

SANT 336: Qualitative Methods

Spring 2017

Tues/Thurs

1-2:15p

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”
-Zora Neale Hurston

This course examines qualitative methods frequently used in anthropological and sociological research. Throughout the semester, we will examine and practice the following methods: ethnography, various forms of interviewing, content analysis of visual, textual, and archival materials, and conducting focus groups. We will also situate these methods within the broader scope of research, critically examining how and why different methods are more or less useful when answering a researchable question. While we will focus on developing a deep understanding of qualitative methods, we will also apply those understandings to the development of your senior thesis ideas. Teaching and learning will take many forms during the semester: lectures, small group discussions, group assignments, and in and out of class writing assignments. These varied strategies aim to support the following course objectives:

- ❖ To learn, experience, and evaluate a range of qualitative methods
- ❖ To practice analyzing qualitative data
- ❖ To develop the practice of ongoing, critical reflection on methods, one’s positionality, and the research process
- ❖ To learn about and consider the ethical considerations associated with conducting research
- ❖ To develop a researchable question for the senior thesis and discuss qualitative methods within the context of their feasibility for the thesis project

4th Credit Hour Justification: The quantity of reading and scholarly work required for this course is commensurate with the fourth hour course classification at Spelman College. In addition to the course readings and assignments, students will be expected to write critical reflections concerning their experiences with different methods and spend considerable amount of time constructing the methods portfolio throughout the semester. These activities justify the fourth credit hour.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ❖ *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Ethnography, Interviews, Documents, and Images*, Carol A.B. Warren and Tracy Xavia Karner
- ❖ *Harlemworld*, John Jackson, Jr.
- ❖ *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Annette Lareau
- ❖ All other required readings will be posted on Moodle

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Class Participation and Engagement (30%): This course is designed to be participatory. In addition to engaging lectures, you should be prepared to discuss the merits and drawbacks of readings, to participate in in-class and out-of-class group exercises, and to critically engage your colleagues in the course. Class participation and engagement is not simply about how often you “speak up,” but also about the quality of your contributions to the overall sophistication and rigor of the conversations and course. Also, class attendance is part of the participation and engagement grade. Each student is allowed **three absences**. Each additional absence will result in a letter grade reduction. If you have extenuating circumstances that prevent you from attending class, see me immediately. Lastly, to prepare for class and engage the materials, the following homework assignments are required (Also embedded in the schedule of assignments):

- **ASSIGNMENT #1:** Go to a restaurant or coffee shop of your choice and purchase something to eat. During 30 minutes (please time them) do a systematic observation of what is going on. You should take notes during this observation. Consider the following questions: What is going on? How is it going on? What does the researcher feel about this observation? After leaving the site, sit down in a quiet place, read your notes, complete them and write a few questions that come to mind about “being in the field”. Please bring to class the notes and questions to share with the group. **(Due: January 26)**
- **ASSIGNMENT #2:** Complete the “Warm-Ups” at the end of the Madison chapter **(Due: February 2)**
- **ASSIGNMENT #3:** Complete exercises 1-4 (Note: You need a partner to complete exercises 3 and 4) **(Due: February 21)**

Methods Practice Exercises (30%): Throughout the semester, you will be assigned practice exercises to be completed outside of class. These exercises will require you to engage several of the methods we encounter this semester and submit reflections on those methods. A detailed description of each exercise will be available on Moodle.

- Developing a Research Question **(Due: January 31)**
- CITI Human Subjects Training **(Due: February 2)**
- Archival Documents Assignment **(Due: February 16)**
- Critical Review of Article in Sociological/Anthropological Journal **(Due: March 9)**
- Participant Observation Assignment **(Due: March 30)**
- Interviewing Assignment **(Due: April 11)**

Intellectual Biography and Oral Exam (40%): For the final, you will write a 4-6 page intellectual biography that details both your positionality as a researcher and your intellectual

engagement and growth over the semester. **Your intellectual biography is due on May 2.** Additional details will be posted on Moodle. Secondly, during the week of finals, you will sign up for an oral exam. The oral exam will be conducted in my office. I will ask you specific questions regarding both your intellectual biography and content from the class. **The oral exam is cumulative.**