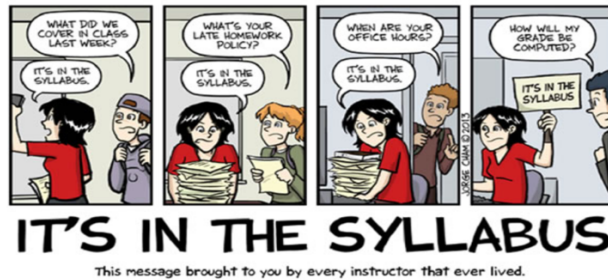


San José State University  
Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences  
**SOCI 105: Qualitative Research Methods**  
SPRING 2025 Course Syllabus



“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison

### Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and are mindful that San Jose State University sits on the land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people, who trace their ancestry through Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose. We remember their connection to this region and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, learn, and play on their traditional homeland.

### Course and Contact Information

**Professor:** Dr. Yolanda Wiggins (she/her/hers)

**Email:** [yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu](mailto:yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu)

**Class Days/Times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00PM-1:15PM

**Location:** Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), Room 226A

**Course Prerequisites:** SOCI 1, SOCI 100W SOCI 101, Upper Division Standing

### Course Description

*Why do we use qualitative research methods? What kinds of questions should we answer with these methods? What are different types of qualitative research methods? How do we conduct content analysis and in-depth interviews? How do we conduct ethical research? How does our background influence what we can learn from others? How do we analyze our data and write it up in a paper?*

This course explores the questions described above. Students will use their sociological imagination and become sociological detectives to explore research questions of their design independently. The readings have been selected to give you examples of how to do qualitative research and what we can learn from qualitative research, both empirically and theoretically. The texts have also been selected to explore dilemmas qualitative researchers confront, such as how to conduct research ethically and how their backgrounds influence their findings and analysis. Ultimately, knowing how to collect data, analyze it, and present it to others, are skills that are extremely valuable in the “real world.”

Conducting qualitative research is labor, time, and writing-intensive. It takes time to collect data, critically analyze data, write-up preliminary memos, and then complete a final paper. Through your research projects, you may learn

things that confirm your hunches about ‘how things work,’ but you should also be prepared to encounter things that challenge those hunches.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will learn how to:

1. Observe their social world carefully and systematically, with an understanding of how one’s social identities (race, class, gender, etcetera) can impact data collection and analysis.
2. Understand how and why to use content analysis and in-depth interviews, among other qualitative research methods.
3. Understand and identify ethical issues in engaging in qualitative research.
4. Learn how to conduct content analysis and in-depth interviews.
5. Collect/record and organize data from their content analysis and interviews.
6. Analyze data, think inductively, and write-up their findings and analysis in a well-written and organized report.
7. Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Required Books and Texts

No textbook is required. All readings will be made available on Canvas.

Method of Evaluation

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1) Short Method Memos                     | (15%) |
| 2) Midterm Exam                           | (30%) |
| 3) Class Facilitation/Class Participation | (20%) |
| 4) Interview Paper Project                | (35%) |

Evaluation Breakdown and Detailed Information

94-100% = A	80-82% = B-	60-65% = D
90-93% = A-	76-79% = C+	< 60% = F
86-89% = B+	73-75% = C	
83-85% = B	70-72% = C-	

A+ 97-100; A 94-96; A- 90-93

***Distinguished Work:*** The student writes at an exemplary level with work that is error free (proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure), demonstrating logical organization, proper documentation and appropriate supporting evidence. Distinguished work requires a consistent application of concepts with original analysis integrating literature and concepts into course work. The student initiates and effectively responds to questions.

B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83

***Superior Work:*** The student completes substantial work including analysis, integration, and application of learned concepts in both written and oral activities. Writing is more a review or summary of materials than a critical analysis. The student attends regularly and participates in class.

C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73

**Average Work:** The student satisfies minimum requirements and demonstrates limited integration, application, and analysis.

D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62

**Unsatisfactory Work:** The student satisfies only some minimum requirements. The student completes all assignments but demonstrates a lack of understanding in regard to core knowledge.

F 59-below

**Failure:** The student does not meet minimum requirements.

### **LATE WORK POLICY**

I want you to be successful in this course. As such, assignments are made available well within advance. I will also make announcements in class regarding upcoming assignments. **In order to be fair to all students a part of this class, late work will not be accepted under any circumstances.** I do not accept emailed work.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

I would like meet with each of you in office hours each. While not required, office hours are a great opportunity to ask additional questions about the course and discuss your research projects and educational career goals. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please email me to set up a different time to meet.

### **CONTACTING ME**

I am available over email if you need to contact me. Please refer to the course name and topic of your email. (105: TOPIC OF EMAIL) in the subject line of your message. You should expect to wait **at least 24 hours** to hear back from me. If you email me on Friday or over the weekend, please do not expect a response until Monday. Please use professional language, tone, and style in your correspondence. For example, do not use texting language. DO use standard greetings – Dear Dr. Wiggins/Prof. Wiggins.

### **ASSIGNMENT COMPONENTS**

#### **SHORT METHOD MEMOS**

Over the semester, you will read examples of empirical research using qualitative research methods. The purpose of these methods memos is to expose you to a range of research projects using qualitative methods, to learn how questions are structured how methods are implemented, and how data is collected and analyzed.

Guided questions and page guidelines for your short response method memo will be posted on Canvas.

### **INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **INTERVIEW PAPER PROJECT (7-10 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES)**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Students will interview **TWO** individuals of their choosing on a topic of your choosing. More details will be provided on Canvas.

#### **CLASS PARTICIPATION/FACILITATION**

One time during the course of the semester you will be assigned to a group and asked to facilitate a class session. This presentation will demonstrate your knowledge on the reading, create discussion for the class and present on

qualitative research on a related topic. More details will come as the course begins. These presentations will begin around Week 4 and run until Week 15.

Periodically, I may administer in class pop quizzes. Quizzes will be administered either at the start of each class or at the end and will be time-limited. There will be no make-up quizzes. Quiz days will be unannounced so please make an effort to attend class regularly. Additionally, throughout the semester there will be in class graded assignments.

### **MIDTERM EXAM**

The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. It will cover content reviewed during lectures and assigned readings up to that point in the course. To help you prepare, a review session will be held during class the week before the exam. This session will provide an opportunity to clarify concepts, ask questions, and go over key topics. Attendance at the review session is highly encouraged.

**\*\*\*\* LATE PAPERS, PROPOSALS, METHOD MEMOS, AND PRESENTATIONS WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT.**

### **Our Learning Community**

Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form study groups to discuss course material, share information, and peer edit assignments. I recommend that you exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two other students the first week of class.

San Jose State University is committed to providing an environment consistent with the academic nature and core values of the institution in which students can participate in learning as a humanizing, social activity. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. As such, please:

- behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies.
- refrain from disrupting the ability of fellow student to learn.
  - Examples of disruption include:
    - Technological use that significantly or repeatedly distracts others
    - Interrupting class by arriving late or leaving early
    - Not allowing others to participate in discussion; cutting people off during discussions
- communicate in a respectful fashion when interacting online.

Feel free to email me and even better, drop by during in-person or virtual office hours. If those hours do not work with your schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment. Consider yourself warmly invited to discuss the readings, career possibilities/opportunities, or anything else! There are aspects about college that can be confusing. Professors can appear intimidating or scary. I am here to help. Please utilize me as a resource!

### **Student Resources**

**The Writing Center** provides individualized support to assist you in better understanding course material and to aid you on your path to success. Services are free and include one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, interactive writing conferences, and academic skills coaching to discuss effective study strategies. Online tutoring services have been expanded significantly. Please see the [Center's website](#) or call: (408) 924-2308 to schedule an appointment.

**Accessible Education Center (AEC)** provides comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students. If you are a student in need of academic accommodations, please contact ACE within the first week of class. From there we can discuss your learning needs and appropriate accommodations. For more information, please visit <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> or call: (408) 924-6000.

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call (408) 924-5910 for an initial consultation appointment or see their [website](#) for more information.

### **Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault**

As your professor, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning space. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on SJSU's campus with the University. For information and resources regarding sexual misconduct or assault visit the [Title IX/Gender Equity Issues website](#) or [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website](#).

### **Academic Integrity**

All academic work for this course must meet the University's standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on tests, using previous work submitted to a class without the instructor's approval (even if it's your own!), and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the [university's policies on academic integrity](#). **By turning in assignments, you are consenting to the Honor Pledge.**

For this course, all of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course Canvas page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work.

All in this class (i.e., usage of Grammarly, ChatGPT, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

### **Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict.

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE**

I have outlined the readings and assignments in the syllabus before the start of the semester, but I may modify the syllabus if the need arises. Please note all readings should be completed by the date listed.

### **UNIT ONE**

#### **Why do Qualitative Research? What are different types of qualitative methods? Why conduct research ethically?**

Our goal for the first unit is to have several brief introductions. We will be introduced to each other.

I will also give you an introduction to the course by providing an overview of the course goals and the course assignments. We will be introduced to the idea of being a sociological detective. We will also be introduced to why we do qualitative research and different kinds of qualitative research methods. We will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to

obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We will consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were violated or questioned.

Jan. 23                      **Welcome Week and Introduction to the Course**  
Course Overview. Review of Syllabus and Course Canvas Webpage

Jan. 28-30                **Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (Continued)**  
How to read academic research articles? What are different types of qualitative research methods. Why should we care about social science research? What are careers utilizing social science research methodology?

## UNIT TWO

### **How Do We Conduct Ethical Research?**

In this unit, we will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were questioned.

Feb. 4-6                    **Do No Harm and Informed Consent**

## UNIT THREE

### **How Do We Conduct Participant Observation? Gaining Access and Taking Notes**

In this unit, you will learn about participant observation/ethnographic research methods and leverage the information you learn to write a thorough ethnographic critique. We will discuss issues of gaining access to field sites observe, the roles ethnographers assume, the mechanics of taking field notes and analyzing data, and how a researcher's background might impact the collection of data and analysis.

Feb. 11-13                **Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography**  
**GROUP 1 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**

Feb. 18-20                **Introduction to Participant Observation/Ethnography (Continued)**  
**GROUP 2 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**

Feb. 25-27                **Moving from observation to analysis**  
**GROUP 3 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**

## UNIT FOUR

### **How Do We Do Content Analysis? How We Impact and Analyze Our Data?**

Students will learn about content analysis and other unobtrusive means of conducting research. We will discuss issues of crafting a research question, selecting documents to analyze, deciding on a

sampling frame, analyzing your data, developing a coding scheme, and writing your results in a report.

- Mar. 4-6                      Constructing a Research Question and Selecting Data, Coding Data  
**GROUP 4 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**
- Mar. 11-13                    Constructing a Research Question, Selecting Data, Coding Data (Continued)  
**GROUP 5 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**
- Mar. 18-20                    Analyzing Data, Creating a Coding Scheme, and Writing Results  
**GROUP 6 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**

### UNIT FIVE

#### **How Do We Conduct Research Interviews? Executing Interview Projects**

In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in a second independent research project of your choosing for which you will interview two individuals. This project may build on your content analysis project or can be something completely different. You will learn about different types of sampling often used for interview-based research and how to move a research interest to a research question. We will discuss issues related to finding participants, obtaining informed consent, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up your findings. You will be exposed to various examples of research using interviews as a primary data source. As you read these examples, you should consider how they might inform your research and the kinds of data used to support the author's analysis.

- Mar. 25-27                  **MIDTERM EXAM ON MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup> (IN CLASS) – NO CLASS ON MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>**
- Apr. 2-4                      SPRING RECESS – NO CLASS THIS WEEK!
- Apr. 8-10                    Sampling or Who Do We Interview? Building Rapport, Interviewing Across Difference, Do's & Don'ts  
**GROUP 7 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**
- Apr. 15-17                  Moving from codes to categories to concepts, Dissemination of Research Findings  
**GROUP 8 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**
- Apr. 22-24                  Moving from codes to categories to concepts, Dissemination of Research Findings (Continued)  
**GROUP 9 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY**
- Apr. 29-May 1              NO READINGS
- May 6-8                      NO READINGS

May 12

FINAL INTERVIEW PAPER DUE ON MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> BY 11:59PM