



Social Issues Methods & Analysis

Dr. Kim A. Case
Thursday 9-11am
Spring 2012

Course Description:

✱ Overview:

This course is designed to teach students qualitative and feminist research methods and how to apply them to the study of social issues through practical, hands-on experience. Students will learn various types of methodology such as content analysis, grounded theories, participatory action observation, interviewing, and focus groups. This course will also emphasize researcher reflexivity and encourage students to reflect on how their own identities (e.g., gender, social class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation) and life experiences affect their research practices. Students will also learn strategies for connecting their research to real world social issues and public policy in applied settings. This is a required class for the General Psychology Social Issues Sub-Plan.

✱ Purpose & Objectives:

- understand qualitative data analysis skills
- gain decision-making experience with regard to social issues research design, sampling, data collection and analysis
- identify ethical issues in qualitative methods
- describe the benefits of researcher reflexivity as feminist research practice

Course Requirements:

Required text:

- *Feminist Research Practice* (Hesse-Biber & Leavy) 2007; ISBN 0761928928
- *From Subjects to Subjectivities: A Handbook of Interpretive and Participatory Methods* (Tolman & Brydon-Miller) 2001; ISBN 0814782590

Participation:

There will be reading requirements for all class sessions and you should expect it to take several hours to read the material for each session. It will be VERY important that you come prepared to discuss the reading material assigned and to participate in discussion.

Field Trips

There will be a few class field trips to visit community organizations and to practice data collection using the qualitative and feminist research methods we learn about in the course. We will schedule these at the beginning of the semester. When possible, the field trips will be scheduled during class time. However, we may also take a full day to work in several visits at once.

Methodology Assignments:

Over the course of 8 weeks, we will visit various locations (see schedule) to gain hands-on experience with qualitative, feminist, and community research methods. These will in no way be full blown studies, but simply a chance for you to gain practical experience with qualitative methods. See separate document for assignment instructions.

Point Breakdown of Final Grade (600 points)

Semi-structured interview assignment	100
Field observation assignment	100
Participant observation assignment	100
Focus group assignment	100
Content analysis assignment	100
Participation and attendance	100

Factors that do NOT influence grading or your final grade:

- How badly you need to a certain grade to graduate
- How many times you have taken the course in the past
- How much you feel you deserve a certain grade
- How much and how often you beg me for extra points
- How much time you put into studying (see below)
- How hard you worked on papers (see below)

Factors that do influence your final grade:

- Total points you have at the end of the semester
- Quality of work you have done up to that point (studying many hours may not actually lead to a high grade if you are studying the wrong material or if your study habits do not help you retain information)
- Ability to show that you have mastered the concepts & can apply them to real life

Blackboard Course Website: Students taking this course in the past have enjoyed having Blackboard as another resource for the course. The course website may be accessed by visiting <http://blackboard.uhcl.edu>. This site provides course information including syllabus and any syllabus changes, announcements (very important), discussion boards, email for Dr. Case, your grades, and links to student resources. Course announcements will be posted on Blackboard, so you should check the site at least 3 times a week and always on class day. Blackboard is not optional in this course; it is required. If you are unable to successfully login using the student guide given out in class and the online help, the Blackboard technical staff on campus can be reached at 281-283-2828 [UCT Support Center].

Course Schedule

Readings listed should be read before attending class on the date listed to enhance our discussion.

*This class will meet about every other week for 2 hours. The readings and assignments are due on the date they are listed. Textbook key for below:

FRP = Feminist Research Practice

Subjects = From Subjects to Subjectivities

January 19, Meeting 1	Welcome and Introductions! Read FRP Chapters 1-4
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February 9, Meeting 2	Guest- Shari Valentine Read FRP Chapters 5-8 Reading assigned by Shari (Blackboard)
February 16 PAPER DUE	Semi-structured interview
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February 23, Week 3	Guest- Dr. Arch Erich Read FRP Chapters 9-11 Read articles = Case, Kanenberg, Erich, & Tittsworth (Blackboard) Erich, Kanenberg, Case, Allen, & Bogdanos (Blackboard)
March 1 PAPER DUE	Field observation
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March 22, Week 4	Read Subjects Chapters 1-6
March 29 PAPER DUE	Participant observation
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April 5, Week 5	Read Subjects Chapters 7-15
April 12 PAPER DUE	Focus group
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April 19, Week 6	Guest- Charlotte Haney Read Subjects Chapters 16-20 Read article = Bourgis (Blackboard)
April 26 PAPER DUE	Content analysis

Course Policies:

Office Hours and Contacting the Instructor:

Questions of general interest should first be posted to the discussion board so that other students can benefit from the response or have an opportunity to respond to your question. Only questions of a

private nature should be communicated to me through the Blackboard email. Please email through Blackboard and not the regular UHCL email (unless Blackboard is down). During office hours, I will be actively checking emails and discussion boards. When sending an email to me, please *allow a minimum of 24 hours for a response*. Most of the time I will respond much faster, but when away at conferences, access to email is limited.

Late Assignments: The late policy is as follows. Late assignments will be graded with a firm penalty of:
10% off for any time during the first 24 hours beyond deadline
20% off for any time during hours 24-48
30% off for any time during days 48-72
More than 72 hours = Zero grade
Please do not contact me with late excuses.

Classroom Behavior (in person and online):

Confrontational or argumentative behavior will not be tolerated. Rude behavior such as hostile tone of voice (all caps online), personal attacks, or snide remarks are unacceptable. In an academic environment, we all need to stay focused on maintaining a respectful classroom where everyone can share without fear of being ridiculed. You are very free to disagree with each other. In fact, I encourage a variety of opinions (so if yours is not being stated, please speak up). However, you can disagree without insulting any individual. Saying one position is ridiculous or that an individual who holds a view is stupid (or some other insult) will not be tolerated. In addition, if you have participated and your point has been made, there is no point in dominating discussion to say/type the same thing again. If you have something new to add, please do so. Thank you for following these guidelines. I hope they will help us work toward respectful engagement with the material.

Blackboard Technical Difficulties: What do you do if your assignment is due and you have a Blackboard technical glitch? NO PROBLEM, but only if you are submitting your work 24 hours before the deadline. If you are submitting your work that early and have a problem, then you must contact the Blackboard help desk folks (UCT Support Center 281-283-2828) to describe your problem and have them document your call. If UCT determines there was no way to correct the problem before the deadline, you may have 12 hours to resolve the problem without penalty. Otherwise, your work will be assessed as late. This policy will be strictly enforced. With such a large number of students, any leniency would produce chaos. Please do not write me for advice on your technical difficulties, especially given that I will not have a clue how to solve the problem.

Privacy and Blackboard Tracking Notice: Blackboard or the course web site automatically records all students activities, including your first and last access to the course, the pages you have accessed, the number of discussion messages you have read and sent, chat room discussion text, and posted discussion topics. This data is accessed by the instructor to evaluate class participation and to identify students having difficulty using Blackboard features.

Incomplete & Withdrawal: Incompletes are not an automatic in this course. Please note that I will only grant an incomplete in rare & unusual circumstances. Students often ask for an incomplete when they

have done poorly in a course and want to avoid a low final grade. However, incompletes are reserved for students in good standing in the course who communicate with the professor as soon as problems arise. If you do not officially withdraw from the course, but stop doing the work, you will earn an “F” for your academic record.

Disability Services: If you have a physical or learning disability, please be sure to contact me during the first week of class. Disability Services requires an initial meeting with new students to review individual needs and the appropriate documentation required to identify the services and accommodations they can offer. SSB 1301; 281-283-2626

Career and Counseling Services: Need help creating a resume or job interview tips? Need to talk to someone about life or other issues? Visit Career and Counseling Services. Short-term individual counseling sessions, seminars, workshops and small group experiences are available to help students grow toward academic and personal goals. I cannot stress to you enough how wonderful the people are in Career and Counseling Services. They are severely under-utilized by our students and the services are available to you at no charge. SSB 3103; 281-283-2580

The Writing Center: This is an instructional facility designed to provide all university students with peer tutors to help with their writing projects. Their primary function is to teach writing. They will work with students on any type of writing task; however, they do not provide editing service. Students must bring their own papers to their meetings and are responsible for the quality of their final products. Peer tutors will work with students at any stage of the writing process: from idea generation to style, grammar, and editing strategies. SSB 2105; 281-283-2910

Copyright: All materials in this course are subject to copyright protections and should not be downloaded, distributed, or used by students for any purposes outside of this course. This includes lectures, text, images, videos, audio, pdf files, emails, discussion posts, and all other documents.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class. Specific policies are clearly outlined in your student catalog, and will not be reproduced here. Please note that I consider any type of academic dishonesty a very serious offense, and will follow the university disciplinary procedures for any violation encountered. Plagiarism of any type may result in an F in the course, or a zero for a paper, regardless of how much coursework has been completed up to that point. Copying the work of another or paraphrasing another person without proper citation is plagiarism.

All UHCL students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UHCL catalog and the Student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. The UHCL Library also has helping information on avoiding plagiarism. The UHCL Writing Center also has a statement on plagiarism. Another wonderful source is www.plagiarism.org.

Did you know you can be guilty of plagiarism without knowing it? Improper citation of sources or too much paraphrasing is plagiarism, even if you do not intend to plagiarize. Unintentional plagiarism is still

plagiarism. So the "I didn't know" defense will not work. In addition, plagiarism can occur in the draft form of a paper as well.

Plagiarism is the use of the work of others without giving credit. For the purpose of this class, direct plagiarism will be defined as four or more consecutive words taken directly from a source without being placed in quotation marks or without citing the source. In addition, taking a sentence from another source and changing a few words is still plagiarism. This is not equivalent to putting ideas into your own words. It only shows a student can use a thesaurus to alter a few words.

This is stated more generally in the University Catalog under the Academic Honesty Policy. It would be very appropriate for you to read this entire policy for your information and for your understanding of the rights of both instructors and students. In addition, the American Psychological Association, 6th edition manual has plagiarism information that you should read.

Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is literally stealing someone else's words. This is not merely against class or University policy; it is against the law and is considered an affront to academic and moral integrity. "Cheating" or copying from another student or out of the book is a form of plagiarism and will be treated as such. The two most significant reasons academic dishonesty is dealt with strongly are as follows:

- The original intent of educational institutions is to provide a learning environment. You do not learn by copying others. If you cannot discuss or write something in your own words (with the exception of technical phrases, definitions, conceptual labels, etc.), you do not understand it.
- You are not only unfair to yourself, but to others. You are using their hard work, their efforts, as your own.

If plagiarism or cheating is found in your work, you may earn a zero for that assignment. Further punishment will be relative to the amount of plagiarism and whether or not it is found in your other assignments. You may also receive a zero for the course, depending on the violation.

Please note that changes to the syllabus may occur at the instructor's discretion and will be announced in class or on WebCT/Blackboard.

You will be responsible for any changes.

