This course seeks to clarify the history, theory, and practice of research in American Studies. At once, it reviews the main approaches and debates in the field, details the research process, and encourages students to apply techniques. Reflecting uniquely interdisciplinary spirit and structure of the field, it weaves together methods and questions asked in a variety of allied disciplines, including anthropology, oral history, literary studies, history, and cultural studies. This brings with it novel challenges and important analytic opportunities.

The first third of the class examines the place of qualitative methods in American Studies. Following a review of the methodological history of the field, discussion turns to recent efforts to rethink the study of American culture, prompted by theoretical shifts, geopolitical transformations, and ideological struggles. Against this background, the next portion of the course grapples with the social forces, cultural preoccupations, and scholarly practices central to qualitative research more generally. Then, we consider social location (connection, identity, status, bias), questioning, and ethics. On this foundation, we weave together conversations about the mechanics and dynamics of qualitative research (literally the how to and the how so, why not, and what now) with applications of various methods. Throughout, students will interrogate and employ various approaches to the qualitative research.

OBJECTIVES

This course has five central goals:

(1) to provide an understanding of qualitative methods and their use in American Studies;

(2) to familiarize students with the research process;

(3) to foster a better appreciation of the ethical, political, social, and conceptual issues associated with qualitative research;

(4) to afford students the opportunity to cultivate basic research skills through the application of specific techniques; and

(5) to advance individual programs of study and professional development.
Requirements

(1) **Attendance and Participation (15%)**

Attendance and participation are expected of all students. The success or failure of this class (both in terms of pleasure and learning) derives from the active, thoughtful, and respectful involvement of everyone. Consequently, I will evaluate students daily for their contribution to class discussions. Getting a good score for this portion of the class is not simply about talking regularly in class (although this helps). Rather, I will take into consideration what is said, how it contributes to ongoing conversations, how it engages readings, ideas, and peers. A few suggestions: come to class prepared; bring questions; anticipate differing opinions; realize there is much to learn; appreciate other perspectives; be open to new ideas; treat everyone with respect.

(2) **Assignments (20%)**

Complete required research and writing assignments by the start of class. These will form the basis for discussion and in-class activities, while also advancing student understanding and applications of qualitative methods. Some of these should also be considered drafts for documents which will eventually appear in the Research Portfolio.

(3) **Research Portfolio (65%)**

Designed to introduce students to the research process and give them an opportunity to apply techniques discussed in class, the research portfolio will allow students to showcase their learning and develop a larger research project. The components of portfolio include:

- Brief essay assessing social location and ethical issues of topic (5%)
- An annotated bibliography (c. 20 pp) on topic (10%)
- Research Notes (10%)
- Apply one method (e.g. interview, textual reading, observation) (10%)
- Experimental Ethnography (autoethnography or perforamtive) (10%)
- Research Proposal outlining project, ideally dissertation (c. 10 pp) (15%)

**Academic Integrity**

PLAGARISM OR CHEATING OF ANY KIND ON ANY ASSIGNMENT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE IN THE COURSE. (Consult the WSU Student Handbook for further details). In other words, do your own work. If using the ideas, work or wording of another in written assignments acknowledge the source. Do not offer or accept assistance during the examination.

**Disability Accomodation**

Students with disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be
approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509 335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

Office Hours
As noted above, I will hold regular office hours each week (Thursdays 10:30-12:00). Come see me if you are intrigued by something you read about for class or that was said in class and would like to read more about it. Come see me if you are puzzled or troubled about something that was said in class. Come see me if you need help with the term project, writing assignments, or readings. Come see me to talk about your grade. Come see me if you have ideas about how to make the course better.

Texts
Three texts are required for this course:

- Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, eds., *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader*.
- Palua Saukko, *Doing Cultural Studies*.

I can make these available on reserve as needed. A series of supplemental articles will also be read. We will discuss access and availability during the first class. In addition, when I first conceptualized the class, I outlined something more ambitious. This led me to order a series of texts, some of which we will discuss in class. Two of these

- Lucy Maddox, ed. *Locating American Studies*.

are provided as background to the history and currents of American studies as a field. We will not read these but they should be considered required reading for those pursuing degrees in American Studies. I have opted only to recommend strongly David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, second edition. It is a practical guide to key elements of the research process and professional
success. Although not required, I have noted where sections of it fit in the arc of the class. Finally, I initially hoped to include

N Denzin & M Giardina, eds., *Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge*

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*

however, as important as they are, I recommend, but do not require them. I will make a reader and place them on reserve as well.

**Course Outline**

Ideal flow. Subject to change.
*Found in the reader or online.
**From a recommended text.

13 Jan Opening

Discuss themes, objectives, histories, trajectories.

20 Jan On Method (in and out of American Studies)

Brian Attebery, “American Studies: A Not so Unscientific Method”

Saukko, Intro and 3

Silver, Part I**

Assignment 1

Retrieve three articles one from a journal in American Studies, the second from a sociology journal, and third from a journal in your area of specialization (literature, anthropology, film studies, etc). Ideally, the articles would be on the same topic (identity, racism, etc).

27 Jan Method as Cultural Critique: Imagination and Engagement

Madison, 1

Saukko, 2

Chin*

Radway*

Willis*

Assignment:
Draft responses to Warm-Ups in Madison.
3 Feb Design
Madison, 2
Saukko, 1
Denzin & Lincoln, Part V (validity)
Silver, Part II & 14-16, 26**
Assignment:
Complete Box at the end of Saukko chapter

10 Feb No Class.

17 Feb Ethics
Madison, chapters 4-6
Silver, 17**
WSU Institutional Review Board Guidelines and Procedures (Bring to class)
Assignment:
Complete IRB Form for WSU.
Draft responses to Warm-Ups in Madison.

24 Feb Experience and Positionality
Saukko, 4
Denzin & Lincoln, Part II
Assignment:
Complete Box at the end of Saukko chapter.

3 March Ideologies
Saukko, 5
Slotkin*
Jeffords*
Kellner*
10 March Genealogies
Saukko, 6
Foucault*
Terry*
Stoler*
Baum*

17 March Break. No Class.

24 March Texts
Saukko, 7
Denzin and Lincoln, Part III
Berlant*
McBride*

31 March Spaces
Saukko, 8
Anzaldúa*
Lipsitz*
King*

7 April Multiplicities
Saukko, 9
Grewal*
Hannerz*

14 April Performative Approaches
Denzin and Lincoln, Part IV
Madison, chapters 7-9
21 April  Conferences

28 April  Writing it Up
Silver, Part V**

6 May  Portfolios Due!
Silver, Part VII**