COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course provides students with a basic understanding of tools needed to engage in the social analysis of real world contexts. The tools you will develop in this course will be beneficial to you whatever your ultimate career (or life) goals may be.

Fundamental to the course is developing the ability to cultivate an awareness of one’s own “baggage” (i.e. cognitive frameworks, beliefs and meaning systems, and analytic lens) and to try and understand the ways in which our own lenses shape the ways in which we see (or don’t see) things and how we interpret and make meaning out of the world around us. We will think deeply about the processes involved in the construction of knowledge and what it means to “know” something. We will also strive to bracket our own lenses, as much as possible, so as to understand the “native” meaning system and point of view. While full, unfettered relativism is impossible, these skills of self-awareness and perspective taking are an essential component of social science, valuable for good and responsible citizenship, and will serve you well throughout your academic and professional life.

During the quarter you will learn about the theoretical foundations of field work including; observation, interviewing, and qualitative data analysis. In addition, you will gain exposure to examples of what these types of research look like in their finished form – once they have been completed, written up, and accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals and books. Lastly, and most critically, this course will provide you with the opportunity to apply each of the methods we cover to conduct a small-scale group research project on a topic of your choosing, and push you to think about how the things we are learning can affect the ways in which you think about and interact with the world around you.

This course will require you to complete a number of exercises to practice skills and conduct original research and analysis. In order to gain the most benefit from the course you should not shortchange these tasks, but be sure to sufficiently prepare and invest time in the various exercises. It would be ridiculous to take a Calculus course without ever completing a single problem set, or Chemistry without stepping into the laboratory and handling all the beakers and test tubes. Similarly, a social research methods course can only truly be productive if you allow yourself to get your hands dirty and try out the methods for
The course content includes:
● research question formation
● qualitative research design
● developing and investigating hypotheses and theories in a qualitative research context
● observation and interview based research methods
● analyzing and interpreting qualitative data
● linking primary data to existing theory and empirical research
● learning how to use qualitative data to construct and further an evidence-based argument.

Course Goals:
One of the objectives of this course is to help you to develop the tools that you will need to complete the research-related requirements of your practicum. However, this is not the sole nor the most important objective for this course. This course also aims to challenge the way you think about the construction of knowledge and the nature of “knowing.” It requires you to set aside deductive paradigms in favor of an inductive and relativistic approach. The analytic tools that you will develop and hone during this course will make you better producers and consumers of knowledge throughout your academic career, in your personal life, and in whatever field you ultimately choose to pursue. Some specific course goals are:

1. Apply a grounded theory approach, to construct, refine, and revise a research question and build evidence-based hypotheses and theories.
2. Develop an understanding of the role of the researcher in the research process.
3. Analyze the ethical, moral, and power dynamics inherent in research and the construction of knowledge.
4. Develop and apply fieldwork/observation and interviewing skills to generate “rich,” high quality data.
5. Estimate qualitative data quality and the strengths and weaknesses of a qualitative research approach overall.
6. Apply analytical tools to develop an original coding scheme and interpret qualitative data.
7. Identify and synthesize existing theoretical and empirical literature to build a framework for analyzing original research and to situate original research within an academic dialogue.
8. Organize and integrate research findings into a coherent narrative to present an evidence-based argument.

_Students must pass this course with a grade of C- or higher in order to begin the practicum._

Required Texts and Other Potential Course Costs
● There are no textbooks required for this course. All assigned readings will be available in ereserves, as ebooks, or posted on Canvas.
● You may choose to use an on-line transcription services to assist you in transcribing your interviews. The use of these services are entirely optional. Some transcription service options and their costs will be covered in class once we begin interviewing.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Group Research Project:
As a member of a research team, you will spend this quarter applying ethnographic research tools to learn about a “world” at Northwestern that is foreign to you. Each team member will be responsible for gathering data via observations and semi-structured interviews. Data collected through this project will be pooled by the research team for analysis. The project will culminate in a conference-style presentation in which you elaborate on your research experiences and findings to present and support a thesis that draws on evidence from your data, and engage in Q & A with instructors to “defend” your process, findings, and argument.

Note: You are strongly encouraged to choose a world of which you are not actively a part – for example, if you are a student athlete you should not choose to conduct research on athletics (broadly defined) within the university community. Among the reasons for this is that part of the research process involves learning how to enter and come to understand a world that is foreign to you (as you will be doing during your practicum). People do often conduct research on worlds to which they are insiders or quasi-insiders (and in a sense, you will all be quasi-insiders to your fields of research as you are all members of the shared Northwestern community). While there can be many benefits to this approach, it also presents a unique set of problems. For the purposes of this course, we will be focusing on learning to manage the position of “outsider.”

Discussion Group:
Six times during the quarter we will break into small groups to engage in discussion on an applied text. During these sessions you are expected to participate deeply. In preparation for each discussion group you are required to submit the following by 8:00 AM the morning of each discussion:

1. 1-2 strengths of the piece
2. 1-2 weaknesses of the piece
3. 2 questions for discussion and/or analytic observations

For each day of discussion group you will receive a ranking of 0 to 3. These points are equivalent to no credit/-/✓/+ and are for your reference - they do not translate into a “grade” will receive for the given day of discussion. Rather they are strictly to provide you insight into how well you are meeting the expectations around discussion group participation. Your presence during discussion group without active participation will not yield an “+” for your participation grade and “just talking” a lot without making significant contributions also will not yield an “+.” I am interested in what you think – but I also require that you ground what you “think” in evidence either from your own research work or from the course readings.

If you are absent on a Discussion Group day you may submit a 1-2 single-spaced page reaction paper addressing the given text so as to receive credit for participating in the day's
Discussion. Reaction Papers are due within 48 hours of the missed class. You may submit only 1 reaction paper for a missed discussion group session. Reaction papers will be accepted in place of participation during discussion groups only in the event of an absence. Discussion group rubric is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Group Participation:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation was exceptional. Individual participated at a high level, consistently throughout course of discussion. Contributions were substantive and meaningful and helped to move the conversation forward. There was strong evidence of deep thought and critical engagement with the material</td>
<td>3 (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual actively participated. Participation made some but limited contribution to moving dialogue forward. Some evidence of deep thought and critical engagement with the material</td>
<td>2 (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not meet expectations. Participation was either highly limited and/or comments were not reflective of deep thought and critical engagement with the material. Comments not reflective of student having read the text.</td>
<td>1 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual was present for discussion but did not participation</td>
<td>0.5 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual was absent and did not submit discussion paper to receive credit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection Journal:**
During the course you are required to keep a brief weekly reflection journal on Canvas - you must complete a total of 9/10 possible entries. With the exception of the final week journal, you can pick on which week you want to take a pass.

The journal is a space for you to think through and make connections between what you are doing/learning in class and things that are going on in the broader world and/or in your research project. This journal is also intended to be a place for you to reflect on feelings, thoughts, questions, concerns, etc. that arise in reaction to the course material, discussions, and your data collection and analysis experiences. Each journal entry should be a minimum of a few brief paragraphs and can be as long as you would like. I will be reading your
journal regularly and may make comments or ask questions. You will receive a 1(✓) or 2(+) on each completed entry.

The journal entries are retrospective, asking you at the end of each week to reflect on the week’s activities and experiences. Some weeks have specific questions or prompts to which you will be asked to respond. **Unless otherwise noted, weekly journal entries must be completed no later than 12:00 PM (noon) on the Monday of each week.**

**Contribution to class and group:**
A primary component of this course is discussion and group work. Your full, active, and high-quality participation is expected throughout the course. This means that you are expected to come to class having completed the readings and assignments, and prepared to actively and contribute to the full class and group discussions and group work with substantive and meaningful engagement.

If there is a reason why fulfilling any element of the active participation requirement for this course is a problem for you, please speak with me as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made to accommodate you.

**Group & Individual Meetings:**
Several times throughout the quarter Prof. Shapiro will meet with groups to help you to review findings and plan next steps. Because some of these meetings will take place outside of our class time, and given how challenging it can be to coordinate schedules, these meetings are not “required.” However, it is expected that you will make a good faith effort to attend any group meetings with me and any meetings that your group holds outside of class time.

In addition, at the beginning of the quarter each student is required to meet with Prof. Shapiro for an in-person feedback on their second practice observation assignment and to meet with either Kyle or Prof. Shapiro for feedback on their first interview assignment. These meetings will be your only opportunity to receive feedback on these two assignments. Failure to sign up for these meetings will be reflected in your course participation grade.

**Work Load:**
This course has a heavy workload. You should be prepared to spend a minimum of **6-8 hours per week** outside of class engaged in class preparation, reading, data collection and processing, and group work. You will be given regular time to work with your groups during class, however, you will also need to complete group work outside of class and should plan to meet regularly. Please plan accordingly and remain in frequent contact with your group members.

Each group will have a folder on Google drive for you to upload all of your assignments to enable in-group collaboration. All students will be required to post copies of their full field notes, interview transcripts, and analytic memos to their shared folders. You are expected to read through the work of your group mates so that you are able to most effectively collaborate on your research project and so that you are able to integrate their data into your own analysis throughout the quarter. I also encourage you to comment on one
another’s work as you read it, to support you in your active engagement and interaction throughout the project.

COURSE POLICIES

Grading & Academic Rigor:
Standards and expectations for this course are high. You will be receiving considerable substantive feedback on most of your assignments and there is an expectation that you will carefully review and use your feedback to support your growth throughout the quarter. Assignments, however, will not be assigned a formal/traditional grade. Throughout this quarter you are developing new skills that require practice. Research has shown that grades can lead to student disengagement with content, hyper focus on performance and pragmatic outcomes or “payoff,” and increase in stress, rather than learning and the risk taking and experimentation that is often a necessary and essential part of growth.1

While no formal grades will be given, each assignment will be given a “rating” of -/✓/+.
These are intended to provide you with a guidepost to how you are doing overall, but they do not translate into a grade for the assignment. Instead of based on individual grades throughout the quarter, course grades will be determined on the totality of your work including, work quality, attention to feedback and growth, discussion group participation, class/group contributions for the quarter, and self-assessment. Grading on the sum of your work and ar of your learning rather than individual assignments will (hopefully) allow you to focus on developing skills and improving rather than concern over any one grade. This does not mean that quality of work on individual assignments does not matter - on the contrary, we are looking for deep engagement with ideas and work and evidence of your learning, which should be manifest in growth over time.

While no formal grades will be assigned to assignments, various assignments will require different levels of work on your part and will therefore “count” more/less in terms of assessing your final course grade. The approximate weighting of the assignment groups is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Approximate Percentage of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Practice &amp; Prep Assignments: Brainstorming, Preliminary Legwork, Practice Observations, Practice Interviews 1 &amp; 2, Open Coding, Full Focused-Coding</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Assignments &amp; Memos</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Interview Protocol Development</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Coding Scheme &amp; Narrative Overview Development</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Final Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Group Preparation &amp; Contribution</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the data collection assignments in Canvas you will find a **rubric**. The rubric provides a breakdown of the skills that you are developing and utilizing in the given assignment. For each criterion within the rubric you will receive a ranking of 0 to 3. *These points are equivalent to ✓/+/−/no credit and, like the rankings on the assignment itself, are for your reference only.* They are to provide you insight into how well you are meeting the expectations associated with the given skill.

**Self/Peer Evaluation:**
You are one of the best evaluators of your own performance and learning. For each data collection assignment you will be asked to complete a (guided) self-evaluation. These self-evaluations will be heavily considered when assigning final course grades. The self-evaluations are required and any assignment that is submitted without the full self-evaluation will be considered incomplete. Prof. Shapiro will conference with each student at least once/quarter to discuss your learning and self-assessments.

In addition, because of the important group element of this course, your conduct and contribution relative to group work is taken very seriously. You will be asked to complete 3 self/peer evaluations during the quarter to assess your own and all group members’ contributions to in-class group work and all out-of-class group collaborations and assignments.

- Completion of these evaluations is mandatory.
  - For each evaluation that you do not complete your *total class participation grade* will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your group at any time during the quarter please do not wait until you receive an evaluation to let me know – come and speak with me ASAP so that I can help you and your group to reach an agreeable and productive resolution.

**Final Course Grades:**
The overall guidelines for assigning final course grades is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Course Grade</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Work is exceptional and exceeds expectations. Student has demonstrated advanced level of mastery of all or most of course objectives. <em>This outcome is associated with a “+” rating on an individual assignment.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Work is good and meets all or most expectations. Student has demonstrated proficiency on all or majority of course objectives. <em>This outcome is associated with a “✓” rating on an individual assignment.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Work meets some expectations. Student demonstrates effort and proficiency on some of course objectives. <em>This outcome is associated with a “-” rating on an individual assignment.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality of work is poor and does not meet expectations. Student does not demonstrate proficiency on course objectives.

Due Dates:
Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are to be uploaded to Canvas. Assignments are due by the time given on the course calendar. This course has a very tight timeline and deadlines are set so that you will have sufficient time to complete all assignments, as well as receive necessary feedback before moving on to subsequent assignments. **Please note that this means that not all assignments are due on class dates.**

Late work will be accepted for partial credit and tardiness of assignments will be taken into consideration when determining final course grades. Work turned in on the due date but after the designated time will be considered late. **Assignments more than 4 days late will not be accepted.** Extensions will be granted only with ample notice and under documented, extraordinary circumstances. Know that obstacles can and will arise when conducting research – meetings get cancelled, people change their minds. Plan ahead so that you will be able to complete assignments by their due dates. If you anticipate that completing any of the course requirements will be problematic for you, please speak with me as soon as possible to share your concerns and so that we may work together to create a solution that will enable you to succeed in the course.

Formatting of Assignments:
- All turned-in written work must be typed and in 12 pt Times New Roman or a similar font and should be submitted in .doc or .docx formats.
  - Page numbers are given as general guidelines for several of the assignments. Please be sure to carefully review assignment descriptions to be clear as to whether the page guidelines require single- or double-spacing of the assignment.
- Assignments submitted in formats other than .doc or .docx will not be read and will be counted as late.
- All outside references must be cited using APA format. For guidance in formatting citations visit the OWL Center at Purdue University ([http://owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)).
- Unless otherwise specified, all work is to be uploaded to the course Canvas site. Occasionally uploads to Canvas fail – be sure to retain a copy of your assignments for your records.

Attendance & Late Policy:
Attendance at this course is required.
- If you are going to miss class for whatever reason please email Prof. Shapiro at least 1 hour before class so that we can notify your group of your absence.
- You are allowed two absences from class for whatever reason - although you are free to do so, you do not need to share with me the reason for your absence.
  - A third absence for whatever reason will result in the lowering of your total class participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade
  - A fourth absence will result in the lowering of your final course grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.
Five or more absences will be handled on an individual basis and may result in failure of the course.

- Exceptions to the attendance policy will only be considered under documented emergency circumstances. In general, additional absences from class will not be excused.
- Excessive late arrivals (3 late arrivals to class of more than 10 minutes) will be counted as an absence.

There are regular in-class activities that help you to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the class – in order to succeed you must be here. This class also involves on a strong group-work component. If you are not in class, your group is at a disadvantage and you are failing in your responsibilities to your group-mates. If you must miss class it is assumed that you will be in touch with your group members so that you are caught up on what you missed and are able to provide input on whatever activity was completed during the missed class time.

**Communication Policy:**
I will make every attempt to respond to your emails within 24 hours. If you do not get a response from me within 24 hours please send me a follow-up email – it is possible that I inadvertently missed your email.

I will be using email and Canvas announcement. I assume that you will be regularly checking email and the course Canvas site.

**Writing Support:**
This course is writing intensive. You will be doing a great deal of writing. As reflected in the various assignment rubrics, quality of writing is important on both individual and group assignments. The construction of an effective argument is predicated on the ability to communicate compellingly. If you feel that you need additional assistance or support with your writing, I encourage you to visit the Northwestern University Writing Center ([www.writing.northwestern.edu](http://www.writing.northwestern.edu)).

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Any student with a disability requesting accommodations must register with Services for Students with Disabilities ([ssd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ssd@northwestern.edu); 847-467-5530) and request an SSD accommodation notification for his/her professor, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

**School of Education and Social Policy Academic Integrity Statement**
Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).