

Sociology 477: *Qualitative Methods in Sociology*

Winter 2021

Class Meeting Times: 10:35 – 12:25 p.m. Mondays via ZOOM

Professor: Elaine Weiner

Office Address: N/A

Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

This seminar provides a practical introduction to qualitative research. Students, working in teams, will undertake their own qualitative study about how Canadians have coped with the COVID-19 pandemic via: 1) pursuing 'creature comforts' in the way of pet adoption (or fostering), gardening, DIY projects/inventions and 2) used (and not) such pursuits to connect to others (e.g., virtual communities). Via relevant materials (e.g., readings), students will learn about the epistemology, execution and ethics of qualitative research methods. Skill development, however, constitutes the central emphasis with students gaining 'hands on' experience collecting, analyzing and writing up qualitative data.

Course Materials

- **Textbook (print version and ebook available):** Warren, Carol and Tracey Xavia Karner. 2015. *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Ethnography, Interviews, Documents, and Images (THIRD EDITION)*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Available for online rental at: <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/discovering-qualitative-methods-carol-a-b-warren-tracy-v9780197550212?term=discovering+qualitative+methods> or <https://www.textbooks.com/Warren-Discovering-Qualitative-Methods-3-3rd-Edition/9780199349623/Carol-AB-Warren.php>

Available for purchase in hardcopy at: Amazon.ca or numerous other online book sellers (e.g., Abebooks).

All other reading materials will be made available on *myCourses*. Please use the URL links on the syllabus to link to assigned videos/documentaries, podcasts, etc.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class Format: Seminar via Zoom (no recording)

Participation Class participation is an integral component of this course. The goal, for all of us, is to create a mutually-respectful space in which everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas, asking questions, etc... (even if they are not, in your estimation, particularly brilliant or profound). **You are expected to come to class always prepared with at least 1-2 questions on the week's assigned materials.** At any given point, I may call on you to ask what your

Because of the remote instruction requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course will use ZOOM for synchronous ('real time') class meetings. If you are unable to attend, you are still welcome to take the course; however, the course requirements will be altered to allow for more asynchronous learning. Please contact me should you require such accommodation.

questions are, so be ready! You should, of course, always have the materials at hand as it makes for easy reference and ultimately, a much more productive discussion.

Reading, Watching &

These are what you should be thinking about as you are engaging with assigned materials for this course:

1. What is/are the main point(s)?

Listening

2. How is/are this/these point(s) supported, empirically and/or theoretically? What strengths and weaknesses do you see?
3. What are the implications of the point(s)/argument(s) made?

Exercises

This seminar aims to introduce you to the craft of qualitative research. Towards this end, the course entails in a number of methodological skill-building exercises (e.g., interviewing, coding). Details on each exercise follow the 'Course Schedule' section of this syllabus.

Course Requirements:

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Attendance	5%
Participation	10%
Research Project	
Consent Form, Sampling/Recruitment Strategy, Interview Guide	10%
Interviews (three)	15%
Coding/Memoing	20%
'Discovery Minute' Presentation	5%
Final Report	35%

Peer Evaluation: Because much of the project is realized as a team, I will be asking you to do a peer evaluation at the end of term. It will be weighted at 25% of the total grade for each of these requirements. Please submit the peer evaluation form (available on *myCourses* – upload individually via the 'Assignments' link).

Please proofread all submitted work, spelling errors/typos are unacceptable. You will lose 1% of your assignment grade for any such errors (=1% *per error*).

Disability Accommodation: If you have a disability and require any special accommodations, please let me know.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: For each day that an assignment is late, the assignment grade will be lowered by half a grade (e.g., if your initial grade is a B- and you submit the assignment a day late, your final assignment grade will be a C+).

Equipment & Software

You will require some kind of recording device (or software) with digital audio recording capacity. Please note that cell phones are frequently equipped with recording ability.

You will be required to use **MAXQDA 2020** data analysis software for the purposes of transcribing and coding your data. You will be provided with a license to use this software (usable on Mac or PC), temporarily, for the purposes of this course. We will spend some time in the (virtual) classroom learning how to use the software. You will be expected to then work, both on your own and as a team, with it. This software has many functions and features – far more than you can ever master in this class! The goal here is to merely show you a bit of how such software can support various aspects of qualitative research. If you are keen to learn more, www.maxqda.com offers a wealth of excellent resources (e.g., tutorials, videos, manuals), most of which are free, to further assist you in learning how to use this software.

Copyright Protection

All materials (e.g., instructional handouts, discussion questions, etc.) used in this course are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form without explicit instructor permission.

Additionally, infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

General

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand offenses

Academic Policies

under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Course Schedule

Week #1 Monday, January 11

Topic: *Introduction*

NO ASSIGNED MATERIALS

Week #2 Monday, January 18

Topic: *What is Qualitative/Ethnographic Research?*

- **Textbook:** Chapter 1 "Introduction to Qualitative Methods."
- **Reader*:**
 - Howard Becker - "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research."
 - Robert Emerson - "Introduction: The Development of Ethnographic Field Research."
 - Robert Emerson - "Part I: The Face of Contemporary Ethnography."
- **Other:**
 - Hammersley, Martyn. 1992. "Ethnography and Realism." Pp. 43-56 in *What's Wrong With Ethnography? Methodological Explorations* by Martyn Hamersley. New York: Routledge.
 - Irwin, Neil. 2017. "What if Sociologists Had as Much Influence as Economists?" *New York Times* March 17.
 - TedxCambridge. 2017. "Tricia Wang: The Human Insights Missing From Big Data" (https://www.ted.com/talks/tricia_wang_the_human_insights_missing_from_big_data/reading-list#t-163967) ~16 minutes
 - Katz, Jack. 1997. "Ethnography's Warrants." *Sociological Methods & Research* 24(4): 391-423.

Week #3 Monday, January 25

Topic: *Ethical Considerations*

- **Textbook:** Chapter 2 "The Law, Politics and Ethics of Qualitative Research."
- **Other:**
 - 2013 "Milgram Experiment" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOUEC5YXV8U>) ~ 12 minutes
 - 2017 "The Ethics Behind the Tuskegee Syphilis Study" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyedeuJOGgl>) ~ 4 minutes
 - Baca Zinn, Maxine. 1979. "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations of an Insider." *Social Problems* 27(2): 209-19.
 - Leo, Richard. 1995. "Trial and Tribulations: Courts, Ethnography and the Need for Evidentiary Privilege for Academic Researchers." *The American Sociologist* Spring: 113-34.

DUE:

You, individually, must do the TCPS 2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics (CORE) (available online at <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome>). You should receive a notification of completion which you should submit to me via *myCourses* (Week #3 – see the 'Assignments' link for upload).

Week #4 Monday, February 1

* The reader is Robert Emerson, ed. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research*. Illinois: Waveland Press. This material is available for you via *myCourses*.

Topic: *Capturing Social Life (Qualitatively)*

Other:

- Jerolmack, Colin. 2014. "Feeding the Pigeons: Sidewalk Sociability in Greenwich Village." Pp. 235-50 in *The Urban Ethnography Reader*, edited by Mitchell Duneier, Philip Kasnitz and Alexandra Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press.
 - Robins, Douglas, Clinton Sanders and Spencer Cahill. 1991. "Dogs and their People: Pet-Facilitated Interaction in a Public Setting." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 20(1): 3-25.
 - 2016 "C.J. Pascoe on Ethnographic Research: Give Methods a Chance" (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/c-j-pascoe-on-ethnographic-research/id955051819?i=1000365943869>) ~45 minutes
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DUE:

Your task, this week, is to find one scholarly article that offers some helpful background or insight, substantive or methodological, on your anticipated research. You are welcome to locate an article on your own, or you may choose from those on the *background literature* list provided in this syllabus. Should you elect to find a piece of scholarship on your own, I would encourage you to use the library's sociological databases (e.g., SocINDEX) and to play with an array of search terms (e.g., online communities, virtual communities, social connection, loneliness, gardening, pets, plants, projects, crafts, hobbies, pandemic, disaster, etc.). You should write a ¾ page summary (single-spaced) of your selected work (due Week #4 via *myCourses* – see the 'Assignments' link for upload) – please put full citation at top of summary. You will also be expected to briefly talk about what you elected to read during class.

Week #5 Monday, February 8

Topics: *Sampling, Gaining Entrée and Building Rapport*

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 3 "Ethnography: Setting and Entrée." and Chapter 4 "Roles, Status, and Relationships in Ethnography."
 - ❖ **Reader:**
 - Erving Goffman - "On Fieldwork."
 - ❖ **Other:**
 - Bernard, H. Russell. 2013. "Nonprobability Sampling." Pp. 162-76 in *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* by H. Russell Bernard. California: Sage.
 - Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral." *Sociological Methods and Research* 10: 141-63.
 - Snow, David, Robert Benford and Leon Anderson. 1986. "Fieldwork Roles and Informational Yield: A Comparison of Alternative Settings and Roles." *Urban Life* 14: 377-408.
 - 2017 "The Seduction of Gangs: The Pleasure and Pains of Ethnographic Research (Dr. Elke Van Hellemont)" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOUEC5YXV8U>) ~18 minutes
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

In class, you will have time to work with your team on your sampling and recruitment strategies.

DUE:

By the start of Week #5, please send me an email informing your team's research focus. You should also draft a consent form for your project (use the fillable template provided on *myCourses*) – send to me as an attachment with the email.

Week #6 Monday, February 15

Topic: *Interviewing*

- ❖ **Textbook:** Chapter 6 "The Interview: From Research Questions to Interview Questions." and Chapter 7 "The Interview: Interaction, Talk, and Text."
 - ❖ **Other:**
 - Hermanowitz, Joseph. 2002. "The Great Interview: 20 Strategies for Talking to People in Bed." *Qualitative Sociology* 25: 479-99.
 - Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2012. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." Pp. 162-47 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (Third Edition)* by Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin. California: Sage.
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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY (advance preparation required)

Each of you, on your own, should prepare a first draft of your (team) interview guide (*please email me a copy of it prior to the start of class*). In class, you will have time to work, in your team, to begin realizing your 'team' interview guide.

DUE:

By the start of Week #6, please email me a 1-2 page MSWord document detailing your team's sampling and recruitment strategies.

Week#7 Monday, February 22

Topic: *From (Participant) Observation to Writing 'Fieldnotes'*

- **Text:** Chapter 5 "Writing Fieldnotes."
- **Reader:**
 - Robert Emerson and Melvin Pollner - "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations."
- ❖ **Other:**
 - Kawulich, Barbara. 2005. "Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6(2): Article 43.

Week #8 Monday, March 8

Topic: *Theorizing, Representing and Validating*

- **Reader:**
 - Robert Emerson - "Part III Producing Ethnographies: Theory, Evidence and Representation."
- **Other:**
 - Atkinson, Paul. 2000. "Ethnography and the Representation of Reality. Pp. 35-56 in *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality* by Paul Atkinson. New York: Routledge.
 - Bloor, Michael. 1992. "Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research: A Critical Commentary." In *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*, edited by Gale Miller and Robert Dingwall. California: Sage.
 - Lincoln, Yvonne and Egon Guba. 1985. "Establishing Trustworthiness." Pp. 289-327 in *Naturalistic Inquiry* by Yvonne Lincoln and Egon Guba. California: Sage.

Week #9 Monday, March 15

Topic: *Coding*

- **Textbook:** Chapter 9 "Analyzing Qualitative Data: Fieldnotes, Transcripts, Documents, and Images."
- **Other:**
 - 2015. "A Discussion with Professor Kathy Charmaz on Grounded Theory" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5AHmHQS6WQ>) ~ 58 minutes.
 - Richards, Lyn. 2005. "Coding." Pp. 83-103 in *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide* by Lyn Richards. California: Sage.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

In class, you will be given some time to work, in your team, on developing an open coding strategy for your first interview transcripts.

Week #10 Monday, March 22

Topic: *Coding*

No ASSIGNED MATERIALS

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

In class meetings will be held with each team and me to review your coding.

Week #11 **Monday, March 29**

Topic: *Memoing*

❖ **Other:**

- Saldana, Jonny. 2009. "Writing Analytic Memos." Pp. 32-44 in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Jonny Saldana. California: Sage.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 2011. "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing." Pp. 179-99 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Second Edition) by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. New York: Free Press.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

You will be given some time to work, in your team, on 'processing' your data.

DUE:

By the start of class in **Week #11**, your team's MAXQDA 'project' containing fully coded first interview transcripts should be submitted to me via email (Note: MAXQDA files can be easily sent as an attachment).

Week #12 **Monday, April 12**

Topic: *Writing Up Findings*

- **Textbook:** Chapter 10 "Writing Well."

- **Other:**

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 2011. "Writing an Ethnography." Pp. 201-42 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Second Edition) by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weiss, Robert. 1994. "Writing the Report." Pp. 183-205 in *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* by Robert Weiss. New York: Free Press.

DUE:

PPSlides are due for your team's 'Discovery Minute' presentations – to be submitted to me via email (by 5 p.m. Monday, April 12th). Please use the PPSlide template up on *myCourses*.

Week #13: **Thursday, April 15**

Topic: *'Discovery Minute' Presentations*

No ASSIGNED MATERIALS

DUE:

By the start of the last class, your team's completed MAXQDA project is due (submitted by email to me).

EXERCISES/ASSIGNMENTS

1. INTERVIEWS

Each of you must conduct three interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these must be conducted remotely via Zoom, Skype, etc.... The timing of these will vary, dependent on your success with participant recruitment and ease of scheduling. I would strongly encourage you NOT to do your interviews 'back to back.' You want to take some time, after the first interview, to reflect on it – on your own, with your team members and with me and the class – and then apply what you learned from your first 'go' in your second interview.

2. CODING/MEMOING

(You should read <http://www.maxqda.com/max12-tutorial/o-teamwork/o-2-alternately-working-on-the-same-project> before undertaking this. Note: Read ONLY N1 'Take Turns Working on the Same Project').

You and your team member(s) are required to develop a coding strategy and apply it to your team's interviews (two per team member). You will also be required to 'memo' – these memos can be done in MAXQDA. You will be required to submit the 'project' in MAXQDA twice as you undertake these modes of data processing; initially, in **Week #11** (first interviews coded) for my feedback and then, in **Week #13** (all data coded and memoing completed) for a grade.

3. 'DISCOVERY MINUTE'

During the final class (**Week #13**), you and your team member(s) will have approximately 10-15 minutes and (no more than) five PP slides to present the following: first, the focus of your research (e.g., where, who, about what); second, two or three 'themes' that you've elected to focus on in your final report.

4. FINAL REPORT

Your team's 'final report' is due Thursday, April 22nd by 5 p.m. (uploaded via *myCourses* – see the 'Assignments' link for upload). It should be double-spaced, use 12-pt font and have 1-inch margins (approximately 25 pages in length). There are a couple of examples of final reports on *myCourses* that you may find helpful. The final report should contain the following:

Introduction (~1-2 pages)

- Research Question(s)
- Method

Background/Literature Review (~2-3 pages)

Discussion of 3-4 Themes (~12-15 pages)

Appendices (no page limit)

1. Description of your Sample (text and table)
2. 'Reflection' = reflection on the research experience (e.g., gaining entrée, positionality/power [identity, insider/outsider], ethical issues, experiences/challenges with interviewing remotely) – *may be done individually or as a team*
3. Interview Guide

Reference List (Note: You are welcome to use whatever citation style your team prefers but please use it correctly)

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Media:

- 1) <https://globalnews.ca/news/6983484/pandemic-pets-coronavirus/>
- 2) <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/11/fluffing-your-own-nest/616469/>
- 3) <https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/gardening/houseplant-coronavirus-pandemic-buying-demand-20200929.html>
- 4) <https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/life/2020/06/22/going-green-indoors-covid-19-crisis-has-us-longing-more-plants/5334720002/>
- 5) <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/personal-finance/household-finances/article-pet-adoptions-have-surged-in-the-pandemic-what-are-people-getting/>
- 6) <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-dogs-in-high-demand-as-canadians-crave-companionship-during-covid-1/>
- 7) <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/16/business/west-paw-dog-toys-boom/index.html>
- 8) <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/sep/15/during-the-pandemic-i-retreated-into-my-shell-could-diy-help-to-pull-me-out>
- 9) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/pandemic-projects-home-diy-1.5559357>
- 10) <https://people.com/home/over-80-percent-of-millennials-have-done-a-diy-home-improvement-project-during-pandemic-shutdown/>
- 11) <https://www.newmarkettoday.ca/local-news/covid-19-how-isolation-has-spurred-diy-labs-inventions-craft-beer-2589693>
- 12) <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/technology/coronavirus-how-to-live-online.html>

Scholarly Sources:

- 1) Wood, Lisa. 2015. "The Pet Factor – Companion Animals as a Conduit for Getting to Know People, Friendship Formation and Social Support." *PLOS ONE* 10(4): e0122085.
- 2) Barker, Adele Marie. 1999. "Going to the Dogs: Pet Life in the New Russia." Pp. 266-77 in *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and Society Since Gorbachev*, edited by Adele Marie Barker. North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- 3) Johnson RA and RL Meadows. 2002. "Older Latinos, Pets, and Health." *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 24(6):609-20.
- 2) Nieforth, Leanne and Marguerite O'Haire. 2020. "The Role of Pets in Managing Uncertainty from COVID-19." *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* 12: S245-46.
- 3) M.S. Lee et al. 2015. "Interaction with indoor plants may reduce psychological and physiological stress by suppressing autonomic nervous system activity in young adults: a randomized crossover study." *Journal of Physiological Anthropology* 34(1): 21.
- 4) Aki Takata et al. 2019. "Effect of Pets on Human Behavior and Stress in Disaster." *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 6 (Article 113).
- 5) Fiona Allon. 2008. *Renovation Nation: Our Obsession with Home*. Australia: University of South Wales Press.
- 6) Gaby Odekerken-Schröder. 2020. "Mitigating Loneliness with Companion Robots in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: An Integrative Framework and Agenda." *Journal of Service Management* 31(6): 1149-62.
- 7) Samuel Wilson and Liegton Peterson. 2002. "The Anthropology of Online Communities." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1): 449-67.
- 8) Karen Christensen and David Levinson, eds. 2003. *Encyclopedia of Community: From Village to Virtual World*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- 9) Fehérváry, Krisztina. 2002. "American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a 'Normal' Life in Postsocialist Hungary." *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 67(3): 369-400.
- 10) Jackson, Patrick. 2012. "Situated Activities in a Dog Park: Identity and Conflict in Human-Animal Space." *Society & Animals* 20: 254-72.
- 11) Ridings, Catherine and David Gefen. 2004. "Virtual Community Attraction: Why People Hang Out Online." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10(1): n/a.

- 12) 2016. "The Anthropology of Online Communities" (<https://www.marketplace.org/2016/09/23/anthropology-online-communities/>) ~ 6 minutes
- 13) Pitt, E.H. 2013. "Growing Together: An Ethnography of Gardening as Place Making." *PhD Thesis* (<http://orca-mwe.cf.ac.uk/53953/1/2013pittehphd.pdf>)
- 14) Kuznetsov, Stacey and Eric Paulos. 2010. "Rise of the Expert Amateur: DIY Projects, Communities, and Cultures" (see <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.676.353&rep=rep1&type=pdf>)