

## **SOC 3391-5: Special Topics in Advanced Interviewing**

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With the help of a Mellon grant, I taught a “special topics” upper-division seminar to sociology and anthropology majors during spring 2017. The seminar was a pilot with the intention of trying out an advanced qualitative interviewing course. The students’ major assignment was to choose a question that they could answer by conducting qualitative interviews in San Antonio. They settled on: How did millennials voting for the first time experience the 2016 Presidential election? The students completed 31 interviews, which were then transcribed and analyzed during the course of the semester. They each then wrote final papers analyzing the interviews from different perspectives. Final paper topics included: Millennial ideals of the American economy; perceptions of immigrants in the campaigns; the use of intellectual frameworks to make sense of the election’s results; and problems running a female presidential candidate.

The students gained skills on several fronts through this class. No other course on campus teaches students how to conduct reflexive, open-ended inquiry using an interview methodology. In doing so, they allow the interviewee to develop their own narratives and interpretations of the research questions. This is a large shift for the students, who are generally taught in college to be active talkers rather than active listeners. Through this class, they became more competent listeners and elicitors of information. The students reported becoming empathetic towards positions that they did

not agree with and identifying with people who they thought they would have little connection. It also allowed them to answer an important contemporary social question with primary research. The course was a success in this sense, and I hope to make it a part of the regular sociology/anthropology curriculum.