E. and Alison Griffith. 2022. *Simply Institutional Ethnography: Creating a Sociology for People.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Chaps 1-2, pp. 3-23.
- Tuck, Eve, and Marcia McKenzie. 2015. "Relational Validity and the 'Where' of Inquiry: Place and Land in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(7):633-38.
- Castellano, Úrsula. 2007. "Tell Your Story." *Contexts.* 6(3): 56-57 (on case worker visits)
- McCorkel, Jill. 2004. "Rentin' Out Your Head." *Contexts.* 4(2): 58-59 (on rehab program)

optional
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1):5-38.

January 31
entering the field, gaining and maintaining access, + initial conversation on ethics
Learning begins in qualitative research well before we're in the field. As we formulate questions, consider ethical concerns, and elaborate our plans to answer our questions, we gain insight into the topics and communities that interest us. We also learn more about the traditions we've inherited and ourselves as researchers. Then, learning continues as we enter the field, when our preconceptions, dispositions, and locations come up against those of the people and places we hope to understand. Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman highlight how these are all racialized, classed, and gendered considerations. Ghodsee encourages us to find ways to write these details into our data—a helpful reminder as the class prepares to submit the first required fieldnotes.

Gaining and maintaining access to those we study is ongoing and relational. Feldman et al cover pragmatic aspects of these processes, which will be relevant given the stage of student projects. Although their discussion of human subjects centers IRB in the U.S. in the 1990s, there are parallel contemporary concerns in Canada. Grant specifies varied phases of access, and levels of analysis, in an organizational ethnography. Berrey and Moon each reflect on the in-the-moment complexities, limitations, and emotions that fieldworkers navigate in organizational settings.

reading
appx. 105 pages
- Feldman, Martha S, Jeannine Bell, and Michelle Tracy Berger. 2003. *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers.* Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.
    - Introduction, pp. vii-xvi

- o Chaps 1-5, pp. 3-50 (Chap. 1: Finding Informants, Chap. 2: Human Subjects and Permission to Contact Informants, Chap. 3: Making Initial Contact, Chap. 4: Developing Rapport Chap. 5: Exiting: Ending the Relationship)
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Incorporate Ethnographic Detail." Pp. 31-40 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- González-López, Gloria. 2011. "Mindful Ethics: Comments on Informant-Centered Practices in Sociological Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 34(3):447-461.
- Grant, Amy. 2017. "I Don't Want You Sitting Next to Me": The Macro, Meso, and Micro of Gaining and Maintaining Access to Government Organizations During Ethnographic Fieldwork." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16(1):1-11.
- Mayorga-Gallo, Sarah, and Hordge-Freeman, Elizabeth. 2017. "Between Marginality and Privilege: Gaining Access and Navigating the Field in Multiethnic Settings." *Qualitative Research* 17(4):377-94.
- Berrey, Ellen. 2004. "The Drive for Diversity." *Contexts* 3(1):60-61
- Moon, Dawne. 2003. "Gay Pain in Church." *Contexts* 2(1):58-59.

due by Fri., Feb. 2, 5pm: Research Proposal

February 7
ethics + catch-up + engaging existing research
As this week's readings make clear, ethical considerations in qualitative research are far-ranging Researchers have ethical obligations to the people we study, the communities we belong to, our institutional homes, and ourselves. We cannot anticipate every ethical issue we will encounter in research, but we can anticipate some and we can develop an ethical code that reflects our professional, political, moral, and interpersonal responsibilities to ourselves and others. Fine & Schulman revisit a classic piece by Fine on ethnographers' lies, to consider ethical dynamics in studying organizations. Readings by Taylor & Patterson and Tuck examine the institutional strategies, mindful practices, and analytic priorities that qualitative researchers may adopt to chart alternative paths through the fraught ethical terrain of qualitative research. Blee's fieldnote provides a reference point for considering ethics when studying people with odious beliefs.

Engaging existing research – what is commonly called the literature review- tends to be done in various stages in qualitative research. Earlier on, reading existing research helps us to clarify the methodological traditions and theoretical understandings that underpin our approaches. It is important to understand what has been published on our topics previously. Yet, this gets complicated. While doing fieldwork, topics often are emergent and iterative, revealing themselves as we gather and analyze evidence, reflect, and get clarity on what we're *able* to learn from our empirical research. Ghodsee (and Luker, optional) help us establish an initial relationship to the literature in our reading, research, and writing.

reading:
appx. 65 pages + Luker
   ethics
   - Fine, Gary Alan and David Shulman. 2009. "Lies from the Field: Ethical Issues in Organizational Ethnography. Pp. 178-195 in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life.* London: SAGE Publications.
   - Taylor, Judith, and Matthew Patterson. 2010. "Autonomy and Compliance: How Qualitative Sociologists Respond to Institutional Ethical Oversight." *Qualitative Sociology* 33(2):161-83.

- Tuck, Eve. 2009. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review*. 79(3):409-427.
- Blee, Kathleen M. 2002. "The Banality of Violence." *Contexts* 1(4): 60-61.

engaging existing research
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Integrate Your Theory." Pp. 51-61 in *From Notes to Narrative.*
- optional: Luker, Kristin. 2008. "Reviewing the Literature." Pp. 76-98 in *Salsa Dancing*

February 14
participant observation
Participant observation is perhaps the emblematic form of qualitative research, invoking as it does the romantic and romanticized image of the ethnographer in the field, immersed in a community, coming to a deep interpretive understanding of everyday social life. Luker provides an overview of the method, while Emerson, et al. and Thorne take up the thorny and practical questions of being in the field, recording notes, and documenting other people's behavior and lives. Ghodsee explores how best to render places and events in our fieldnotes and eventual analysis. Reich's field note catapults us into intense organizational and interpersonal family dynamics. Ryvicker shows us how fieldwork can reveal organizational cultures and their consequences for caregiving. Wynn's piece illustrates how an ethnographer can polish their ethnographic field notes and present them in a way that illustrates important social dynamics in their site.

reading
appx. 70 pages
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press:
    - Chap. 1, "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research," pp. 1-20
    - Chap. 2, "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes," pp. 21-38
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Describe Places and Events." Pp. 41-50 in *From Notes to Narrative*
- Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "'You Still Takin' Notes?' Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent." *Social Problems* 27(3):284-97.
- Reich, Jennifer. 2002. "Bogeyman with a Clipboard." *Contexts* 1(1): 59-60.
- Ryvicker, Miriam. 2006. "The Trade-Off in Caring." *Contexts* 5(3): 44-45.
- Wynn, Jonathan. 2007. "Guiding Ideas." *Contexts* 6(1): 56-57.

assignment due by Fri. Feb. 16, 5pm: fieldnotes, with memo

February 21: Reading Week

February 28
interviewing
Interviewing is the most frequently used method for qualitative fieldwork. It's often a more practical route than ethnography and participant observation for busy researchers, and many are drawn to the idea of talking to people about their experiences of the social order and inequalities that interest us. Start with the Weiss *Contexts* article for an engaging overview of interviewing with photographs. Then, read the chapters from his foundational book; consider how his interview questions and engagement create a structured conversation that encourages the interviewee to open up and talk in detail about their life. DeVault helps us consider the ways gender threads through what women say and how they say it, while May interrogates the ways race and racism thread through even our conversations about race

and racism. Pugh offers further strategies for not taking interviewees at face value and instead thinking carefully about what we can learn through the complicated talk generated in interviews.

reading
appx. 140 pages plus skimming – but Weiss is an easy read!
- DeVault, Marjorie L. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1):96-116.
- May, Reuben A. Buford. 2014. "When the Methodological Shoe is on the Other Foot: African American Interviewer and White Interviewees." *Qualitative Sociology* 37(1):117-36.
- Pugh, Allison. 2013. "What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture?" *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1):42-68.
- Weiss, Robert S. 2004. "In Their Own Words." *Contexts* 3(4): 44-51
- Weiss, Robert S. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview.* - see Quercus if you can't access the library copy.
    - Introduction, pp. 1-11
    - Chap. 4, Interviewing, pp. 61-119. *This looks like a lot of reading, but most of it is excerpts from interview transcripts plus the author's commentary/analysis of what is going on during the interviews.*
    - Skim Chap. 5: Issues in interviewing, pp. 121-150.

March 6
emotion and self in the field
A common saying in field research is that "the researcher is the instrument." We are the tool through which data is collected; and we are the research tool that participants interact with. Much as the quality of the online survey, interview questions, or archival system helps to shape the data available for study, the researcher's biography, body, behavior, social location, and social identities (projected and claimed) will help determine the data available in a qualitative study. The authors we read for today's class join other qualitative researchers approach these questions of "positionality" as a source of methodological strength and sociological insight. González-López considers researchers' relationships to the people we study, while Kovach, et al. explore the additional issue of our relationships to ideas and histories. Hordge-Freeman and Moussawi examine the value of our emotional lives and corporeal selves in the field. Ghodsee supports our efforts to write these experiences as researcher and as instrument into our data and our analysis. Kudler chronicles a Muslim family's grieving over the death of a loved one in a U.S. hospital – an account that is rich in detail but lacking in emotion itself. Pager describes the emotional experiences of her research assistants as they personally encountered the very discrimination her research documents.

reading
appx. 70 pages
- González-López, Gloria. 2010. "Ethnographic Lessons: Researching Incest in Mexican Families." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39(5):569-81.
- Kovach, Margaret, Jeannine Carriere, M. J. Barrett, Harpell Montgomery, and Carmen Gillies. 2013. "Stories of Diverse Identity Locations in Indigenous Research." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 6(4):487-509.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Put Yourself into the Data." Pp. 23-30 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Hordge-Freeman, Elizabeth. 2018. "Bringing Your Whole Self to Research: The Power of the Researcher's Body, Emotions, and Identities in Ethnography." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17(1):1-9.
- Moussawi, Ghassan. 2021. "Bad Feelings: On Trauma, Nonlinear Time, and Accidental Encounters in 'the Field.'" *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 10(1):78-96.
- Kudler, Taryn. 2007. "Providing Spiritual Care." *Contexts* 6(4): 60-61.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. "Blacks and Ex-Cons Need Not Apply." *Contexts* 2(4): 58-59.

March 13
coding + analysis
Data collection and analysis are usually simultaneous and dialectic in qualitative research. An inductive approach to analysis and theory-building involves systematic and consistent reflection on the evidence we've collected. New questions emerge, sampling takes a new direction, and concepts gain new clarity as researchers spend more time in the field learning more about the setting and people and gaining a new appreciation of what they still need to learn. The readings for today emphasize the importance of simultaneous data collection and analysis, but they also turn our attention to that moment in a study in which data collection ends and analysis becomes the focus. Davies and Hughes provide an overview of the basics of analyzing data collected through different qualitative methods. Emerson et al and Auerbach & Silverstein offer some practical guidance for organizing and making sense of ethnographic field notes and interview data, respectively. Berrey et al offer an example of an interview-based study that captures people's perceptions, experiences, and identities in the institutional context of the U.S. legal system, involving multiple organizational entities and profoundly unequal power dynamics; in class, we likely will read and analyze the transcript for the Chris Burns interview.

reading
appx. 100 pages
- Davies, Martin and Nathan Hughes, 2014. *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods.* 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Chap. 12 "Analysing Qualitative Data." Pp. 187-206.
- Auerbach, Carl and Louise Silverstein. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis:*
   - Chap. 4: Coding I, The Basic Ideas, pp. 31-41
   - Chap. 5: Coding II, The Mechanics, Phase I, Making the Text Manageable, pp. 42-53
   - Chap. 6, Coding II, The Mechanics, Phase II, Hearing What Was Said, pp. 54-66
- Berrey, Ellen, Steve Hoffman, and Laura Beth Nielsen. 2012. "Situated Justice: A Contextual Analysis of Fairness and Inequality in Employment Discrimination Litigation," *Law & Society Review* 46(1): 1-36. Abstract + pp. 8 (Why Employment Civil Rights?) – 30. *Focus on the experiences of the plaintiffs (the party that files the lawsuits), especially Chris Burns.*
- Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.* Chap. 6, "Processing Field Notes: Memoing and Coding," pp. 142-168

   assignment due by Fri., Mar. 15, 5pm: interview transcript, with memo

March 20
analysis, continued
We continue to focus on analysis this week, with an emphasis on theoretical dimensions of coding. Auerbach & Silverstein continue the discussion from last week on coding, turning out attention to developing theory. The other readings center grounded theory along with more recent innovations that build on and critique the grounded theory tradition. Charmaz & Belgrave offer an overview of grounded

theory, which is the most cited method of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Deterding & Waters offer a flexible model that engages with recent and established technological advances in data analysis. Timmermans & Tavory develop abductive analysis as a more accurate and theoretically generative alternative to grounded theory. Vila-Henniger et al proposes an approach for concretely implementing abduction in analysis and coding.

reading
appx. 80 pages + review/optional
- Auerbach & Silverstein. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis:*
    - Review last week's readings
    - Chap. 7: "Developing Theory," pp. 67-76
- Charmaz, Kathy, and Linda Liska Belgrave. 2015. "Grounded Theory." Pp. 1-6 in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Deterding, Nicole M., and Mary C. Waters. 2018. "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-First-Century Approach." *Sociological Research & Methods* 50(2) 708-739.
- Timmermans, Stefan and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30(3):167-186.
- Vila-Henninger, Luis, Claire Dupuy, Viginie Van Ingelgom, Mauro Caprioli, Ferdinand Teuber, Damien Pennetreau, Margherita Bussi, and Cal Le Gall. 2022. "Abductive Coding: Theory Building and Qualitative (Re)Analysis." Sociological Methods & Research 0(0) https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/00491241211067 - *focus on pp. 11-23.*

optional
The Clarke reading (recommended for students who prefer a more visual approach to coding) develops a model of situational analysis. It engages with questions raised by postmodernism about the human and nonhuman actors that constitute social life in all its complexity and instability.
- Clarke, Adele. 2005. "Doing Situational Maps and Analysis." Pp. 83-144 in *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

March 27
text analysis, archival research, and other unobtrusive methods
- Additional readings TBA
- Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. "Inside the Box." *Contexts* 1(3):56-57.

assignment due by Fri., Mar. 29, 5pm: all remaining fieldnotes and interviews

April 3
developing a "good enough" argument based on evidence
In this last seminar meeting, we will reflect on what we've learned and accomplished as qualitative researchers this term. Auerbach & Silverstein remind us of appropriate standards for assessing qualitative research. Luker sends us off with one more consideration of life as a salsa-dancing sociologist. Ghodsee encourages us to find our own practices and ambitions as qualitative researchers and writers. Luttrell argues that, in the end, it might be enough to be "good enough." In class, we will discuss writing a "spew draft" (Becker 2020).

reading
- Auerbach & Silverstein – review Chap. 8

- Luttrell, Wendy. 2000. "'Good Enough' Methods for Ethnographic Research." *Harvard Educational Review* 70(4):499-523.
- Luker, Kristin. 2008*.* "Living Your Life as a Salsa-Dancing Social Scientist." Pp. 217-25.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Find Your Process." Pp. 117-26 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

assignment due by Fri., April 19, 5pm: final portfolio

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be penalized if the assignment is late for legitimate (preferably documented) reasons beyond the student's control. For other late assignments, a late penalty of 5% will be assigned per day; assignments will be accepted up to 7 days late.

Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties.

Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well.

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters and the Code of Student Conduct, which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Text here is copied and adapted from UTM Prof. Steve Hoffman's syllabus statements on AI: Large Language Models (LLM), Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and related machine learning systems such as ChapGPT are proliferating. Useful information and resources on generative AI is provided by the UofT Office of the Vice-Provost and, specific to graduate students, by the School of Graduate Studies.

The results of generative AI systems can be impressive and quite human-like, yet they have many limitations, including their reliance on probability rather than accuracy. No doubt these tools will get used in creative ways, and they will be abused in stupid ways. My belief is that we need to learn how to work with these systems in effective ways that still align with 1) standards of academic integrity and 2) the essential pedagogical principle that students should be assessed based on the quality of their original work, which they produce on their own and which reflects their academic abilities.

In this class, students **may not** use AI tools to generate the drafts or final versions of their written assignments.

- The knowing use of generative AI tools for generating drafts or final versions of written assignments may be considered an academic offense in this course.
- Representing as one's own idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated may be considered an academic offense in this course.

In this class, students **may** use AI tools for:

- ☐ refining language or grammar (i.e., ESL purposes),
- ☐ transcribing interview recordings,
- ☐ conducting background research and identifying secondary literature, and
- ☐ asking questions about course themes and assimilating information for general understanding.

For any of these permitted uses, students must:

1. Submit, as an appendix with your assignment, any content produced by an AI tool, and the prompts you used to generate the content. This documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.
2. Appropriately cite any content you produced using an AI tool. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/).

Note that these terms of use may change without advance notice during the term.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Accessibility staff (located in room 2037B, Davis Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let the office and your instructor know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Equity & Diversity

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns you may contact the UTM Equity and Diversity officer at edo.utm@utoronto.ca or the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union Vice President Equity at vpequity@utmsu.ca.

Student Services and Resources

The university offers a variety of **student support services and resources**, which can be found at http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/current-students. This includes supports for your academics, health, and wellness, and other student services.

Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities."

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services, call at 416-978-8060, or email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at Student Life's web site for distressed students; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030;or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Equity and Diversity

All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated; please alert me to any behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any person in this course or otherwise creates an intimidating or hostile environment. You'll find additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto online.