

**COM 7340 (Fall 2018)**  
**Interviewing**

**Instructor:** Dr. Rahul Mitra

**Course Time/Days:** Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.

**Course Location:** 503 Manoogian Hall

**Instructor's Office Location:** 541 Manoogian Hall

**Instructor's Email Address:** [rahul.mitra@wayne.edu](mailto:rahul.mitra@wayne.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-4 pm, Wednesdays 3-5 pm, and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Interviewing is one of the most common, and yet complex, modes of data collection for researchers in the social sciences and humanities. Rather than a simple “Q&A” session, it involves deep introspection of the researcher-participant positionalities at stake, and the contexts in which the interview takes place. Interviews can be one-on-one, dyadic, focus groups, ethnographic, computer-mediated, or televised, to name but a few. This course trains graduate students in a variety of interview techniques. This course will focus on how ongoing communication practices shape intersubjective, situated ways of knowing and knowledge.

Topics covered include: Rigor, validity, and reflexivity issues; designing interview-based studies; ethnographic interviews; focus group facilitation and analysis; computer-mediated interviews; documentary and other arts-based interviews; interview data analysis, etc.

Students will also work with the instructor to collect data for an ongoing trans-media research project on how underserved urban communities make sense of access to water resources. Several of the empirical readings for this course thus address ecological, water and urban-related themes.

This graduate seminar will be discussion- rather than lecture-based. Thus, for it to be a meaningful experience, you will NEED to attend class every day, complete ALL assigned readings, submit assignments on time, and participate actively in class discussions.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Specific learning outcomes for this class include:

1. Students will have explored and examined the landscape of interview research and other types of interviewing through participatory discussion and practice.
2. Students will have practiced interviewing skills that demonstrate an understanding of different interview types and techniques in line with a desired outcome.
3. Students will have demonstrated defensible decision-making when proposing methodological choices for variations of inquiry.
4. Students will have completed a qualitative interview project that demonstrates an ability to conceptualize, plan, conduct, and report a project and meet quality standards.

**REQUIRED Texts:**

Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davis, C. (2017). *Focus groups: Applying communication theory through design, facilitation, and analysis*. New York: Routledge.

In addition, we will be using various academic articles and book chapters (see schedule), which will be available through Blackboard.

**RECOMMENDED Resources:**

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lindemann, K. (2018). *Composing research, communicating results: Writing the Communication research paper*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Website: <http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>

For a quick guide, you can look up: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>

In addition, you can contact the Wayne State University Writing Center at:  
<http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

**Prerequisites:** Graduate standing.

**Assignments:**

Your grade in this class will depend on the following assignments.

1. Class Participation: 20 pts.

I expect you to attend EACH AND EVERY class, barring major emergencies and/or illness, in which case you should notify me via email before class. I expect engaged discussions during class, so that you must participate actively, both asking and answering questions. Please also make sure that you are ON TIME for each class. 20 points are allotted on the basis of my impression of your general engagement and participation.

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1 and 3.

2. Field Assignments: 10X7=70 pts.

You will complete 7 field assignments during the course of the seminar. Each assignment will ask you to complete a particular task, and write a 2-3 pg. (double spaced) response paper describing why and what you did. PLEASE BE AS REFLECTIVE AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR PAPERS, since a crucial goal of these field assignments is to examine our own research practices vis-à-vis the contexts studied. More details will be forthcoming later.

- 1). CITI Training: <http://research.wayne.edu/irb/mandatory-training.php>
- 2) F2F Interviewing
- 3) Transcribing
- 4) Specialized Interviewing
- 5) Focus Group Protocol Design
- 6) Analyzing
- 7) Reflection

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

3. Final Paper: 40+70=110 pts.

Your final paper has TWO interrelated components.

- 1) Drawing on the readings and discussions engaged in over the course of the semester, you will conduct FOUR interviews with Detroit residents, each lasting 30-60 minutes. (See Blackboard for the interview protocol, with demographic questions.) Your interviewees should be older than 18 years of age, a mix of both newcomers and long-time residents, and represent at least THREE different neighborhoods of the city; they should not be WSU students (unless they are long-term residents of the city). You may use “snowball sampling” to recruit interviewees, and tap your social or professional networks. You should audio-record all these interviews and make them available to me via OneDrive on WSU Connect, along with demographic details of interviewees and any transcriptions (please use pseudonyms for interviewees you contact.). (4X10=40 pts.)
- 2) In groups (of 4 students each), you will write a 20-25 page research paper analyzing AT LEAST 20 of the interview transcripts, on a topic/theme covered in the interviews. *You should especially pay attention to how everyday stories, interactions, and discourse frames communicatively constitute research participants’ sense-making of water.* You are encouraged (but not required) to compile “field notes” based on the data collection. (70 pts.)
  - i. Paper outline: 10 pts.
  - ii. Presentations: 10 pts.
  - iii. Final Paper: 50 pts.
  - iv. (Peer Evaluations included within participation grade.)

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

**Grading:**

To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. Class Participation: 20 pts.
2. Field Assignments: 70 pts.
3. Final Paper: 110 pts.

---

TOTAL: 200 pts.

For all assignments, you will be graded on the following parameters:

- Engaged and active participation in class and online
- Clarity of meaning and presentation (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- Effective and ethical data gathering
- Effective and ethical organizing of material
- Persuasiveness of your arguments/analysis
- Adherence to set guidelines (e.g., APA style for final paper)

Final grades will be assigned according to a standard scale:

186 – 200	A	93%+
180 – 185	A-	90%+
174 – 179	B+	87%+

166 – 173	B	83%+
160 – 165	B-	80%+
154 – 159	C+	77%+
140 – 153	C	70%+
134 – 139	D+	67%+
126 – 133	D	63%+
120 – 125	D-	60%+
119 and below	F	below 60%

**Incompletes:** Incompletes are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as personal emergencies that can be documented. An incomplete is granted when in the judgment of the instructor a student can successfully complete the work of the course without attending regular class sessions. Incompletes, which are not converted to a letter grade within one year, will automatically revert to an F (failing grade).

**Withdrawing from Class:** Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Please be advised that withdrawing from a class has severe consequences; for this reason, please treat it as a matter of last resort and consult me before you withdraw.

For more information, please refer to:

<http://finaid.wayne.edu/receiving/withdrawing.php>

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The instructor must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. Students who stop attending but do not request a withdrawal, will receive an automatic F (failing grade).

**Make-up Work and Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit for this class. All work must be submitted on time by the set deadline. There is no provision for “make-up work” unless there are very strong extenuating circumstances.

**Grade Appeals:** The college policy for appealing a final grade can be found at:

<http://www.cfpc.wayne.edu/files/FinalGradeAppeal.pdf>

### **Policy Statements**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend and participate actively in class. No cell phone use in class, unless approved by the instructor beforehand. If you are using tablets and/or laptops, I expect you to be ONLY using them for class-work, and not distract anyone in the class.

**Canvas:** Readings for this class will be posted on Canvas, so please look up the course page regularly. Call C&IT at (313) 577-4778 if you have problems accessing Canvas.

**Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. The SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-202-4216 for videophone use. Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services' mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University. You can learn more about the disability office at [www.studentdisability.wayne.edu](http://www.studentdisability.wayne.edu) To register with Student Disability Services, complete the online registration form at: [https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public\\_accommodation/](https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/)

Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

**Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty:** Materials that are clearly not the student's own work or which are not appropriately documented will be subjected to close scrutiny. All acts of academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism will be treated as violations of appropriate student conduct and will be subject to disciplinary action. The University Due Process Policy can be found at: <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/judicial/index.htm>. Students should not use work that was substantively done for other classes unless otherwise approved by the instructor.

**Religious Observances:** It is Wayne State's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

**Other Policies:** Since this is a graduate seminar, I encourage and expect the active participation of all class members. Please keep in mind the need to respect the diversity of opinions and values that may be expressed in class, and the ensuing need for civil and respectful discussions.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### Sep 4: Review of Syllabus

### Sep 11: Interviewing as a Mode of Understanding

Brinkmann & Kvale, Chapters 1-3

### Sep 18: Research Design: Ethics and Context

Brinkmann & Kvale, Chapters 4-6

- FA1 due (CITI/IRB)

### Sep 25: Interviewing in Action

Brinkmann & Kvale, Chapters 7-10

### Oct 2: Urban Water Access Research: “Wading in...”

Project Proposal and Protocol posted on Canvas.

Anand, N. (2012). Municipal disconnect: On object water and its urban infrastructures.

*Ethnography*, 13, 487-509.

Radonic, L., & Kelly-Richards, S. (2015). Pipes and praxis: A methodological contribution to the urban political ecology of water. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 22, 357-465.

Strang, V. (2005). Common senses: Water, sensory experience and the generation of meaning. *Journal of Material Culture*, 10, 92-120.

- FA2 due (F2F Interviewing)

### Oct 9: Specialized Interviewing:

Lisa Jackson's Documentary Interview Tips & Advice

#### Choose any **THREE**:

Dougherty, D.S., Schraedly, M.A., Gist-Mackey, A.N., & Wickert, J. (2018). A photovoice study of food (in)security, unemployment, and the discursive-material dialectic. *Communication Monographs*. Advance Online Publication. doi:10.1080/03637751.2018.1500700

Brown, L., & Durrheim, K. (2009). Different kinds of knowing: Generating qualitative data through mobile interviewing. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15, 911-930.

Metz, J.L. (2008). An inter-view on motherhood: Racial politics and motherhood in late capitalist sport. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 8, 248-275.

Denzin, N.K. (2001). The reflexive interview and a performative social science. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 23-46.

Broad, K.L., & Joos, K.E. (2004). Online inquiry of public selves: Methodological considerations. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10, 923-946.

Bellar, W. (2017). Private practice: using digital diaries and interviews to understand evangelical Christians' choice and use of religious mobile applications. *New Media & Society*, 19, 111-125.

Ruby, J. (1992). Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside: An anthropological and documentary dilemma. *Journal of Film and Video*, 44(1&2), 42-66.

- FA3 due (Transcribing)

### Oct 16: Focus Groups Design

Davis, Chapters 1-3

- *FA 4 due (Specialized interviewing)*

**Oct 23: Focus Groups in Action**

Davis, Chapters 4-6

**Oct 30: Analyzing Interviews**

Brinkmann & Kvale, Chapters 11-14

- *FA5 due (Focus Group Protocol Design)*

**Nov 6: Using Atlas.ti & Analyzing Focus Groups**

*National Communication Association annual conference Nov 8-11, at Salt Lake City UT*

Davis, Chapters 7-8

Atlas.ti Overview Seminar (1 hr. video/webinar):

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/3906321113277107468>

**Nov 13: Focus Group DEMO**

- *FA6 due (Analyzing)*
- *Detroit resident interviews should be submitted*

**Nov 20: Knowledge & Validity**

Brinkmann & Kvale, Chapters 15-17

- *FA7 due (Focus Group Reflection)*

**Nov 21-25: Thanksgiving Break (No classes)**

**Nov 27: Analysis/Workshop Day**

- *Group paper outline due*

**Dec 4: Presentations & Extra Workshop Day**

- *Group presentations due (including hard copy of slides)*

**Dec 13 (Thursday): FINAL PAPERS DUE (via Canvas)**

- *Peer evaluations due*

***HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK!***

### Other Suggested Resources

- Alvesson, M. (2011). *Interpreting interviews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Briggs, C.L. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellingson, L.L. (2008). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lindlof, T., & Taylor, B. (Eds.). (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles, Sage
- Spradley, J.P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.