



COLLEGE OF INFORMATION STUDIES

INST-808: Seminar in Research Methods and Data Analysis

Spring 2016: Qualitative Research Methods for Social Science Research

Location: Hornbake, Room 1112

Time: Tuesdays, 6-8:45PM

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

INST-808 is a seminar course that covers different topics within research methods and analysis. For the spring 2016 term, we will focus on qualitative research methods, including study design, data collection, and analysis.

This course is designed to provide a general understanding of qualitative research methods and issues related to the design and conduct of qualitative studies. It is important for researchers to understand how different methods can be used to investigate different research objectives. Qualitative research seeks the answers to *how* and *why*; it analyzes and describes; and it may shape preliminary questions to quantitative research. Qualitative methods include interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and content analysis.

If you plan to use qualitative research in your future career or studies, or want to become familiar with the various methods to qualitatively evaluate research questions, this class will provide a strong foundation in the primary research methods used in social and informational science research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this course, you will be able to:

- Develop strong, testable research questions
- Identify appropriate methodological approaches to evaluate research questions
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods
- Collect and analyze qualitative data through robust research strategies

- Present qualitative research data to diverse audiences

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE MATERIALS

There is one assigned textbook for this course: [Qualitative Research \(3rd Ed\)](#) by David Silverman. Textbook readings will be supplemented with PDF articles available on ELMS.

Qualitative Data Analysis Software: There are many options for doing qualitative analysis of your data. You can use Word or Excel, or you can use one of the many free software options. Below I've listed a few. Note: I haven't used any of these so you should check out a few and find one you like):

- [ODA Miner Lite](#): "free and easy-to-use version of our popular computer assisted qualitative analysis software. It can be used for the analysis of textual data such as interview and news transcripts, open-ended responses, etc. as well as for the analysis of still images. [Windows Only]
- [Coding Analysis Toolkit \(CAT\)](#): open-source project developed by several universities.
- Analysis of Qualitative Data ([AQUAD](#)): German-based open-source program
- [Compendium](#): allows for mapping of ideas/arguments

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The grading scale (including corresponding GPA) for the final grade is as follows:

A (4.0) 95-100	B (3.0) 83-86.9	C (2.0) 73-76.9	F (0.0) < 60
A- (3.7) 90-94.9	B- (2.7) 80-82.9	C- (1.7) 70-72.9	
B+ (3.3) 87-89.9	C+ (2.3) 77-79.9	D (1.0) 60-69.9	

Class participation (10%): This class is structured to be discussion-centered seminar. This will require that you finish all assigned readings **prior** to each class session. Participation forms an integral part of your own learning experience, as well as that of your classmates. Class participation grades will take into account both the quantity and quality of your contributions to class discussions; however, the quality of your contributions (whether questions, viewpoints, responses to others' questions, etc.) to a meaningful, ongoing discussion will be much more heavily weighted.

Method-Specific Exercises—Multiple Deadlines (30%): During Part II of the course, we will cover seven types of qualitative research methods: (1) historical research/analysis of secondary data; (2) case studies and ethnographies; (3) interviews; (4) focus groups; (5) content analysis; (6) user studies; and (7) online data. For each method, I have designed an activity to help you transform the readings and class discussions to knowledge. For example, for Week 8

(Interviews), you will be asked to select a topic and devise an interview protocol. We will spend the first 30 minutes of the following class going over the assignment and discussing strengths, weaknesses, and ways to improve your study design.

Notes: Only the top six grades will be counted, so you can skip a week without penalty. However, the ethnography exercise is required of all students.

Method Article Critique—DUE Week 13/April 26 (15%): You will select a published qualitative research paper on a topic of interest and write a 800-1200 word critique of the paper. Use this document as guidance for your critique: <https://www.usc.edu/hsc/ebnet/res/Guidelines.pdf>

Qualitative Research Paper—Multiple Deadlines (45%): Individually or in pairs (2 people), you will select a research topic of interest, identify one or more research questions, and develop a qualitative study to evaluate/analyze their chosen topic. The goal of this semester-long project is for you to get experience collecting, analyzing, and writing up a qualitative study, and I strongly encourage you to treat this project as an opportunity to create a draft of a publishable paper.

This project includes multiple graded parts spaced throughout the semester to provide you with ongoing feedback from your classmates and the professor, including a paper proposal, progress report due mid-semester, peer feedback, and a final paper and presentation during the last class meeting.

Breakdown of qualitative research project

Proposal: 5% | Progress Report: 5% | Peer Feedback: 5% | Paper: 20% | Presentation: 10%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is a corrosive force in the academic life of a university. It jeopardizes the quality of education and depreciates the genuine achievements of others. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act. All members of the University Community—students, faculty, and staff—share the responsibility to challenge and make known acts of apparent academic dishonesty.

You have a responsibility to familiarize yourself with violations of the Code of Academic Integrity. Among these include:

- 1. Cheating:** "Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise."
- 2. Fabrication:** "Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise."
- 3. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** "Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty."

4. Plagiarism: "Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in an academic exercise."

For further clarification or information on the Code of Academic Integrity:

<http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html>

Plagiarism in any course assignment will not be tolerated. Students who submit an assignment containing plagiarized text (including lack of proper attribution, including quoted material with encasing copied text in quotes, copying part of an assignment from another student, or insufficiently paraphrasing content from another source) will have their assignment returned, ungraded, and they will have three (3) days to re-submit the assignment with the plagiarism issues addressed. Students will also receive a penalty of up to 50% of the assignment grade. If a second case of plagiarism is detected, students will automatically receive an F in the class and will be referred to the university for disciplinary action.

Students are encouraged to check their assignments prior to submission using one of the free online plagiarism checkers (e.g., www.grammarly.com).

ATTENDANCE AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

This class meets once a week. The course will include lecture, discussion, and group work. It is essential that everyone participates in the discussions of course materials. Participation means active involvement in class discussions. You are expected to question, challenge, argue, and discuss issues and topics related to that session's readings.

Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. If you are absent more than two times due to illness, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss plans for make-up work. If you are absent on days when papers are due, you are required to notify me in advance and turn in the paper via email/ELMS. Please see the extensions policy below if extra time is needed due to illness.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

As a graduate seminar, the classroom environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Issues of policy can involve strongly held beliefs and current political controversies. Remember--your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect. As another aspect of respect in the classroom environment, turn off or mute all phones and other communication devices during each class session. If you use your laptop in the classroom, limit the usage of the computer to course-related reasons (i.e., taking notes).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Support Services office, and (2) discuss any necessary academic accommodation with me. This should be done at the beginning of the semester.

LEARNING ASSISTANCE

If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, contact the Learning Assistance Service, 2202 Shoemaker Building, 301-314-7693. Their educational counselors can help with time management, reading, math learning skills, note-taking and exam preparation skills. All their services are free to UMD students.

EXTENSIONS

Timeliness is an essential component of graduate work, and extensions will only be available during personal emergencies. If you need to request an extension, you should discuss the matter **in advance** with me. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission of the paper will result in a deduction of a letter grade for each day the paper is late, while unexcused delays in presentations will result in a deduction of a letter grade for each class meeting the presentation is late.

LATE WORK

Unless approved in advance of the due date, late work will automatically be graded down by one step (i.e., 5%) for each day it is late (unless otherwise noted in the syllabus). For example, an assignment that would normally receive an A- if submitted on time would receive a B if it was submitted two days late. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Please see the University's Emergency Preparedness Website (<http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/>) for information about the current status of the campus. If a class session needs to be rescheduled, I will e-mail you as soon as possible.

Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather, you should check the UMD homepage (umd.edu) or call 301-405-SNOW (7669) to determine if there are delays or closures. Closures and delays will also be sent over the e2 Campus notification system. Follow the link to sign up for alerts: www.alert.umd.edu. Also make sure you either check your UMD email regularly or forward UMD emails to an account you do check regularly, in case I email about a class cancellation.

WEEKLY TOPICS OVERVIEW

The course is divided into three sections. In the first, you will learn the foundations of qualitative research, including the types of research questions most appropriate to be evaluated qualitatively and grounded theory, on which much qualitative research is based. In

the second section, we will take a deep dive into seven of the major forms of qualitative research and data collection. In the final section, we will focus on how to analyze and interpret qualitative data and discuss ethical issues specific to qualitative research.

Week/Date	Topic/Readings	Due
Section 1: Overview of Qualitative Methods		
Week 1 (Jan 26)	Defining Qualitative Research: Silverman Ch. 22; Greenhalgh & Taylor (1997); Gorman & Clayton (2004)	
Week 2 (Feb 2)	Theoretical Grounding: Silverman Ch. 16 & Ch. 20; Lincoln & Guba (2002)	
Week 3 (Feb 9)	Planning a Qualitative Research Study: Silverman Ch. 18 & Ch. 21; Kezar (2000); Small (2009); Mays & Pope (1995)	
Section 2: Evaluating Different Methodological Options		
Week 4 (Feb 16)	Historical Research/Secondary Analysis of Data: Silverman Ch. 6; Witkowski & Jones (2006); Heaton (2008)	Submit proposal for research paper
Week 5 (Feb 23)	Case Studies & Ethnographies: Silverman Ch. 2; Flyvbjerg (2006); Goetz & Lecompte (1981); Wang (2016—link below)	Method Exercise (Historical)
Week 6 (Mar 1)	No in class meeting Work on ethnography activity.	
Week 7 (Mar 8)	Interviews: Silverman Ch. 8 & Ch. 9	REQUIRED: Method Exercise (Ethnography)
SPRING BREAK – March 15 – NO CLASS		
Week 8 (Mar 22)	Focus Groups: Silverman Ch. 10; Chapter from Kruger & Casey (2008)	Method Exercise (Interviews)
Week 9	Content Analysis: Prasad (2008); Forman &	Method Exercise (Focus

(Mar 29)	Damschroder (2008); Bowen (2009)	Groups); Progress Report
Week 10 (Apr 5)	User Studies (Qualitative Methods): Adams et al. (2008); Selman (2014—link below); Millen (2000)	Method Exercise (Content Analysis); Peer Review
Week 11 (Apr 12)	Qualitative Research with Online Data: Silverman Ch. 7; Beneito-Montagut (2011); Christensen (2015)	Method Exercise (User Studies)
Section 3: Bringing it All Together		
Week 12 (Apr 19)	Analysis and Interpretation of Data, Part I: Silverman, Ch. 15 & Ch. 19	Method Exercise (Online Data)
Week 13 (Apr 26)	Analysis and Interpretation of Data, Part II: Lewis et al. (2013), Ch. 10 & Ch. 11	Article Critique
Week 14 (May 3)	Ethical Aspects of Qualitative Research: Silverman Ch. 23; Vitak et al. (2016); Markham & Buchanan (2012)	
Week 15 (May 10)	No in-class meeting Analysis Week & one-on-one meetings (as needed)	Last day to submit paper drafts for review (optional)
Final Exam May 17	Final Presentations	Final Paper (electronically & hard copy)

References

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