F I E L D R E S E A R C H M E T H O D S - S O C 4 7 8
C O U R S E D E S C R I P T I O N A N D S Y L L A B U S

Class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12 noon to 1:15 p.m., in Saunders 242

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Prerequisites: SOC 300, or consent of instructor. This course fulfills the Sociology upper-division methods requirement. This section is designated as "Writing Intensive" and fulfills one of the Focus Requirements. This course is acceptable for graduate credit, and graduate students are invited to enroll.

This course is intended to provide students with an opportunity to develop skills for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. It has five complementary foci:

1. Field methodology and participant-observation. How to observe, record data, and develop analytical schemes, especially for face-to-face and everyday life situations.
2. Community studies. As a follow-up to the Sociology of Community course (old SOC 317), how to go into a place or among a group of people, to figure out what is going on, and to document the ways and degrees to which they are a community (with emphasis on the dimensions of we-feeling/liability/solidarity and power/politics/efficacy).
3. Grounded theory. The theoretical perspective of the social construction of reality, especially with regard to ethnomethodology and community organization. Toward a model of how people create the realities they take for granted.
4. Reflexivity. The process of self-examination as data about the people being studied. Towards a model of how sociologists influence the realities they are trying to make sense of.
5. The sociology capstone. For seniors finally taking this course because it fulfills that last requirement, this could be an opportunity to integrate the experience of the major as part of the sociology of sociology.

Texts:

: *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*.
By John Lofland, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn Lofland.
Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2006, fourth edition.

Contemporary Field Research, Perspectives and Formulations; Edited by Robert Emerson.
Waveland Press, 2001, second edition.

Learning From the Field: A Guide From Experience. By William Foote Whyte.
Sage Publications, 1984.

Course Requirements: The collection of field notes, as part of on-going research, as documentation of various sorts of social involvements, or simply as exercises. Each of two projects are analytic papers based on the field notes collected. Deadlines for these projects will be arbitrary but important as we will try to spend as much time analyzing the data as we did collecting them. On the days that the projects are due we will spend the entire class period reading one another's papers! Thus, all papers must be turned in as hard copies, not as email (except in extreme situations, and then my comments will only be on the hard copies). Miscellaneous additional papers are also invited, and, although not required, will count for those who do them.

Exercises one, two, and three will be explained on the Thursdays of weeks one, two and three. Exercise four is to attend and document with field notes and artifacts at least an hour of a meeting of a Neighborhood Board, at a time and place convenient to each student, some time during the semester.

VERY IMPORTANT: The final copy of each of the two projects must eventually before final grades go in--be submitted electronically (as email attachment or as IBM-formatted floppy disk), which will be used for the Sociology Department's assessment program. This requirement can wait until you have revised and corrected earlier drafts, or when you have decided not to make revisions.

This style of sociological activity takes a lot of time and energy. The researcher has to both live with the data and somehow get extricated from them. It has to be complicated; if our ideas are too clear too early, they are probably too simple-minded; at least we are close enough to the situations we study to make such challenges. The class will serve as a collegial research team for
the necessary mutual support and feedback, so regular attendance will be expected.

KOKUA ANNOUNCEMENT:
Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability is invited to contact me privately. I would be happy to work with you, and the KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course. KOKUA can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612 (voice/text) in room 013 of the Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services.

PLAGIARISM ANNOUNCEMENT: The following definition of plagiarism comes from the UH-Manoa Student Conduct Code:
Plagiarism includes but is not limited to submitting, in fulfillment of an academic requirement, any work that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual's work without attributing that borrowed portion to the individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation another's idea and particular phrasing that was not assimilated into the student's language and style or paraphrasing a passage so that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral or artistic material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved; or "drylabbing," which includes obtaining and using experimental data and laboratory write-ups from other sections of a course or from previous terms. From the University of Hawai`i at Manoa Student Conduct Code (1992), p. 6

It is ultimately each student's responsibility to learn about plagiarism and how to avoid it. Ignorance of the rules, saying "I forgot about that" or "I made a mistake" are not considered valid excuses when it comes to plagiarism.

REGARDING THIS SYLLABUS ON THE WEB: Students: Please be advised that this syllabus is provided for informational purposes only. YOU SHOULD NOT PURCHASE ANY BOOKS OR MATERIALS ON THE BASIS OF THIS SYLLABUS AS IT MAY CHANGE PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS. Please wait until the first day of instruction at which time you will be given the final version of the syllabus.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1. Introduction to the course; the class members and our purposes. Paying attention: sociology colloquia, neighborhood boards, and newsmagazines. For Thursday, READ through all three texts! Bring questions. Hints on documentation and then an interview exercise.

Week 2, READ Whyte's Chapters 1 & 2, and Emerson's Introduction, p. 1-26.
On Tuesday turn in field notes from the interview. The social construction of reality as a conceptual framework. What do we want our course to be, individually and collectively?
On Thursday we'll do a group exercise.

Week 3, READ Lofland et al., Part One, Whyte's Chapter 3, and Emerson's essay, p. 27-53.
On Tuesday turn in field notes from the group exercise; we'll read one another's and compare them (and then turn them in). Let's discuss societies,communities, and universities. On Thursday we'll leave the classroom to do a field exercise.

Week 4, READ essays 1 through 4 in Emerson's Part I. On Tuesday bring field notes from the field exercise; we'll read one another's and compare them (and then turn them in). Problem selection; what's happening in our worlds? On campus? For Thursday propose a small group interaction study (Project I).

Week 5, READ Whyte's Chapters 4, 5, & 6, and Emerson's essay, p. 113-151. Participant-observation; the range of roles we assume. Subjectivity, reflexivity, and personal hang-ups. Bring first set(s) of field notes. Handout: Guide to Writing a Field Research Report.

Week 6, READ Lofland et al., Parts Two and Three, and Whyte's Chapters 7 & 8.
Focusing and analyzing. Bring more field notes.

Week 7, READ essays 5 through 12 in Emerson's Part II. Theory and evidence, validity, reliability, credibility. More notes? On Tuesday propose an outline for writing up the first project. Handout: Rosenthal Appendix.

Weeks 8 & 9, More notes? Theory/reconceptualization?

Week 10, The small group interaction study report (Project I) is due on Thursday, at noon

(i.e., at the beginning of class).

Week 11, On Tuesday, a post-mortem on Project I. READ Emerson's essay, p. 281-316, and Whyte's chapters 9 & 10. Culture and community. For Thursday, propose a community study (Project II).

Week 12, READ essays 13 through 18 in Emerson's Part III. Politics, ethics, and social hang-ups. Bring first set(s) of community study field notes.

Week 13, READ Whyte's Chapters 11 and 12. Action and humanist sociology. Bring more field notes.

Week 14, READ Lofland et al., Part Three, again. On Tuesday, April 18, propose an outline for writing up the second project.

Week 15, The community study report (Project II) is due on Thursday at noon (i.e. at the beginning of class).

Week 16, Post-mortum on Project II, and any necessary catching up. READ Whyte's Chapters 13 & 14. The biggest picture. Conclusions and evaluations.

The "final exam" essay (“What did you learn this semester?”) is scheduled during Final Exam Week, but may be turned in any time after Project II is completed. Also consider this the deadline for electronic copies of the two projects.