Course Description

How do researchers study and make sense of social phenomena? From epidemiologists hoping to understand the spread of disease to app developers hoping to target our interests and compel us to buy their product, the study of human behavior is everywhere. This course introduces you to **qualitative research methods** that will provide a foundation for current and future work in the STS program. It will also provide a foundation for students working with any kind of research involving human subjects, as we learn how to develop good research questions, review and organize existing literature, and engage with the scholarly community through gathering, analyzing and presenting data.

This class is primarily about **practicing qualitative research methods** through a series of small mock projects. We will read first about the history, philosophy and ethics of qualitative methodology, and then participate in hands-on exercises involving data collection and analysis.

The semester will culminate in a **research methods portfolio** that complies both your data and your reflections on the practices you have learned.

How This Course Will Run

Each week, we will have class lecture and discussion on **Monday**. We will follow best practices for classroom learning, alternating small group meetings with lectures. Please see the course schedule for more information about these sessions. There are also ongoing research activity and fieldwork requirements that will happen primarily on **Wednesday**. Specific details and an overview will be discussed during our first week of classes.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop basic understanding of the history and development of qualitative research methodology
- Develop basic understanding of (and distinctions between) traditions and philosophical frameworks of qualitative research
- Explore in greater depth issues related to subjectivity, role, access, and ethics in qualitative research studies and their relationship to research design
- Develop understanding of Institutional Review Board (IRB) history and procedures
- Complete training modules developed by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)
- Develop strategies for developing appropriate, scalable and realistic questions for human subject research

- Develop basic understandings of specific data collection methods, including interview, focus group, observation, content analysis
- Develop basic understanding of how social scientists attempt to analyze and interpret raw data.
- Strengthen writing and oral presentation skills

Required Texts

Tracy, Sarah (2020). *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact, 2e.* Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 9781119390794

Other readings, videos and links to websites will be posted to Canvas.

Other Course Policies

Attendance Policies: Each student is allowed two absences from lecture during the course. Thereafter, one grade point for each absence will be deducted from the final participation grade. Accumulating more than 4 absences results in failure of the course. Excessive lateness/early departure also negatively impact the participation and classwork grades.

Late Submission Policy: Fieldwork assignments and exams posted late will lose 5 points per day, staring immediately after the assigned **time** and **date**. Journal entries cannot be made up, as only 4 of the 6 journal assignments are required. Presentations cannot be made up, but written materials can be submitted to the instructor for a 10-15 grade point deduction.

Plagiarism, presenting someone else's words, thoughts, or ideas (in whole or in part) as your own, is cheating and will not be tolerated. This includes the use of AI such as Chat GPT. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. NJIT enforces strict academic integrity policies, and any plagiarized material **will** result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course. Academic probation and possible suspension or expulsion from the university may also be pursued by NJIT administration in cases of plagiarism. **Three very important things to remember:**

1) Various plagiarism-detection tools are employed in this course.
2) There have been numerous cases of students attempting to submit papers written by students enrolled in earlier versions of this class. These students have received failing grades and academic probation – and the students supplying the papers have also been punished.
3) If you're struggling with the final project or concerned about these policies, I'm happy to work with you! Plagiarism is not worth the risk to your future.

Final Grade assessment formula:

Ongoing Course Engagement (attendance, participation, and Canvas discussion activities)	20%
Exams	15%
Fieldwork Assignment (field notes and final drafts)	30%
Presentation	10%
Final Portfolio & Reflection	25%

Final Grade Scale:

A =89.6-100; B+=87-89.5; B =80-86.5; C+=77-79.5; C =69.5-76.5; D+ =66.5-69.5; D = 59.5-64.5; F =59.4 or below

Course Schedule: Readings and Meetings

subject to change as needed; see below for assignment deadlines and summary descriptions

Date	Learning Objectives & Reading Assignments	Fieldwork / Assignments
9/3 W	**Introduction: Course Objectives & Social Research**	
9/8 M	**Reading Assignment:** On Canvas: Dixon et al, Chapter 1: • The Process of Social Research (pp 5-7) • Four Facebook Studies (pp 7-12) • Tracy, Chapters 1-2	Fieldwork Pre-assignment: "Do Nothing"
	Part 1: Observation Fieldwork and Ethics	
9/10 W	**Fieldwork Session 1: Site Designs**	**Fieldwork Session 1:** Observation I Class will take place around campus at specific locations. See assignment for details.
9/15 M	**Reading Assignment:** Tracy, Chapters 5-6	
9/17 W	**Fieldwork Session 2: Observation A ; return to class for de-brief at 11:00**	**Fieldwork Session 2:** Observation 2-A Class will take place around campus at specific locations. See assignment for details.
9/22 M	On Canvas: Dixon et al, Chapter 3: • The Ethics of Research (pp 39-59) Tracy, Chapters 3-4	**COMPLETED Fieldwork Assignment #1 due Upload to Canvas by 1 PM**
9/24 W	**Fieldwork Session: Observation B**	**Fieldwork Session** Observation 2-B Class will take place around campus at specific locations. See assignment for details.

Part 2: Interview, Existing Data, and Analysis		
9/29 M	**Reading Assignment:** On Canvas: Dixon et al, Chapter 9: • Interviews (pp.257-259) • Interview Structure (pp. 270-272) • The Process of Conducting In-Depth Interviews (pp. 282-288) Tracy, Chapter 7-8	
10/1 W	**Fieldwork Session 3: Interview A**	**Fieldwork Session 3:** Interview 1 - A Class will take place around campus at specific locations for fieldwork to be conducted.
10/6 M	**Reading Assignment:** Tracy, Chapter 8 On Canvas: Goldman and Waymer (2014), "A Focus Group Analysis of Ugly Betty"	
10/8 W	**Fieldwork Session 3: Interview B**	**Fieldwork Session :** Interview 2-B Class will take place around campus at specific locations for fieldwork to be conducted.
10/13 M	**Reading Assignment:** Tracy, Chapter 9	**COMPLETED Fieldwork Assignment #2 due Upload to Canvas by 5 PM**
10/15 W	**Fieldwork Session Conducted IN CLASS** **Reading Assignment:** Tracy, Chapter 10	**Fieldwork Session 4:** Data Analysis
10/20-10/22	**Exam Week**	**Exam Part 2: Upload to Canvas by 5 PM on 10/22**
Part 3: Synthesizing, Writing, and Presenting Research		
10/27 M	**Reading Assignment:** Tracy, Chapter 11	**Library / Bibliographic Research Session: Location TBD**

Date	Topic	Fieldwork / Feedback
10/29 W	**Bibliographic Research Jigsaw:** Meet with your group; return to class to debrief by 9:30	**Fieldwork Session 5:** Bibliographic Research Practice **Upload meeting notes to Canvas by 5 PM**
11/3- 11/5	**Conference Week** Check Meeting Schedule for appointment time	
11/10 M	**Round 1 Presentations**	**If assigned: Send Feedback for Round 1 by 5 PM**
11/12 W	**Round 2 Presentations**	**If assigned: Send Feedback for Round 2 by 5 PM**
11/17	**Round 3 Presentations**	**If assigned: Send Feedback for Round 3 by 5 PM**
11/19 W	**Round 3 Presentations**	
11/24 M	**Round 4 Presentations**	
12/1 M	**Organizing Final Projects**	
12/3 W	**Portfolio Review Session 2**	
12/8 M	**Portfolio Review Session 2**	

Final Portfolios due **FRIDAY, December 12 by 5 PM**