SOC 610: Methods of Qualitative Analysis
Colorado State University
Spring Semester 2014
Mondays – 3:30-6:20 p.m.
B-252 Clark Building

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Office: B-237 Clark Building
Office Hours: Mondays – 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and By Appointment

Course Description:
This graduate seminar offers an introduction to qualitative field research methods used in the social sciences. The course is designed to give you an overview of the logic of qualitative research, process of research design, major types of qualitative data collection methods, and techniques of data analysis. Through the readings, discussions, exercises, and assignments, we will explore:

- the assumptions and theoretical traditions of qualitative research;
- responsible conduct of research (RCR) principles including: ethics and social responsibility in research; conflicts of interest; use of human subjects and safe laboratory practices; mentor/mentee responsibilities; collaborative research; data acquisition, management, sharing, and ownership; research misconduct; responsible authorship, publication and peer review; financial management and responsibilities;
- the role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry;
- typical qualitative data collection methods with a specific focus on non-participant and participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic content analysis, participatory mapping, and photovoice;
- techniques for describing, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data; and
- ways to ensure rigorous, rich, theoretically-informed, and practically useful qualitative studies.

I deeply enjoy teaching this course, and I am looking forward to working with each of you. I am dedicated to giving you the best possible education in qualitative methods that I can, and in turn, I expect that you will be committed to the course. This class is reading, writing, and field work intensive. That means that you need to do the readings in advance of the weekly meetings, be a regular and active seminar participant, contribute to class discussions in meaningful ways, and complete all of the assignments on time and with a good deal of forethought.

By the end of the course, you should be familiar with the modes of thinking, specific practices, and the language and logic associated with the qualitative paradigm. You will become certified by the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research. You will also learn how to formulate research questions, choose the best methodology to answer them, and design your own qualitative research project. Finally, you will have the opportunity to conduct preliminary field research, in the form of observations and in-depth interviews, and thus will gain experience with the actual practice of doing research.

Required Course Materials:


A number of additional required readings are available electronically via RamCT.

**Recommended Course Materials:**
The following books are not required, but are recommended. In order to conduct research and write well, you must be thoughtful, organized, persistent, and consistent. These recommended books offer helpful suggestions for organizing and presenting content, learning to write as a professional, developing your own style and voice, and figuring out how to start and finish a scholarly project. They also review elementary rules related to the proper use of the English language and provide specific guidelines for how you should cite academic sources.


**Course Requirements:**
*Attendance and Participation (5%; 25 pts.)*: This course will be run in a seminar format with the goal of promoting an active learning environment. Thus, your attendance and thoughtful participation is vital to the success of this course. I expect that you will be on time and that you will attend every class session in its entirety. In addition, you should read the assigned materials prior to class and come prepared to contribute in a meaningful way to the discussion. Please do not, under any circumstance, text message, surf the Internet, complete readings or homework for other classes, or otherwise engage in disruptive behaviors during this class.

*Weekly Reading Summaries (10%; 50 pts.)*: This course is organized around a set of readings that will be used to guide class discussions and inform your various research assignments. Prior to 10 seminar meetings of your choosing, you will submit a one- to two-page, single-spaced, paper that summarizes and integrates the key themes from each of the week’s readings. You are also encouraged to raise questions and to critique the assigned material. As the class progresses and you develop your research topic of interest, you should increasingly make connections between the readings and your own project. Therefore, I expect that the summaries will evolve over the course of the semester. These summaries should be submitted to the entire class via RamCT by no later than 1:00 p.m. on the Sunday before seminar meetings. This should help us focus on common critiques, concerns, and questions during our Monday seminar. Again, students must submit ten one- to two-page summaries throughout the semester.

*Discussion Leader (5%; 25 pts.)*: Each student will serve as a discussion leader once during the semester. The discussion leader will be responsible for preparing a brief presentation that summarizes key aspects of the week’s readings and raises questions for discussion. Discussion leaders should meet with me at least one week prior to their presentation. Discussion leaders are required to post a minimum of five questions on RamCT by no later than 3:30 p.m. on the Sunday prior to their scheduled presentation. This will allow the other students in the class time to consider the questions and to prepare for class discussion. During the actual presentation, discussion leaders are strongly encouraged to use PowerPoint, handouts, and/or other creative teaching aids to facilitate class involvement.
Research Topic Write-Up (5%; 25 pts.) and Written Critiques (5%; 25 pts.): We will spend the first few weeks of the semester discussing some of the general issues in the conduct of qualitative research and how to choose a topic and setting, formulate a research question, and use the best methods to answer the question. By no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 13, you should submit a two-page, double-spaced paper via RamCT that describes the a) problem or topic; b) research question(s) that you will address in your final proposal; c) research setting; d) population of interest and possible sampling strategy; e) research method(s); f) rationale for doing the research; and g) what we can hope to learn from your project. The expectation for this assignment is that you have a clearly thought-out research topic, either based on a gap in prior research or an as yet undiscovered contribution to the field. You should be aware that the research question and overall conceptualization will improve with revision, and that the project will likely evolve substantially as the semester progresses.

On Monday, February 17, you will receive written feedback on your research topic write-up. Prior to this class session, you will be divided into small groups, and each student will be responsible for preparing a written critique of two other research write-ups. You should bring duplicate copies of each written critique (one for each of your group members, and one for me) to class on February 17.

Institutional Review Board Training (5%; 25 pts.): All social scientists should be aware of ethical standards that must be adhered to in everyday professional activities. The American Sociological Association’s Code of Ethics sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie our professional responsibilities and conduct. At Colorado State University, all published or publicly presented research involving human subjects (including master’s theses and doctoral dissertations) must have prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). CSU requires that researchers gain competencies outlined by the Institutional Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training Program Policy. Core principles for RCR include: ethics and social responsibility in research; conflicts of interest; use of human subjects and safe laboratory practices; mentor/mentee responsibilities; collaborative research; data acquisition, management, sharing, and ownership; research misconduct; responsible authorship, publication and peer review; financial management and responsibilities. This semester, if you have not done so already, you will complete a web-based training program through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). This self-paced course consists of several basic modules focusing on defining research with human subjects, the history of human subjects protection, regulatory compliance in the social and behavioral sciences, ethical principles, privacy and confidentiality concerns, informed consent, and research with vulnerable populations. You must log on to the CITI website (https://www.citiprogram.org/) and register to complete the modules for social and behavioral science researchers. Each training module contains relevant information and ends with a brief question quiz. It will take you about 10-20 minutes to complete each module, and an overall passing score of 80% must be achieved to obtain the CSU training certificate. You should complete and pass each module and bring a printed copy of your training certificate to class on Monday, February 24.

Observations and Fieldnotes (15%; 75 pts.): The purpose of this project is to familiarize you with the practice of conducting field observations and writing up observational fieldnotes. For this assignment, you will conduct observations for at least one hour. If possible, you should try to observe interactions in a setting that is related to the place where you plan to conduct your actual thesis or dissertation research. Before you carry out this exercise, we will discuss observational techniques and the practice of recording and analyzing fieldnotes. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. On Monday, March 24, you will submit your typed fieldnotes and a 5-8 page reflection paper.

Transcribed and Theme Coded Interviews (20%; 100 pts.): The purpose of this project is to familiarize you with the practice of conducting, analyzing, and writing up qualitative interviews. For this assignment, you will develop an interview guide and conduct qualitative interviews with two informants. Ideally your informants should be persons who are connected to the topic that you plan to research for your thesis or dissertation. You will then transcribe at least one of the interviews, analyze your recorded data, and write a report on your experiences. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. On Monday, April 14, you will submit the interview guide, verbatim transcription, coding scheme, and 5-8 page reflection paper.
Draft Research Proposal (5%; 25 pts. and Written Critique (5%; 25 pts.): By no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 1, you will submit a draft research proposal via RamCT that includes a plan for conducting a qualitative research project. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. You and a partner will exchange research proposals and will provide written feedback to one another. You should bring the marked copy of the proposal and two copies of your written critique—one for me and one for your partner—to class on Monday, May 5.

Final Research Proposal (20%; 100 pts.): Students will have the opportunity to revise their research proposals based on peer feedback. Final proposals, which should be approximately 15 pages, are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 12. You should submit a hard copy of your proposal to my Sociology Department mailbox, B-258 Clark Building.

Grading:

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<th>Assignments</th>
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<td><strong>Total Points Possible</strong></td>
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Grading Scale:

500-450 = A
449-400 = B
399-350 = C
349-300 = D
299-Below = F

Statement on Class Attendance, Late Work, and Incompletes:
This graduate seminar meets only one time per week, and we will cover much material in each class session. Therefore, I expect that you will arrange your schedule so that you will attend every class in its entirety. Failure to attend a class session will result in a 10% reduction (one full letter grade) of your final grade for the class. Exceptions to the aforementioned rule will only be granted in the case of a documented emergency or other legitimate professional or personal reason. If you know that you are going to have to miss class, please contact me immediately so that we can make arrangements for you to complete an alternate assignment.

Assignments are considered late if they are not submitted by the time and date outlined in the syllabus. I will subtract 10% from your assignment grade for each day your assignment is late, starting with the time and day the assignment was due.

I do not allow graduate students to take incompletes in my course except under the most extreme circumstances. If you are unable to complete the requirements for this course during the spring 2014 semester, you should reconsider your enrollment in the class.

Statement on Laptop Computers and Cell Phones:
I care deeply about this class, and as such, I want all of my students to be fully engaged in every minute of every class session. As such, you should please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices at the beginning of class. I also ask that no laptops be used in the seminar room.

Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is essential to the intellectual vitality of the university and the ideals of education. I expect students to be honest and to conduct themselves with integrity in all aspects of the course. Dishonest conduct—which includes cheating, plagiarizing, or lying for the purpose of influencing a grade or for other academic gain—
undermines the educational experience and is simply not acceptable. Any student found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to academic penalty and/or university disciplinary action. See the Colorado State University General Catalog for statements on academic integrity and student conduct (http://catalog.colostate.edu/).

Disabilities Statement:
If you are a student who will need accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation. You may also want to contact Resources for Disabled Students for additional support (970-491-6385; http://rds.colostate.edu/).
Course Outline:

**Week 1  January 27  Introduction and Course Overview**

**Topics:**
- Peer and self-introductions.
- Identify research topics and populations of interest.
- Discuss graduation timelines.
- Review syllabus. Discuss assignments, expectations, and outcomes.
- Sign up to lead the weekly discussions and to bring snacks.

**Required Reading:**
- Course Syllabus

**Week 2  February 3  The Logic of Qualitative Research**

**Topics:**
- Promises and challenges of qualitative research.
- Qualitative genres, paradigms, and epistemologies.
- Issues of validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability.
- Evaluating qualitative research.

**Required Reading:**
- Marshall and Rossman (chapters 1-3)
- Charmaz (chapter 1)
- Rubin and Rubin (chapter 2)

**Further Reading:**
### Week 3  February 10  Designing Qualitative Research

**Topics:**
- Building a conceptual framework.
- Selecting topics, posing research questions, and reviewing the literature.
- Identifying field settings.
- Key informants, sampling, and data saturation.
- Data collection methods.
- Mixed methods.
- Form five small groups of three students each to complete the research topic write-up critiques.

**Required Reading:**
- Marshall and Rossman (chapters 4-7)
- Rubin and Rubin (chapters 3-5)

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### Week 4  February 17  Situating the Self

**Assignment Due:**
- Bring duplicate copies of each of your written critiques to class. You will give one copy of your comments to your group members and one copy to me.

**Topics:**
- Membership roles in field research.
- Issues of class, gender, race, religion, and age.
- Insider/outsider debates.
- Gaining access to field settings.
- Offering research accounts.

**Required Reading:**
- Adler and Adler (chapters 1-5)
Further Reading:

Week 5 February 24 Politics and Ethics in Field Research

Assignment Due:
- You should have completed the web-based IRB training program prior to this class session. Please bring a printed copy of your training certificate, verifying that you passed each of the modules with a score of 80% or higher.

Topics:
- Research ethics, institutional review boards, and professional codes of ethics.
- Power relations and special protection of vulnerable populations.
- Physical and ethical dangers in field research.
- Gaining entrance and exiting a field setting.
- Informed consent and deception.
- The research bargain and taking sides.

Required Reading:

Further Reading:
  [http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethicscode.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethicscode.pdf)
Week 6     March 3     Field Observations – I

**In-Class Activity:**
- During part of this class session, we will engage in a practical exercise in observation.

**Topics:**
- Why we conduct observations.
- Techniques and strategies for conducting non-participant and participant observation.
- Classic and contemporary observation studies and statements by researchers about how they went about conducting their research.
- Discuss observation assignment.

**Required Reading:**
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapter 1)

**Further Reading:**

Week 7     March 10     Field Observations – II

**Topics:**
- How we conduct observations.
- Jottings in the field and writing full fieldnotes at the desk.
- Imposing exogenous meanings.
- Making sense of observational data: coding and memoing.
- The importance of keeping up with fieldnotes.

**Required Reading:**
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapters 2-6)

Week 8     March 17     Spring Recess
Week 9    March 24    Interviewing – I

Assignment Due:
❖ The observations and fieldnotes assignment is due at the beginning of this class session.

Topics:
❖ Why we interview.
❖ Differences between survey and qualitative interviewing.
❖ Preparation for interviewing and developing an interview guide. (Review sample interview guides.)
❖ Choosing and recruiting respondents. How our own identities and positionality influence recruitment.
❖ Setting up interviews and the interview “script.”
❖ Discuss interview assignment.

Special Guest:
❖ Dr. David Abramson, Deputy Director at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, will share his experiences interviewing “elusive communities” and other hidden and vulnerable populations.

Required Reading:
❖ Rubin and Rubin (chapter 1; chapters 6-10)

Further Reading:

Week 10    March 31    Interviewing – II

Topics:
❖ How and where we interview.
❖ Conducting unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews.
❖ Issues in interviewing.
❖ Picking up on “markers.”
❖ Interviewing special populations.
❖ Telephone interviewing.
❖ Gathering rich data.
❖ Empathy and emotion-work in interviewing.
❖ Ending the interview.

In-Class Activity:
❖ Please bring a draft of your interview script and guide to class. We will review the scripts and the guides during class and provide feedback.

Required Reading:
❖ Rubin and Rubin (chapter 11)
❖ Charmaz (chapter 2)


Further Reading:


Week 11 April 7 Data Analysis and Constructing Grounded Theory

Topics:
- Organizing audio files and preparing transcripts. (Review sample field protocol document.)
- Initial, focused, and axial coding and memo-writing.
- Preparing codebooks. (Review sample codebooks.)
- Theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting.
- Constructing grounded theory.
- Qualitative data analysis software.

In-Class Activity:
- During part of this class session, I will demo Atlas.TI and discuss other data analysis software programs.

Required Reading:
- Rubin and Rubin (chapter 12)
- Marshall and Rossman (chapter 8)
- Charmaz (chapters 3-6)

Week 12 April 14 Focus Groups

Assignment Due:
- The transcribed and theme coded interview assignment is due at the beginning of this class session.

Topics:
- Why we conduct focus groups.
- Designing and implementing focus groups in diverse settings and with various population groups.
- The importance of interaction in focus groups.
- Analyzing focus group data.
Required Reading:
- Carey and Asbury (chapters 1-8)

Further Reading:

Week 13 April 21 Ethnographic Content Analysis and Other Unobtrusive Measures

Topics:
- Ethnographic content analysis as method and approach.
- Why we use unobtrusive measures in social science research.
- Textual, visual, and archival research.
- Sampling documents and other secondary data.

Required Reading:

Further Reading:
## Week 14  April 28  Participatory Action Research and Participant-Centered Methods

**Topics:**
- The logic and practice of participatory action research.
- Photovoice, participatory mapping, drawing, and other interactive and creative methods.

**Special Guest:**
- Jennifer Tobin-Gurley, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Colorado State University, will share her experiences using creative methods as part of the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery participatory research project.

**Required Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

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**May 1  Draft Research Proposals Due**

**Assignment Due:**
- Submit your draft research proposal to the class email list via RamCT by no later than 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 1. Each student will be responsible for reading and preparing a written critique of one other research proposal prior to the April 30 class session.
Week 15  May 5  Crafting Proposals and Writing Up Qualitative Research

Assignment Due:
- Bring the marked proposal that you reviewed and two copies of your proposal critique to class. You will give one copy of your written comments to your partner and one copy to me.

Topics:
- Planning time for writing.
- Articulating value and logic.
- Outlining and organizing a research proposal/article.
- Getting started, revising, and submitting the final draft.

Special Guests:
- Meghan Mordy, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology, will share her experiences conducting ethnographic fieldwork with children and in schools in El Salvador.
- Peter Hall, Ph.D., will discuss analyzing data and making theoretical contributions using qualitative data.

Required Reading:
- Marshall and Rossman (chapters 9-10)
- Charmaz (chapters 7-8)
- Rubin and Rubin (chapter 13)
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (chapter 7)

Further Reading:

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Finals Week  May 12  Final Research Proposals Due

Assignment Due:
- Please submit a hard copy of your final research proposal to my Sociology Department mailbox by no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 12.

“It would be nice if all of the data which sociologists require could be enumerated because then we could run them through IBM machines and draw charts as the economists do. However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”