

SOCI 4997
SENIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR

Professor Dawne Moon

Office: 416 Lalumiere

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2-3, or by appointment (usually Fridays)

dawne.moon@marquette.edu

phone: 414-288-7914

This course gives you the opportunity to reflect on what you have learned during your time as a sociology student by conducting an independent, qualitative social research project on a topic of your own choosing. Ideally you will draw from materials you have studied in previous classes.

Throughout the course, you will design, conduct, analyze and write up your research. Your project may use the methods of participant-observation, intensive interviews, or a combination of the two. At the bare minimum, you should plan to conduct at least twenty hours of observations or interviews, although your project will most likely require more.

You should begin conducting your original research **as soon as possible**, even though some assignments that seem preliminary are not due until later. Qualitative research is full of false-starts, fumbling, and mistakes—you should of course not make them on purpose, but even when we do our best they may be inevitable. They are where some of the best learning can happen. You should plan to get the initial ones out of the way as quickly as possible. As the semester begins, we will guides to and examples of qualitative research as you begin the preliminary steps of choosing your topic and field site. The bulk of the reading for the course, however, you will conduct independently. However, if other students are working on related topics, you may wish to discuss certain texts among yourselves, with me, or with another faculty member.

As a graduating senior, you must be able to take initiative and responsibility for marshaling your resources, and this includes knowing when you need to ask for help *and doing so*. Most class sessions will begin with a “check-in time” to discuss problems that arise in the course of research—and it wouldn’t be research if there weren’t plenty of problems, believe me! We will discuss those problems, as well as helpful tricks you may come up with, as a class. I may call on you at any time to ask about how your research is progressing, how you are thinking about framing your findings in relation to the literature, or how you have dealt with difficulties in your research. Later in the semester, you will present your research-in-progress, in small groups and eventually to the whole class. It is my sincere hope that you will find this class to be a rewarding challenge and an apt way to conclude your time at Marquette. If at any time you run into difficulties, dilemmas, or snafus, I hope you will bring them to my attention as soon as possible so that we can work on them together. Recognizing your problems and discussing them with someone who can help are signs of a mature researcher. You are not alone!

Capstone Objectives

As the Capstone for your major, this course has four objectives. In this course, I expect to help you:

- Integrate the methods, perspectives, and concepts used in sociology;
- Acknowledge the connections between sociology and other disciplines;
- Reflect upon how see how interactions, institutions, and/or culture systematically shape (constrain and/or facilitate) individuals’ lives;
- Reflect upon, in the context of your specific research, the impact of your college education on your development as a whole person.

READINGS

The bulk of the reading for this class will be done on your own, as part of your research. In addition, we will read several articles and chapters at the beginning of the term, which are all available under Content on our D2L site.

ASSIGNMENTS

Requirements for the course include:

I. Active participation in class discussions (20 pts.)

The success of this course absolutely depends on your attention, attendance, and diligence about your research. As a graduating senior, it is expected that you are capable of planning your own time, figuring out what you need to do and carrying it through—those same qualities that will make you good at your future career will permit you to succeed in this course. Attendance is absolutely mandatory, and I track it daily. You must come to class having completed the reading or writing assignment. I may call on you without warning. This class will be a collective learning experience, where you share your understanding of the readings and experiences doing research with your peers. You must bring the readings or other materials with you to class for discussion. There is no shame running into problems, making mistakes (they may be inevitable, if you're doing good research) or even in being wrong about something. I encourage you to voice different experiences and differences of opinion. Coming to office hours beyond the required visit constitutes another form of participation.

As of June, 2011, Marquette policy recognizes that ANY absence from class impedes your learning, and thus allows for students to be withdrawn for absences (WA) after **six** absences, making no distinction between excused and non-excused absences. For the purpose of this class, I do recognize that some absences are more excusable than others. If you have a family emergency or are sick, particularly if your illness may be contagious, please let me know beforehand that you will be missing class. If you are absent a great deal, it is helpful to have a doctor's note to explain your condition, though I know that Marquette's clinic will not issue such notes. In keeping with Marquette policy, more than **one** absence may result in a lowering of your participation grade, and the grade will fall significantly with each subsequent absence. You may be withdrawn from the course for more than **six** absences but if you are having problems or expect to be absent, I appreciate being informed, and am willing to come to a reasonable accommodation if you explain your situation to me in a timely manner and one can be reached.

Active participation by everyone in this class is CRUCIAL to its success. Do not use class time to compile field notes or engage in research. You must be mentally present (ie paying attention) as well as physically present in order to earn above a C for participation.

II. Personal Meeting (5 pts.)

Within the first three weeks of class, you are required to come to my office hours. Please come prepared having thought out—you may bring notes if you like—your response to the following questions:

What are you interested in studying as a research project for this course? What methods would you like to employ? What population(s) interest(s) you? What questions do you have about how to proceed?

This is not a test, but an opportunity for me to help you to design an appropriate and doable study. Note that in later weeks, I will expect you to be caught up with the assignments and will ask you questions about your research appropriate to where we are in the semester. If you are not sure about what you want to research this semester, you should see me in the first week of classes.

III. Research Exercises

Note: Each written assignment is due on paper in class, except for the Human Subjects certificate (D2L dropbox). The final paper is due both on paper and in the D2L Dropbox.

1. Preliminary proposal (5 pts.—due 22 January)

For this assignment, you should be as detailed as possible—everything you get down in paper now gets you that much further along in your project. You might also wish to write in a private journal or file, everything you think, know, and feel about your topic, research site, etc. You do not need to share this with anybody, but it's often very helpful to get ideas, preconceptions, past experiences, and the like down on paper so that your mind isn't tripping over them as you begin your study. It can be helpful later to look back at what you were thinking when you first proposed this topic, and it can be helpful for you to get your ideas on paper so that you don't have to work to remember your own experiences as you learn about others'—it can be easier to listen with an open mind.

If your proposal is not thorough and thoughtful, I will take it as a statement that you are not taking this course seriously. The very highest grade you can earn on a cursory or unreflective proposal is an F.

For the proposal, be sure to answer in as much detail as possible:

- A. What do you want to study?
- B. How will you go about it? (What methods will you use? What population will you sample from, or at what site will you conduct fieldwork? What access do you have?)
- C. What is your preliminary research question? (It must be a question you could answer with the methods at your disposal. It must be as clear and specific as possible. Note: *Your research question should change* as your research progresses and you learn more, but it will be hard for you to even get started if you don't begin with a clear, answerable preliminary research question.)
- D. What books and articles have you already read that speak to your topic (from previous classes or research projects, for instance)? What do you know from them, and how does it connect to your project?
- E. What do you expect to find? That is to say, what are your hypotheses?

2. Human Subjects Training (~2 hours online—). Link is under Content (5 pts.— due by 25 January, but I recommend getting it out of the way earlier).

3. Initial Bibliography (5 pts.—due 29 January)

Using previous course syllabi, the bibliographies from those readings, the library's search resources, and the *Annual Review of Sociology*, develop a list of **at least 15** relevant sources and **arrange them into sections**, in order of their apparent importance to your project (with the understanding that they may change in importance as you read them carefully and as your project evolves). Section headings might be: Methodology, Theory, *x* part of your question, *y* part of your question (where you define the parts). As you begin perusing those sources and reviewing ones you have already read, you may wish to begin a spreadsheet, filling in the information you'll need for Assignment #4, the annotated bibliography. **At least two**, probably more, of your sources should be articles from *AJS*, *ASR*, *Social Problems*, *Symbolic Interaction*, or *Social Forces*. Sources do not have to be about your exact topic; they may have implications about what the authors would expect to find had they looked at your case. The preponderance of your citations should be **sociological**, of course, though you should cite **at least**

one source from another field for comparison. Consult the bibliography of each thing you read to find more potential sources. **Please note that a URL does not constitute a bibliographic entry.**

Please use U.Chicago format (the format used in *AJS*). Note: For sources from another field—education, psychology, economics or business, for instance—you will need to distinguish clearly between these authors’ approach and a *sociological* approach in your final paper (or whenever you discuss them).

4. Preliminary Methodological Discussion (10 pts.—due 5 February)

In a document of 2-3 pages, address the following questions, depending on your method): What method are you employing? If qualitative interviews: What group are you studying? What sampling strategy are you using to get interviewees? What do/will you tell them about your project? What procedures will you follow to obtain informed consent from your interviewees? What format and questions will you use for your interview guide? How long do you expect the interviews to last? Will you record and transcribe them (preferred), or take notes and reconstruct them immediately afterward? If participant observation: What is your site? What access do you have? How have you secured (or how will you secure) permission to conduct this research? How open will you be with various players in this site about your research? How often will you be in the field? How will you make your field notes? Can you take them as events happen, or will you reconstruct them from jottings or voice-recorded notes? What themes will you initially look for as you begin?

5. Annotated bibliography (5 pts.—due 12 February)

Select the 8-12 most important sources from your bibliography (most helpful, most closely related to your research topic, presenting a theoretical argument you wish to use or take issue with, etc.) and *for each*, state the reading’s: main points; methods; sample or site; and relevance to your project. Your summary should be thorough, committing to paper everything you will want to know about the selection when it comes time to write.

Note: for Weeks 6-8, you will be bringing in your field notes or interview transcripts to discuss with your small group. These assignments will not be graded, but it is up to you to do a good job preparing them and to benefit from help from me and from members of your small group. **If you only go through the motions of research, it will show in excruciating (for you and for the rest of us) presentations and a weak final paper.**

6. Memo (10 pts.—during weeks 9-12, the day before your appointment with me)

We will discuss the memo format and assign time slots as we approach the time for initial presentations. We will discuss how to write memos before we stop meeting as a class. For examples of how to write memos, see the data presentation sections of any of the articles we have read.

7. Final presentation of findings (10 pts.—during weeks 11-15)

Here you will present your research in near-final form, though of course those who present earlier may expect to gain feedback toward improving their final papers, and those who present later will be expected to present more finished projects. What was your research question, what were your methods, what themes emerged from your research, and how do they speak to the literature?

8. Final paper (25 pts. – due 2 May, last day of class, in D2L Dropbox and on paper)

Please note: With your final paper, please submit a brief (1 page) written reflection on how your project shows how individuals' lives are shaped or constrained by interactions, institutions, and/or culture. In addition, please share briefly how your understandings or outlook have changed as a result of this research, your experience in the SOCI major, or your college career. This will not be graded, but it will contribute to my overall evaluation of your project. It is fine if all or part of it is copied and pasted from your final paper.

This paper will gather together and synthesize all of the work you have done this semester, though it will probably not include everything you have learned. Ideally, your argument will point to something new, not discussed in any of the published literature on your topic. It is, however, perfectly acceptable to use your research to point to a minor flaw or oversight in the published literature on your topic. Rather than a summary or report, think of this paper as akin to a short sociological article, like those you have read as background for this project. It must be beautifully written, free from grammatical and typographical errors as well as stylistic problems. There should be no redundancies, and each sentence, paragraph, and section should be as terse and elegant as possible. You will most likely want to show what you think is your final draft to a friend or writing tutor for editing – trading this favor with another member of the class is a good way to get this done. Be sure to ask the editor to PLEASE be as ruthless as possible with the editing.

Your paper must state a research question and present a clear argument, point, or thesis; it must explain your research methods, and illustrate your argument with evidence gathered in your own research. It must include section headings. The paper should be about 18-20 pages (plus bibliography), double spaced, in standard-sized 12-point font, with 1.25" margins, and presented in a report cover or stapled in the upper left corner (as well as through the D2L dropbox). It should have an **evocative title**, and begin with a **1-paragraph abstract** that summarizes the research question, methods and findings. **You will also need to submit all field notes and interview transcripts with the paper copy of your final paper.**

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

Late assignments will lose 1/2 grade for each day they are late, starting after the beginning of class on the due date.

LOGISTICS: I assume that, as a graduating senior, you know how to use a word-processor or computer, including how to keep a back-up copy of all of your work. You should keep back-ups of all work conducted for this course, at least until the final grades are in and you have no questions about them. (If there is a chance you might ever ask me for a recommendation letter, you should save your work with my comments to show me at that time.) I also assume you know how to use a printer, and how to schedule your time such that you will be able to turn in your work at the appropriate times.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Please note that I will strictly adhere to Marquette's policy on academic honesty, which can be found online. Any incident of plagiarism or other cheating will be met with an F for the course and a report to your Dean of Students and the Chair of SOCS. This would most likely interfere with your timely graduation.

Reading Guide:

Many of the non-methodological articles we will read are examples on which you can model parts of your paper. To help you to understand how to write your paper, I recommend you use the following reading guide for each article. You will probably find it helpful to mark the number of each element on the reading itself, so that you can easily find examples later.

- 1) Where does the author state:
 - a) Their topic?
 - b) Their thesis/point/argument?
 - c) Their methods?
 - d) Ethics considerations?
 - e) Their personal role as a researcher?
- 2) How do they cite previous scholarship? What different categories of readings do they cite?
- 3) Where do they explain:
 - a) participants' meanings
 - b) participants' practices
 - c) significant events?
- 4) Where do they state their conclusions?
- 5) Where do they reflect on the limitations of their study?
- 6) Where do they reflect on questions for future studies?

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1	INTRODUCTION
15 Jan	
17 Jan	READ: Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland, 2006. "Starting Where You Are" and "Evaluating Data Sites," pp. 9-32 in their <i>Analyzing Social Settings</i> , Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Learning.
WEEK 2	
22 Jan	Preliminary proposal due READ: Dow, Dawn M. 2016. "The Deadly Challenges of Raising African American Boys: Navigating the Controlling Image of the 'Thug,'" <i>Gender and Society</i> 20:531-52. We will discuss getting access and write/practice scripts for talking to gatekeepers.
24 Jan	Meet in Raynor Library LARGE CLASSROOM (R245, across from Writing Center) — and please bring a laptop if you have one Bring in a qualitative sociology article that you like (ideally that might relate to your topic, maybe from a class you took). Be prepared to talk to the class about its hypothesis or research question, results/findings, what you like about it or how it could be done better, how/where it cites different categories of sources, and what sources it cites that might be helpful to you in your project. We will discuss these articles in class after a presentation on library tools to help you with your bibliography.
FRIDAY 25 Jan	Complete Human Subject Training; Submit certificate to D2L Dropbox
WEEK 3	
29 Jan	Initial bibliography due READ: Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," pp. 412-453 in his <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> , New York: Basic Books. We will discuss distinguishing a wink from a twitch of the eye; how you discern and explain what words and actions mean.
31 Jan	Bring in a thick description based on either 10 minutes of constant writing about a setting near you (a coffee shop, library, group of friends, etc.) or based on a detailed recollection of an event you just left when you started writing (a party, a class, your job, an incident you witnessed, etc.) READ: Pitt, Richard N. 2010. "Killing the Messenger': Religious Black Gay Men's Neutralization of Anti-Gay Religious Messages," <i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i> 49(1):56-72. Download and Read Powerpoint slides: Doing Research (D2L Content, Week 3 Thursday)

WEEK 4 5 Feb	<p>Preliminary Methodological Discussion due</p> <p>READ: Bender, Courtney. 2003. [excerpt] <i>Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver</i>, pp. 108-115. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [note; we are reading this as an example of how Bender recognized her own misunderstanding and put it into discussion with social theory; don't get hung up on what has not been explained in this excerpt!]</p> <p>READ: Salzinger, Leslie. 1991. "A Maid by Any Other Name: The Transformation of 'Dirty Work' by Central American Immigrants," pp. 139-160 in <i>Ethnography Unbound</i>, edited by Michael Burawoy, et al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.</p> <p>Download and read list: Do's and Don'ts (D2L Content W4T)</p>
7 Feb	<p>READ: González-López, Gloria. 2004. Fathering Latina Sexualities: Mexican Men and the Virginity of their Daughters. <i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i> 66(5): 1118-1130.</p>
WEEK 5 12 Feb	<p>Annotated bibliography due</p> <p>READ Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i>. Chapter 6: Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing (pp. 142-168). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p>
14 Feb	<p>Bring in your first set of field notes or transcript to discuss coding/themes in small groups</p>
WEEK 6 19 Feb	<p>Continue discussing coding</p>
21 Feb	<p>Continue discussing coding</p>
WEEK 7 26 Feb	<p>Bring in second set of field notes or transcript</p>
28 Feb	<p>Continue discussing coding</p>
WEEK 8 5 March	<p>Bring in third set of field notes or transcript Sign up for Memo Meetings; Discuss Memo Instructions</p>
7 March	<p>TBD</p>
11-15 MAR	<p>Midterm break—No class</p>

WEEK 9 19 March	No class—individual meetings Memos are due to me the day before your scheduled meeting with me. Students will meet at least once with me individually to discuss your progress. Groups will continue meeting during this time. Students may meet with me during class time or during office hours. We will have an electronic sign-up for Final Presentations.
21 March DM unavailable	No class—DM unavailable
WEEK 10 26 March	No class—individual meetings
28 March	No class—individual meetings
WEEK 11 2 April	Final Presentations?
4 April	Final Presentations
WEEK 12 9 April	Final Presentations
11 April	Final Presentations
WEEK 13 16 April	Final Presentations?
18 April Easter Break	NO CLASS
WEEK 14 23 April	Final Presentations
25 April	Final Presentations
WEEK 15 30 April	Final Presentations
2 May	Final Paper Due Final Presentations

CONGRATULATIONS!!! YOU ARE DONE!!!