SOC 404

Qualitative Research Methods
MWF 11-11:50 am, B030 JFSB

Curtis Child
cchild@byu.edu
Office Hours: M 3–5 pm, W 4-5 pm (2035 JFSB)

Ke'ala Cabulagan
kealacabulagan@hotmail.com
Office Hours: TTh 2-3:30 pm (1053 JFSB)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the purposes, methods, and limitations of qualitative research.

MATERIALS

Book

Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut, by Kirsten Luker. (All other readings will be accessible online.)

Dedoose

We will use Dedoose to code the interview transcripts for the final project. Dedoose provides a free 30-day trial. If you need it longer than that, you will have to purchase a one-month subscription, which will cost about $10-12.

Dropbox (or an alternative)

You will need to occasionally send me large audio files. For most email services, these files will be too large to send by attachment. Instead, you will need to upload them to an online storage service, such as Dropbox, and send me a link to the file. (I will demonstrate how to do this in class.) This means that you will need to create a Dropbox account or that you will need to have some extra space in your account in order to upload files. If you are out of space, you will need to delete old files, purchase an upgrade, or use an alternative service approved by me (some options include: box.com, sugarsync.com, droplr.com, and soshareit.com).

Recording equipment

You will need to be able to record multiple interviews. Most students use their smartphone, tablet, or computer. You may also check out a recorder from Margaret in the main sociology office. There is no need to purchase new recording equipment for the course.
BRIEF ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

There are 500 points available to earn over the course of the semester. This is how they are distributed across the assignments:

**Readings and Reading Notes – 25 pts (5%)**

This class is organized in such a way that students cannot do well if they do not read the assigned material. The required readings are listed on the schedule according to the date they are due. I expect students to have them read before coming to class.

For every assigned reading, you will need to write six *or fewer* sentences that distill the text’s central argument. Of course, you are welcome to write more for your own records. If you are responding to one of Luker’s questions, then simply answer it. For everything else, the first sentence should be phrased as a question. The remaining question should be an answer to that question (which is also a summary of the reading).

You will submit your summary to me by email. The email for this and other assignments is always soc404.child@gmail.com. (Use this address only for submitting assignments. All questions should go to my account or my TA’s account.) Your submission will need to be completed *prior* to class. We will not read these summaries every time a reading is due. Rather, every few weeks we will look over them to make sure that you are keeping up. Acceptable summaries will be given a “P” for pass. Summaries that are poorly written or do not provide sufficient evidence that you completed the reading will be given a “P-”. You are permitted three “P-” scores, after which any more “P-” scores will be counted the same as if the summary was not completed at all.

Here is how grades will be assigned:

- 10 acceptable summaries = 25 pts
- 8-9 acceptable summaries = 20 pts
- 7-8 acceptable summaries = 15 pts
- 6-7 acceptable summaries = 10 pts
- 0-5 acceptable summaries = 0 pts

Note: Writing a reading summary presumes that you made at least a minimal effort to engage with the reading.

**Article Analysis – 15 pts (3%)**

Once during the semester, you will be required to analyze a published journal article that uses qualitative methods. More details will be provided in class.

**The Big Quiz – 75 pts (15%)**

There will be one “big quiz,” which will cover important material from the first part of the class. This will be an in-class quiz. More details will be provided when the quiz date draws nearer.
Practice Exercises – 160 pts (32%)

In preparation for The Project (see below), and in order to develop data collection skills, you will execute and submit four practice assignments that will give you experience conducting different types of interviews and making field observations.

- Observations and field notes – 40 pts
- Oral history interview – 40 pts
- Semi-structured interview – 40 pts
- Focus group interview – 40 pts

The Project – 200 pts (40%)

One of the major preoccupations of the class will be a collaborative project in which groups participate in designing and executing a research project. As part of this, students will submit a number of memos and other assignments, which will ultimately culminate in a final paper due at the end of the semester. More details will be provided in class.

Group points:
- Form group and elect leader – 3 pts
- Meet with Curtis to discuss project ideas – 6 pts
- Project proposal, draft – 3 pts
- Project proposal, revised – 3 pts
- Interview guide, draft – 3 pts
- Interview guide, revised – 3 pts

Individual points:
- Final transcript – 65 pts
- First read and short memo – 3 pts
- Final paper outline – 3 pts
- Final paper draft – 3 pts
- Final paper – 100 pts

Attendance – 25 pts (5%)

I expect you to come to class on time and to be prepared by having assignments read and/or ready to turn in. Because we will be doing collaborative work, attendance is required and will be recorded. You may miss the following number of days in order to receive the corresponding attendance score at the end of the semester:

- 0-3 days missed = 25 pts
- 4-6 days missed = 12.5 pts
- 7+ days missed = 0 pts

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you are not present, I will assume you have a good reason for being away. It is the responsibility of students who miss...
class to get lecture notes from someone who was in class. I do not provide my notes or slides to students, and I do not regard it as my responsibility to fill them in on what they missed.

**GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
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<td>60-62.9</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59.9 or lower</td>
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**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Qualitative Research Epistemology**

Students will be able to explain the epistemological assumptions of qualitative research methods, how to select the appropriate qualitative research method to address a research question, and the criteria for evaluating qualitative research methods.

**Qualitative Research Methods: Design and Data Collection**

Students will be able to design and conduct an in-depth interview study, an oral history interview study, a focus group study, an ethnography, a qualitative content analysis study, a qualitative case study, and a mixed-method study.

**Qualitative Research Methods: Analysis**

Students will be able to code and interpret qualitative data. (This may include the use of qualitative data analysis software.)

**Writing and Representation of Qualitative Research**

Students will be able to write a qualitative methods and findings section, as for a qualitative research article.

**Educational and Career Planning**

Students will be able to connect what they are learning in the sociology program and/or classes with educational and career options.

**POLICIES**

**Online Priority**

I will try to make as few changes to the syllabus as possible. That said, it is possible that some modifications will be necessary. I will announce any changes and alter the online content accordingly, but I will not reprint paper copies of the syllabus. Students should therefore give
priority to the online official course documents over the printed documents distributed at the beginning of the semester.

**Attendance**

It is the responsibility of students who miss class to get lecture notes from someone who was in class. I do not provide my notes or slides to students, and I do not regard it as my responsibility to fill them in on what they missed.

**Contesting Grades**

Regardless of the assignment, all grade contestations must be made within 10 days of the grade being posted/distributed (regardless of when, if at all, the hard copy of the assignment, quiz, or exam is returned). After these 10 days, the grade is considered final and no changes to it can be made. If students want to contest a grade, they need to express their complaint(s) in writing. Send complaints in the form of an email to me.

**Technology**

Turn off cell-phone ringers. Do not use cell-phones at all during class (i.e. no text-messaging, games, etc.). Laptops are permissible as long as students use them to take notes. I will revoke this allowance on a case-by-case basis if a student uses a laptop to play games, visit social media sites (Facebook, Google+, Twitter, etc.), check email, or carry on any activity that is not related to the class (or is in any way distracting to other students)—regardless whether he/she is also taking notes.

**Late work**

Instructions for submitting assignments are on the syllabus or will be given in class. If there is a problem uploading/sending an assignment, then the you should notify me by phone or email before the start of class. Work received after the assignment has been collected, or after the due date and time has passed, is considered late. Work will be penalized that is submitted by hard copy when electronic copies are requested.

Late work that is submitted after the due date and time, but on the same day as the assignment is due, will receive a 10 percentage point penalty. Late work that is turned in any time after the due date and up to one week following the due date will receive a 30 percentage point penalty. Work turned in after one week following the due date will receive a 50 percentage point penalty.

Note: Assignments that can be completed easily after the class period has passed will not be accepted after the class period ends. For example, you will not receive points for submitting a reading summary after the class has passed.

**Classroom Behavior**

I expect all class members to interact with their fellow students in a professional, respectful, and considerate manner.
Technology

Turn off cell-phone ringers. Do not use cell-phones at all during class (i.e. no text-messaging, games, etc.). Laptops are permissible as long as students use them to take notes. I will revoke this allowance on a case-by-case basis if a student uses a laptop to play games, visit social media sites (Facebook, Google+, Twitter, etc.), check email, or carry on any activity that is not related to the class (or is in any way distracting to other students)—regardless whether he/she is also taking notes.

Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education and pertains to admissions, academic and athletic programs, and university-sponsored activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment of students by university employees, other students, and visitors to campus. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor or contact one of the following: the Title IX Coordinator at 801-422-2130; the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847; the Equal Employment Office at 801-422-5895; or Ethics Point at http://www.ethicspoint.com, or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours).

Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

Academic Honesty

The first injunction of the Honor Code is the call to “be honest.” Students come to the university not only to improve their minds, gain knowledge, and develop skills that will assist them in their life’s work, but also to build character. “President David O. McKay taught that character is the highest aim of education” (The Aims of a BYU Education, p.6). It is the purpose of the BYU Academic Honesty Policy to assist in fulfilling that aim. BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.
**Plagiarism**

Intentional plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft that violates widely recognized principles of academic integrity as well as the Honor Code. Such plagiarism may subject the student to appropriate disciplinary action administered through the university Honor Code Office, in addition to academic sanctions that may be applied by an instructor. Inadvertent plagiarism, which may not be a violation of the Honor Code, is nevertheless a form of intellectual carelessness that is unacceptable in the academic community. Plagiarism of any kind is completely contrary to the established practices of higher education where all members of the university are expected to acknowledge the original intellectual work of others that is included in their own work. In some cases, plagiarism may also involve violations of copyright law. Intentional Plagiarism-Intentional plagiarism is the deliberate act of representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one’s own without providing proper attribution to the author through quotation, reference, or footnote. Inadvertent Plagiarism-Inadvertent plagiarism involves the inappropriate, but non-deliberate, use of another’s words, ideas, or data without proper attribution. Inadvertent plagiarism usually results from an ignorant failure to follow established rules for documenting sources or from simply not being sufficiently careful in research and writing. Although not a violation of the Honor Code, inadvertent plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct for which an instructor can impose appropriate academic sanctions. Students who are in doubt as to whether they are providing proper attribution have the responsibility to consult with their instructor and obtain guidance. Examples of plagiarism include: Direct Plagiarism-The verbatim copying of an original source without acknowledging the source. Paraphrased Plagiarism-The paraphrasing, without acknowledgement, of ideas from another that the reader might mistake for the author’s own. Plagiarism Mosaic-The borrowing of words, ideas, or data from an original source and blending this original material with one’s own without acknowledging the source. Insufficient Acknowledgement-The partial or incomplete attribution of words, ideas, or data from an original source. Plagiarism may occur with respect to unpublished as well as published material. Copying another student’s work and submitting it as one’s own individual work without proper attribution is a serious form of plagiarism.

**Honor Code**

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university’s expectation, and my own expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.