SYLLABUS: WWS 513/POP 507 Qualitative Research Methods

Spring Term 1997

Princeton University
Woodrow Wilson School
Graduate Program
Robertson Hall, T/Th 10:40-12:10

The Syllabus

I. Seminar description

This seminar examines qualitative methods used in social science research, focusing primarily on participant-observation, on asking questions, on writing fieldnotes, and on the transformation of these primary field data into written ethnographic documents. Other methods considered include the quantification of ethnographic data through the use of computer programs, decision tree modeling, and time allocation studies. Seminar readings on specific research methods will contribute to the formulation of a research project to be carried out during the semester. Recent literature on the theoretical and ethical aspects of these methods will also be considered in the context of these projects.

II. Seminar requirements
1. Participation in the discussion of class readings is an important part of the seminar. Students will be responsible for the assigned readings, for taking part in class discussions, and for presenting an oral summary of their research project. (25%)

2. An 8-10 page mid-term paper that integrates a discussion of class readings with research question formulation, site and informant selection, methodology, interview questions, and human research impact statements is due on 13 March 1997. (20%)

3. A paper based on this research project, 20-25 pages (double-spaced, not including references, tables, etc.), will be due on 13 May 97. Topics are open but projects might focus on local constructions of ethnic or religious identity, on interpretations of recent welfare changes by particular groups, or on the life histories of particular individuals associated with an aspect of social change in the community. A meeting for discussion and approval of the research project topic should be made by the 3rd week of class and a human subjects impact statement along with a project summary and tentative interview questionnaire are due by the 4th week. (35%)

4. A research notebook should be kept during the course of the semester with bi-weekly entries about your research project, both as you are formulating it (which can include comments on the readings, seminar remarks, etc.) and as you are conducting research (as a field notebook). This would include notes taken during field interviews, transcribed interviews, data interpretations and analyses, and other relevant materials (20%)

(*) Books are available at the University Store and on reserve, along with journal articles, at the Woodrow Wilson School library.

III. Seminar Schedule

Week 1: Qualitative methods: Introduction


Week 2: Doing qualitative research: Ethnographic fieldwork


Recommended:


Week 3: Doing qualitative research: Preliminaries


Week 4: Doing qualitative research: Interviews

Briggs, Charles, Learning How to Ask (*). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986


Note

- 27 February 1997: Research project summary, questionnaire, and human subjects statement due
- 5 March 97: ORPA submission deadline

Week 5: Doing qualitative research: Other methods


**Week 6: Fieldnotes**


**Recommended:**


13 March 1997: Mid-term paper due

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 7: The quantification of qualitative research**


**Week 8: Theoretical and ethical concerns**

Week 9: DQR: Gender considerations


Week 10: Writing and qualitative research


Recommended:


Week 11: Ethnographic experience, part 1


Week 12: Ethnographic experience, part 2