

SOCI 6004

Advanced Qualitative Methods

Department of Sociology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Instructor: Prof. Jin Sun
Office/Office hour: Sino Building 414, Thursday, 2:00 pm-4:00 pm
Email: jinsun@cuhk.edu.hk
Time/Location: Sino Building 429, Wednesday 11:30 am-2:30 pm
TA: TBC

Course Description:

In this course, postgraduate students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches. Students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry and acquire a general understanding of the theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology. Through lectures, readings, assessments, and hands-on research activities, students will explore different ways of investigating the social world in a scientific but non-statistical way that gives voice to the people we are studying. The ultimate goal is to let students experience the ways that qualitative sociologists do research. We will therefore emphasize applied aspects of qualitative research.

Learning Outcome

At the end of this class students are expected to be able to understand key methodological and empirical readings as well as on practical skills, such as such as case study, informant engagement and selection, ethnography, fieldwork, interview techniques, focus group, participant observation, writing field notes, script coding, and analyzing and writing qualitative data.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop skills around how to collect, manage, analyze, and interpret qualitative research data
- Formulate research questions and choose a qualitative research design to examine those questions
- Understand and meet the ethical standards for conducting research with human subjects, including research in different social spaces
- Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis
- Analyze and interpret qualitative data
- Demonstrate academic integrity in assessed work through appropriate use of academic citation and referencing conventions

Assessment:

- A) Final Report (20%): The main requirement is to produce a final report based on research conducted during the course of the semester.

The final report should include:

- 1) A problem statement, supported by some references to the research literature. What is the puzzle? What is this a case of? What is the question/problematic?
- 2) Engaging the readers with the literature. What literature are you speaking to or adding a contribution to? What analytical tools and data do you use to do so?
- 3) A description of the research site, including people and activities involved.
- 4) A description of your data-gathering activities
- 5) A description of your method for gaining access to the site and establishing field relationships. Observer effects on the data. Ethical problems encountered.
- 6) A description of your approach to data analysis.
- 7) Your findings. How do the findings relate to your problem statement? Do they confirm, refute, or suggest a reformulation of the research question? What do these early findings suggest about what you would need to do for this research?

The final paper should be submitted via email (in .docx format) before W12/W13 at the latest (no exception). It should not exceed 20 pages in length (double-spaced), plus appendixes and bibliography. Write an analysis of your qualitative data in article form, as modeled after articles published in journals such as the American Journal of Sociology.

- B) Eight assignments that lead up to the final paper (20%).

Assignment 1: Self-Introduction

Assignment 2: What is Good Qualitative Sociology?

Assignment 3: Define your Research Question (and Compete Literature Review)

Assignment 4: Create your Research Proposal (and contact interviewees/network)

Assignment 5: Create Interview Questions (and confirm interviewees/network)

Assignment 6: Conduct a Preliminary Round of Interviews and Revised Interview Questions and Research Proposal

Assignment 7: Complete a Human Subject Form and the online training to conduct research on Human Subjects

Assignment 8: Provide a One-Page Abstract of your Final Paper

- C) Discussions, peer review, and participation (20%).
- D) Proposal and Final Report Presentations (each 20%). Proposal presentations will be arranged in W4-W11 with 2 presenters each week, and the final report presentations will be in W12-W13 with 8 panels each week.

Note: Chat-GPT or other AI-generated contents will be graded below B.

Course Schedule

1. Introduction
2. Research Design in (Chinese) Sociology | A1
3. Choosing a Good Question/Case/Object/Research Strategy | A2
4. Fieldwork, Interviews and Focus Groups | A3/P1
5. Ethnography and Participatory observation | A4/P2
6. Archive, Mixed and Computational Qualitative | A5/P3
7. Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis using ATLAS.ti | A6/P4
8. Application I: society/social group | A7/P5
9. Application II: state | A8/P6
10. Application III: institutions | P7
11. Application IV: global and transnational fields | P8
12. Final Presentation I (P5-8)
13. Final Presentation II (P1-4)

Note: guest speakers might be invited subject to further confirmation.

Week 1: Introduction

- Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney. 2012. A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigm. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-15.
- 劳伦斯·纽曼. 2007. 社会研究方法：定性和定量的取向. 中国人民大学出版社, pp.87-120.
- 谢宇. 2006. 社会学方法与定量研究. 北京：北京大学出版社, pp.3-8&29-39.
- 赵鼎新. 2015. 社会科学研究的困境：从与自然科学的区别谈起. 社会学评论.
- 赵鼎新. 2021. 质性社会学研究的差异性发问和发问艺术. 社会学研究.

Week 2: Research Design in (Chinese) Sociology | A1

- Abend, Gabriel. 2013. “Styles of Causal Thought: An Empirical Investigation.” *American Journal of Sociology*. 119 (3): 602-654.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Patricia White. 2008. The Evaluation of Systematic Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences. National Science Foundation. Pp.3-19.
- Lamont, Michèle. 2009. How Professors Think. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 159-201.
- 费孝通. 2017 (1947). 鄉土中國. 香港中和
- 金耀基. 2023 (1966). 從傳統到現代:中國現代化與中國現代文明的建構. 中華書局
- 张静. 2019. 中国社会学四十年. 北京：商务印书馆. 第一章
- 周晓虹. 2021. 重建中国社会学: 40 位社会学家口述实录 (1979—2019). 北京：商务印书馆.
- 第一辑: 金耀基：探索现代中国的伟大转型;
李沛良：中国社会学的重建与“两岸三地”的交流.
- 第三辑: 谢宇：格物致知，观世穷理
赵鼎新：在动荡的时代中锚定历史
周敏：从唐人街开启的移民研究生涯
周雪光：本土与国际间的“越界旅行”

A1: Self-introduction. Please write a few paragraphs describing yourself, your personal, intellectual and professional interests, and your social/spatial trajectory. Describe your exposure to qualitative and mixed methods. Send it to TA/Instructor before the class.

Week 3: Choosing a Good Question/Case/Object/Research Strategy | A2

A2: Under what Light does it Shine? Each student will be required to choose a qualitative study that won a best paper/book ASA award over the last few years (see list here http://www.asanet.org/sections/section_recipients.cfm). In 2-5 pages, please identify the theoretical argument of the work, describe some of the evidence used to support it, and evaluate the strengths of the study and the kind of excellence that it illustrates (if any). Each student needs to talk and participate to Q&A for 10 minutes.

Send it to TA/Instructor before the class. Each student shall choose a different article or book. Confirm with TA as early as possible. TA will set up an online topic form.

Week 4: Fieldwork, Survey, Interviews and Focus Groups | A3/P1

- Choi, Susanne YP, and Roman David. "Lustration systems and trust: evidence from survey experiments in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland." *American Journal of Sociology* 117.4 (2012): 1172-1201.
- Spires, Anthony J. "Contingent symbiosis and civil society in an authoritarian state: Understanding the survival of China's grassroots NGOs." *American journal of sociology* 117.1 (2011): 1-45.
- Michelson, Ethan. "Lawyers, political embeddedness, and institutional continuity in China's transition from socialism." *American Journal of Sociology* 113.2 (2007): 352-414.
- Michelson, Ethan. "Decoupling: Marital violence and the struggle to divorce in China." *American journal of sociology* 125.2 (2019): 325-381.
- Optional:*
- Ali, Syed and Philip Cohen, eds. 2016. "How to do Ethnography Right," Contexts <https://contexts.org/blog/how-to-do-ethnography-right/>
- Deluca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lundquist and Kathryn Edin. "Want to Improve your Qualitative Research? Try Using Representative Sampling and Working in Teams"
- Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing". *Qualitative Sociology* 37 (2):153-171.
- Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 99-190.
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." Pp. 152-72 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (second edition). California: Sage.
- Strategies for Qualitative Interviews:
https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf
- Watters, John K. and Patrick Biernacki, 1989. "Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations." *Social Problems* 36 (4): 416-430.
- Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press, vii-120.

A3: Define your Research Question. This will be the first step toward your major research project. Go out, explore the world, and come back with some possibilities for the research topic, setting, scene, locale, etc. Be prepared to present your ideas orally to the class for discussion. You will have to narrow down very quickly – so narrow down now if you can. Start assessing research sites.

P: Each student needs to prepare a research proposal (2-4 pages) including the research question, key concepts, preliminary hypotheses, empirical data to be gathered, informant, sources of data/interview/survey, how to access into the fieldwork, and a rough draft of interview questions or focus group questions to be used in the field. Each presenter needs to present the research proposal in 10-15 minutes, and invite 3 peer reviewers to comment on the proposal in a Q&A session for 20-15 minutes. Both the presenter and the reviewers will be graded based on performance. The research proposal shall be submitted to the instructor, TA and reviewers *one week prior to the presentation*.

Week 5: Ethnography and Participatory observation | A4/P2

- Chan, Cheris Shun-ching. "Invigorating the content in social embeddedness: An ethnography of life insurance transactions in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 115.3 (2009): 712-754.
- He, Xin. 2021. *Divorce in China: Institutional Constraints and Gendered Outcomes*. New York: New York University Press.
- 贺欣. 2021. 街头的研究者—法律与社会科学笔记. 北京大学出版社.
- He, Xin, and Jing Feng. 2021. "Unfamiliarity and Procedural Justice: Litigants' Attitudes Toward Civil Justice in Southern China." *Law & Society Review* 55(1): 104-138.
- Ng, Kwai Hang, and Xin He. 2017. *Embedded Courts: Judicial Decision-Making in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Otis, Eileen M. "Beyond the Industrial Paradigm: Market-Embedded Labor and the Gender Organization of Global Service Work in China." *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 1 (2008): 15–36.

A4: each student needs to submit a preliminary research proposal (without the appendix of interview questions), and report the panel of 3 peer reviewers to TA.

Week 6: Archive, Mixed and Computational Qualitative Studies | A5/P3

- Computational Qualitative Studies, Guest Speaker: Prof. Tony Tam
- Nelson, Laura K. "Computational grounded theory: A methodological framework." *Sociological Methods & Research* 49, no. 1 (2020): 3-42.
- Radford, Jason, and David Lazer. "Big data for sociological research." *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Sociology* (2019): 417-443.
- Optional:*
- Tam, Tony, and Jin Jiang. "The Making of Higher Education Inequality: How Do Mechanisms and Pathways Depend on Competition?" *American Sociological Review* 79, no. 4 (2014): 807–16.
- Tam, Tony. "Sex Segregation and Occupational Gender Inequality in the United States: Devaluation or Specialized Training?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102, no. 6 (1997): 1652–92.
- Hannum, Emily, Hiroshi Ishida, Hyunjoon Park, and Tony Tam. "Education in East Asian societies: Postwar expansion and the evolution of inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45 (2019): 625-647.
- Andreas, Joel. "The Structure of Charismatic Mobilization: A Case Study of Rebellion during the Chinese Cultural Revolution." *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 3 (2007): 434–58.
- Benavot, Aaron, Yun-Kyung Cha, David Kamens, John W. Meyer, and Suk-Ying Wong. "Knowledge for the Masses: World Models and National Curricula, 1920-1986." *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 1 (1991): 85–100.
- Zhang, Yang. "Why Elites Rebel: Elite Insurrections during the Taiping Civil War in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 127.1 (2021): 60-101.

A5: Develop your interview questions based on the feedback you will have received on your proposal and on the readings. The questions should be open-ended and intended to elicit narrative accounts pertinent to your research concerns. Add a list of interview questions as an appendix to the proposal and send it to 3 peer reviewers and TA.

Week 7: Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis using ATLAS.ti (UL) | A6/P4

<https://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/research/digital-scholarship/tools/>
<https://atlasti.com/video-tutorials>
<https://atlasti.com/video-tutorials/atlas-ti-web-video-tutorials>
https://www.youtube.com/@ATLAS.ti_QDAsoftware

Note: TA will contact the University Library to see if there will be a workshop in Spring; if no, the session will be arranged at the Soc Dept lab at 4/F Sino Building.

A6: Conduct a Round of Preliminary Interviews and Deliver a Revised Interview Questions and Research Proposal. Recruit 2-5 adult friends with whom you don't know their answers for an open-ended pilot interview. It is preferred to select pilot interviewees with the setting that will be the subject of your final report. Record your interview with them and keep a field note diary. Revise your interview questions as well as your research proposal, based on the pilots and the comments you have received to date. Share it with your reviewers for additional feedback. Analyze the interview scripts using ATLAS.ti and send it to TA.

Week 8: Application I: society/social group | A7/P5

Hurst, William. 2009. *The Chinese worker after socialism*. Cambridge University Press.
Kane, Danielle, and Jung Mee Park. "The puzzle of Korean Christianity: Geopolitical networks and religious conversion in early twentieth-century East Asia." *American Journal of Sociology* 115.2 (2009): 365-404.

Lee, Ching Kwan, and Yonghong Zhang. "The power of instability: Unraveling the microfoundations of bargained authoritarianism in China." *American journal of sociology* 118.6 (2013): 1475-1508.

Lei, Ya-Wen. "Freeing the press: How field environment explains critical news reporting in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 122.1 (2016): 1-48.

Lei, Ya-Wen. "Delivering solidarity: Platform architecture and collective contention in China's platform economy." *American Sociological Review* 86.2 (2021): 279-309.

Liu, Sida, and Hongqi Wu. 2016. "The Ecology of Organizational Growth: Chinese Law Firms in the Age of Globalization." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(3): 798-837.

Sun, Yanfei. "The rise of Protestantism in post-Mao China: State and religion in historical perspective." *American Journal of Sociology* 122.6 (2017): 1664-1725.

Xu, Xiaohong. "Belonging Before Believing: Group Ethos and Bloc Recruitment in the Making of Chinese Communism." *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 5 (2013): 773-96.

- Yang, Fenggang, and Helen Rose Ebaugh. "Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications." *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 2 (2001): 269–88.
- Zhao, Dingxin. 2008. *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zhao, Dingxin. "State-society relations and the discourses and activities of the 1989 Beijing student movement." *American journal of sociology* 105.6 (2000): 1592-1632.
- Zhao, Dingxin. "Ecologies of social movements: Student mobilization during the 1989 prodemocracy movement in Beijing." *American journal of Sociology* 103.6 (1998): 1493-1529.

A7: Complete a Human Subject Form and the online training to conduct research on Human Subjects. <https://www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/orktsResearch/>.

Week 9: Application II: state | A8/P6

- Kiser, Edgar, and Yong Cai. "War and Bureaucratization in Qin China: Exploring an Anomalous Case." *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (2003): 511–39.
- Lee, Chengpang, and Myungsahm Suh. "State building and religion: Explaining the diverged path of religious change in Taiwan and South Korea, 1950–1980." *American Journal of Sociology* 123.2 (2017): 465-509.
- Slater, Dan. "Revolutions, crackdowns, and quiescence: Communal elites and democratic mobilization in Southeast Asia." *American Journal of Sociology* 115.1 (2009): 203-254.
- Wang, Liping. "From Masterly Brokers to Compliant Protégées: The Frontier Governance System and the Rise of Ethnic Confrontation in China-Inner Mongolia, 1900–1930." *American Journal of Sociology* 120.6 (2015): 1641-1689.
- Zhao, Dingxin. 2015. *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History: A New Theory of Chinese History*. Oxford University Press.

A8: Provide a One-Page Abstract of your Final Paper to 3 peer reviewers and TA.

Week 10: Application III: institutions | P7

- Guthrie, Douglas. "Between markets and politics: Organizational responses to reform in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 102.5 (1997): 1258-1304.
- Hurst, William. 2018. *Ruling before the law: the politics of legal regimes in China and Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Marsh, Robert M. "Weber's misunderstanding of traditional Chinese law." *American Journal of Sociology* 106.2 (2000): 281-302.
- Ng, Kwai Hang, and Xin He. "The institutional and cultural logics of legal commensuration: blood money and negotiated justice in China." *American journal of sociology* 122.4 (2017): 1104-1143.
- Yang, Dali L. 1996. *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Zhou, Xueguang. 2022. *The Logic of Governance in China: an organizational approach*. Cambridge University Press. (周雪光. 2017. 中国国家治理的制度逻辑)
https://web.stanford.edu/~xgzhou/zhou_book2017.pdf

Note: No assignment (Conduct a new Round of Interviews and Write the Final Report).

Week 11: Application IV: global and transnational fields | P8

Halliday, Terence C., and Bruce G. Carruthers. "The recursivity of law: Global norm making and national lawmaking in the globalization of corporate insolvency regimes." *American Journal of Sociology* 112.4 (2007): 1135-1202.

Liu, Dongxiao. "When Do National Movements Adopt or Reject International Agendas? A Comparative Analysis of the Chinese and Indian Women's Movements." *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 6 (2006): 921-42.

Long, Yan. "The contradictory impact of transnational AIDS institutions on state repression in China, 1989-2013." *American Journal of Sociology* 124.2 (2018): 309-366.

Mallard, Grégoire, and Jin Sun. "Viral Governance: How Unilateral US Sanctions Changed the Rules of Financial Capitalism." *American Journal of Sociology* 128.1 (2022): 144-188.

Steinmetz, George. "The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire before 1914." *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 4 (2008): 589-612.

Note: due for the first group of final reports. Send your Final Paper to 3 peer reviewers, instructor and TA.

Week 12: Final Presentation I (P5-8)

Instructions: each of 8 presenters need to submit the final report to 3 peer reviewers, instructor and TA one week prior to the final presentation. Each presenter will brief the one-page abstract for 1-2 minutes. Three reviewers will comment and discuss with the presenter for 15 minutes. Both the presenter and reviewers will be graded.

Note: due for the last group of final reports. Send your Final Paper to 3 peer reviewers, instructor and TA.

Week 13: Final Presentation II (P1-4)

Instructions: each of 8 presenters need to submit the final report to 3 peer reviewers, instructor and TA one week prior to the final presentation. Each presenter will brief the one-page abstract for 1-2 minutes. Three reviewers will comment and discuss with the presenter for 15 minutes. Both the presenter and reviewers will be graded.

Credit: Qualitative Social Analysis by Michèle Lamont; Research Design and Proposal Writing by Graziella Moraes Silva.