

Advanced Qualitative Research Methods

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION There are three main components and stages of qualitative research: research planning and designing, data collection, and data management and analysis. Since you already have some knowledge and practical experiences with various methods of data collection, this graduate seminar will focus on how to design qualitative-oriented research and how to manage, evaluate and analyze qualitative data. Sample topics include: What constitute qualitative data? What is case study and how to think about contexts and contingencies when selecting cases and making inferences from them? How to make methodological choices for explaining variations vs. uncovering commonalities? What are some of the varying mutations of “validity” in qualitative research and how to demonstrate each? How to write about the mechanisms and processes for your research methods? How to conduct different levels of analysis based on qualitative data and develop arguments to link them? Throughout, we will read and discuss the selected methodological texts and research exemplars to explore various tools that can be useful for your own qualitative research design and analysis.

Specifically, our objectives are:

- Learn how to conceptualize and design original research using qualitative methods;
- Master various methods for data analysis and interpretation: such as development of a coding scheme, construction of categories and typologies, and data triangulation and corroboration;
- Be able to identify the methodological trends in the field and critically appraise qualitative research using appropriate terminology and classifications;
- Understand the ethics and to gain a deeper appreciation of qualitative inquiry as part of the larger endeavor of academic research;
- Design and implement your own qualitative project and write a conference-ready paper.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you have to miss a class (due to medical conditions, family emergency, jury duty, call to active military duty or other excused absences), please notify the instructor in advance and provide necessary documentation. Being late more than 10 minutes will count as an absence. For each unexcused absence 2.5% will be deducted from your overall grade.

Participation

- Each student is required not merely to attend, but also to participate in each class session. To participate, you must have prepared by completing all of the assigned readings and assignments and by thinking critically about each of those readings and assignments.
- The quality of your experience with this course depends in part on the degree of your participation. Asking questions, making observations, introducing issues for debate, and sharing your research experiences are all good ways to start. By the end of the course, you will be given a grade for your overall participation in class (10% total).
- We will create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. This means both active listening to one another (and not always thinking about what you would say next) and that all members have an opportunity to contribute rather than the discussion being dominated by a few.
- To foster an engaging classroom environment, only use laptops or iPads for readings, readings notes, and in-class exercises. Set up your notebook to take notes during class.

Class Presentations

- During the first day of class, students will sign up for a total of three presentations. The first presentation will be for the second week, “Qualitative Methods Refresher,” when each student will present a mini-lecture on an assigned method. Students will also choose two additional weekly topics for their presentations. A list of who will present on which topics will be emailed to the class and uploaded to Canvas.
- Each presentation will be 25 to 30 minutes. Details on the requirements and techniques of presentations will be discussed during the first day of class.
- The assigned presenters will need to upload to Canvas a draft of your PowerPoint presentation or an outline of your presentation plan no later than noon on the Sunday before your presentation. I will provide feedback for revisions and refinement. If the students would like input before or during their preparation, I am more than happy to meet for discussion. The final PowerPoint presentation should be uploaded to Canvas no later than noon on Tuesday of your presentation.
- During the class, the presenters will give a brief, synthesized summary of the readings, clarify concepts, raise questions, lead discussion, and conclude with critical comments and observations. They can also bring in data sets (film clips, interview transcripts, etc.) for analyses and demonstrations.
- You will be given a grade for your performance in your presentation, including preparation, creativity, organization, and presentation skills (total 3 presentations, 5% each).

Assignments

#1. Response paper I (5%). Find two journal articles that employ different qualitative methods dealing with topics similar to your own research project. Write a response paper (no more than two pages, single-spaced) comparing and assessing the formulation of the research problem, the research design and the data collection methods used by the researchers in the two articles. Your evaluation should include, but is not limited to, the following: appropriateness of the

research design to answer the research question, scope and feasibility of the research, strengths and weakness of the data collection strategies, validity, and ethical problems. Please upload the two articles you plan to review to Canvas by for instructor's approval. Your response paper is due by noon on (upload to Canvas). Please be prepared to present your critique in class.

#2. Research design (10%). This is a preliminary step towards your final paper for this class. Here are the key elements that should be included (a total of no more than three pages, single-spaced):

- Provide a tentative title that captures the essence of your topic and an abstract (75-100 words) that summarizes the main elements of your proposal.
 - Explain context of your research and then carefully frame your research questions (should be important, novel, and answerable; should be clear, unambiguous, and easily understandable)
 - Justify the method(s): name the method(s) you will use and explain why it is (or they are) the most appropriate method (s) to answer your research questions (cite relevant literature to justify your methodological choice)
 - Identify the data: if interview or focus group, identify, explain and justify the demographic criteria for choosing participants (e.g., age, educational and professional background, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, nationality); if field observation, identify the site for your fieldwork and explain (cite relevant literature to justify the site selection); if textual analysis/discourse analysis, identify and explain which texts will be selected (type of medium, type of text, time frame, number of text sources, etc.).
 - Describe the procedure: if interview, describe how to get access to and recruit the possible interviewees; if field observation, describe how to get access to the field and observation strategies; if textual analysis/discourse analysis, describe how you would locate, retrieve and organize the texts, and how you will analyze the texts (inductive vs deductive; open coding vs focused coding, etc.).
 - Explain the measure: if interview and focus group, justify if you would use structured or semistructured or unstructured questions, compose possible questions, and group them into different topical areas or theoretical categories; if field observation, explain what particular areas you would like to focus on (e.g., for newsroom observation, you could focus on editor-reporter relationships, socialization and professionalization through daily practices, gender dynamics in the newsroom, etc.); if textual analysis/discourse analysis, design a "coding scheme/protocol" in a qualitative sense and explain what you will look for in analyzing the texts (e.g., theme, metaphor, journalistic tradition, discursive strategies, intended message).
 - Describe validity strategies: identify and describe in detail at least three strategies to improve validity for both data collection and data analysis (e.g., reflexivity, triangulation, peer review, participant feedback, extended fieldwork, etc.)
- 5 class participation 10% class presentation 15%
Response papers I, II, III 15% Research design 10% Final paper and presentation 50% class participation class presentation Response papers I, II, III Research design Final paper and presentation
- Reflection: describe possible holes in the research design and challenges you expect; explain your "rescue" or "backup" plan.

3. Response paper II (5%). You are going to read one of your classmate's research designs and write a two-page, single-spaced constructive criticism. Evaluate the appropriateness of the research design, scope and feasibility of the research, strengths and weakness of the data collection strategies, validity, and possible ethical problems. The paper is due by noon on (upload to Canvas). Please also send a copy to the author, and you will discuss your critique with the author during the meeting.

4. Response paper III (5%).

You are going to analyze a focus group data set.

5. Final paper and presentation (50%). Following the research design you proposed earlier in the semester, you will carry it out and write up as a research paper (18-22 page, double spaced). The research paper will include: a title, an abstract (75-100 words), introduction (including research statements or research questions), review of relevant literature, selection of research method(s) and data collection, data analysis, and conclusion and discussion of the results. Detailed instruction will be given in class. Submit the draft of your paper to Canvas. Also send the draft to one assigned class member by noon, December 1 (Friday). You will then present your paper in class on December 5, and we will have a detailed discussion of each of your papers. Revise your paper based on the comments and suggestions by the class and submit your final paper to Canvas by noon,