**PB AF 525A: Qualitative Methods for Policy & Social Science**

University of Washington Spring 2012

Instructor: Meeting dates and times:

Professor Sara R. Curran Mondays 9:30a-12:20p.

[scurran@u.washington.edu](mailto:scurran@u.washington.edu) 156 Savery Hall

Due Dates: Friday 5pm

Course e-list & Website

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/scurran/29394/>

Office Hours:

Monday, 1-5pm

417 Thomson Hall

<http://www.washington.edu/maps/?l=THO>

**Credit Hours**

This course is currently listed as 3-4 credits. The workload is worthy of 4 credits. You must negotiate with Professor Curran for how to reduce your workload for 3 credits.

*Course Overview*

**Description**

This course is designed to provide graduate students in public affairs and the social sciences with a review of qualitative research methods, exposure to writings from the field, and opportunities to try their hand at practicing fieldwork. The final assignment is a proposed qualitative study. There is also a take-home review exam. There will be some emphasis on study design, case selection, and field notes. There will only be a little attention to coding, analysis, writing and presenting findings. These topics will be addressed in PB AF 527a taught during the spring quarter.

**Learning Outcomes**

In this course, we aim to cultivate the following competencies:

A. Values Objectives

* Reflect on personal and professional values and ethics
* Develop an appreciation for the importance of critical self-awareness in the context of qualitative research
* Develop an appreciation for a praxis--reflective and active--approach to learning and research
* Identify areas of growth and continued learning toward personal and professional development

B. Knowledge and Awareness Objectives

* Identify and describe the major theoretical paradigms that frame current qualitative research approaches.
* Understand and describe the concepts and practices of different qualitative methods
* Identify personal strengths and challenges in conducting qualitative research
* Describe the benefits and limitations of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in research design.
* Define characteristics of research questions and design appropriate to qualitative methods.
* Identify qualitative data gathering methods and sampling approaches, and describe their implications for analysis and interpretation of data.
* Identify how qualitative research design and methods can be developed to maximize rigor, validity and reliability in findings.

C. Skills Objectives

* Demonstrate ability to apply qualitative methods skills in different contexts
* Demonstrate critical self-reflective abilities in relation to qualitative research
* Formulate a proposal of qualitative or mixed methods research, select appropriate research strategies and design analytic processes.

**Course Assignments and Student Assessment**

Read everything assigned and actively participate in classroom discussion. (20%)

Complete five short assignments on time. (50%)

Final Exam – Reflection on methods and experiences. (15%)

Research Proposal (15%)

The detailed guidelines for each assignment will be provided in class. A breakdown of the schedule and points of each course assignment follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Assignment*** | | ***Point*** | | ***Due Date*** |
| *Participation and Reading* | | ***20*** | | *Every class session* |
| *Assignment 1: Human Subjects* | | ***10*** | | *Fri. Wk 2* |
| *Assignment 2: Data Collection Plan* | | ***5*** | | *Fri. Wk 3* |
| *Assignment 3: Revised Plan* | | ***5*** | | *Th. 5/3* |
| *Assignment 4: Ethnography Review* | | ***5*** | | *Mon. 5/7* |
| *Assignment 5: (choose 2 of 4 approaches) Notes from Interviews, oral history, participant observation, or focus groups* | | ***30*** | | *TBD* |
| *Final Exam* | | ***30*** | | *Fri.* |
| *or* | |  | |  |
| *Final Paper or Research Proposal* | | ***30*** | | *Fri.* |
|  |  | |

B. Information about Class Participation

There is a possible 20 points for attendance and participation; Class participation will be evaluated by (1) contributions of the questions and comments raised in class (I will be taking volunteers for leading discussion for particular readings), (2) participation in dialogue with others in both small group and full-class situations, (3) evidence of reading the required materials, and (4) class attendance.

*Learning Groups*

The learning groups are designed to offer a space for dialogue, support, feedback and challenge as we go through the course. The learning group can serve to bridge your learning and thinking about issues of qualitative research as they unfold in the course and bridge this learning to your outside research assignment. These groups will also be used in the class itself for small group exercises and dialogues.

*Structure*

The learning groups will be made up of 4-5 members each. The groups will meet both in the class and outside over the course of the quarter. The learning group will:

* Serve as a forum for more in-depth dialogue
* Meet for some small group activities in class
* Serve as your group for your research project

### Formula for Final Grade

This course will be graded on a 4.0 scale. The final grade will be based on the total number of accumulated points from all course assignments as shown below:

**Grade Accumulated** **Grade Accumulated  
Point Points Point Points**

4.0 98-100 3.4 86-84  
3.9 97-96 3.3 83-81  
3.8 95-94 3.2 80-79  
3.7 93-92 3.1 78-77  
3.6 91-89 3.0 76-74  
3.5 88-87 2.9 73-71

2.8 70-69

**Course Evaluation**

Course evaluation will be conducted during the last class period using the standard University evaluation form.

**Readings**

*Required*

Emerson, Robert. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Patton, Michael G. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

\*The three texts are available for sale in the University Bookstore. Additional reading materials are available online in pdf format on the course website.

**SESSION BY SESSION OUTLINE**

**Week 1-2: Overview**

Session Objectives:

* Overview of course/Discussion of course mechanics
* Discussion of students’ goals and plans – identification of research teams
* Introduce Assignments and discussion of topics for each assignment
* Identify key concepts and discuss the spectrum of qualitative data
* Handout Observation Assignment – Conduct observation – 15 minutes

Required Readings:

* Goodwin, Jeff and Ruth Horowitz.  2002.  “Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology.”  Qualitative Sociology.  25(1):33-47.
* Chapter 1 and introductions to Part I, II, III in Emerson
* Introduction in Lofland et al.
* Ch. 1,2 Patton
* Chapter 7 in Perecman & Curran (see files page on course website)

Assignments:

* Complete UW Online Human Subjects Certification & Provide Field Notes on the Experience (1) <http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd/courses> by Friday 5pm of week 2.
  + References for doing Human Subjects Assignment –
    - Ch. 11 in Perecman & Curran (see files page on course website)
    - Wax, Murray (see files page on course website)
    - Pp. 134-147 and pp.270-71, 276-79 in Emerson
    - Pp. 405-415 in Patton
    - Pp. 51-53 in Lofland et al.

**Week 3: Epistemology & Initial Discussion of Oral History**

Session Objectives:

* Ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological choices
* Assumptions about what can be known and how to go about knowing
* Identify and define characteristics of research questions for which qualitative research strategies are appropriate
* Outline benefits and limitations of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in the same research project
* Representation in qualitative interpretation
* Discussion around the standards for qualitative methods
* What is “good” qualitative work
* How is “interpretive validity” achieved
* Reliable? Replicable? Generalizable? Transferable?
* Ethics: institutional and otherwise
* Learning Group formation

ORAL HISTORY METHODS VISITOR (Prof. Glennys Young, UW History & JSIS)

Required Readings:

*Evaluating “Good” Qualitative Research*

* Devers, K. How will we know “good” qualitative research when we see it? Health Services Research 34(5): 1153-1183. **NOTE – this PDF is out of order, pay attention to page numbers.**
* Ch. 1-5 Lofland et al.
* Ch. 3, 4, 17, 18 in Emerson
* Ch. 9 in Patton

*Oral History Readings*

* Giles-Vernick, Tamara. 2006. “Oral Histories as Methods and Sources.” In Perecman and Curran.
* Young, Glennys. Introduction. 1997. *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

<http://play.google.com/books/reader?id=B8ur9CbLauAC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA9.w.1.3.0>

* Ch. 7 in Lofland & Ch. 7 in Patton both discuss interviewing approaches – read these to consider how to combine and generate an oral history

Assignment:

* Submit research plans for the quarter (1st draft)

**Week 4: Topic, Entrée & Legitimacy**

Session Objectives

* Topic choice, entrée, legitimacy
* The politics of qualitative approaches – voice in relation to class, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.
* Discuss the value of reflexivity in the pursuit of qualitative inquiry
* Identify insider-outsider perspectives
* Handout interview guidelines and observation guidelines

VISITS BY POLITICAL ETHNOGRAPHERS

***Dr. Jessica Beyer, Online Activism***

***Prof. Scott Radnitz, Ethnography in the Caucasus***

Required Readings:

* Emerson, Robert. Ch 6, Ch. 8, Ch.9
* Review material in Lofland et al.
* Finlay, L. “Outing” the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. Qualitative Health Research 12(4): 531-45.
* Radnitz, Intro, Chapter 2, 6, Methodological Appendix

**Week 5: Interviewing & Observing**

Session Objectives:

* Identify how the dynamics and context of interviewing can influence data analysis and interpretation
* What can individual lives, and life stories, tell us?
* How are lives influenced by political, historical and cultural context in which they are lived? In return, what impact do individual lives have on larger social contexts?
* Review interview guidelines
* Review observation guidelines

VISITS BY POLITICAL ETHNOGRAPHERS

***Professor Cabeiri Robinson, Political Islam & Kashmir***

Readings

* Ch. 15 & 18 in Emerson
* Ch. 6-7 in Lofland et al.
* Ch. 6-7 Patton
* Hermanowicz, J. The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed

**Week 6: Study Design Considerations & Applied Anthropology**

Session Objectives:

* Understand the purpose of case study research
* Gain an appreciation of how ethnographies are one form of case based research
* Learn how ethnographic approaches can be useful for policy or social theory
* Understand the strengths and weaknesses of ethnographies and case based research
* Understand how an ethnography might be conducted through the reading of an ethnographic study

Required Readings:

* Emerson, Robert. Ch, 13, Ch. 15, Ch. 17, Ch. 1
* Schrank, Andrew. 2006. “Case-Based Research.” & “Essentials for the Case Study Method.” In Perecman & Curran.
* Patillo-McCoy, Mary and Rueben Buford. 2000. “Do You See What I See? Examining a Collaborative Ethnography.” *Qualitative Inquiry*. 6:1(65-87).
* Melissa Cefkin, (2009) "Introduction: Business, Anthropology, and the Growth of Corporate Ethnography", in Cefkin, ed., *Ethnography and the Corporate Encounter: Reflections on Research in and of Corporations*, Bergahn Books, NY (pp. 1-37).

Assignment:

Revised Research Plans – with question guides (moving from concepts to questions) due Thursday at 5pm May 3.

Ethnography Book Reviews due Monday 5/7 at 5pm.

***VISIT BY APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGIST: The use of ethnography in the corporate sector – case study examples, field note examples, report deliverables (10:30 am)***

***Dr. Barbara Burton, PhD Anthropology, Applied Anthropologist & Research Lead, Artefact Design Group, Seattle, WA***

**Week 7: Qualitative Research Methods for Evaluation**

Goals:

* Understand the distinct qualitative methods needs for evaluation research
* Presentation and discussion of field work

Required Readings:

* Ch. 3,4, 9 in Patton

***Visit by: Dr. Jodi Nelson, Director, Impact Planning & Improvement, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (***[***http://www.gatesfoundation.org/leadership/Pages/jodi-nelson.aspx***](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/leadership/Pages/jodi-nelson.aspx) ***)***

**Week 8: Focus Groups & Interpretation & Coding**

Session Objectives:

* Identify observation and data gathering strategies
* Developing skills to discriminate between description & interpretation & judgement
* Understand the purpose and structure of a focus group
* Learn to distinguish what can be learned from group interviews versus individual interviews
* Consider the ethics of group interviews versus individual interviews
* Consider the nature of power when conducting interviews
* Presentations of Research Proposals

Required Readings:

* Frey, James and Andrea Fontana. “The Group Interview in Social Research.” In *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*. Newbury Park: SAGE.
* Morgan, David L. and Richard A. Krueger. 1993. “When to Use Focus Groups and Why.” In *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*. Newbury Park: SAGE.
* Short, Susan. 2006. “Focus Groups.” In Perecman and Curran.
* Ch. 8 Patton
* Ch. 5, 9 & 10 Lofland et al.
* Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland – Chapter 8.
* Vitalis, Robert. “Archives.” In Perecman and Curran.

Assignment:

***Visit with: Tabitha Hart, PhD Candidate Political Science, will teach about Atlas Ti a coding and analysis software package for 1 hour***

***Visit by: Professor Ann Bostrom, Evans School of Public Affairs***

**Week 9: Reflections**

Session Objectives:

* Presentations of Field Work
* We will review the entire course and what has been learned
* We will reconsider how method influences knowledge building and vice versa.
* You will be asked to evaluate the class.

Required Readings:

**Week 10: (YIKES – MEMORIAL DAY – NEED TO DISCUSS PLAN**

**FINAL Assignments:**

**Take Home Final Exam: TBD**

**Research Proposal: TBD**