Course Description

This course will introduce students to novel qualitative strategies like virtual and digital ethnography, software assisted content analysis, and digitally mediated interviews. Students will also become acquainted with novel qualitative data sources, including grassroots data reclamation projects that amass government data for researchers. Students will engage with the intellectual genealogies of new qualitative methods as models for conceptualizing novel approaches to data collection and use. Students will have the opportunity to integrate their own research into the final assignment by drawing on a methodological, analytical, or data-based intervention modeled in the course (or other novel intervention). The course will consider the ethical dimensions of long-standing and novel methods.

Required Texts


See *Notes for Me section at the bottom

Learning goals

Be familiar with sociological strategies for methodologically approaching novel data.

Edit a manuscript for a methodology-based publication.

Identify strengths and weaknesses in qualitative methodologies.
Develop a reflexive practice for interrogating methodological ethics.

Grading

1 Data Memo - 20%
1 Week Leading Discussion - 15%
1 Final Methods Paper - 35%
1 Theorization of Methods Presentation - 30%

Agenda

Each section below includes one or more anchor texts, sometimes books, and sometimes articles. To supplement the anchor texts, I may add other short pieces ranging from relevant long-form news investigations and policy reports to digital art exhibitions that invite participants to interact with exhibit objects in unanticipated ways. Students may be asked to read a paper specific to their colleagues’ research in order to offer substantive peer feedback. The anchor texts are spread out accordingly. Where the reading is shorter, I expect students to read closely for a deep dive into the texts.

Key Questions:

(We will add to these as the semester progresses)

What, exactly, is a method?

How does theory inform the construction and execution of sociological methods?

What are the ethical critiques of particular qualitative research methods?

How do stories about the social world push our intellectual boundaries?

How do methods socially construct “facts”?

September 7th Introduction: Why “New” Methods?

September 12th Content Analysis


September 19th Interviewing: Up-to-Date Techniques

Vasquez-Tokos, Jessica. **“If I Can Offer You Some Advice”: Rapport and Data Collection in Interviews Between Adults of Different Ages.** Symbolic interaction 40, no. 4 (2017): 463-482.

**September 26th**

**Ethnographies of the Intangible**


**October 3rd**

**Archival and Historical Comparative Methods**


**October 10th**

**Process Tracing**


**October 17th**

**Speculative Fiction**


October 24th  Theorization and Methodological Logics


October 31st  “Big” Data and Computer Assisted Data Collection


November 7th  Virtually Situated Ethnography


November 14th  Digital and Virtually Situated Interviewing


November 21st  Dark patterns

**November 28th**

**Public and Reclaimed Data**


**December 5th**

**Problem-Solving Methodological Quandaries/ Presentations**

**December 12th**

**Presentations**

**Classes end December 14th**

**Reading Days - December 15th**

**Notes from Me**

**Accessibility**

If you have any specific personal and/or academic accessibility requirements (learning disability, physical disability, language comprehension, etc.), I welcome you to speak with me or email me to let me know how to best accommodate your needs, especially if you don’t have an apparent disability, have ongoing health issues or are trying to pass. You are NOT obligated to disclose any of these issues with me, only specify if there’s any accommodations required. It is my pleasure to ensure that as my class meets the needs of all my students. If you need any adaptations for course materials (large font, pacing, image description, closed captioning) let me know. You are also encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Support Services, but it is not a requirement.

**Rutgers Diversity Statement**

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.