QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS
SYA 6315, Spring 2011, NPB 1200
Wednesdays, Periods 6-8 (12:50 – 3:50pm)

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This Qualitative Methods course builds on basic experience in participant observation and qualitative interviewing to develop research skills in visual sociology and other methods to investigate tacit and less verbally-accessible forms of knowledge. In addition to providing students with experience using a wide array of such methods, this course will critically examine the methodological issues associated with different research tools and approaches for in-depth qualitative enquiry. In particular, the course is based on the analysis of exemplars of actual sociological research, and of the methods employed therein.

The course consists of a series of intimate and participatory 3-hour seminars, each on a particular theme in qualitative social research methodology. The seminars will be loosely structured to give time to in-class discussion and practical experimentation with different methods. Students are expected to prepare by reading required texts and participating in discussions on the topics raised. The required readings have been chosen to give students a ‘flavor’ of the applied issues in using particular research methods, but students are expected to independently conduct an extensive literature review in their area of interest and bring examples from this literature into class for group discussion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Introduce researchers to different methods and styles of qualitative data collection and analysis, which range from theoretical to applied research questions.
- Advance researchers’ understanding of the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry, as well as appropriate scenarios for the use of each.
- Equip researchers with the capacity to apply these methods in their own research, in a reflexive manner.
- Become familiar with and critically examine examples of published qualitative work.
- Develop critical reviewer skills important to participating in a community of qualitative researchers.
- Support researchers in developing a draft thesis/dissertation methodology chapter which demonstrates critical awareness of the value and limitations of different research approaches in their field of interest.
- Advance researchers’ ability to design a competitive qualitative research proposal.

***I reserve the right for the class to make changes to this syllabus, as long as they are announced by Dr. Acord in advance (in class or via email).***
GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

ACADEMIC ETIQUETTE: This course is designed to be a working seminar, where all participants are both students of qualitative analysis and active qualitative researchers. Thus it is expected that participants will work together as colleagues to engage theoretical and methodological ideas, actively do research and analysis, and provide each other with constructive criticism.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/ethics/code_of_ethics_table_of_contents) details professional expectations that all members of this course will be expected to embrace. In addition, members of this course are expected to comply with the Honor Code of the University of Florida. The Dean of Students Office provides an online description of the Student Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php), including the honor pledge, a list of violations of the student honor code, and a list of possible sanctions. Cheating or plagiarizing will be reported to the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability with the Disability Resources Office, located at 0001 Building 0020 –Reid Hall (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/, accessuf@dso.ufl.edu, 352-392-8565). Please notify me within the first two weeks of class about any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodation to be unavailable.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance at and active participation in all classes is mandatory. Students who miss all or part of a class must notify me of their absence by email. Students must still complete all coursework (and circulate it to their classmates using the class email list) during excused absences. Every unexcused absence will result in a drop of one letter grade.

SEMINAR BREAK: We will have a seminar break with non-alcoholic drinks and snacks every week, with all class members taking turns to host. The two ‘Practicum’ seminars are excepted.
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

PARTICIPATION (20% of total grade)
Credit will be assigned based on individual students' contributions to class discussion, class assignments, and class practicums.

READING REVIEWS (10% of total grade)
To facilitate group discussion of the value and limitations of particular research methods, you will be expected to write 9 weekly reading reviews (and prepare for brief classroom presentations) on books and/or articles from your area of interest. Reviews should be 1 page maximum (with single or 1.5 spacing, and 11 or 12-pt font), and will be handed in. Each review should include identification of the author(s)' research questions, outline of research methods, key findings, and critical reflections about the methodological implications of the work (especially in relation to other readings & ideas from class).

Weeks with Reading Reviews are noted on the syllabus.

HARN MINI RESEARCH PROJECT (points possible, 5% of total grade)
On February 9th, we will be conducting a small video-based research project in the Harn Museum. You are expected to follow this period of video observation by analyzing the video and conducting 1-2 elicitation interviews with study participants. Your report on this study should take the form of a 1-2 page description of your personal research and analysis methods, a 2-4 page description of preliminary findings, a 2-4 page reflection upon the strengths and limitations of the method, and an appendix with your interview data. This is due in class on Wednesday, March 16th.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL (points possible, 60% of total grade)
This proposal will have two parts. First, it will condense the results of your independent literature review, along with other course reading as relevant. Second, you will build on this research to make a professional quality proposal situating, outlining, and defending a developed (and realistic) M.A. or Ph.D. project. You will be expected to turn in a final research proposal (maximum: 30 pages with 1.5 spacing, 11-12pt font) on Monday, April 25th.

PROPOSAL DEFENSE (points possible, 5% of total grade)
You will be expected to do a 15-20 minute presentation with PowerPoint about your proposal in our last classes on Wednesday, April 13th and 20th. Your colleagues will provide feedback on your proposal. You are expected to use this feedback to revise your proposal for final submission on April 25th.

Final grades will be available via ISIS on the evening of May 4th

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<td>A</td>
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COURSE READING

All required reading will be made available via the UF Library Course Reserves: https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ Exceptions to this will be noted and distributed one week prior. I’ve tried to ensure that as much material as possible is available online, but you may be required to take out the print copy on reserve in some instances.

It is your responsibility to read the Required Readings in advance of class meeting, and bring these readings to class (in either paper or electronic form, or bring your notes on the readings to class). Recommended Readings are highly suggested; please try to skim them.

**Students who have not taken a previous course in qualitative research methods, or who have not had experience in qualitative interviewing or observation, should refer to the texts below over the winter break to prepare for the course.

The following texts are suggested for independent reference, as students will be expected to prepare a research proposal in their particular area of interest. I expect that they will be cited as relevant in the final research proposal.

Qualitative Methods and Analysis Writ Large


**Ethnography and Observation**


**Interviews and Focus Groups**


**Qualitative Data Analysis**


Riley, J. (1996) *Getting the most from your data: A handbook of practical ideas on how to analyse qualitative data*.


**Visual Methods**


**Discourse Analysis**


Human Subjects Ethical Guidelines

www.onlineethics.org

Some Peer-Reviewed Qualitative Research Journals and Sites

*Methods@manchester*: www.methods.manchester.ac.uk
*Qualitative Inquiry*: http://qix.sagepub.com/
*Qualitative Research*: http://qrij.sagepub.com/
*Qualitative Sociology*: http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/journal/11133
## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### Jan 5th  Course Introduction: The Problem of Tacit Knowledge

What are the basic building blocks of the social world? What aspects must we take into consideration when doing qualitative research?

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


### Jan 12th  Analytical Frameworks: Situating Qualitative Research

How do research methods enable particular types of knowledge-creation? What epistemological issues are involved in developing a qualitative research program?

**Assignment:** Prepare brief methodological summary of your research area.

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

**Jan 19th Ethics, Validity, and Reliability in Qualitative Inquiry**

How can we ensure the quality of qualitative data collection and analysis? What special measures must be in place to protect our informants?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:

- Required Reading for UF Researchers using Human Subjects: [http://irb.ufl.edu/education/trainreq.htm](http://irb.ufl.edu/education/trainreq.htm)

Recommended Reading:


**Jan 26th Visual Sociology**

What can visual images reveal about social interaction and meaning? How can we interrogate this?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


**Feb 2nd Microethnography**

What can we learn from micro-level examinations of speech and behavior? How do questions of meaning-making impact on larger questions in the sociology of race, gender, and equality?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:


**Recommended Reading:**


**Feb 9th Video Practicum: Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art**

This seminar will be a hands-on pilot study of label use in the Harn Museum. Students will be expected to recruit friends and colleagues to participate. This class will meet at the Harn Museum.

**Required Reading:**


**Feb 16th Active Interviewing**

How do interviewing styles impact upon the forms and quality of data collected? What techniques can assist in naturalistic data capture, and how do these affect the researcher/informant relationship?

*Reading Review*

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading:**


### Feb 23rd Elicitation Interviews

How can we help our informants to access non-verbal forms of knowledge?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:


### March 2nd Practicum: The Spatial Turn and Participatory Mapping

This seminar will meet in the computer lab (CBD 110B) and carry out an in-class project using Google Maps to create personal ecosystems.

* Reading Review

Required Reading:


### March 9th Spring Break – no class

### March 16th Research Design

How do you design and manage a large-scale research project? What considerations need to be made to improve the validity and reliability of the research outcomes? What are the ingredients of a successful research proposal? What is the value of comparative work or mixed methods?

This seminar will have a guest visit from Dr. Sebastian Galindo, IFAS, to discuss designing ‘evaluation research’ for national U.S. funding bodies.

* Harn Mini Research Project due in class.

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


### March 23rd Discourse and Conversation Analysis

What is the connection between language and social structure? How can we investigate the performance of structure in everyday text and conversation?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:

March 30th Coding and Grounded Theory

How can we make sense of qualitative data? What tools exist to create emergent sociological knowledge?

* Reading Review

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


April 6th Researching for Social Justice: Action Research

In this final seminar, students will choose other qualitative research methods and introduce them to the class. Examples could include: ethnodrama, autoethnography, etc.

* Reading Review

Recommended Reading:


April 13th Second to Last Class: Presentations of Research Proposals

April 20th Last Class: Presentations of Research Proposals

April 25th Exam Week: Final Research Proposal Due by 4pm to Dr. Acord’s mailbox, TURL 3120