

COMM 6830: Qualitative Research Methods  
Graduate Seminar, Spring 2016  
Wednesday, 10:10am – 12:30pm, Mann 480

Professor: Lee Humphreys, Ph.D.  
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office: 607-255-2599  
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Office hours: Wednesdays, 1-3pm

Course description:

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to ethnographic and qualitative research methods. This seminar examines qualitative methods used in social science research, focusing primarily on participant-observation, in-depth interviewing, writing fieldnotes, and the transformation of these primary field data into written qualitative research documents. Seminar readings on specific research methods will contribute to the formulation of a research project to be carried out during the semester. Recent literature on the theoretical and ethical aspects of these methods will also be considered in the context of these projects.

By the end of the semester students should achieve the following learning objectives:  
Describe strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research.

1. Distinguish between different epistemological approaches within qualitative research.
2. Analyze the key steps in conducting qualitative research including access, sampling, data collecting, data analysis, and writing.
3. Apply the knowledge and skills learned in the class to an independent qualitative research project.

Logistics:

Students should complete all readings in preparation for class.

Throughout the semester, students will conduct a qualitative research project. The project should include at least one of the following methods: field observations, participant observations, or interviews. Students may work either alone or in groups.

Students will do a series of assignments throughout the semester through which to practice and engage with course material and/or contribute to their research project. All students are required to complete all of the assignments.

Specifically assignments include:

- a) Response Papers: Each week students will be expected to write up a short response to the readings or discuss methodological concerns, issues, or challenges they are encountering. Each week discussion prompts are posted to Blackboard to help shape, inform, or inspire your responses. Students are expected to have at least skimmed each others' responses prior to class. Each response will be graded on a complete/incomplete basis. Since content of the responses will not be graded, students should feel free to express confusion, creativity, and curiosity in their

responses. Responses should be around 300 words and posted on Blackboard *by midnight the night before class. In their responses, students should pose at least one discussion question for the class based on the readings.* Throughout the semester, students need to submit 10 response papers. Late submissions will have a detrimental effect on your final grade.

- b) Summary and critique of a qualitative thesis or dissertation: Students should select a Ph.D. dissertation that uses a method similar to what they might use for their dissertation. A detailed description of what the critique should encompass will be handed out later in the semester.
- c) Human Subjects Training: All researchers at Cornell who conduct research with human subjects must complete Human Subjects Training. If you have not completed such the online training here at Cornell, you are required to do so before you can begin work on your research project.
- d) Research Proposal & IRB: Students will write a short research proposal for their semester research project (1-page). This proposal should include information regarding the broad purpose of the research, access and sampling of the proposed project, participant consent form (if appropriate), recruitment material (if appropriate), and sample interview/observation guide. Since much of the proposal material will need to be submitted for IRB approval, students should also submit their IRB exemption or approval forms as part of this assignment. If students are collaborating on a group research project, one proposal and IRB form should be submitted on behalf of the group, with the group members' roles and duties delineated.
- e) Research Presentation: Students will present a 10-minute presentation based on their semester research project. Presentations may involve powerpoint/keynote or other audio-visuals, but do not have to.
- f) Final Paper: Students will write up a final paper based on their semester research, which, ideally, is one draft away from being submittable to a conference and/or journal. It's good to check out journals where you might send it to while you're preparing the manuscript. Finished papers will likely be approximately 20-25 pages in length. If students are collaborating on a group research project, one paper should be submitted for all students.

#### Grading:

Course grades will depend on critical mastery of the practical skills and conceptual issues raised in the course as demonstrated in contributions to response papers (15%), research proposal & IRB (20%), in-class discussion (10%), evaluation & critique of dissertation (25%), oral presentation of research project (5%), and a final paper (25%).

#### Students with disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and qualify for academic accommodations, please contact me within the first two weeks of the semester. I am happy to provide students with the necessary accommodations as long as you let me know ahead of time.

Statement of Inclusivity and Respect:

Each student in this course is expected to contribute to an inclusive and respectful class environment. Students of all backgrounds including gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religion are to be treated fairly and with honesty, integrity, and respect. Civil discourse, reasoned thought, sustained discussion, and constructive engagement without degrading, abusing, harassing, or silencing others is required of all students in this class.

Code of Academic Integrity:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Proper APA citation should be followed for all assignments. For this course, collaboration is allowed in the following instances: group research proposal and on the final paper.

From the Cornell "Code of Academic Integrity":

*“Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations, but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process... A Cornell student's submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student's own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times. In addition, Cornell students have a right to expect academic integrity from each of their peers.*

*General responsibilities:*

- 1. A student shall in no way misrepresent his or her work.*
- 2. A student shall in no way fraudulently or unfairly advance his or her academic position.*
- 3. A student shall refuse to be party to another student's failure to maintain academic integrity.*
- 4. A student shall not in any other manner violate the principle of academic integrity.”*

The entire Code of Academic Integrity can be found online at

<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.

All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Absences:

Attendance in class is required. As graduate students with professional research programs, it is expected you may have a professional conference during the semester that requires you to miss one class. If you are going to miss a class due to professional reasons, please let the professor know at least one week in advance. If you are sick, please do not come to class but email the professor before class to let her know. If you need to be absent from class, your response paper is still due the night before.

Extensions:

All assignments (besides the response papers) are due at the start of class on the assigned dates. Extension requests will only be considered if the professor is notified at least 3 days in advance of the due date. The penalty for a late paper is a third of a grade deduction (e.g. an A becomes an A-).

Required Reading:

- Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing Up Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Suggested Reading:

- Markham, A. N., & Baym, N. K. (2009). *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

American Psychological Association. (2011). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (Vol. 6th ed., 2nd printing [corr. rev. ed.]). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

## Course Overview

### **Week 1: January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic:** Qualitative methods- Introduction, Research Projects, & IRB

### **Week 2: February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Thinking about qualitative research: historical context**

**Readings:**

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). The Discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Becker, H. (1996). The epistemology of qualitative research. In R. Jessor, A. Colby & R. A. Shweder (Eds.), *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry* (pp. 53-71). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp. 1-44)

Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (pp. 1-66).

*Further suggested reading:*

Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretation of culture: Selected essays*. New York: Basis Books (pp. 3-30).

**Assignment:**

Human Subjects Training: <http://www.urb.cornell.edu/training/citi> (please send your certification to [lmh13@cornell](mailto:lmh13@cornell) when you've completed the training)

### **Week 3: February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Doing qualitative research: Sampling & Access**

**Readings:**

Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing (pp. 7-53).

Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (pp. 67-83).

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp. 45-77).

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. New York: Routledge (pp.54-104).

### **Week 4: February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Doing qualitative research: Observations & Fieldnotes**

*Guest Lecturer: Matthew Aldridge, Senior IRB Administrator*

**Readings:**

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377-391). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

- Becker, H. (1958). Problems of inference and proof in participant observation. *American Sociological Review*, 23(6), 652-660
- Wolfinger, N. H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes: collection strategies and background expectations. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 85-95.
- Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (pp. 78-108).
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing (pp. 81-98, 108-117)

**Week 5: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Doing qualitative research: Interviews**

**Readings:**

- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing (99-108)
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The Interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Charmaz, K. (2002). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: context & method* (pp. 675-694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**Assignment:**

**\*\*Research Proposals & IRB forms due in class.\*\***

**Week 6: March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Doing qualitative research: Focus Groups**

**Readings:**

- Kamberelis, G. & Dimitriadis, G. (2011). Focus groups: Contingent articulations of pedagogy, politics, and inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of qualitative research (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 545-561). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Belzile, J. A. & Oberg, G. (2012). Where to begin? Grappling with how to use participant interaction in focus group design. *Qualitative Research*, 12: 459.
- Lunt, P. & Livingston, S. (1996). Rethinking the focus group in media and communication research. *Journal of Communication*, 46(2): 79-98.

*Further suggested reading:*

- Barbour, R. (2008). *Doing focus groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Halkier, B. (2010). Focus groups as social enactments: integrating interaction and content in the analysis of focus group data. *Qualitative Research*, 10: 71.

**Week 7: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Analyzing qualitative data**

**Readings:**

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp. 101-115) 79-158).
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing (pp.119-219).
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, & interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (pp. 9-54)

*Recommended Reading:*

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp. 79-101 and 115-158).
- Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/865/1881>.

**Week 8: March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Validity, Reliability & Generalizability in qualitative research**

**Readings:**

- Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (pp. 9-80)
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: Interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (pp. 86-98)
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E., G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. (“Establishing Trustworthiness” pp. 289-331)
- Duneier, M. (2011). How not to lie with ethnography. *Sociological Methodology* 41(1): 1-11.

*Recommended:*

- Mayring, P. (2007). On generalizability in qualitatively oriented research. *Qualitative Social Research*, 8(3), article 26.
- Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(2), Article 2.

**Week 9: March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Writing about qualitative research**

**Readings:**

- Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (Chapters 1, 2, 4 & 5).
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing (pp. 220-240).

*Recommended:*

Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Assignment:**

**\*\*Summary & critique of dissertation due in class\*\***

**March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10: April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Theoretical and ethical concerns**

**Readings:**

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (pp. 251-257)

Sieber, J. E. (1997). Planning ethically responsible research. In L. Bickman & D. J. Bog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 127-156). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ASA Code of Ethics: <http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm>

ICA Code of Ethics: [http://www.icaheadq.org/about\\_ica/ethics.asp](http://www.icaheadq.org/about_ica/ethics.asp)

ACM Code of Ethics: <http://www.acm.org/about/code-of-ethics>

AoIR 2012 Ethics Report: [www.aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf](http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf)

*Recommended:*

Markham, A. N., & Baym, N. K. (2009). *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (pp. 69-98).

Ess, C., & AoIR ethics working committee. (2002). *Ethical decision-making and Internet research*. Association of Internet Researchers.

Marcus, G. E. (1994). What comes (just) after "post"? The case of ethnography. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 563-574). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Week 11: April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Reading Qualitative Research**

**Readings:**

Priest, P. J., & Dominick, J. R. (1994). Pulp pulpits: Self-disclosure on "Donahue". *Journal of Communication*, 4(4), 74-97.

Gray, M. (2009). Negotiating identities/queering desires: Coming out online and the remediation of the coming-out story. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 14(4), 1162-1189.

Norum, K. E. (2000). Black (w)holes: A researcher's place in her research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(3), 319-340.

**Week 12: April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Issues & Approaches of Online Qualitative Research**

**Readings:**



- Markham, A. N., & Baym, N. K. (2011). *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (pp. 1-32 & 173-197).
- Rutter, J., & Smith, G. W. H. (2005). Ethnographic presence in a nebulous setting. In C. Hine (Ed.), *Virtual methods: Issues in social research on the internet* (pp. 81-92). Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers.

*Recommended:*

- boyd, d. (2008). *Taken out of context: American teen sociality in networked publics*. Ph.D. Dissertation at UC Berkeley. (Chapter 2, pp. 42-91). Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://www.danah.org/papers/TakenOutOfContext.pdf>.

**Week 13: April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Mixed Methods Research**

**Readings:**

- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11*(3), 255-274.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). Chapter 3: Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeCoster, J., & Lichtenstein, B. (2007). Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Communication Research. *Communication Methods and Measures, 1*(4), 227-242. doi:10.1080/19312450701636599
- Bryman, A. (2007). Barriers to Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 8-22.

*Recommended:*

- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design: From Theory to Practice. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 3-20. Vicki

**Week 14:**

**May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Topic: Class Presentations**

**Week 15**

**May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – LAST DAY OF CLASS**

**Topic: Class Presentations**

**May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**\*\*Please upload your final papers to Blackboard by noon as a .doc or .pdf.**