This class provides an introduction to the strategies, issues and challenges associated with interview-based social research. Students will learn-by-doing: At the start of the quarter, each class member will identify an interview-based research project to pursue. For class each Monday, they will read core debates surrounding different facets of interview-based research (e.g., the validity of using interview data, various approaches to sampling and recruiting interviewees, etc.). For class each Wednesday, they will respond to prompts asking them to make and justify choices for their own project. By the end of the quarter, students will produce a final paper based on this project.

Students will regularly present their work to peers, both in class and on Canvas among workgroups. The purpose of this approach is two-fold. First, students will receive detailed feedback on their work, thus enabling them to revise and/or better justify their approaches in response to issues raised by peers. Second, by providing this feedback, students will also sharpen their capacities in critically engaging with and evaluating interview-based social research.

In order to maximize our ten weeks together, students should have their research projects selected by the start of the quarter. Students must be able to conduct interviews during the quarter for this project, especially during the period between weeks 5 and 8. Therefore, they should only select a project for which they can be sure to collect interview data during this time period. If it is likely that data collected during this class will be useful for a student’s research publications in the future, approval from UW IRB should be sought before the quarter begins with assistance from the student’s faculty advisor.

**Required Text**

All other readings available via Canvas.

Assignments
Total possible points: 200. All assignments other than the final paper should be posted on Canvas by the assigned deadline.

- **Weekly Memos (45 points, 1 per week for 9 weeks):** Due by noon every Tuesday. These memos will respond to weekly prompts. The aim is to use course readings and discussions to inform decision-making on one’s research project.
- **Literature Review (15 points):** Due before the start of class on April 17. This should situate your research project within an existing scholarly debate.
- **Interview Guide (10 points):** Due at noon on April 30. This should overview the questions you will ask in interviews. Questions should be linked to the core scholarly debates to which you aim to contribute.
- **Interview Transcription (10 points):** Due at noon on May 21. This should provide a complete transcription of one of the interviews you have conducted.
- **In-Class Presentation (25 points):** Once in the quarter, each student will present to the class one study (journal article, book) that is based on qualitative interview data. This should highlight the strengths and limitations of the author’s approach. Students choose the study to present. We will assign presentation dates during the first week of class.
- **Analytical Write-Up (15 points):** Due at noon on May 28. Based on a minimum of three interviews, this should identify themes from your interviews, define those themes, and provide empirical evidence from interview data to illustrate them. Be sure that these themes you identify correspond with the research question you are asking.
- **Final Paper (50 points):** Due June 5. This should present and motivate your RQ, situate it within an existing body of literature, explain and justify the methodological choices made in the project, and present empirical findings based on your interview data.
- **Participation (30 points):** Students should provide informed, constructive contributions to class discussions, and at least one comment on each document posted by members of your work group.

Weekly Schedule

**Week 1: Overview, RQs**
April 1

- Weiss, “Introduction” from Learning From Strangers, (pgs. 1-14)
- Kristin Luker, “What is this a case of, anyway?” from Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences, (pgs. 51-75).

April 3 -- RQ workshop

- Memo #1: Introduce and motivate your research question. What do you want to know? What’s at stake in knowing it?

Week 2: Validity and Ethics in Qualitative Interview Research

April 8

- Pierre Bourdieu, “Understanding” from The Weight of the World.

April 10

- Memo #2: Justify the fit between your RQ and method, and identify at least two ethical issues related to your research. Be sure to incorporate key concepts and ideas from readings in your justification, and discuss ways you plan to address ethical issues.

Week 3: Recruitment & sampling strategies

April 15

- Weiss, “Respondents: Choosing them and recruiting them” in Learning From Strangers (pgs. 15-38).

April 17 -- Present literature reviews + workshop sampling and recruitment strategies
● Due: literature review.
● **Memo #3:** Explain and justify who you will interview: how will you recruit them and what will your sampling strategy be? Identify both the strengths and limitations of this approach.

**Week 4: Preparing for interviews**

April 22

April 24 -- Interview guide workshop
● Interview protocol/guide due
● **Memo #4:** Detail and provide rationale for the questions you will ask and your strategy for asking them. How will the responses help answer your RQ?

**Week 5: Conducting interviews**

April 29

May 1 -- Debrief of first interview
● **Memo #5:** Identify two issues that arose during your interview, and develop a strategy for addressing these issues.

**Week 6: Conducting further interviews**
May 6 -- No class (Matt is traveling)

- Use class time to conduct further interviews

May 8

- Memo #6 -- Write up your personal impression and feelings from the interviews you have conducted, and discuss initial analytic ideas and hunches that derive from it.

Week 7: Preparing and organizing interview data

May 13


May 15 -- Organizing interview data workshop

- Due: Complete transcription of one interview you have conducted.
- Memo #7: Explain the rationale behind your transcription. What rules did you follow, and how will they preserve the accuracy of the interview data?

Week 8: Analyzing interview data, part 1

May 20

- Weiss, Chapter 6

May 22 -- Interview data analysis workshop
• **Memo #8**: Identify themes from your interviews; define those themes, and provide empirical evidence from interview data to illustrate them.

**Week 9: Analyzing interview data, part 2**

May 27 -- No Class (Memorial Day)

May 29 --
• **Memo #9**: Refine and deepen your analysis from the prior week. Overview major themes and findings of your research; provide evidence for interview data to illustrate them.

**Week 10: Reporting interview data**

June 3

June 5 -- Final reflections and observations workshop
• Final paper due.