

# WSSR

## WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

### Introduction to Interpretive (-qualitative)

### Methodologies and Methods

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May 10-12, 2017

9:00am – 4:30pm

#### Course Overview

Interpretive research puts the meaning-making of those studied at the center of a research project. Guided often by an abductive logic of inquiry, such research is commonly not driven by formal hypotheses or variables. Based on a constructivist ontology and an intersubjectivist (or constructivist) epistemology, interpretive research generates data through talk, observation, and/or document selection and analyzes them through a wide array of methods, including category analysis, discourse analysis, genealogy, metaphor analysis, story-telling analysis, etc. This introductory workshop explains the vocabulary, processes, and evaluative standards consistent with the interpretive emphasis on meaning-making. We will begin with a comparison of interpretive to positivist (variables-based) methodologies and methods, emphasizing the value of methodological pluralism for the study of human societies. Overall, the goals of workshop include:

- Cultivation of the ability to explain what constitutes an interpretive approach to social science research and its contributions to knowledge;
- Completion of two hands-on data-generation exercises in order to bring these abstract ideas to life for participants; and
- Interactive discussion of research design and practice as raised by workshop participants.

#### Required Readings:

*Students should buy or borrow these two texts for the three-day session.*

*Students will get the most out of class sessions if they complete the readings in advance of each session. Estimated page numbers are provided for readings.*

- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, and Yanow, Dvora. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. New York and London: Routledge. [SS&Y in the daily list]
- Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., 2014. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. [Y&SS2 in the daily list]

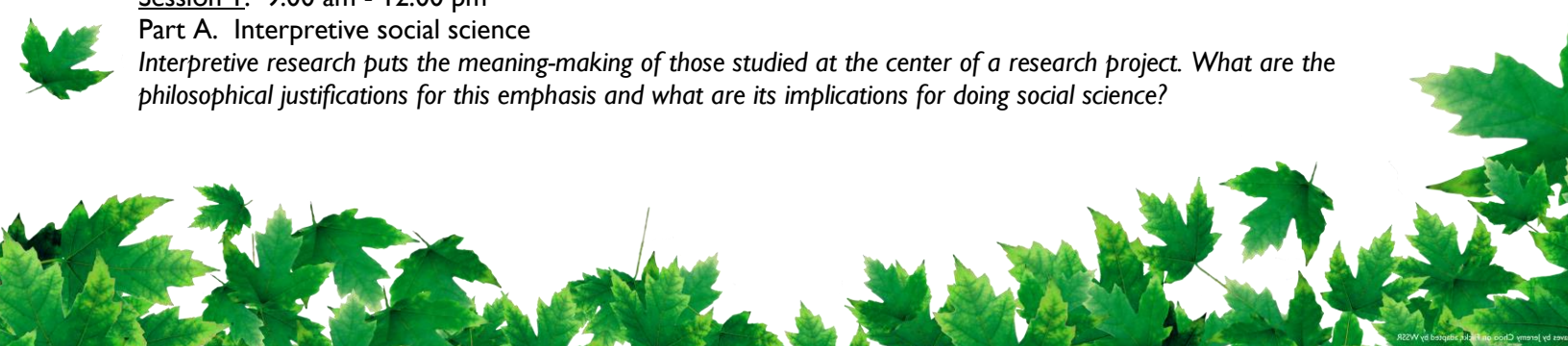
#### Schedule of Sessions and Reading List\*

##### **Wednesday, May 10**

Session I: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Part A. Interpretive social science

*Interpretive research puts the meaning-making of those studied at the center of a research project. What are the philosophical justifications for this emphasis and what are its implications for doing social science?*





### Recommended readings

- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. 2015. Interpretive Social Science. In *Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, Edited by Michael T. Gibbons, Diana H. Coole, Elisabeth Ellis, and Kennan Ferguson. Wiley-Blackwell Publishers. **6**
- Yanow, Dvora. 2003. Interpretive Empirical Political Science: What Makes This Not a Subfield of Qualitative Methods. *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* 1 (2): 9–13. **4**
- SS&Y, Introduction, Chapter 2 (Ways of Knowing) and Chapter 3 (Starting from Meaning) **45**
- Y&SS2, #13 McHenry, Dean E. Studying Political Protest in India, pp. 239-54. **15**

### Part B. Observation

*Observation is basic to science. What does it mean when the primary “instrument” of observation is the researcher (as opposed to an a priori measuring device)?*

#### Recommended readings

- Emerson, Robert M., Fretz, Rachel I., and Shaw, Linda L. 2011. Chapter 2 In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 21-43. **22**
- Y&SS2, #21 Yanow, Dvora. How Built Spaces Mean: A Semiotics of Space. pp. 368-86. **16**
- Y&SS2, #11 Shehata, Samer. 2014. Ethnography, Identity, and the Production of Knowledge. pp. 209-27. **17**

Session 2: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Part A. Observation exercise

Part B. Debriefing

### Thursday, May 11

Session 3: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Part A. Evidence

*What constitutes “good” evidence for an interpretive research question? We will compare basic methods of generating evidence and their general strengths and weaknesses.*

#### Recommended readings

- SS&Y, #4 The Rhythms of Interpretive Research I - Getting Going, pp. 54-77. **23**
- SS&Y, #5 The Rhythms of Interpretive Research II - Understanding and Generating Evidence, pp. 78-90. **12**
- Y&SS2, #16 Lynch, Cecelia. 2014. Critical [Historical] Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements. pp 300-08. **8**
- Y&SS2, #12 Weldes, Jutta. High Politics and Low Data: Globalization Discourses and Popular Culture, pp. 228-38. **10**
- Critiques of Alice Goffman’s *On the Run* TBA

### Part B. Interviewing

*Interviewing is widely used in the social sciences. We will discuss the variety of approaches to interviewing and differentiate interpretive from positivist approaches.*

#### Recommended readings

- Y&SS2, #8 Soss, Joe. Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered View of Interviewing for Interpretive Research, pp. 161-182. **21**
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. Putting Equality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective. *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 517-532. **15**

- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence. *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2):231-41. **10**

Session 4: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Part A. Conducting a phenomenological interview

Part B. Debriefing

## Friday, May 12

Session 5: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Part A. Design and case selection

*Interpretive research design emphasizes flexibility even so far as allowing fundamental changes in the research question. Why is flexibility desirable and what does that imply for research proposals?*

Recommended readings

- SS&Y, #1 Wherefore research designs? pp. 15-23. **8**
- SS&Y, #6 Designing for trustworthiness, pp. 91-114. **23**
- SS&Y, #7 Designs in context. pp.115-129. **14**
- Thomas, Gary. 2011. Models of the Whole. Chapter 3 from *How to Do Your Case Study*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 45-60. **15**

Part B. Modes of analysis

*In interpretive research, there is a wide array of possible data analytic techniques that may be used depending on the research question and the genres of evidence assembled for any given project.*

Recommended readings

- Beechey, Susanne.N. and Moon, Leah C. .2015. Gender in the Adoption and Implementation of Sex Education Policy. *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 3: 224-233. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/jss.2015.37035> **9**
- Yanow, Dvora. 1996. American Ethnogenesis and Public Administration. *Administration & Society* 27: 483-509. **26**
- Yanow, Dvora and van der Haar, Marleen. 2013. People Out of Place: Allochthony and Autochthony in The Netherlands' Identity Discourse—Metaphors and Categories in Action. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16 (2): 227-61. **25**

Session 6: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Evaluative standards and methodological pluralism

*Because the goals of interpretive research are distinctive, standards for assessing the quality of interpretive projects differ from those appropriate for positivist projects. We discuss these standards and the value of methodological pluralism for advancing social science knowledge.*

Recommended readings

- Y&SS2, #7 Schwartz-Shea Peregrine. Judging Quality: Evaluative Criteria and Epistemic Communities. pp. 120-46. **26**
- SS&Y, #8 Speaking Across Epistemic Communities. pp.130-139. **9**
- Schwartz-Shea Peregrine. 2006. Conundrums in the Practice of Pluralism. In Sanford Schram and Brian Caterino, eds., *Making Political Science Matter: Debating Knowledge, Research, and Method*. New York: NYU Press, 209-221. **12**

\*If you are registered for credit, you can find these readings on course reserve: <http://reserves.concordia.ca/>

\*If you are registered for non-credit and are unable to locate the readings, please contact us at

[wssr@concordia.ca](mailto:wssr@concordia.ca)