

University of Manitoba  
**Department of Sociology**

**077:742 L01 (3 credit hours)**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**

Fall, 2005-2006  
Mondays, 1:00-4:00  
Room 335 Isbister Building  
Office Hours: Wednesday afternoon  
Or by appointment

Instructor: E. Jane Ursel  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this course is to critically examine and apply a variety of qualitative methods of data collection. We will begin with a discussion of the debates about the relationship, (if any) between qualitative and quantitative methods and theories of knowledge and knowledge production that underlie various methodologies. However, the emphasis in this course will be on doing qualitative research. Qualitative research is an expanding area and it is not possible to cover all relevant material in one course. Certain frequently applied qualitative methods will be incorporated in course assignments and each student should have experience with at least three different methods before completion of this course. Students are encouraged to explore other methods in planning their major paper/research assignment. The goal is to assist students in making informed decisions about selecting methods in further research work.

The course format is a seminar. The expectation is that students will regularly present their work in progress and critique the work of fellow students engaged in the same process. Our meetings will be structured in the manner that research workshops are conducted: what is the goal; what are the questions we need to ask to achieve that goal and which method will best provide those answers. In class we will work together on the design of a qualitative study/ies, we will report back on the execution of the study/ies and discuss and critique the analysis of the data generated.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

Maxwell, Joseph A. - Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA 2004

Weiss, Lois & Michelle Fine - Speed Bumps: A Student Friendly Guide to Qualitative Research Teachers College Press, New York

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

In addition to these required books, articles will be assigned each week to address the specific topics of discussion for the week. These articles will be made available to all students several weeks before the discussion and will be required reading for the course.

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS/JOURNALS

Brown, Leslie and Susan Strega - Research As Resistance

Canadian Scholar's Press, Toronto, 2005

Qualitative Health Research - available on line and at Elizabeth Dafoe Library

**Note: November 16** -Last date for voluntary withdrawal without academic penalty from first term half courses. You will have returned grades before that date.

### Course Requirements:

1. Three mini-assignments related to course subjects 50% of final grade
  2. A presentation of a group research project 10% of final grade
  3. A major research paper 40% of final grade
- See Page 6 for details on these assignments

### Policy on Grades:

The following letter/percentage/GPA/descriptive scale will be used.

A+	90 - 100%	4.5	Exceptional
A	80 - 89%	4	Excellent
B+	75 - 79%	3.5	Very Good
B	70 - 74%	3	Good
C+	66 - 69%	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60 - 65%	2	Adequate
D	50 - 59%	1	Marginal
F	49% or less	0	Failure

Only documented reasons will be accepted for late submissions of written assignments. It is the student's responsibility to inform me as soon as possible of requests for deferrals for reasons of health, compassion or disability. With prior approval from instructor a late submission will be marked without penalty. **Without prior approval** a late submission will be docked one grade point per day overdue. A missed assignment which is unexplained will result in no grade for the missing assignment.

The University acknowledges the right of all students to observe Holy Days of their faith which fall within the academic year. I should be notified ahead of your intended absence.

If you have special learning needs (if you require extra time to complete assignments, aids or other supports) please introduce yourself to me at the beginning of the term and suitable arrangements will be made.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is a serious offence, with grave consequences. You should acquaint yourself with the University of Manitoba's academic regulations and policy on 'Examinations: Personations' (p.26) and 'Plagiarism and Cheating' (p.27) found in the University Undergraduate Calendar. (See attached policy)

## Overview of the Weekly Schedule

Sept 12 - Introduction to the course - plan for a full three hours. Because the emphasis in the course is on doing qualitative research a great deal will need to be discussed to prepare you to enter the field. If you have a particular interest or idea for a qualitative research project come to the class prepared to discuss it. In a half course there is little time for all of the preparation necessary to conduct a study, so the first class will focus on assessing where folks are at, what they want to do and to outline some studies students can join if they don't have a particular project in mind. Expectations for assignment 1 due next week will be outlined.

Sept 19 - Subjectivity and Objectivity - the History and Politics of the Quantitative - Qualitative Divide

- Readings:**
1. Maxwell - Chap 1 and 2
  2. S. Strega - "The View from the Post-structural Margins: Epistemology and Methodology Reconsidered," in Eds: Leslie Brown and Susan Strega, Research as Resistance, Canadian Scholar's Press 2005
  3. Kelly, Liz -Journeying in reverse: possibilities and problems in feminist

**Workshop:** Students will report on Assignment 1 and hand in written report.

Sept 26 - Designing a Qualitative Study

- Readings:**
1. Maxwell - Chap. 3, 4 and 5
  2. Weiss and Fine - Chap. 4

**Workshop:** Concept Mapping for Group Research Project

Oct 3 - Ethical Concerns in Qualitative Research

- Readings:**
1. Woliver, L. (2002) Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing - Political Science and Politics, 35 (4) 677-678
  2. Tri-Council Policy Statement - [http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20June2003\\_E.pdf](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20June2003_E.pdf)
  3. Vanden Hoonard, Will C. - "Is Research-Ethics Review a Moral Panic?" Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 38 (2001):19-36
  4. University Affaires -

**Workshop:** Bring your ethics application form so we can work on it together

Oct 10 - Thanksgiving no class - Students should be conducting field work this week

### Oct 17 - Interviewing

- Readings:**
1. ten Have, Paul - "Interviews" in Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology, 2004 Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA
  2. Oakley, Ann - Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms in Lincoln, Y. and Norman Denzin "Turning Points in Qualitative Research" in AltMira Press, New York, 2003
- Workshop:** Students report on Observation Assignment and submit report  
Discussion of interview plan

### Oct. 24 - Research with/in Aboriginal Communities - Guest Speaker: Jocelyn Proulx

- Readings:**
1. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for Seven Generations, "Ethical Guidelines for Research", Ottawa, 1996
  2. Struthers, R; Felecia Schanche Hodge; B. Geishirt-Cantrell, L. De Cora "Participant Experiences of Talking Circles on Type 2 Diabetes in Two Northern Plains American Indian Tribes", Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 13 No. 8 October 2003, pgs 1094-1115
  3. Little Bear, L (2000) Jagged world views colliding, In M. Battiste (ed) Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision 77-85 Vancouver, UBC Press

### Oct. 31 - Collaborative Research and Participatory Action Research

- Readings:**
1. Rutman, D., Hubbersty, C., April Barlow and Erinn Brown - "Supporting Young People's Transitions from Care: Reflections on Doing Participatory Action Research with Youth from Care" in Eds: Brown, L and Susan Strega, Research as Resistance, Canadian Scholar's Press 2005
  2. TBA
- Workshop:** Students report on interview experience

### Nov. 7 - Diverse Sources of Data - Focus Groups, Documents, Archives and Diaries

- Readings:**
1. Turney, Lyn "The Incidental Discovery of Nonpaternity Through Genetic Carrier Screening: An exploration of Lay Attitudes" Qualitative Health Research, May 2005 - Vol. 15 No. 5 pgs. 620-633
  2. Albrecht, T. Gerianne Johnson and Joseph Walther - Understanding Communication Processes in Focus Groups and Knodel, John - "The Design and Analysis of Focus Group Studies" Morgan, David (Ed.) Successful Focus Groups - Sage, Thousand Oaks CA 1993
  3. Ursel, E. J. - Note on the Research Process, P. 305-320 in Private Lives Public Policy, Women's Press, Toronto, 1992

**Workshop:** Designing a focus group

Nov. 14 - Data Analysis I

- Readings:**
1. Maxwell - Chap. 6
  2. Marvasti, Amir - Chap. 5 Data Analysis in Qualitative Research in Sociology Sage , thousand Oaks, CA 2004
  3. Tutty, L. and K. Nixon - “Selling Sex? It’s Really Like Selling your Soul” in Gorkoff, K and Jane Runner, Being Heard: The Experiences of Young Women in Prostitution: Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 2003

**Workshop:** Student discussion of their progress on their analysis.

Nov. 21 - Data Analysis II

- Readings:**
1. Maxwell - Chap 7
  2. Ayres, L., Karen Kavanaugh, Kathleen A. Knafit “Within-Case and Across-Case Approaches to Qualitative Data analysis”, Qualitative Health Research, July 2003, Vol. 13 No. 6, pgs. 871-883.
  3. Weiss and Fine - Chap. 1 & 2

**Workshop:** Student discussion of experience of different methods, observation, interview and focus group, document analysis and the challenges they presented

Nov. 28 - Student Project Reports

Dec. 5 - Student Project Reports

Dec. 15 - Major Paper due today

Acknowledgments: My colleague Karen Grant has been most generous sharing her course outline for this course, which she taught in 2002-2003. She has taken the time to discuss her students’ experience with various research assignments and the success of these assignments as teaching tools. She, like I, believes that the best way to learn methods is to do them. So I have borrowed heavily from her outline and I have replicated the research assignments she had used (with minor alteration). I would like to thank her for her generosity and acknowledge her ideas in the development of this course.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of my colleague Susan Strega, Faculty of Social Work, for sharing her course outline, her book and her ideas.

Both contributions have assisted me greatly.

## **ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES**

### **1. First Assignment- Subjective-Objective Perspectives - Due Sept. 19 for 10% of grade**

Take one of your own experiences as a way to “make the case” for a qualitative orientation to research. Identify an incident from your past which would be viewed differently from another point of view. After you have articulated your story from your own point of view, rethink (and rewrite) the story from the point of view of another person in the incident. Then, think of what an objective view of the incident might be. Does the objective version of the story capture the story? What are the key differences in your point of view and the point of view of the other person? Why? Can there be a totally objective version of this story?

Be prepared to present your incident in class and discuss the divergent points of view. Do not select an incident that is too personal or embarrassing. Bring your written report (no more than 5 pages) to class to hand in.

### **2. Second Assignment - Court Observation - Due Oct 17 for 20% of grade**

For this assignment you will be asked to observe a sitting of the Winnipeg Family Violence Court. You will be provided with a schedule of courts in class. Try to sit in a location that gives you a good vantage point. You will need to spend at least 2 hours observing in order to discover the “culture” of the site, the routines of the people there, and what’s going on. Take notes throughout your observation period (no tape recording devices should be taken to court).

You should observe and report on the following: the physical setting, the social context, and the people who are there (or not there), what happened... were the processes easy to follow or difficult to understand? Language: what did people say; was the language culturally unique; did professionals use jargon? Be sure to observe non-verbal communication and staging or presentation of self/issues, dress, demeanor, props.

After completing the field observation, take some time to review your notes. Add any observations you have omitted. Study your notes. Then on a separate page, respond to the following questions: What is important here? What is it that I need to find out more about? What would I want to focus on more closely if I returned to this court? Your responses to these questions would allow you to refine your focus on your next visit (if you made one), or in interviewing some of the people you observed (if you were going to do this). Bring these pages and your field notes to class on Oct. 17 for discussion.

Based on your observations, what can you say about what you have observed? Provide an interpretation of the deeper cultural meaning of the court and activities you have observed. Did this court bear any resemblance to the courts you have seen portrayed on T.V. or in movies? If there were differences what were they? Finally, evaluate your experience of being a participant observer and preparing on-the-spot field notes. Were you able to separate description from interpretation? Could someone reading your notes gain some understanding of what was happening in this court?

Submit your field notes and the analysis of the process. The analysis should be no more than 8 pages.

### **3. Third Assignment - Interviewing - class report due Oct. 31, written report due Nov. 7- 20%**

All fellow class mates will have observed the Family Violence Court. Your task is to find a classmate who is willing to be interviewed for a period of 1 to 1.5 hours. Because the purpose of this assignment is professional skills training rather than research, you will not need to go through an ethics approval process, but you will need to attend to the usual requirements for ethical conduct in research involving human subject (i.e., respecting the subjects' right to confidentiality, voluntary participation, etc.). You can use a RESOLVE tape recorder, (book ahead for the recorder), if the individual is willing to let you record the interview; otherwise, take notes but do not let your note-taking interfere with the flow of the interview.

You have two choices here: 1. Do a directive interview - for which you will need to construct a fairly detailed interview guide or schedule. 2. Do a non-directive interview. Instructions for developing an interview guide for either option will be provided.

When you have completed the interview transcribe the tape, prepare a summary of the interview (no more than 4 pages) to bring to class to discuss on Oct. 31. Following our discussion in class on the 31<sup>st</sup> write up your analysis of the interview, review readings on data analysis for guidelines on analysis. Reflect on the process of interviewing: how well did you listen; did your interview guide or schedule provide the focus you wanted? Did your interview provide enough information? How did your interview differ from the other type of interview conducted by other students in the class? Which interview style do you think you would prefer to do? Under what circumstances? This discussion of the interview process should be no more than 4 pages in length. Submit it along with the summary of the conversation. In total about 8 pages. Written material is due Nov. 7.

### **4. Fourth Assignment - Major Group Project - Presentation - Nov. 28 or Dec. 5 written report - Dec. 15 Group Presentation - 10% Major paper 40%**

The major assignment is to design and carry out a qualitative research project. This will be done in small groups. In this project, you are to demonstrate how you can use qualitative methods to study a particular topic. It is expected that some qualitative data will be collected and analyzed by the individual members of the group. In other words, the group decides on the topic and the approaches, and individuals gather data (i.e., conduct observations, facilitate focus groups, conduct interviews, gather documents or visual data, etc.) and write up their own papers.

Groups should consist of 3 or 4 people (so there should be no more than four groups in the class). Some class time will be set aside for the groups to work on their projects. Out of necessity, the groups will have to arrange to meet outside of class time to do some of the work necessary for this assignment.

Once groups have settled on the topic, the members of the group should familiarize themselves with the literature on this subject, and proceed to carve out a methodological plan for the study. Consideration should be given to the relevant theoretical, methodological and substantive literature that pertains to your topic.

Two dates have been set aside for group presentations so sign up early for the date you would prefer. Two groups will present on each day. A group grade will be assigned to all members working on a project

for the “group product”, i.e., the presentation. An individual grade will be assigned to each individual for his/her own final paper. The paper will involve using the data the individual has collected, supplemented by the data and the experiences of the others in the group.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH

Students conducting research on human subjects are expected to comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) regarding research involving humans, and the University of Manitoba’s policy on research ethics (Policy 1406). Copies of TCPS and Policy 1406 are available on the website of the Office of Research Services (<http://www.umanitoba.ca>). Students will need to allow sufficient time to secure ethics approval before initiating any research involving human subjects. Only one ethics application will be prepared for each project, but it will need to cover all aspects of the data collection process. Applications must be vetted by me. I will need to receive them no later than Oct. 5, then, I will forward them to the Psychology/Sociology Research ethics Board by no later than Oct. 7. A class has been allocated to discuss and finalize your ethics submission on Oct. 3.