

University of Manitoba
Department of Sociology
Qualitative Research Methods
SOC 7420, A01
3 Credit Hours, First Term 2008/09

Instructor: Rod Kueneman **Class Location:** 335 Isbister
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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 -2:00 or by arrangement
Phones: 474-6501 (office)
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REQUIRED TEXTS:

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. The Discovery of Grounded Theory
Lofland, John. Analyzing Social Settings, 4th edition
York, Geoffrey. The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada
Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
Spradley, James. Participant Observation
Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin, Basics of Qualitative Research

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your evaluation for this course will be based on your performance in the following submissions:

1. A **domain analysis** using material from chapters 2, 3, 5, and 9 of York's book, The Dispossessed, after Data Reconstruction Workshop I..

This component will make up **10%** of your course grade.

2. A **taxonomy, axial coding, or dimensional coding** using material from chapters 2, 3, 5, and 9 of York's book, The Dispossessed, after Data Reconstruction Workshop II.

This component will make up **10%** of your course grade.

3. A **content analysis** of at least chapters 2, 3, 5, and 9 of York's book. This analysis is to be guided by Spradley's, Strauss/Corbin's, or Lofland's, approach to organize the findings. In this paper, the use the "reconstructed logic" of the approach you selected to frame your report on York's book as a data source. An assessment of the utility of the approach selected is expected as an integral part of the assignment.

This component will make up **40%** of your course grade.

4. A **Research Design Proposal**. Your task in this assignment is to analyze, critique, and

recast Geoffrey York's research on Native peoples in Canada within the framework of the corpus of this course. You will be required to plan a course of research which will specify the use of at least three types of data, their triangulation, the methods of data gathering, analysis, and reporting of findings. This proposal will be situated within the reconstructed logic of qualitative methodology complete with supporting truth claims.

This component will make up **40%** of your course grade.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Qualitative methodology is based on a particular type of understanding of social life and its discussions about reliability and validity are based on pattern explanation and density of contact with the research subject instead of discussions of randomness and representativeness of sample. This approach relies heavily on Glaser and Strauss's Grounded Theory approach and emphasizes a theoretical sampling strategy, and the triangulation of different types of data in an effort to understand complex social formations with sophistication and depth. This approach sprang from the symbolic interactionist tradition and has been very hostile to statistical approaches largely because the quantitative researcher has very little knowledge of the interior phenomenal world of those studied and hence research findings are of questionable validity in spite of high respectability and even replicability.

There is no doubt that there are significant philosophical, sociological, methodological, and pragmatic differences between qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis techniques. We need to assess the validity statements of such alternatives as interviewing, participant and non-participant observation, content analysis, historical method, and the like. But personally, I would like to tackle the underlying presupposition of any type of method which claims to know. We need to focus on how each approach deals with anomalies. I see continuities and discontinuities between qualitative and quantitative approaches and have no wish to contribute to the name calling which has gone on between camps.

Rather I would like to look toward praxis. The final test for me about the knowledge we have is whether we can bring about the desired results we seek. There are various ways for us to arrive at a plan of action. False understanding is too easily attainable for the human being, and hence, I am arguing for an active, intervention-oriented social science. The test of knowledge will be our success at social engineering. Alinsky,, Touraine, Freire and Stoutt have some definite ideas about how we might embark on this course.

I have required field work for this course in past years but have concluded that there is too little time to learn much from such an exercise. Students wishing experience in the use of this methodology can discuss the possibility of using SOC 7350 or SOC 7360 course numbers for a directed research project.

I hope to transcend the typical discussion of quality versus quantity and to begin to appreciate the appropriateness of various methodological approaches employed by the social scientist.

DUE DATES

Your **domain** analysis assignment is due on **October 21st**. Late submissions will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Your **taxonomy, axial coding, or dimensionalizing** assignment is due on **October 28th**. Late submissions will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Your **content** analysis assignment is due on **November 18th**. Late submissions will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Your **research design proposal** is due **December 9th**. Again, late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

While major assignments are due later in the course, they can be worked on in a systematic way from the beginning of the course.

GRADING PROCEDURES

The following description of my grading scheme should make it possible for you to calculate your final grade in the course. You are urged to make your own computations to ensure that I have not made an error.

I find the normal grading system too constraining, so I have modified it to a limited extent by introducing the minus grade (e.g. A-, B-, C-). In the final grade submitted, however, I must conform to the university scheme.

Your answers are being evaluated on a letter grade system, not on a point system which is converted to a letter grade. The main benchmarks for the grade ranges can be described as follows:

D/F= an answer which is factually weak, faulty analysis, and very poor organization.

C= an answer which is mostly complete in terms of facts but suffers from poor analysis, organization and integration. Knowing the facts is a good start, but only a beginning.

B= answer is factually accurate and mostly complete as well as organized and integrated.

A= answer factually complete, well organized, sophisticated analysis which demonstrates a good degree of comprehension.

There is no grading curve used in the evaluation of our answers, as class could do very well or very poorly, I feel no obligation to artificially manipulate the distribution into a bell curve. Each letter grade has been assigned a numerical value to allow for averaging and the calculation of a final grade. The numerical value has been assigned to convert the letter grade into an interval scale. Thus a C is 30% rather a C is equi-distant from a C+ (4) and a C- (2) on the scale; a C is a factually complete answer which suffers from limited analysis. Mechanically, you assign each

of your letter grades the comparable numerical weight in your calculation in the following way:

A+ = 10	B+ = 7	C+ = 4	D = 1
A = 9	B = 6	C = 3	F = 0
A- = 8	B- = 5	C- = 2	

On a test with two questions, which received a letter grade of A- and C+, your average grade is $8 + 4 \div 2 = 6$ or B. I take all of your tests and assignments and calculate them together, as weighted by their relative value and derive a final numerical value for the course. The final cutting points for your letter grade are very important, because the minus grades must now disappear. They give you a higher final numerical grade because a weak A answer was an A- instead of a B+. But in the final analysis, all A- would become a B+. You would need some A or A+ grades to pull you over the cutting point. The cutting points are:

A+ (9.6 - 10)	exceptional
A (8.3 - 9.5)	excellent
B+ (6.6 - 8.2)	very good
B (5.3 - 6.5)	good
C+ (3.6 - 5.2)	satisfactory
C (2.3 - 3.5)	adequate
D (.5 - 2.2)	marginal
F	failure

This grading scheme gives you the benefit of the buoyancy of the minus grade. If you fail to make it over a threshold, even by a fraction, it is unlikely that I will raise your grade unless you have shown significant improvement over the term; have submitted an exceptional piece of work, or have made positive contributions to class discussion. Otherwise, an 8.24 will remain a B+ and not an A.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I encourage collaborative and cooperative work ethics. Feel free to discuss your thoughts with other members of the class and thereby develop your comprehension and critical analysis. But remember, when it is time to submit your assignments, do your own work. The written material of your colleagues is the fruit of their labour and under no circumstances should you avail yourself of it when preparing your own answers. Likewise the printed work of other scholars must be properly recognized. Acts of academic dishonesty or plagiarism are serious offenses and are subject to academic discipline. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on 'Plagiarism and Cheating' (pg. 20) found in the Graduate Calendar. The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

SOC 7420 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY
Dates/Topics/Reading Assignments

Week 1	September 9	<u>Course Overview</u> Introduction Description of Assignments
	Readings	[none]
Week 2	September 16	<u>Patterns vs Hypothetical Deductive Models</u>
	Readings	Lofland pp. 1-65 Spradley pp. 3-35 Glaser & Strauss pp. 1-77 Strauss & Corbin pp. 176-193
Week 3	September 23	<u>Anomalies, Constant Comparative Method, Triangulation</u>
	Readings	Kuhn pp. 1-110 Denzin pp. 291-307 Glaser & Strauss pp. 79-115
Week 4	September 30	<u>Data Gathering</u> - Types of Sources, historical method, conflict methodology
	Readings	Mills Johnson drug articles Boyd Comack Spradley pp. 37-84
Week 5	October 7	<u>Data Analysis I</u> : Theoretical Coding, Axial Coding, Domain/Taxonomic/Componential Analysis
	Readings	Strauss & Corbin pp. 57-175 1/2 hr. session Spradley pp. 85-159 in groups to start York Chapter 2 working on actual coding
Week 6	October 14	<u>Data Reconstruction Workshop I</u>
	Readings	York Chapters 2,3,5,9

Week 7	October 21	<u>Data Reconstruction Workshop II</u>
	Readings	York Chapters 2,3,5,9
Week 8	October 28	<u>Data Analysis II</u> - historical documents, social unit analysis
	Readings	Lofland Chapters 6,7 & 9 Platt article Attwood article
Week 9	November 4	<u>Truth Claims/Epistemological Concerns</u>
	Readings	[none] (N.B. do readings for Data Reporting now to help with the content analysis assignment)
Week 10	November 11	<u>Subjective Awareness of Respondents</u> phenomenologist/marxist positions on self understanding The role of the relevant counterfactual.
	November 12	Voluntary Withdrawal date
	Readings	[none]
Week 11	November 18	<u>Sociological Intervention/Action Research</u> Enabling Research and Resistance Alinsky/Freire/Touraine/Stouff
	Readings	Strega Kueneman
Week 12	November 25	<u>Discussion of Final Paper Format</u>
	Readings	[none]
Week 13	December 2	<u>Data Reporting</u>
	Readings	Strauss & Corbin pp. 197-248 Spradley pp. 160-172 Lofland Chapters 10