

**Sociology 272**  
**Department of Sociology, Colby College**  
**Office hours: Thurs, 9:30-12:00, Friday 9:30-10:30,**  
**and by appointment**

**Teresa Arendell**  
**Fall 2006**  
**314 Lovejoy**  
**859-4711**

## **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

Are humans different from other objects of study? Does the study of human behavior require a methodology different from those we use to study other objects? What sort of similarities and differences exist between the study of human behavior and the study of other objects? What are the implications of these questions for people endeavoring to do “science” or “social science”? Examining human behavior as it is lived or “accomplished,” this course examines issues such as these in our efforts to develop a conceptual and methodological frame which is sensitive to the distinctive features of human activity. In this course, we explore and encourage the fuller linking of theory and method as this pertains to the study of humanly experienced life-worlds. We ground qualitative methods and methodologies in relevant and selected significant literature. And we gain first-hand experience in data collection and analysis in field research, specifically utilizing the methods of participant observation and in-depth interviewing. Thus, we proceed on two levels more or less simultaneously: We examine basic theoretical and methodological questions and explore the basics of qualitative research methods.

“Qualitative research seeks to understand the multifaceted and complex nature of human experience from the perspective of subjects. . . . Experience in all of its ordinary complexity remains in the foreground of the research [Gubrium 1992].” – Sankar and Gubrium

“Believing with Max Weber that Man is an animal suspended in webs of meaning he himself [sic] has spun, I take culture to be these webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.” – Clifford Geertz

### **Required Texts:**

*Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Robert Emerson [E]  
*Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw [E, F, S]  
*The Long Interview*, Grant McCracken [McCracken]  
*Everything In Its Path*, Kai Erikson [Erikson]  
*Good Days, Bad Days*, Kathy Charmaz

### **Recommended:**

*Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles*, Margot Ely with Margaret Anzul, Teri Friedman, Diane Garner, and Ann McCormack Steinmetz [Ely]

As indicated on the reading schedule, additional articles are available on reserve at the Colby Library. Additionally, each student will be assigned one additional book, a research monograph and, in collaboration with several other students, will prepare and present in-class a critical analysis of the work. These books are: *Gender Trials*, Jennifer Pierce; *Fathers & Divorce*, Terry Arendell; *In the Mix*, Barbara Owen; *In Search of Respect*, Philippe Bourgois; *Passing By*, Carol Brooks Gardner; *Dishing It Out*, Greta Goff Paules; *Farewell to the Factory*, Ruth Milkman; *Cocaine Kids*, Terry Williams.

### **Class Policies:**

**Responsibilities:** You are responsible for all class materials—readings, lectures, discussions, and films—and for all assignments. Come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. You are responsible even for the assigned readings which we do not discuss in class (unless noted otherwise over the course of the semester). That is, you are responsible for each assigned reading, whether or not it is covered in class meetings. You are encouraged, indeed, expected, to raise questions and topics for class discussion from any and all of the readings.

**Attendance:** I adhere to the Colby attendance policy: Student Attendance in Classes. “Students are expected to attend all of their classes and scheduled course events in any semester or January and are responsible for any work missed. Failure to attend can lead to a warning, grading penalties, and/or dismissal from the course by the instructor with a failing grade.” My specific policy is that only genuine and verified health or family crises will be granted the status of excused absences. (Verification must come from the Dean of Students’ Office; please note: I will not accept notes from the Colby Health Center.) Please respect this policy. Attendance will be taken regularly and absences will be considered in the calculation of final grades. Excessive tardiness will be treated as absences. Any more than two absences will result in a lowering of your grade. **More than four absences will result in your dismissal from and failing of the course.**

**Class discussion:** This course involves a combination of lecture, discussion, and small group activities; we will give intensive consideration to the readings, often comparing and contrasting the arguments and points of various works. All members of the class are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Short assignments, pertaining specifically to assigned readings and sometimes involving short class presentations, will be given regularly and will be factored into the overall course grade.

**Written coursework:** All exams are to be taken and papers submitted as scheduled – no exceptions. Papers are to be submitted within the first five minutes of the respective class meeting as assigned. *All* exams and any other assigned work must be completed in order to pass the course.

**Assignments and Required Graded Work:**

- Class participation, short homework assignments, and group presentation/detailed outline – **20%** of course grade
- Short analytical essay on *Everything in Its Path* and comparison with some aspect of after-effects of Hurricane Katrina – due 9/29, **10%** of course grade
- Fieldwork exercises – total **20%** of course grade  
(observations composite: 10%; interviews composite: 10%)
- In-class mid-term exam – 10/20/06 – **25%** of course grade
- Final take-home exam/paper – due the date and time of scheduled final exam – **25%** of course grade

**Note:** You’re encouraged to study together. Study groups are especially useful for discussing assigned readings. All written coursework, however, must be your own, consistent with Colby policy as specified in the Colby Student Handbook. **Plagiarism:** I hold a strict position with respect to plagiarism: plagiarism in any of its forms will result in failing the course, no exception, and my handing over of materials showing plagiarism to the Dean of Students Office. Please review the Student Handbook with respect to plagiarism.

**Suggestions:**

- Take notes on course materials as you read them—doing so will facilitate learning and retention and save you an enormous amount of time over the term.
- Stay up with the reading; catching up is always a more difficult process. (Try to begin assigned readings -- especially the monographs - in advance.)
- Bring reading and lecture notes to class to aid you in your class participation.
- Please do not correspond with me by email – use the old-fashioned methods of leaving a telephone message or come by to see me in my office.
- Come by during my office hours: that’s why I’m there!

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**  
(Subject to Change– *Likely* to Change as this is a ‘work in progress’ )

**Week 1 – 9/6, 9/8**

**Introductions**

Read for Friday, 9/8:

E, Preface, p. vii-xi

E, Emerson, I: Introduction. The Development of Ethnographic Field Research

E, 13, Becker, The Epistemology of Qualitative Research

Recommended

Schwandt, Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry (Reserve library)

Denzin and Lincoln, Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research (Reserve library)

Read (for week 2)

*Everything in Its Path*

**Week 2 – 9/13, 9/15**

**(Cursory) Overview of Qualitative Research Theoretical Bases and Methodologies**

Read (for week 3)

E, 7, Duneier, On the Evolution of *Sidewalk*

E, 12, Leo, Trial and Tribulations: Courts, Ethnography, and the Need for an Evidentiary Privilege for Academic Researchers

Colby IRB forms and standards

ASA Code of Ethics

E, F, S, chapter 1: Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research

**Week 3 – 9/20, 9/22**

Research Ethics, Institutional Review Boards, Politics and Power Dimensions in Research

Video: *Zimbardo's Quiet Rage: the Stanford Prison Study*

Read (for week 4)

E, Part II. FIELDWORK PRACTICE: Issues in Participant Observation (113-151)

E, 1, Geertz, Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture

E, 2, Wieder, Telling the Convict Code

E, F, S, chapter 2: In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes

**Week 4 – 9/27, 9/29**

**“The Face of Contemporary Ethnography:” Theory**

Read (for week 5)

E, 3, Atkinson, Ethnography and the Representation of Reality

E, 4, Hammersley, Ethnography and Realism

**Week 5 – 10/4, 10/6**

**Ethnography (continued): Theory and Practice**

Read (for week 6)

E, 11, Emerson and Pollner, Constructing Participant/Observation Relations

E, 5, Goffman, On Fieldwork

E, F, S, chapters 3 & 4: Writing Up Fieldnotes I; Writing Up Fieldnotes II

**Week 6 – 10/11, 10/13**

**Ethnography (continued): Participant Observation in Practice**

Read (for week 7)

Arendell, Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men.  
*Qualitative Sociology* 20(3). (Summer 1997). (Reserve library)

**Week 7 – 10/18, 10/20**

**Loose ends and review**

**In-class Exam 10/20**

Read (for week 8)

E, F, S, chapter 5: Pursuing Members' Meanings

E, 10, Thorne, Learning from Kids

E, 6, Baca Zinn, Inside Field Research in Minority Communities

**Week 8 – 10/24, 10/26**

**Ethnographies**

10/24 Video: *A Class Divided*

10/26 Video: *Interviews with Interviewers*

Read (for week 9)

E, 9, Warren, Gender and Fieldwork Relations

E, 8, Kondo, How the Problem of "Crafting Selves" Emerged (Dorine K. Kondo)

E, F, S, chapter 6: Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing

**Week 9 – 11/1, 11/3**

**Ethnography: Issues of Diversity and Difference**

Read (for week 10)

McCracken, *The Long Interview*

Fontana and Frey, Interviewing: 'The Art of Science' (Reserve library)

Ely et al., "Interpreting" (chpt 5 in *Doing Qualitative Research*) (Reserve library)

**Week 10 – 11/8, 11/10**

**Analyzing Field Notes; Interviewing; Writing an Instrument**

Read (for week 11)

E, 15, Charmaz, Grounded Theory

E, 17, Katz, Ethnography's Warrants

E, 16, Becker, Tricks of the Trade

E, F, S, chapter 7 Writing an Ethnography

E, 14, Katz, Analytic Induction Revisited

**Week 11 – 11/15, 11/17**

**Interviewing; Data Analysis; Writing-Up Qualitative Research**

Read (for week 13)

E, Part III, p. 281-316, Producing Ethnographies

E, 18, Bloor, Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research: A Critical Commentary E, F, S, chapter 8: Conclusion

Recommended: Arendell, Proposal Guidelines for Qualitative Family Research, *Family Science Review*, Special Issue on Teaching and Learning Research Methods. (Spring 1997.) (Reserve library)

**Week 12 – 11/22, 11/24 – No class meetings, Thanksgiving holiday.**

Be preparing assigned monograph for group presentation.

Be reading *Good Days, Bad Days* for preparation for essay assignment.

Be working on in-depth interview, analysis, and write-up.

**Week 13 – 11/29, 12/1**

11/29 – Owen, Bourgois book presentations

12/1 – Gardner, Pierce book presentations

**Week 14 – 12/6, 12/8**

11/29 – Milkman, Paules book presentations

12/3 – Williams, Arendell

Interview write-up due 12/8