

**RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE:  
Focus on Qualitative Field Methods**

**SECTION AZ:           Tues./Thurs. 8:15 – 9:40**

**SECTION BZ:           Tues./Thurs.9:50 – 11:15**

**Dr. CJ Churchill**

“The stranger is close to us insofar as we feel between him and ourselves similarities of nationality or social position, of occupation or of general human nature. He is far from us insofar as these similarities extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people....As such, the stranger is near and far *at the same time*.”

Georg Simmel, “The Stranger” (1908)

“Policemen collect data, openly or under cover, in order to put someone in jail. Whatever it is, the sociological enterprise is not that. Sociologists are not interested in directly affecting the lives of the particular people they study. They are interested in those individuals only as representative of some larger aggregate....Therefore, in almost all sociological research, the necessity to preserve the anonymity of the respondent is not an onerous one, because no purpose at all would be served by identifying the respondents.”

Irving Louis Horowitz & Lee Rainwater, “Sociological Snoopers and Journalistic Moralizers” (1975)

“Fiction and social science are usually seen as very different approaches to representing reality....Yet these approaches...have fundamental similarities.... [B]oth fiction and social science seek to model the world. Furthermore, they both take the modeling problem seriously, in a way that journalism, for example, does not.”

Susan Krieger, *The Mirror Dance: Identity in a Women’s Community* (1983)

**Course Objectives:**

How do sociologists and anthropologists discover and portray social patterns that occur within the seemingly random events which make up everyday life? While there are many answers to this question, this course focuses on qualitative research and its central method, “participant observation.” Through reading case studies and methodological articles as well as doing field work, you will become a participant observer within a group of people. You will then show through a final report how human behavior which seems ordinary on the surface is actually complex and filled with unseen motives and patterns.

**Dr. Churchill's Web Site:** Go to <http://stacweb.stac.edu/~cchurchi/> for links to this syllabus (bottom of page), additional course material, and links to web sites relevant to sociology.

**Final Grade:** Participation = 20%  
Initial Field exercise = 10%  
Methodological Paper = 30%  
Field Project Report = 40%

**NOTE:** *Any work which you do not complete will be worth 0 points.*

**Office Location:** Maguire G12

**Office Hours:** Mon. 7:45-8:15  
Tues. 11:15-2:15  
Wed. 7:45-8:15  
And by appointment.

**Office Telephone #:** (845) 398 – 4387

**E-mail:** cchurchi@stac.edu

**Required Texts (available in the College bookstore):**

Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*.  
Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel & Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*.

**ALSO:** Various articles will be distributed in class.

**Due dates for papers and field project elements will be announced in class.**

**Requirements & Policies:**

- 1) *Participation*: This is a seminar. You are required to make comments, ask questions, and participate in debate during class sessions.
- 2) *Academic Accommodations*: If you are entitled to special accommodations such as extra time for testing, in class note takers, etc., it is your obligation to let me know in advance of *each* test or relevant assignment and to show me proof of your entitlement each time. (Also see STAC policies on third to last page of this syllabus.)
- 3) *Reading*: To be done as assigned.
- 4) *Papers*: Guidelines for each paper will be distributed in advance.
- 5) *Attendance*: More than 2 absences will harm your grade. Seven (7) absences will result in failing the course, regardless of whether absences are excused. Disruptive behavior such as reading newspapers, doing work for other courses, or sitting in a manner indicating you are asleep during class will result in your being marked absent. Coming into class late and leaving early will also be noted and will harm your grade.
- 6) *E-mail and phone*: Do not email or call me with questions about assignments, scheduling, or grades. These issues must be addressed to me directly in class or during office hours.
- 7) *Electronic devices*: **Laptop computer use is prohibited in this classroom.** All means of electronic communication (email, text messaging, etc.) are also prohibited. Use of electronic communication in class will result your being instructed to leave class for the day, marked absent for that session, and points being deducted from your next test or paper; the professor will determine the number of points to be deducted on a case by case basis. (Also see STAC policies on third to last page of this syllabus.)
- 8) *Grading*: The standard in grading all student work in this course can be found in the St. Thomas Aquinas College Catalog on the next to last page of this syllabus. While the STAC grading scale does not include minuses (e.g. A -, B -, C -), my own scale does. See back page of the syllabus for a conversion chart.

All grade questions must be discussed with me in person, not by telephone or by email. Athletic obligations and vacation plans are your burden to accommodate. Tests and due dates will not be altered to fit these external activities. A test missed because of a valid, documented excuse will be replaced with a make up test. Absences without a valid excuse during a test result in 0 points for that test.

## WRITING GUIDE

The most important rule to remember in writing papers is to be clear and to the point. If you read your paper aloud to yourself, you will hear whether what you have written is clear or garbled. Reread your written work a couple of times before handing it in. Any sentences or paragraphs which do not make sense to you will make even less sense to me. An excellent guide for clear writing is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White. This is a slim and inexpensive paperback available in most bookstores.

The following rules apply to all writing:

- 1) **Plagiarism: DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use *anyone* else's writing or ideas in your papers without quoting and citing them properly, you will receive an F on your paper and you may receive an F for the entire course. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances in this course. (Also see STAC policies on third to last page of this syllabus.)
- 2) **Format:** All papers must be typed and double-spaced. Do not use excessive margins or font sizes to extend the length of your paper. If you do, your grade will suffer.
- 3) **Cover Page:** All papers must have a cover page which contains the following: (a) paper title, (b) your name, (c) the course and section for which the paper is written, and (d) the date on which the paper is handed in. The cover page does not count toward the length of the paper.
- 4) **Numbering:** Number all pages except for the cover page.
- 5) **Contractions:** Do not use contractions. For example, instead of writing "don't" or "haven't" write "do not" or "have not". Contractions are informal and do not belong in academic writing.
- 6) **References and Citations:** Any time you quote or reference work which is not your own, you must provide a full citation for that work in a footnote or endnote and provide a full bibliographical reference. This pertains to any printed or spoken ideas or words you are using which are not your own. If you are quoting a source from the Internet, you are required to provide proof that the source is reliable (for example, show me that it is an academic or mass media source). It is your obligation to prove that any Internet site is a legitimate source of information.

***Web sites are never acceptable citations unless approved by professor in advance and provided with an annotation in the bibliography.***

For guides on formatting footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies, go to the library and locate the citation guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA). You may also use *The Chicago Manual of Style* as a guide.

## **STAC Academic Policies**

### **I. Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic Integrity, a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility, is the foundation of the learning process. All members of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community are held to the highest standards of academic honesty. While we recognize the participatory nature of education, we take academic integrity very seriously, and the College policy on academic dishonesty details consequences that can include dismissal from the College. That policy can be found in both the Student Handbook and the College Catalog.

As a student in this class, you must demonstrate your commitment to academic integrity by submitting work which originates in your own imagination, analytical faculties, or your own knowledge, which you have done yourself, and which represents your very best efforts. When appropriate, your work should be supplemented and supported by other sources; however, you must always insure that these sources are properly cited using the recommended documentation system.

### **II. STAC Academic Accommodations Policy**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented disability should notify the instructor before the end of the first week of class.

### **III. STAC Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Students are not to use any electronic device at any time without the expressed consent of the professor. This policy covers cell phones, laptop computers, or any other device the use of which constitutes a distraction to the professor or to the other students in the class, as determined by the professor. Students with documented disabilities that require the use of a laptop in class may use them after informing their professor.

When a professor designates a time during which laptop computers may be used, they are only to be used at the discretion of the faculty member and in accordance with the mission of the college; visiting sites which the professor deems to be inappropriate to the needs of the class is forbidden.

Professors have the latitude to develop specific and reasonable policies to deal with violations of these general policies as they see fit. For more extreme cases of classroom disruption, see the College's Disruptive Student Policy.

**STAC Grading Standards**  
**(Excerpted from College catalogue; emphasis added)**

**GRADING SYSTEM**

**A (94-100%)**

Excellent. Indicates *unusually high achievement*. Students who merit A, in addition to fulfilling the minimum requirements, give evidence of the *ability to work independently, read rather widely on their own initiative*, organize the materials of the course in relation to its wider implications, give evidence in skill subjects of habitual *errorless mastery*.

**B+ (87-93%)**

Very good-superior. Indicates achievement *demonstrably above average* and an intelligent fulfillment of course requirements in a manner that *approaches the excellence of the highest grade*.

**B (80-86%)**

Good. Signifies a *consistently high level of achievement* and indicates that the course requirements have been fulfilled in an intelligent and *above-average* manner.

**C+ (75-79%)**

Very satisfactory. Signifies a more acceptable degree of understanding and consistent achievement than a C. Indicates that a *student has mastered the basic course material, attended classes regularly, fulfilled assignments as required*, and given *evidence of mastery* of the skills required for the course.

**C (70-74%)**

Satisfactory. Signifies *acceptable understanding & consistent achievement* of quality that satisfies the required graduation grade.

**D (65-69%)**

Inferior-passing. Indicates understanding and achievement *below the average level* expected of students and therefore warrants only minimum approval.

**F**

Failure. Indicates that the student's work does not merit a passing grade.

**GRADING CONVERSION CHART**  
**STAC to Dr. Churchill**

<b>STAC</b>		<b>Dr. Churchill</b>	
<i>Letter</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>%</i>
A	94 – 100	A+	100
		A	95 – 99
		A –	94
B+	87 – 93	B+	87 – 93
B	80 – 86	B	84 – 86
		B –	80 – 83
C+	75 – 79	C+	75 – 79
C	70 – 74	C	74
		C –	70 – 73
D	65 – 69	D+	67 – 69
		D	65 – 67
F	0 – 64	F	0 – 64*

**\*NOTE:**

If you hand in work which earns an F, the percentage equivalent for that F is usually 64%. If you fail to hand in an assignment, the F you receive for it has the percentage equivalent of 0%. In the latter case, the F is technically worth far less than an F for a completed assignment and will have far more damaging consequences for your overall grade. **In all cases of plagiarism and cheating, an F is worth 0% and the violation is recorded in a permanent file in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Depending on the severity of the incident, you may also fail the entire course.**