

**Advanced Qualitative Methods: 34:833:628 Thursdays, 1:10 – 3:50, Civic Square Building, Rm 113
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Spring Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 to 4 pm and Thursdays 10 am to noon**

Course Catalog Description

Students apply techniques of qualitative research, including interviewing, ethnography, and phenomenology, to help them gain an understanding of which techniques are appropriate for what specific research needs.

Course Synopsis

This course is designed to familiarize doctoral and advanced master's students with the most commonly used qualitative research methods and with qualitative research design. The course will prepare you to utilize these methods in your own research and to evaluate the qualitative research done by others.

Course Learning Goals

1. To Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems & Make Decisions.
2. To Participate in and Contribute to the Public Policy Process.

All Learning Goals are assessed via written assignments, in class comments, and a final research proposal.

Requirements and Grading

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Because this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class discussions is critical and will count for **39% of the overall course grade, 3% for each of 13 weeks**. It is difficult to participate if you're not in class, so participation will include attendance. Each class participant will be allowed one excused absence. Any additional absences, with the exception of those caused by emergencies, will result in a 5-point reduction off the total grade. Anyone who knows in advance that s/he will miss class must let the professor know as soon as possible.

Research Proposal

Class participants will be required to write and present to the class a research proposal that utilizes qualitative research methods. **The final written proposal is due by midnight on Saturday, April 18th. The written and 15 to 20 minute oral presentation of your proposal will jointly count for 26% of your overall course grade. Three preliminary versions of the written proposal are due by 4PM on Wednesdays, February 5th and 12th, and 4PM on Saturday, March 21st. They will count for 3%, 3% and 5% of the course grade, respectively.**

Weekly Assignments

In addition to participating in seminar discussions and writing and presenting the research proposal, course participants will be required to fulfill eight weekly assignments. **Each of these will count for 3% of the overall course grade, for a total of 24%**. Unless indicated otherwise, the assignments must be uploaded to Canvas by 4PM on the Wednesday before class. Any that are turned in later than that will not be accepted. **PLEASE ALSO BRING YOUR COMPLETED ASSIGNMENTS TO CLASS, TO HELP FACILITATE DISCUSSION.**

Readings

With the exception of *Designing Qualitative Research, sixth edition*, by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, all the readings will be available on Canvas. The Marshall and Rossman book can be purchased online or read on reserve at Alexander library. All the readings for the first three weeks of the course are available on Canvas, to give you time to purchase the Marshall and Rossman book, should you wish to do so.

THIS CLASSROOM IS A COMPUTER-FREE ZONE.

Numerous studies have found that allowing students to use computers and the internet in classrooms substantially impedes their learning. See, for example, <https://seii.mit.edu/research/study/the-impact-of-computer-usage-on-academic-performance-evidence-from-a-randomized-trial-at-the-united-states-military-academy/>

Week 1 (January 23): Introduction – What Is Qualitative Research?

- Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th edition:
 - Chapter 2: Strategic Themes in Qualitative Inquiry, pp. 45-84

Week 2 (January 30): Qualitative Research Approaches

- Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 6th edition:
 - Chapter 2: Qualitative Research Genres, pp. 15-41.
- John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edition:
 - Chapter 1: The Selection of a Research Approach, pp. 3-16.

(Assignment 1 due to Canvas by 4PM Wednesday, January 29). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Identify an article that uses **only** qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis and indicate:

- What is the overall objective of this research?
- What specific research question(s) did the study answer?
- What data collection technique(s) and method(s) of analysis were used to answer the research questions?
- Why were these data collection techniques and methods of analysis selected?
- Could the research question(s) have been answered using quantitative methods? If yes, please explain how?

Week 3 (February 6): Designing qualitative studies

- Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th edition:
 - Chapter 5: Designing Qualitative Studies, pp. 244-254.
- Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 6th edition:
 - Chapter 4: The What of the Study, pp. 65-96.

Optional Readings

- John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edition,
 - Chapter 6: The Purpose Statement, pp. 117-132
 - Chapter 7: Research Questions & Hypotheses, pp.133-146.

(Assignment 2 due 4PM Wednesday, February 5). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Prepare a preliminary research proposal that will serve as the first draft of the proposal you will distribute and present at the end of the semester. It should be no more than 2 pages double spaced and should include:

- The purpose statement
- The research question(s) that you wish to address in this research.

Week 4 (February 13): Which data collection methods to use?

- Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 6th edition:
 - Chapter 6: Basic Data Collection Methods, pp. 141-176.
 - Chapter 7: Specialized and Focused Data Collection Methods, pp. 179-204.

(Assignment 3 due 4PM Wednesday, February 12). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Prepare a preliminary research proposal that will serve as the second draft of the proposal you will distribute and present at the end of the semester. It should be no more than 2 pages double spaced and should include:

- The purpose statement.
- The research question(s) that you wish to address in this research.
- Qualitative data collection techniques you plan to use to answer your research question(s) and why they are appropriate for these research questions.
- Alternative qualitative data collection techniques you could use to answer your research question(s) and why you chose not to use them.

Week 5 (February 20): Data collection – individual interviewing

- Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th edition:
 - Chapter 7: Qualitative Interviewing, pp. 421-474
- Read any two of the journal articles based on individual interviewing, which are posted on Canvas.

(Assignment 4 due 4PM Wednesday, February 19). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Create an interview guide for a thirty minute qualitative interview on a topic about which you could interview one of your class members. Use the readings assigned for this week to help inform your work. Please indicate at the top of your assignment if your interview questions are appropriate for all class members or only specific class members (e.g., doctoral students or women or those under the age of 30). If the interview questions are only appropriate for some class members, please select a group with at least six representatives in the class whose membership would be fairly easy for me to identify. In other words, do not select categories such as students who are left-handed and like sushi, who would be difficult to identify without knowing them very well 😊. Please bring a recording device to the February 20 class, to enable you to record the interview.

You will need to transcribe this or another interview for the April 15 data analysis class. Transcribing is very time intensive and I would strongly encourage you not to leave it until the week it is due.

Week 6 (February 27): Data collection – group interviewing

- Benjamin F. Crabtree, et al. (1993). Selecting individual or group interviews. Pp. 137-149. In David L. Morgan (1993). *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*
- Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey (2009). *Focus Groups*, 4th edition. A Practical Guide for Applied Research, Chapters 2, 3,4,5 and 11, pp. 17-111 and pp. 173-184.
- Richard Zeller. (1993). Focus group research on sensitive topics: Setting the agenda without setting the agenda. Pp. 167-183. In David Morgan (1993). *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*.

(Assignment 5 due 4PM Wednesday, February 26). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Working with your partner(s), create a protocol for a twenty minute focus group on a topic of your choice. The protocol should indicate your research objective (what are you trying to learn from the focus group)? The protocol also should specify your opening question, your introductory/discussion starter question(s), your transition question(s), your key questions, and your ending question(s). Please also indicate what role each of you will play (e.g., moderate the focus group, observe and write down what participants are doing, other?)

Please also sign up on Canvas for 2 focus groups in which you will participate during class.

Week 7 (March 5): Data Collection – Documents and Material Culture, Use of Images, Historical and Biographical Methods - see readings on Canvas.

(Assignment 6 due 4PM Wednesday, March 4). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Your assignment is to utilize two of the following methods to collect data – documents and material culture, use of images, historical and biographical methods. Write a 2 to 3 page response paper that briefly describes how you collected data, analyzes the data you collected, and reflects on your experience with using these methods. What or whom you choose to study is entirely your decision. While you may choose to study the same person, place, event or phenomenon via each of the methods, this is neither expected nor required for the assignment. The objective is to give you experience using these techniques in collecting and analyzing data. Please do not worry about "getting it right."

Week 8 (March 12): Data collection – Observation, Participant Observation and Ethnography – see readings on Canvas.

(Assignment 7 due 4PM Wednesday, March 11). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Your assignment is to utilize observation and participant observation to collect data about a culture with which you may or may not already be familiar and write a 2 to 3 page analysis of that culture that draws on your data. You also may (but do not have to) draw on additional sources of data for the analysis. The objective is to give you experience using these techniques in collecting and analyzing data. Please do not worry about "getting it right."

March 19: NO CLASS

Enjoy Your Spring Break!

ASSIGNMENT 8: DRAFT RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE BY 4PM SATURDAY, MARCH 21. PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS.

This is the third draft of the proposal you will present at the end of the semester. This version should be no more than 5 pages double spaced and may be shorter. At minimum, your proposal should include: 1) The purpose statement 2) The research question(s) 3) Method you plan to use to collect and analyze your data (please provide specifics whenever possible – e.g. how you'll obtain access to research subjects or a research site, if that is not obvious). I realize that most of you are not yet well-versed in these methods (that is why you are taking this class). Please keep in mind that you will have time to modify your research proposal before you submit it at the end of the semester. 4) Why you plan to utilize these data collection methods 5) Any limitations of the methodology (e.g. not enough money or time to do the number of interviews necessary for saturation) 6) A timeline indicating when you will conduct and write-up the various aspects of this research – based on a June 1, 2020 start date. **OPTIONAL:** A brief summary of the relevant literature that you are addressing or responding to via this research. A literature review is required for the final research proposal.

Week 9 (March 26): Class discussion of preliminary research proposals

Come prepared to discuss your research proposal and critique the subset of other research proposals that you will receive by noon on Sunday, March 22nd.

Week 10 (April 2): Case Studies and Phenomenology – see readings on Canvas

(Assignment 9 due 4PM Wednesday, April 1). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Submit two research questions that would be appropriate for a case study design and two research questions that would be appropriate for a phenomenological design. Provide an explanation for why each of them is appropriate for answering via case study or phenomenology vs. an alternative methodology, and what, if any, other methodologies you could use to address each of these research questions.

Week 11 (April 9): Grounded Theory Building & Participatory Action Research – see readings on Canvas

(Assignment 10 due 4PM Wednesday, April 8). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Propose two studies, one that uses participatory action research (PAR) and one that uses grounded theory building. Submit a one page summary for each one that includes the research question, why it is appropriate to use PAR or grounded theory to address that question, and your proposed sampling and data collection methods.

Week 12 (April 16): Data Analysis – see readings on Canvas

(Assignment 11 due 4PM Wednesday, April 15). PLEASE BRING A COPY TO CLASS

Transcribe a 15 to 20 minute interview that you conducted (in class or elsewhere), code and analyze the interview using the techniques outlined in the readings, and write a 2 to 3 page summary of your analysis and findings. Please submit the transcript and coding along with your assignment.

ASSIGNMENT 12 - FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL - DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SATURDAY, APRIL 18TH

The completed research proposal should include a final version of all the areas you covered in the preliminary research proposal, and a complete literature review. You do not need to turn in the slides or other materials that you will be using for your research presentation on April 23rd or April 30th.

Week 13 and 14 (April 23 and 30): Research Proposals Presentation & Discussion

Please sign up on Canvas for a date and time to present your research proposal. Your presentations should be 15 to 20 minutes in length and will make up part of your total research proposal grade. Those not presenting will provide written feedback on the proposals that will make up their class participation grades for those days.