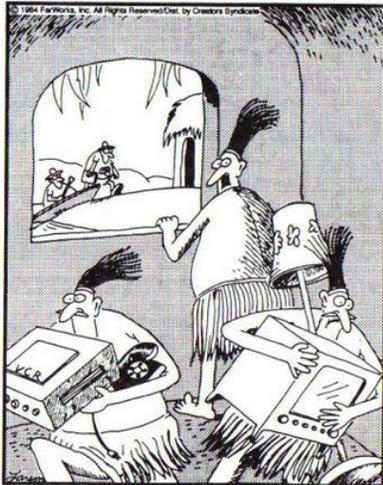


GEOGRAPHY 597: QUALITATIVE METHODS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Prof. Leigh Johnson  
Tu/Th 14:00-15:20  
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THE FAR SIDE® By GARY LARSON



"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

"Methodology can only bring us reflective understanding of the means which have demonstrated their value in practice by raising them to the level of explicit consciousness; it is no more the precondition of fruitful intellectual work than the knowledge of anatomy is the precondition of "correct" walking."

-Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*

"The only people who end up actually believing and, goddess forbid, acting on the ideological doctrines of disembodied scientific objectivity – enshrined in elementary textbooks and technoscience booster literature – are nonscientists, including a few very trusting philosophers."

-Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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In a world of alternative facts, big data, and even artificial intelligence for voice mimicry, how do human geographers (and fellow social scientists) produce data and draw meaningful conclusions about the world? This course is a graduate-level introduction to qualitative research methods in the social sciences. We will both assess the written work of others and engage in our own research design, learning how to formulate questions, identify indicators, choose appropriate methods, and analyze data.

**LEARNING GOALS:**

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand systematic practices for designing and assessing the validity of intensive qualitative research
2. Be able to empathetically critique the research designs of others
3. Have designed, conducted, analyzed, and written up a pilot piece of qualitative research

**A NOTE ON THEORY:**

This course assumes some basic familiarity with geographical (and cognate social science) approaches to epistemology. Because our primary goal is to acquaint you with the "how" and "why" of particular methods for generating and analyzing qualitative data, we will not spend much deal of time rehearsing debates about positivism, constructivism, the post-structural turn, and so forth. *Regardless of your own epistemological approach(es)*, an appreciation for these ongoing debates about how and why we generate knowledge is critical in order to engage with the work of all of your colleagues.

**A NOTE ON ASSIGNMENTS:**

Students in this course come with a variety of backgrounds, needs, and motivations. I want this class to be *as useful as possible for you*, within the broad confines of the learning goals described above. The onus is on you to let me know if:

- there are topics you want to cover that aren't currently planned
- some assignments could be reconceptualized to better contribute to your research progress

This does not mean that I will allow an endless variety of custom modifications of assignments. However, if there is a specific need/interest of a subset of students, modifications are possible.

ASSESSMENT:

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Participation (15%)

Reading prep sheets and discussion prompts (25%)

Project portfolio (60%)

- **Participation:** Includes showing up on time, with the assigned readings completed, and copies of the readings for the day in hand/on device, and actively engaging in class discussion/activities. It also includes presenting your draft portfolio elements intermittently.
- **Reading prep sheets:** The format of a methods seminar requires that students engage in the deep reading of assigned texts. Reading groups are designed to encourage reading and ongoing group debates in a twice-weekly seminar where reading response papers would become burdensome. Students will be assigned to a reading group of 5-6 people. Beginning in week 3, each student will come to class with his or her completed *physical copy* of the reading prep sheet according to his or her assigned role.
- **Discussion prompts:** For some class meetings, the texts or the format planned do not lend themselves to the reading group format. On these days, you will either be assigned a specific reading assignment task (**noted with \*** in the schedule), or post a substantive (100-150 word) discussion comment, question, or critique to the whole class Canvas Discussion board by 9 pm the day before each class (**noted with a "d"** in the schedule). We will use discussion questions to get a sense of which topics are most interesting and confounding for you. Prompts are graded "complete"/"needs improvement"/"not submitted".
- **Project portfolio:**  
Over the quarter, you will complete a series of assignments to guide you in developing a research project, for which you will actually *do* research, analysis, and write up the results. Further details will be finalized following our discussion in Week 1.  
Tentative elements:
  - Part 1: Problem framing
  - Part 2: Research question/hypothesis
  - Part 3: Observation or documents plan
  - Part 4: Interview sampling and script
  - Part 5: Focus group sampling and script
  - Part 6: Pilot report and data transcripts
  - Part 7: Analysis

#### COURSE MATERIALS:

Readings will be drawn from a variety of books and academic journals. Those not available for you to download directly through the UO libraries or directly access on the web will be posted on Canvas, except for the following which you should purchase:

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Broadway Books.

#### **Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software:**

In Weeks 8-9 we will work on analysis of data, including transcribing and coding. I will introduce you to free and excellent transcription software, but qualitative coding software has a price tag.

**There are 5 machines in the Kariel lab with copies of Atlas.ti that can be used for this purpose.**

*Those who will continue doing qualitative work are strongly encouraged to purchase their own student license for a qualitative data analysis software (MaxQDA is your instructor's personal choice, but Atlas.ti and Nvivo are also good standard options that will work well). I will provide some orientation to these tools and choices as the quarter progresses.*

**WEEKLY TOPIC OUTLINE**

Week	Date	Topic	Notes/Assignment due dates
<b>I. Introduction</b>			
1	3 April	Introductions: Making this course work for you	
	5 April	The value and logic of qualitative approaches	d
<b>II. A brief technical interlude</b>			
2	10 April	<i>Survey the field: reviewing successful NSF proposal methods sections</i>	*
	12 April	How to: Secondary data sources, primary data management (tentative)	*
<b>III. The Ultimate Objectives</b>			
3	17 April	A glimpse into a dissertation: From question to method to data to write-up (Guest: Leslie McLees)	d
	19 April	A glimpse into a proposal and the art of proposal writing	<i>Portfolio Part 1 due</i>
<b>IV. Operationalizing the problem: cases and indicators</b>			
4	24 April	4.1 Linking questions and hypotheses to cases	RP
	26 April	4.2 Samples, operationalization and indicators	<i>Portfolio Part 2 due</i>
<b>V. Collecting and Generating evidence</b>			
5	1 May	Making sense of documents and archives	RP
	3 May	The continuum of observation	RP
	(Proposed 4 May)	Ethics and IRB	d
6	8 May	Ethnography	RP
	10 May	Organizational and event ethnography	<i>Portfolio Part 3 due</i>
7	15 May	Interviewing Part 1	RP
	17 May	Interviewing Part 2	<i>Portfolio Part 4 due</i>
8	22 May	Focus Groups	RP
<b>VI. Analyzing and writing</b>			
	24 May	Data reduction and coding	<i>Portfolio Part 5 due</i>
9	29 May	Coding workshop and interpretation	*
	31 May	Writing Ethnography (Guest: Prof. Hannah Appel, UCLA)	<i>Portfolio Part 6 due</i>
10	5 June	Visual analysis	RP
	7 June	The ethics of writing	RP
11	Monday, June 11	Final presentations 12:30	<i>Portfolio Part 7 due</i>

d: discussion prompt due on Canvas discussion board; RP: Normal reading prep sheets due in class

\*: Specific reading tasks will be given, normal reading prep sheets not due

**TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE:**

## INTRODUCTION:

### 1.1 Introductions and course organization

### 1.2 The value and logic of qualitative approaches

- Erikson, Susan (2018) "[Cell phones as an anticipatory technology: Behind the hype of big data for Ebola detection and containment](#)" Working Paper 24 of the Priority Programme 1448 of the German Research Foundation "Adaptation and Creativity in Africa: technologies and significations in the making of order and disorder". Leipzig and Halle.
- Richards, P., Amara, J., Ferme, M. C., Kamara, P., Mokuwa, E., Sheriff, A. I., ... & Voors, M. (2015). Social pathways for Ebola virus disease in rural Sierra Leone, and some implications for containment. *PLoS neglected tropical diseases*, 9(4), e0003567.

## TECHNICAL INTERLUDE:

2.1 Surveying the state of methods in human geography: Reviewing successful NSF proposal methods sections (Student-led, Prof. Johnson at AAG)

- Cloke, Paul et al. 2004. *Practising Human Geography*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE: "Changing practices of human geography: an introduction" (1-35), and Introductions to Part 1, "Constructing geographical data" (35-40), and Part 2, "Constructing Geographical Interpretations" (207-213).
- Self-directed reading assignment: Locate 2 NSF proposals

2.2 How to: primary data management and secondary data sources (tentative)

- Reading TBA

## THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES: PROBLEMS, METHODS, AND EVIDENCE

3.1 From question to method to data to write-up: A glimpse into a dissertation

- McLees, Leslie 2012, *Understanding the Urban: The role of open space agriculture in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*. PhD Dissertation, University of Oregon Dept of Geography. Read: Chapters 1, 3, 5.

3.2 A glimpse into a proposal and the art of proposal writing

- Brady, Dylan. 2016, "An Infrastructural Approach Towards the Emergence of Chinese National Territory", Proposal for NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant.
- Michael Watts (2006) In search of the Holy Grail: The dissertation proposal, in E. Peregman (ed), *A handbook for social science field research*, Sage, 2006. This is also available publicly [here](#), via the UC Berkeley Institute of International Studies Dissertation Proposal Resources.
- Also peruse the "Nuts and bolts", "Style", and "Examples" pages on the IIS Dissertation Proposal website: <https://iis.berkeley.edu/node/304>

## OPERATIONALIZING THE PROBLEM: CASES & INDICATORS

4.1 Linking questions and hypotheses to cases

- Lund Christian (2014) Of What is This a Case? Analytical Movements in Qualitative Social Science Research. *Human Organization* 73(3): 224–234.
- Herbert, Steve (2010) "A taut rubber band: Theory and empirics in qualitative geographic research" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.

4.2 Samples, operationalization, and indicators

- Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa dancing in the social sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 6: On Sampling, operationalization, and generalization.
- Dewan Verma, Gita. 2000. "[Indore's Habitat Improvement Project: success or failure?](#)" *Habitat International: a Journal for the Study of Human Settlements* 24 (2000): 91-117.

## COLLECTING AND GENERATING EVIDENCE

### 5.1 Making sense of documents and archives

- Further TBA
- Weisser, Florian. 2014. "Practices, politics, performativities: Documents in the international negotiations on climate change" *Political Geography* 40
- Riles, Analise. 2006. Documents: Artifacts of modern knowledge (pp. 1e38). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. (Selections)

### 5.2 The continuum of observation

- Luker, *Salsa Dancing*, Ch 10 Field and other methods
- Rowe, Stacy and Jennifer Wolch. 1990. "Social Networks in Time and Space: Homeless Women in Skid Row, Los Angeles" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80:2, 184-204.
- Howard S. Becker, "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," *American Sociological Review* 23, no. 6 (1958): 652-666.

## {Proposed 5.3 Fri May 4}: Ethics, Human Subjects and Institutional Review Boards

### 6.1 Ethnography

- Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Broadway Books. *Selections*.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz & Linda. Shaw (2011) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2

### 6.2 Organizational and event ethnography

- Clifford, James. 1990. Notes on (Field)notes. In Roger Sanjek, editor. *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Pp. 47-70.
- Dempsey, Jessica. 2016. *Enterprising Nature*. New York: Wiley. Introduction & Chapters 6-7.

### 7.1 Tactics: Interviewing

- Paul Cloke et al., 2004, *Excerpts*: "The practices of talking to people", "Preparing for an Interview" and "Conducting an Interview", from Chapter 5 of *Practicing Human Geography*, London: SAGE. Pages 126-130, 152-159.
- Briggs, Charles. 1986. *Learning how to ask*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *Selections*.

### 7.2 Tactics: Interviewing Part 2: Strategies and debates in interviewing experts

- Schoenberger, E. 1991. The corporate interview as a research method in economic geography. *The Professional Geographer* 43:180-89.
- Parry, B. 1998. Hunting the gene-hunters: The role of hybrid networks, status, and chance in conceptualising and accessing "corporate elites." *Environment and Planning A* 30:2147-62.
- Dunn, Elizabeth. 2007. "Of Pufferfish and Ethnography: Plumbing new depths in economic geography" In *Practice and Politics in Economic Geography* (Adam Tickell, Jamie Peck, Eric Sheppard and Adrian Smith, eds.), pp. 82-93. London: SAGE.

### 8.1 Focus Groups

- Conradson, David. "Focus groups" in *Methods in Human Geography*. Flowerdew and Martin (eds). New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Secor, Anna. 2002 The veil and urban space in Istanbul: Women's dress, mobility and Islamic knowledge *Gender Place and Culture* 9:1, 5-22
- Colucci 2008 "Focus Groups Can be Fun": The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. *Qualitative Health Research* 17(10): 1422-1433.
- + McIntyre 2003 Through the eyes of women: photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place. *Gender Place and Culture* 10(1): 47-66.

### 8.2 Data reduction and coding

- Luker, Kristen, *Salsa Dancing*, Chapter 10
- Meghan Cope, 2010, "Coding Transcripts and Diaries", Chapter 27 of *Key Methods in Geography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn, Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French and Gill Valentine (eds.), London: SAGE. Pages 440-452.

### 9.1 Coding and interpretation

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz & Linda. Shaw (2011) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 6: Processing fieldnotes: coding and memoing
- MacKian, Sara (2010) "The art of geographic interpretation" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.

### 9.2 Writing ethnography

- Appel, Hannah. 2012. "Walls and White Elephants: oil extraction, responsibility, and infrastructural violence in Equatorial Guinea" *Ethnography* 13(4):439-465
- DeLyser, Dydia. 2010. "Writing Qualitative Geography" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.

### 10.1 Visual methods and analysis

- Crang, Mike (2010) "Visual Methods and Methodologies" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.
- More TBA

### 10.2. Writing and ethics

- Myers, Garth (2010) "Representing the Other: negotiating the Personal and the Political" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.
- Pratt, G. with the Philippine Women Centre (1999) 'Is this Canada? Domestic workers' experiences in Vancouver, BC', in J. Henshall Momsen (ed.) *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*. London: Routledge, pp. 23-42.