

SE 194W Naturalistic Field Research Winter 2010

Class meets: MW 11:00 to 11:50
Room: SSH 100
Instructor: Susan Coutin, Ph.D.
Office hours: Mondays 10-11 and by appointment
Office: Social Ecology II, Room 3375
Phone: (949) 824-1447
Email: scoutin@uci.edu

Course Description:

This course is designed to teach students how to develop and implement research projects using naturalistic field research. Naturalistic research entails observing on-going social behavior and conducting formal interviews and informal conversations with social actors. Students will learn how to formulate a research topic, design and implement a research methodology, draft a research proposal, conduct and record field observations and interviews, analyze qualitative research data, and write-up their analysis in the form of a research report. Fundamental research issues, such as identifying and gaining access to a research site, constructing a research sample, complying with human subjects requirements, and making sure that a project is methodologically sound, will be discussed.

As research methods are best learned through practice, this course will be conducted in a hands-on fashion. During class and through readings, students will be presented with examples that they can use as models when developing their own research projects. In addition, some time in class and in sections will be devoted to practicing naturalistic research techniques. Students may, for example, interview each other, their TA, or the instructor on particular topics; conduct an observation of a social setting, describe events viewed during a film clip, and comment on each other's projects.

Naturalistic field research produces a variety of written texts, including fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and finished research reports. Throughout the quarter, attention will be paid to the relationship between the methods employed and the texts that are produced. Through integrating writing, research, and pedagogy, the course will treat texts as both process and product.

Course readings:

There are assigned texts on reserve in the library and available for purchase in the bookstore. We will also be reading several articles, which can be accessed through the course website. In addition, the class website features examples from the instructor's research, links to writing resources, and announcements regarding the class. The class website can be reached via eee.uci.edu.

Books:

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2003. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Esterberg, Kristin G. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Articles & book chapters:

- Allen, James D. 1986. "Classroom Management: Students' Perspectives, Goals, and Strategies." *American Educational Research* 23(3):437-459.
- Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Michael Sauder. 2007. "Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):1-40.
- Hoffman, Elizabeth A. 2007. "Open-ended Interviews, Power and Emotional Labor." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36(3):318-346.
- Mazumdar, Shampa and Sanjoy Mazumdar. 2009. "Religion, Immigration, and Home Making in Diaspora: Hindu Space in Southern California." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29:256-266.
- Yodanis, Carrie. 2006. "A Place in Town: Doing Class in a Coffee Shop." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35(3):341-366.

Course schedule:

Weeks #1/2 (January 4-15): Devising a field study:

January 4 (lecture): Introduction to Naturalistic Field Research

January 6 (lecture): Developing a Methodology, human subjects

January 8 (section): Writing tips; students present and discuss topics

January 11: (lecture): Obtaining secondary sources

Due 1/11: Completed project proposal form, with evidence of Human Subjects Tutorial completed on-line.

January 13 (lecture): Operationalizing concepts; presentation on field study

January 15 (section): Project proposals returned, with comments

Readings: Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, Chs 3-4. (Ch. 5 is also recommended)

Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*, Introduction and Chapter 1.
Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods*, Chs. 2-3.
Yodanis, “A Place in Town” (article on course website)

Week #3 (January 18-22): Observations

January 18 (lecture): **Martin Luther King Holiday – No class**

January 20 (lecture): How to conduct observations

January 22 (section): Observations and fieldnotes (sample distributed in section)

Due 1/22: Summaries of a minimum of two secondary sources

Reading: Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods*, Ch. 4.

Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*, Ch 3.

Allen, “Classroom Management” (article)

Week #4 (January 25-29): Interviews

January 25 (lecture): How to conduct interviews

January 27 (lecture): Situated knowledge

January 29 (section): Exchange fieldnotes for comments and feedback

Reading: Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*, Ch. 4

Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods*, Ch. 5

Hoffman, “Open-ended Interviews” (article)

Week #5 (February 1-5): Field Studies in Social Ecology

February 1 (lecture): Ecological approaches

February 3 (lecture): Field Studies in Psychology, Criminology, and Planning

February 5 (section): Exchange interview transcript for comments and feedback

Reading: Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*, Ch. 7, 9.

Mazumdar and Mazumdar, “Religion, Immigration and Home Making”
(article)

Week #6 (February 8-12): Taking Stock

February 8 (lecture): **Midterm** (Please use scantron form F-158)

February 10 (lecture): Assessing one’s project

February 12 (section): Exercise on analytical writing

Due 2/12: Notecheck – turn in copies of the data that you have collected
to date

Readings: No reading. Focus on midterm and on preparing your notes
for the notecheck.

Week # 7 (February 15-19): Data analysis

February 15 (lecture): **President’s Day -- No class**

February 17 (lecture): How to analyze fieldnotes and interview transcripts

February 19 (section): Continued discussion of data analysis

Reading: Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 7-9.

Esterberg, *Qualitative Research*, Ch. 8

Week #8 (February 22-26): Project Write-up

February 22 (lecture): Sections of a research report
February 24 (lecture): The peer review process
February 26 (section): Peer review of drafts, exercise on polishing one's writing

Due 2/26: Rough draft of paper

Reading: Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, Chs. 12-14.
Esterberg, *Qualitative Research*, Ch. 10.

Weeks #9-10 (March 1-12): Issues in Naturalistic Research

March 1 Qualitative, quantitative, mixed

March 3 (lecture): Validity (Reactive bias, triangulation, validation, subjectivity & objectivity, saturation)

March 5 (section): Rough drafts returned with comments

March 8 (lecture): Engaged research

March 10 (lecture): Conclusion of course

March 12 (section): Review for final

Due 3/12: Final paper

Reading: Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, Ch. 16.
Esterberg, *Qualitative Research*, Ch. 7 (recommended)
Espeland and Sauder, "Rankings and Reactivity" (article)

Final exam: Friday, March 19, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. (Again, please bring scantron form F-158)

Policies:

Section Attendance: Students **must** attend their assigned section, unless, in the event of an unavoidable absence on the part of a TA, their TA asks them to attend a different section on a particular date. Students may not simply attend other sections instead of their assigned sections, as doing so creates difficulty in record-keeping, and it is important for students to work with their assigned TA for the purpose of continuity. **Do not attempt to change sections on-line, as you may be dropped from the lecture.**

Add/Drop Policy: Enrollment for this class is administered by the University Registrar through their Electronic Add/Drop service. Students may add or drop this class via WebReg or TELE. These services may be accessed from anywhere in the world:

WebReg: <http://www.reg.uci.edu>
TELE: (949) 725-9UCI [(949) 725-9824]

Electronic Add/Drop is first come, first served and **does not** prioritize according to seniority, so students are urged to wishing to add are urged to check the wait list regularly and get on it as soon as possible.

Students who are SE majors but are unable to add the course electronically because the Registrar's does not recognize their status, should clarify their status with either the University Registrar or the Social Ecology Undergraduate Advising Office.

In order to expedite the stability of class membership, the instructor **will not sign drop cards after the second week of class**. All final additions to the class will be made after that date. Also note that University Registrar policy states:

Only students who are not failing the course, or subject to disqualification, may drop the course after 6th week, and only with the permission of the instructor and the dean (or equivalent) of the appropriate school (academic unit). Permission to drop may be given only if such action would be to the educational benefit of the student or of the class as a whole, or both.

Classroom Decorum: Please switch off all mobile telephones and pagers during class. Please only use laptops for taking notes, *not* for other purposes which may be distracting to your fellow students. Please do not walk out of class or begin packing up your materials until class is formally dismissed. If it is necessary to walk out in an emergency, please do so as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. If you know you will have to leave early for some reason, please sit in the back.

Approval of Research Topics: Research topics must be officially approved by the teaching assistant or the instructor prior to the initiation of research. All students who turn in a project proposal will receive written notice indicating whether or not their project was approved. Students who have difficulty devising an appropriate project may select a topic from a list of approved topics. Projects may not be changed after the third week of classes.

Examinations: The midterm and final exam can only be made up under extraordinary circumstances, therefore, it is important for students to plan to be in class on time to take these tests. Please check your schedule now to make sure that you will be able to attend class on the date of the final exam.

Late Work: Source summaries, notes for the note check, and rough drafts may not be turned in late. If they are not turned in on time, they will not be accepted. The final paper may be turned in late, however, there will be a whole letter grade deduction for each day that the paper is late. The paper is due on Friday. Thus, if it is turned in on Monday of finals week, the grade will be lowered one letter grade. If it is turned in on Tuesday, it will be lowered two letter grades. And so forth. Please plan to finish your work early in case unusual circumstances occasion last-minute delays. Be sure to keep extra paper and printer cartridges on hand in case these run out as you are trying to print the final version of your paper.

Work may be turned in early, so if you anticipate an absence, please make arrangements to turn your work in early.

Submission of Work: All work is to be turned in to teaching assistants. Completed work may not be emailed to teaching assistants or to the instructor, unless the TA or the instructor asks students to email work.

Turnitin.com: In addition to submitting a hard copy of the final paper to their teaching assistants, students are required to upload digital copies of their final papers to the turnitin.com website. By taking this course, students agree that all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. Alternatively, students may write a five-page reflection describing the research and analytical process that they used to write their papers.

Academic Honesty: Students are referred to Catalogue and the Schedule of Classes regarding the University's [academic honesty policy](#). Plagiarism and cheating are considered severe offenses in an academic environment and will be dealt with as such.

Students who may be confused about what constitutes plagiarism, may consult the [Research Resources](#) at TurnItIn.com

Incompletes: No incompletes will be given for this class.

Emergencies: Under extraordinary circumstances (such as a car accident, death in the family, or major illness or injury), the above policies can be waived. Prompt notification of extraordinary circumstances is important.

Grades:

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Project proposal:	5 points
Article summaries:	5 points
Note check	5 points
Rough draft	5 points
Midterm:	45 points
Final	45 points
Paper:	90
Total:	200 points

The project proposal, article summaries, note check, and rough draft will be graded pass/not pass. In other words, if you turn in an acceptable version of these, you will get full credit. The project proposal may be rewritten to receive credit, if the initial proposal is turned in on time. Other assignments may not be rewritten for credit. The final draft of your research paper will be graded according to its quality, thoroughness, and analytical strength. The midterm and final exam will cover lecture and readings, and will be multiple choice and short answer in format.

Assignments:

Every written assignment should have a cover page with your project title (you can change the title during the quarter, if you wish), your name and student I.D. number, your TA's name, the instructor's name, the date, and the title and number of the course. Examples of these assignments will be provided on the course website. Keep copies of all course work, and make sure to back up your computer files.

Project proposal: I have created a project proposal form for you to complete and print out in order to describe the project that you plan to carry out during this course. The form is available on the course website. **Please download the form and type out your answers to the questions on the form.** An example is posted on the course website.

I recommend that you choose a topic that you find interesting! If you write about a topic that you like, then you are likely to do a better job on the research and to produce a better quality paper. Make sure that your project is feasible. It should be something that you can investigate locally, that is on-going, and that occurs frequently, giving you ample opportunity for field observations. Please note that you may not do projects that raise human subjects difficulties, including research regarding illegal behavior, interviews with minors (individuals under 18 years of age) or research that exposes the researcher to protected health information.

Your methodology must be naturalistic and must include both field observations and interviews. The project proposal form asks you to go into detail about these. Where will you conduct observations? How often? For how long? How will you record your observations? What will you pay attention to during observations, and why? How will you ensure that your observations do not cause any harm to human subjects? Regarding interviews, who do you plan to interview? Why? What will you ask them about? Why? How many people will be interviewed? Does your sample need to be diverse in particular ways? (e.g., both men and women, people of different ages or ethnic backgrounds, etc.)

For anyone who has difficulty thinking of a topic, there is a list of possible topics posted on the course website.

Your project proposal must be accompanied by evidence that you have completed the human subjects tutorial, which you can access via the Institutional Review Board's website, which is <http://apps.research.uci.edu/tutorial/>

Source Summaries: You are required to locate at least **two peer reviewed journal articles** that are relevant to your topic, and to turn in summaries of these two sources, along with a complete citation in APA format. A link to the APA citation style is posted on the course website.

You are required to write the summaries **in your own words**. Do **not** simply cut-and-paste the abstract as your summary. If you choose to quote statements from the articles, please place these in quotation marks, with appropriate citation. The majority of the summary **should be your own writing**, not quotations. In your summaries of these two

sources, be sure to explain how these are relevant to your own research project. For example, do they help you figure out what methods you should use? Do they help you understand your fieldsite or the social group that you are studying? Are you going to be able to test their findings through your own research? Will you be building on these findings in some way? Etc.

The summaries should be a total of approximately two pages, double-spaced. An example of the source summary assignment will be posted on the course website. Please note that in your actual paper, you are welcome to cite more than two sources, however, I expect you to spend the bulk of your time collecting primary data through your own observations and interviews. Note too that in your final paper, you may cite course readings if they are relevant to your topic, however, in addition, for the source summary assignment, you must find an additional two peer reviewed journal articles on your own.

Field observations: For your research paper, you are required to conduct a number of field observations. Though the amount of time devoted to observations will vary from project to project, it is recommended that you plan to conduct a minimum of 10 hours of observations. Remember that it is better to have more data than too little. A good rule of thumb is that when you thoroughly understand what is going on and no longer encounter perplexing or surprising situations, you have done enough observations. If you feel that you already understand something thoroughly before you start, then you probably have not chosen a good topic.

Whenever you do field observations, you should keep a record of what you observed. What you pay attention to will depend on the nature of your project, however, it is a good idea to try to produce rich, detailed field observations. How many people are present? Who are they? What do they say? What do they do? What is the social setting like? How do you feel during your observations? How do people react to you? It is better to err on the side of writing too much rather than too little.

Interview transcripts: When you do interviews, you should take detailed notes, and then transcribe the interview as soon as possible after its conclusion. In the case of audiotaped interviews, you may listen to the tape in order to transcribe the interview. It is important to have your notes as a back-up, however, in case the person speaks softly or in case there is a technical difficulty. If you do not audiotape the interview, then when you are finished, you should use your notes to write up the interview in its entirety. You should include your questions, their answers, their comments or questions, your answers, and any nonverbal communication (laughs, gestures, facial expressions, etc.)

A good interview transcript will be very detailed and will more or less reproduce the dialogue that occurred during the interview. It should also describe the person interviewed (e.g., gender, occupation, approximate age, ethnicity) and the setting in which the interview occurred.

Rough Draft: Ideally, your rough draft will be a complete draft of your final paper. At a minimum, however, your rough draft should include an introduction, literature review

(based on the source summary assignment), methodology, at least half of the presentation and analysis of your data, and an outline of the remainder of your paper. Otherwise, it will not be considered a draft and cannot count toward the completion of this assignment.

Rough drafts will receive written comments rather than letter grades. Nonetheless, it is my experience that students who turn in rough drafts and who receive comments generally earn about one letter grade higher on their final papers than they would have if their rough draft was their final draft.

Final Paper: Your final paper should be 15 to 20 pages in length and should include the following sections:

Introduction: Outline the key issues to be addressed in the paper. State the thesis or argument of the paper. (Recommended length: 1-2 pages)

Literature review: Draw on your source summary assignment to write this section of the paper. As noted above, you may also discuss class readings or other material, if relevant to your topic. (Recommended length: 1-2 pages)

Methodology: Describe the methods that you used in your research. (Recommended length: 2 pages)

Data presentation and analysis: This section can be divided into subsections if you wish. Do not simply insert your interview transcripts and fieldnotes. Do not simply tell the story of yourself going about your research. Rather, you should devote this section to proving your thesis or argument. Summarize your data, deploy your data strategically to illustrate key points, and write analytically. That is, every paragraph should follow logically from the paragraph before and should lead logically to the paragraph that follows. Each paragraph and each subsection (if any) should be devoted to substantiating the central claim of the paper. Consider any possible criticisms of your reasoning or of your methods and indicate whether or not you consider them persuasive. Also feel free to discuss the limits of your research and your findings. (Recommended length: 10-12 pages, maybe more)

Conclusion: Reiterate (in different words) the central claim of your paper. What do you want your reader to walk away with? What are the larger implications of your findings? Are there any topics that should be taken up in future research? Can you recommend any changes in policy? (Recommended length: 1-3 pages)

Bibliography: All papers should cite at least two peer-reviewed journal articles related to the research topic. Please use APA citation format.

Try to make your argument compelling, your writing powerful, and your analysis clear. This is best achieved by going through multiple drafts. Make good use of opportunities for peer review and for TA comment on your work. Try to produce something that you are proud of.

Regarding formatting, please use standard fonts, one-inch margins, and a 12-point font size. Use footnotes primarily for explanatory purposes and place these at the end of the

paper. You are required to cite at least two peer-reviewed journal articles and to include these in a bibliography. Be sure to use pseudonyms for individuals interviewed, and think about whether or not you should use pseudonyms for groups that you have observed.

Exams:

There will be a midterm and a final exam, both of which will be multiple choice and short answer in format and will cover both lecture and readings.