

## **Qualitative Research**

MMC 6426 Section 0636

Time: Wednesday 6 – 8 periods (12:50 pm to 3:50 pm)

Location: Weimer Hall 1098

Spring 2026

### **Instructor**

Dr. Huan Chen

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2088 Weimer Hall

Office Hours: T/TH 9:30 am to 10:30 am

### **Course Description**

MMC 6426 offers an in-depth exploration of qualitative research methodologies and philosophies, specifically tailored to the field of communication. This course delves into the practical aspects of utilizing qualitative research to gain insights into various phenomena typically associated with communication studies. Although it occasionally touches on philosophical underpinnings, the core focus is on the practical application of qualitative research techniques. Key areas of interest include critical tasks that a qualitative researcher must undertake. These include selecting a subject for investigation, formulating research objectives and questions, choosing an appropriate qualitative research design, identifying relevant data sources, conducting comprehensive interviews and field observations, analyzing qualitative data, assessing the quality of qualitative research, and effectively communicating the findings in a research report.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of MMC 6426, students will be equipped to:

Articulate the process through which qualitative research contributes to understanding phenomena.

Distinguish and compare various qualitative research methodologies.

Formulate focused objectives and pertinent questions for qualitative research.

Plan and execute a comprehensive qualitative research study.

Effectively carry out in-depth interviews and conduct thorough field observations.

Assess the rigor and value of qualitative research findings.

Compose a detailed and coherent qualitative research proposal.

### **Required Texts**

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand, Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Tentative Schedule** (subject to change with adequate notice to participants)

**Week 1: Introduction 1/14/26**

Overview of the course

Teacher/student introduction

Taylor, Ronald E., Mariea Grubbs Hoys, and Eric Haley (1996), “How French Advertising Professionals Develop Creative Strategy,” *Journal of Advertising*, 14(1), 1-13.

**Week 2: What is qualitative research? 1/21/26**

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 1

Pauly, John (1991), “A Beginner’s Guide to Doing Qualitative Research in Mass Communication,” *Journalism Monographs*, 125, 1-29.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2005), “The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” in Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1-32.

Morrison, Margaret A., Eric Haley, Kim Bartel Sheehan, and Ronald E. Taylor (2002), “A Qualitative View of the World: Theory and Data Analysis,” *Using Qualitative Research in Advertising*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 16-28.

**Week 3: Philosophical and theoretical foundation 1/28/26**

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 2

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann (1967), “The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life,” *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, 19-46.

Blumer, Herbert (1969), “The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism,” *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1-60.

Geertz, Clifford (1973), “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 3-30.

**Week 4: Designing qualitative research 2/4/26**

Creswell & Poth, Ch. 3 & Ch. 4

Maxwell, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2

The qualitative state of your field is DUE.

### **Week 5: Phenomenology 2/11/26**

Creswell & Poth, 75-82, 349-364, 114-116, 201-202, 238-240, 271-273.

Polkinghorne, Donald E. (1989), “Phenomenological Research Methods,” in Ronald S. Valle and Steen Halling, eds. *Existential Phenomenology Perspectives in Psychology*. New York: Plenum Press, 41-60.

Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Pollio (1989), “Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential Phenomenology,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (September), 133-146.

### **Week 6: Conducting qualitative interviews 2/18/26**

Kvale, Steiner (1983), “The Qualitative Research Interview,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 14 (2), 171-196.

Morrison, Margaret A., Eric Haley, Kim Bartel Sheehan, and Ronald E. Taylor (2002), “Listening to Consumers: The Qualitative Interview,” *Using Qualitative Research in Advertising*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 45-61.

Gray, Lia M., Gina Wong-Wylie, Gwen R. Rempel and Karen Cook (2020), “Expanding Qualitative Research Interviewing Strategies: Zoom Video Communications,” *The Qualitative Report*, 25(5), 1292-1301.

Article critique is DUE.

### **Week 7: No Class/Conducting an in-depth interview 2/25/26**

### **Week 8: Grounded theory 3/4/26**

Creswell & Poth, 82-90, 365-383, 116-117, 203-204, 240-243, 273-276.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1-43.

Suddaby, Roy (2006), “From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is Not,” *Academy of Management Journal*, 49 (4), 633-642. 2/23/16

### **Week 9: Ethnography 3/11/26**

Creswell & Poth, 90-96, 384-406, 118-119, 204-206, 243-246, 276-279.

Gold, Raymond (1997), "The Ethnographic Method in Sociology," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(4), 388-402.

Kozinets, Robert (2002), "The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39, 61-72.

In-depth interview is DUE.

**Week 10: No Class/Spring break 3/18/26**

**Week 11: Conducting observations 3/25/26**

Barnard, H. Russell (2002), "Field Notes: How to Take Them, Code Them, Manage Them," *Research Methods in Anthropology*. New York: Altimira Press, 365-389.

Barnard, H. Russell (2002), "Direct and Indirect observation," *Research Methods in Anthropology*. New York: Altimira Press, 390-425.

Belk, Russell W., John F. Sherry, Jr., and Melanie Wallendorf (1988), "A Naturalistic Inquiry into Buyer and Seller Behavior at a Swap Meet," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (March), 449-470.

Cotter, Kelley (2019), "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram," *New Media & Society*, 21(4), 895-913.

**Week 12: No class/Field work: Conducting an observation 4/1/26**

**Week 13: Narrative research 4/8/26**

Creswell & Poth, 67-74, 329-348, 113-114, 198-200, 233-238, 269-271.

Polkinghorne, Donald E. (1988), "Practice and Narrative," *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 157-184.

Spector-Mersel, Gabriela (2010), "Narrative Research: Time for a Paradigm," *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 204-224.

Field observation is DUE.

**Week 14: Case study 4/15/24**

Creswell & Poth, 96-103, 407-422, 119-121, 206-207, 246-249, 279-280.

Stake, Robert E. (1978), "The Case Study in Social Inquiry," *Educational Researcher*, 7(2), 5-8.

Yin, Robert K. (2003), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1-18.

Baxter, Pamela and Susan Jack (2008), "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers," *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.

## **Week 15: Research proposal presentations 4/22/26**

Each student is required to prepare a 10-minute presentation on the qualitative research proposal.

Final research proposal is DUE.

### **Evaluation of Grades**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Percent of Grade</b>
The qualitative state of your field	80	8%
Long interview	140	14%
Field observation	100	10%
Article critique	80	8%
Discussion leader	200	20%
Qualitative project proposal	300	30%
Participation	100	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Academic Policies & Resources**

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

### **Assignment Description**

#### **The qualitative state of your field**

Select three journals in your field. Define your field in any way you choose. Examine the three journals for the past five years for qualitative research articles. Write a report on the status of qualitative research in your field. Consider the topics addressed, authors, methods used, trends, explanations of qualitative approaches, whatever appears interesting and relevant. Make the last page of your report a bibliography of articles located.

#### **Long interview**

Conduct an in-depth interview (preferably related to your research proposal and at least 40 minutes long) with someone you do not know or barely know. If your interview turns out to be

less than 40 minutes long, you must redo it. Otherwise, you will not have enough data for analysis.

Given the current situation, you are advised to conduct the interview via Zoom. You will be asking your participant about his/her lived experience of a topic/question appropriate for qualitative analysis. For this assignment, you will create an interview guide, conduct, record, and transcribe the interview; make a preliminary analysis of themes; summarize the findings; and write your reactions to the process.

Here is my suggestion on how to write this assignment:

- A reflection on the significance of your research (1 or 2 paragraphs)
- A description of your interview participant and the interview setting (1 or 2 paragraphs)
- The interview guide/protocol (1 page)
- Interview transcript marked up with notes from analysis (whatever it takes)
- A discussion of the findings and themes, with supporting quotes (whatever it takes)
- Your reflections on the experience. How well did the interview progress? What difficulties did you encounter? How would you change the process next time? What did you learn about interviewing? About yourself? About your comfort level with this method? (1 page or more)

### **Field observation**

You will conduct one observation (preferably related to your research proposal) in a natural setting either offline or online for at least 90 minutes. Unless you have particular research question in which you are interested, the question you need to address is: “What’s going on here?” Use the five minutes to write somewhat detailed description of the site. Then, pay attention to the people, how they look, how they interact, their behavior, etc. While on site, you will take condensed field notes. (Those taken on the field: reminders to yourself of things seen and heard. If you are writing too much, you won’t be able to observe what is going on around you). Allow yourself the hour immediately after the observation to prepare your expanded field notes. (These are extensive notes. Write all you remember but try not to make value judgment). When taking notes, I recommended that you divide the page in two columns. On one column write your observations, on the other jot down your thoughts and feelings.

You should turn in:

- Your condensed field notes
- Your expanded field notes
- A brief account of your observations; did you find an answer to your initial question? If so, what is your answer? If not, what precluded you from answering the question?
- A written reaction to the project including reflections on the experience of being an observer (what you learned about being an observer, about yourself, and about your comfort level with this method)

### **Article critique**

Critique an article that employs a qualitative approach from a peer-reviewed journal in your field. The overall idea is to act as a professional reviewer. This means you must be critical but not rude and over the top. You should also not be too easy. As a reviewer for this class, your job is to highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of the METHOD not much on the content, findings, or theoretical justification. Write the critique as you would a review, which has the following format:

Name: [your name] – this is obviously not done in a real review

Manuscript title: “Expressive Consumption Escape Mechanisms: From Horse Back Riding to Extreme Sports”

Reviewer Comments to the Authors

Strengths: [keep this section short]

This manuscript is about...It is strong in its...

However, there still exist opportunities for improvement.

Major Weaknesses:

1. I am not convinced that the theoretical base upon which the authors draw sufficiently justifies the method for this project. Here is why...
2. Please explain why this approach was taken...
3. I don't see the XYZ interpretation clearly from the passages used in the manuscript....
4. (or something along these lines)

Minor Weaknesses:

1. You misspelled “horseback” throughout; it's one word.
2. Your citation on page 5 is missing a date.

This review can be as long as you think is needed. Before reaching a premier journal in communication, qualitative manuscript reviews such as those I receive and write will typically be 3-4 pages double-spaced for each reviewer. At this stage, with a published work, I expect about two pages, with far more strengths than would normally ever be found in the early stages of the review.

### **Discussion leader**

You will lead the discussion for one or two articles (depending on enrollment) of your choice during the semester. As the discussion leader, you are supposed to facilitate the class to better understand the assigned article and the topic of that week. You have flexibility in the content and format of your presentation. Try to use different strategies and tools to engage the whole class and facilitate individual and collective learning.

### **Qualitative Research Proposal**

You will write a 15-page qualitative research proposal (not including cover page, abstract, reference, table, etc.). The proposal should be thought of as the front end of a manuscript you intend to submit to a conference or journal. It should include an introduction that describes a phenomenon you wish to explore qualitatively and why understanding it more deeply is

necessary for both scholars and practitioners. It should describe literature and theories that you think a priori justify the need to conduct the research and may partially describe what might be going on within the phenomenon. This section will also include research objective(s) and research question(s). Finally, the most important part will address methodology. You need to select one of the five traditions we discuss in the course as a methodological approach that you will use to collect and analyze your data. In this section of the manuscript, you need to justify the tradition you have chosen as well as explain the steps you will follow. This method section includes the following subsections: self-reflexivity, population and sample, data collection, data analysis, and quality control. At the end of the proposal, you will need to provide a timeline of procedure and a budget table.

The proposal will be evaluated on

- how well it complies with a solid premier journal manuscript style
- how precisely, clearly, and forcefully an argument is made to study a specific phenomenon
- how accurately a tradition is chosen that aligns with the stated phenomenon, objectives, and questions
- how thoroughly and appropriately antecedent literature is considered
- how well the tradition chosen is conceptualized and explained
- the potential relevance of the proposed project to scholars and or practitioners

## **Class Participation**

This graduate seminar demands significant participation from each student. I am quite hard on this requirement. At this level, I do not reduce my expectations by considering cultural traditions or backgrounds or social/personality styles. You absolutely must be able to make your point in a professional, courteous yet forceful manner. These points should be well thought out and supported by sound scholarly logic and if possible, the literature read in the course. Participation can take the form of asking good questions, helping to clarify points from the readings for other students, or making statements about the readings or research process.

Behaviors I do not like to see include:

- Sitting quietly through a full three-hour session rarely contributing to the discussion
- Contributing at a cursory or superficial level merely for the sake of saying something and often demonstrating a lack of effort in trying to understand the material
- Being rude to anyone else in the room (or authors of the class materials for that matter) by making judgmental comments about people as opposed to the ideas represented, cutting other people off when they are speaking, not being aware of cultural differences or program level differences when using terms, slangs, or phrases
- Being unprepared to engage the material for each session