

Course:	SOC 6712Fh1: QUALITATIVE METHODS
Term:	Fall 2024
Meeting Place:	Dept. of Sociology
Time:	Wednesday 11-1; 1-2

Judith Taylor/ Department of Sociology/ University of Toronto  
Office hours: by appointment Fridays 2-3  
Email: [judith.taylor@utoronto.ca](mailto:judith.taylor@utoronto.ca)

TA: Mimi Nadon-Belanger

### **Course Materials:**

*Course Reader*, links/ readings here:

### **Introduction:**

Sociology, (like most disciplines), is about making knowledge. We do this principally through telling stories that have a narrative arc. They begin with a nod to knowledge makers past, with a new or persistent question, with a journey of discovery to answer it, and a reckoning with the fruits of our travel upon its conclusion. The quality of this reckoning reflects the genre and traditions within which we have been trained. These outline what we believe is knowable, which questions can or should be answered, how we can go about answering them, what theoretical and political modes of operation should be privileged or eclipsed, and what sociology is for.

Sociology also sits in a strange epistemological place. The social sciences have been deeply extractive in their focus on disenfranchised people; 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.

Professors and disciplines can be thought of as guilds – independent people who hone their crafts within loosely structured organizations: universities, journals, professional associations, and the like. Most of your craft you will learn from coursework, your mentors, books and articles, conferences, fellow students, and colleagues. This course thinks of sociology as a craft and an art. We strive to not be too technocratic (engaged only in methods for their own sake), soullessly producing data that seems to float apart from feeling and reason. We strive to not be too ideational, wedded to theories that dictate research outcomes. We strive to not fetishize, excessively worried about whether truths can be asserted, whether lives can be known. We hope to not obsess to the point of

paralysis, fearful of who can legitimately study whom, who can ask what kinds of questions and expect honest answers.

In sum, knowledge making is multi-faceted, partial, insightful and impaired – and incredibly challenging and gratifying to think about, plan for, and do!

As sociology is a craft, we will really unpack how things are done, and how we think we should, and shouldn't, do things. That said, we will also respect the ways in which happenstance, creative ingenuity, and talent – also comprise making sociological knowledge. Some people's artistry is going to enable them to elicit, hear, and capture the import of the social world in truly exceptional ways. Through a process of experimentation, emulation, and finding our own unique talents, we all aim to tell about society in ways that are consequential, and recognize others' good stories when we hear them.

### **How to Read**

It is imperative when reading course texts to treat the process with care and precision. We read for research thought and practice. We reflect on what is asked of us. We unpack what was done, how, and with what results. Whether we appreciate the findings, or the subject of the research is not our focus. When you read the research examples, take notes on the question, “how'd they do what they did?” not on the subject of their article.

Articles about how to do research are meant to give you tips and insights for how to generate and think about data. Like the research articles, some will be more useful than others. First understand -- then you may want to raise questions.

In a round robin fashion, I ask you each to make observations about the readings and one another's work every time we meet. I might dialogue with you about your reflections, as will classmates. It is best to take notes when you read, to prepare you to speak and reflect, and be in dialogue.

### **Project: “The Tool for the Job”**

Each year, students in this class conduct research in groups on a shared subject that allows for creativity but provides sufficient structure to enable completion and compliance with university ethics approval. 12 weeks is not a lot of time to introduce you to qualitative methods -- the techniques, analyses, and exemplars – and to give you time in the field to conduct research. As a consequence, each year I select a research focus for us all that enables us to work and learn together on a manageable project with an overarching shared subject.

Last year we worked on projects about strangers, extending Georg Simmel's theorizations from *The Stranger* (1904), and the year before, we looked at things that break up, ala Diane Vaughn's *Uncoupling* (1986). This year we will creatively practice in the vein of Adele Clarke, a Science and Technology Studies (STS) and feminist

sociologist and scholar at UCSF, who passed away this year. The research approach of STS have great import for other subfields, like yours, so don't worry if this isn't your field. It's not mine, either.

Adele Clarke advocated studying "tools" rather than people as a way of mapping how things get constituted, get implemented, and themselves, make social worlds and realities. Her most famous question was, "how did that become the tool for the job? How did the pamphlet become the right tool for activist, how did the pen become the right tool to write with, or the bicycle to get to work, or the lipstick, to appear ready for public, or the bomb for international relations? Tools have histories, presents, makers, users, can inspire adherents and protest. Clarke studied RU486, the abortion pill, and the pap smear, among other technologies/ tools.

Your group should select an object that can be easily studied, and perhaps about which one person in the group has knowledge, but it's not imperative. We aim to find published materials, makers, users, practiced people who seek out opportunities to co-theorize, to be in dialogue, and to be heard. We want to avoid people too precarious to want to talk, not because of university ethics guidelines, but because vulnerable people need not be practiced on by the likes of us. Of course, a lot of us are precarious, and vulnerable, too.

Please work without AI. First, it's super bad and I can tell when I receive it. It can't make sense of your data or even summarize

### **Assignments and Mark Distribution**

1. Reading Briefs: 4 X 10% Each due the day we discuss those readings, weeks of your selection. Format: Summarize contribution/ compliment, critique or question/ how this could be useful to your own research plans (one page single-spaced)
2. Research proposal Due: Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 10%
  - a. Research Question
  - b. Literature review
  - c. Explanation of how you will approach your object
  - d. Description of study/ chosen methods/ approach/ samples; you may find additional citations/ exemplars of this kind of work you intend to model your research on
  - e. For research with humans: Consent form and letter of invitation/ description of study for potential participants

5 pages (but can be much more)
3. Field Notes Workshop 10%
  - a. Sign up for a week:
    - i. Oct. 16:
    - ii. Oct 23:

- iii. Nov. 6
  - iv. Nov. 13
  - v. Nov. 20
- b. Field notes for classmates and instructor  
Narrative sense making based on your field notes
  - c. These must be circulated the prior Tuesday by email.
4. Participation 10%
  5. Final Portfolio Due Dec. 13 20%
    - a. Ethics and Proposal
    - b. Field Notes
    - c. Preliminary Research Report
    - d. Reflections on accomplishments and mistakes
  6. Presentation Nov. 27 10%

If you have accessibility accommodations, discuss with me and the TA. Late work will not be penalized. Unless there is an administrative allowance, all marks will be assigned by December 13 and turned in. Please speak with David and Melissa ASAP if you are falling behind so we can find what will work for you.

### Weekly Schedule

#### 1. Sept. 11                    **Introduction**

- Clark and Fujimora. 2014. *The Right Tools for the Job: At Work in Twentieth-Century Life Sciences Part 1*. Pp. 3-30 appx.
- Casper and Clarke. 1998. Making the Pap Smear into the Right Tool for the Job. *Social Studies of Science*. 28: 255-290.
- Clarke and Montini. 1993. The Many Faces of RU486 *Science, Technology and Human Values*. 18: 42-78.
- Molotch, Harvey. 2003. *Where stuff comes from: how toasters, toilets, cars, computers, and many other things come to be as they are*. Routledge. Pp. 1-51

Other readings (Suggested)

Clarke. Adele. From Grounded Theory to Situational Analysis.

[www.researchgate.net/profile/Adele-Clarke-2/publication/261773735\\_From\\_grounded\\_theory\\_to\\_situational\\_analysis\\_What's\\_new\\_Why\\_How/links/577707d808ae1b18a7e1b3e0/From-grounded-theory-to-situational-analysis-Whats-new-Why-How.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Adele-Clarke-2/publication/261773735_From_grounded_theory_to_situational_analysis_What's_new_Why_How/links/577707d808ae1b18a7e1b3e0/From-grounded-theory-to-situational-analysis-Whats-new-Why-How.pdf)

Starr and Clarke. 2008. “The Social Worlds Framework: A Theory/Methods Package” in The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies. Pp. 113-138

[www.dhi.ac.uk/san/waysofbeing/data/data-crone-wyatt-2007b.pdf](http://www.dhi.ac.uk/san/waysofbeing/data/data-crone-wyatt-2007b.pdf)

## **Making Groups; Formulating Projects**

2. Sept. 18      Sociology as (the Right?) Tool for the Job

- DuBois. 1903 The Souls of Black Folk. Chapter 1&2. Of Our Spiritual Strivings/ Of the Dawn of Freedom.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm>

- Yu. 2001. Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America 0-46; Ch. 7 (Library has digital copies)
- Watts, Vanessa et. al. 2020. A Troubling Presence: Indigeneity in English-Language Canadian Sociology. CRS. 57:1.

3. Sept. 25 Complementary Research Paths

Burawoy, Michael. Ethnography Unbound. The Extended Case Method

<http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/books/unbound/ecm.pdf>

Carroll, William K. Critical Strategies for Social Research. Introduction. Unpacking and Contextualizing Critical Research Strategies. Pp. 1-14.

Smith, Dorothy et. al. 2022. Simply institutional ethnography: creating a sociology for people. UofT Press. Chapters 1-2.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-Thinking Intersectionality. Feminist Review, 89(1), 1-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.4>

4. Oct. 2                      **Access and Ethics**

Tuck, Eve. 2009. Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities. Harvard Educational Review. Vol. 79:3

Taylor and Patterson. 2010. "Autonomy and Compliance: How Qualitative Sociologists Respond to Institutional Ethical Oversight. Qualitative Sociology. 33: 161-183.

Allen, C. 1997. Spies Like Us: When Sociologists Deceive their Subjects. Lingua Franca.

Humphreys, Laud. 1975. Tea Room Trade. NY: Routledge.

<https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/GEN107/um/HUMPHREYS.pdf>

#### 5. Oct. 9      **Observation**

Geertz. 1972. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. From Interpretation of Cultures.

Sherryl Kleinman, et al. 1997. Qualitatively Different. Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 25: 469-499.

Law and Singleton. 2013. ANT and Politics: Working in and on the World. Qualitative Sociology. 36: 485-502

#### 6. Oct. 16      **Interviews**

Twine, France Winddance. 2004. A White Side of Black Britain: The Concept of Racial Literacy. Ethnic and Racial Studies. 27(6): 878-907

Doucet, A. 2007. From Her Side of the Gossamer Walls: Reflexivity and Relational Knowing. Qualitative Sociology. 31: 72-87.

Lamont and Swidler. Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing. Qualitative Sociology 37, 2: 173-188.

Pugh, Allison. 2013. What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? AJCS. 1: 42-68.

#### 7. Oct. 23      **Focus Groups**

Taylor, Johnston, Whitehead. 2016. "A Corporation in Feminist Clothing? Young Women Discuss the Dove "Real Beauty" Campaign. Critical Sociology. 42: 123-144.

Howarth, Caroline. 2002. So You're from Brixton? The Struggle for Recognition and Esteem in a Stigmatized Community. Ethnicities. 2: 237-260.

Benoit, Cecilia, Dena Carroll, Munaza Chaudhry. 2002. In Search of a Healing Place: Aboriginal Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Social Science and Medicine. 56: 821-833.

#### 8. Nov.6 **Contemporary Ethnography**

Elijah Anderson. The Cosmopolitan Canopy.  
<https://citythroughthebody.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/cosmopolitan canopy.pdf>

Jooyung Lee. 2009. Battlin' on the Corner: Techniques for Sustaining Play. Social Problems. 56: 578-598.

Fields, Mamo, Gilbert, Lesko, et. al. Beyond Bullying. Contexts. 13(4): 80-83.

#### 9. Nov 13. **Life History**

Stephen, Valocchi. 2013. Activism as a Career, Calling and a Way of Life. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 42:2 169-200.

Sugiman, Pamela. 2004. Memories of Internment. CJS. 29 (3): 359-388

Stein, Arlene. 2018. Unbound: Transgender Men and the Remaking of Identity. NY: Pantheon. Chapters 2-4.

#### 10. Nov 20 **Analysis, Concepts and Writing – bring your favourite concept**

Becker. Ch. 13 Goffman's concepts.

Dumit, Joe. 2014. Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World one thing at a Time. Cultural Anthropology

<https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/ca29.2.09/301>

#### 12. Nov. 27 **Presentations**

In this last class, we listen to one another's group's findings, giving feedback on data analysis, theoretical extension, themes and concepts.

Appendix:

### 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" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

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 at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.



[Use UofT letterhead]

Date

Student name

Sociology Dept. Address

Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am an MA/ Doctoral student at the University of Toronto, studying (object). So far, I have researched the following (archives, journals, and materials), to form the basis of my analysis and my interest in interviewing you. I am working in a group of 4 students all focused on the same topic.

All students in my methods class are interviewing object makers and users. We are studying objects such as (movie theatres, scissors, elevators, hair bands) to understand how they changed experiences of the arts, sewing and manufacturing, the modern office building, feminine aesthetic practice (for correlative example).

We are seeking out enthusiasts and experts, to talk about these tools as they understand them. Hair stylists have understandings of hair bands, elevator historians have understandings of elevator technology and affordances [modify].

I will use a program to transcribe this interview and all others in my sample, and will anonymize your interview and put it into NVIVO, a data processing program that helps me analyze and write a paper. My research group of 4, my professor, and my TA will have access to the transcription from our interview. The NVIVO data will be erased after December 15.

If you would like to stop participating in my class-based project at any time, please email me. I will remove your interview, up until the due date for my paper. December 13. If you would like a copy of my final paper, or of the interview we do, please ask me.

On the following page are the questions I plan to ask you, or as we call it, interview schedule.

If you consent to participation, we will include your verbal consent in the transcription. There is no written consent. Please keep this communication for your records. If you have questions about my research for the professor of the class, contact Judith Taylor [Judith.taylor@utoronto.ca](mailto:Judith.taylor@utoronto.ca) and she will gladly speak with you.

Many thanks for your consideration!

[Sign]

[Name]

## Interview Schedule

1. Please tell me how you first came to work with/ know about [object].
2. How long have you worked with it, and how?
3. What do you know about it's history?
4. What do you admire about it?
5. What do you think it's shortcomings are?
6. If this had not been invented, what do you think we could use to do this work instead?
7. Can objects used for one thing be adopted for another use, and is this true of this object?
8. If objects have a politic or hold power, what story would you tell about this one?
9. Do you think about a new object you'd like made or you'd like to make? What would it take for this to happen?
10. Is there something you wanted to share about this object these questions have not enable you to touch upon?
11. Do you have resources, online or otherwise, or people you'd like me to connect with that could enhance my research and understanding?
12. If you have more thoughts, once the interview is over, will you email me if you'd like to share them? Thank you! [email]