

Geography 299: Special Topics Qualitative Methods

Location: Gardner 104

Office Hours: Thursdays 9-noon and 2-5. Call before dropping by.

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A Note about Blackboard

The best way to keep “in touch” throughout the semester is to come to class. Nevertheless, I will post announcements on Blackboard under our class space. To get to this on the web you want to go to <http://blackboard.unc.edu> and log in with your Onyen and password. Once in, click on the Courses tab (next to Bb Desktop). You should see a link to GEOG299.002.FALL 2001 SPECIAL WORK. That’s where our stuff will be. If you have issues let me know and I will do my best to resolve them. Remember you can always call, e-mail, or stop by my office. The Hickerson House is located on Battle Lane. It is the second house on the right coming off Franklin. You are welcome to call and stop by.

Course Description

The purpose of this seminar is to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of qualitative research methods, and to engage different qualitative strategies by collecting and analyzing data. This course begins with an introduction to research methods in general while highlighting the uses of qualitative methods in particular. During this section we will discuss the history of qualitative methods and the philosophy of conducting research. Next we will embark on a journey to explore different qualitative methods through class discussion and actual fieldwork. Simultaneously, we will learn how to manage, analyze, and write-up data that we collect. This will be accomplished through peer review as well as assignments to be graded by the instructor. All of these activities will culminate into a final paper demonstrating your ability to theorize about and use qualitative methods.

Completing this course should increase your understanding of research methods in general as well as when to use them. Afterward, you will be in a better position to carry out your own qualitative inquiries as well as evaluate qualitative work of others. Further, you should leave this experience with a new appreciation for the ways in which quantitative and qualitative methods may be used together in order to conduct social inquiry in geography and other related disciplines.

Course Objectives

As a participant in this course you will:

1. Identify the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methods in different paradigms. Understand what types of questions can be answered using quantitative and qualitative methods as well as the limitations of different methodological positions. And, be able to cogently argue that qualitative methods may be used rigorously.
2. Understand how to employ different qualitative methods in conducting social research. Be able to identify appropriate data collection and analysis techniques. And, have working knowledge of how to carry out a qualitative research projects using the major techniques found in the literature.
3. Be able to develop a research agenda that employs both qualitative and quantitative components. Understand how qualitative and quantitative methods serve different purposes under the various paradigms that inform the research process.
4. Examine ethical issues surrounding the research process. Understand what techniques are available to include the reflection of people you are examining.
5. Develop proficiency in writing-up qualitative proposals and reports. Be able to evaluate the value of qualitative research conducted by other researchers.

Requirements

You will be responsible for conducting qualitative research as well as discussing readings during class meetings.

Required Texts

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gubrium, J. F., and Holstein, J. A., (1997). *The New Language of Qualitative Method*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yon, Daniel A. (2000). *Elusive Culture: Schooling, Race, and Identity in Global Times*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Class Participation (50% of final grade)

The quality of the class will depend upon your level of engagement and preparedness. Therefore, your participation affects the quality of the class experience for others as well as yourself. One strategy that I have found useful in assisting with effective class participation is to have students note three important themes that they perceive to stem from the readings assigned, and then develop discussion questions related to these topics. For each class please submit one-page of “discussion topics” that demonstrate your about the material. Please submit this assignment each week on the Blackboard page for this course, under the “Discussion Board” section. This will allow me to see who has submitted their notes for each week as well as give you all a chance to read and think about each other’s thoughts before we meet. Since we will be using these write-ups to shape class discussions, you need to submit each week’s notes at least 24 hours in advance of the class for which you have prepared your notes. These notes should be your own critical thoughts and questions about the week’s reading, not just summaries of the texts. As this will be a mechanism to generate many class discussions, feel free to comment and build off of other students’ submissions or previous notes that you have written, as long as you explain how you are furthering previously submitted thoughts (rather than just agreeing or disagreeing). This forum is part of the required class work and will complement the face-to-face discussions we will have in class. This is not supposed to be “busy work” so please do not write more than a page since this assignment is meant to stimulate class discussion.

Research Project (50% of final grade)

At the beginning of the semester you will choose a research topic for which qualitative data collection and analysis may be appropriate. The purpose of this project is to serve as a guide for your journey into the world of qualitative methods. I will assist in this process, so be rest assured that it will be a matter of determining your interests and the feasibility of carrying out the project. Since this class is multidisciplinary you may consider a topic outside your primary field although it may be practical to consider something related to your upcoming thesis or dissertation. We will cover quite a bit of data collection and analysis material prior to your assignments, so you will be equipped to have fun as well as complete the components of the research project.

The topic you choose should lend itself well to various forms of data collection since you will need to complete “hands-on” work in the three following areas: Interview Assignment, Participant-Observation Assignment, Archival Assignment.

Here are some example topics. Have you ever wondered about the impact of the built environment upon different populations? One topic might be the impact of planning on bikers in Carrboro and Chapel Hill. Another topic might focus issues of poverty. How do single mothers negotiate their childcare and employment tasks compared to families with two adults? Yet, another topic might focus on the human geography of “dating” in the area. What public spaces are created for people to meet and how do people give meaning to places and create identities that are connected to those spaces? For those of you who are interested in the environment and hazard mitigation you might choose to study a community in North Carolina that has been affected by Hurricane Floyd.

Above all, choose a topic for which you have an interest. Research methods courses are not only invaluable because they supply you with more tools to rigorously examine the world around you, but also because these are courses where you have the freedom to choose almost any substantive topic.

The following assignments, in order, comprise the research project.

1. Complete an initial literature review. For the purposes of this class I expect that you will spend a few days conducting a literature search and five-page write up on your topic. While this assignment is not meant to have you provide a comprehensive review of work on your project topic, I do expect that you will have at minimum fifteen referenced articles from scholarly journals, which you will use to write a short literature review.
2. Complete a five- to seven-page summary of the data collection and analysis strategies you will employ including sampling and actual qualitative techniques. Additionally, you will need to include a one-page statement of subjectivity. This should detail your epistemological stance as well as personal characteristics that may bias your investigation. These will need to be approved by me prior to any data collection. One criterion for approval will be that you engage at least two types of data collection (e.g., interviewing, participant-observation, archival collection). Another will be successfully obtaining approval form the UNC Institutional Review Board.
3. Go forth and collect data! Well, it is more structured than that because you need to follow your data collection plan, but it may be more fun if you imagine that you will be seeing things for the first time from the perspective of a social researcher. This is your project, and the final product will be a reflection of your decisions “in the field.” Luckily, past researchers have provided tools to assure that you create a paper trail of your journey. These are called fieldnotes. Per class discussions you will know how to keep different types of daily memos. You will need to keep a daily log of theoretical memos, methodological memos, and personal memos. Of course, you will also keep a separate section for actual data that you collect. It is important that these notes and data be entered on a regular basis and identified by type of memo and date. During this stage you will also begin to analyze data. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that data is simultaneously collected and analyzed.
4. During class you will sign up to provide and update on your project. During this update you need to make available sample fieldnotes for the class and discuss them. You will also have the opportunity to share copies of your weekly fieldnotes with one other student for their evaluation (a different student every week).
5. As the data collection comes to an end and you have analyzed your data it will be time to begin telling the tale. During this portion of the class we will focus on

different ways of presenting results and how to incorporate theoretical, methodological, and personal fieldnotes into a manuscript. The final paper should articulate the entire journey of your research effort. Plan on turning in a 25-40 paper. Size is not the criteria for evaluation. Brevity is an art form!

You will be responsible for reporting on your project (props are optional). I encourage you to think of this as a theatrical adventure and have fun with it. Per our readings, you will be armed with a variety of rhetorical devices to provide an engaging presentation. Remember, even the most rigorous and sound projects may be forgotten if the presentation is lacking. Finally, you will need to provide your final report to myself and one other student for evaluation. While I will provide the project grade, student comments will be taken seriously. This highlights my pedagogy that includes the belief that we all provide knowledge that is useful in determining the value of a piece of work.

The Daily Grind: Course Schedule & Reading List

Week 1 (August 27th)

1. Introductions and overview of class
2. Discussion on the origins of qualitative methods in the social sciences

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 1: Denzin, N., and Y. Lincoln. Introduction: the Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research

Chapter 2: Vidich, A., and S. Lyman. Qualitative Methods: Their History in Sociology and Anthropology

In Gubrium and Holstein –

Chapter 1: Method Talk

Chapter 2: Naturalism

Week 2 (September 10)

1. Discussion on epistemological stances and social research

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 6: Lincoln, Y., and E. Guba. Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences

Chapter 7: Schwandt, T. Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructionism

Chapter 8: Olesen, V. Feminisms and Qualitative Research At And Into The Millennium

Chapter 9: Ladson-Billings, G. Racialized discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies

Chapter 10: Kincheloe, J., and P. McLaren. Rethinking Critical Theory And Qualitative Research

Week 3 (September 17th)

1. Offering some choices in doing qualitative inquiry: revisiting epistemology and method

In Gubrium and Holstein –

Chapter 3: Ethnomethodology

Chapter 5: Postmodernism

Chapter 6: Analytic Choices

Week 4 (September 24th)

1. Offering some choices in doing qualitative inquiry: merging method and epistemology

In Gubrium and Holstein –

Chapter 7: The “Artful” side of Interpretive Practice

Chapter 8: Conditions of Interpretation

Chapter 9: Explanation and Deprivatization

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 18: Gubrium, J., and J. Holstein. Analyzing Interpretive Practice

Chapter 19: Charmaz, K. Grounded Theory: Objectivist and constructivist Methods

Week 5 (October 1st)

1. Getting started on our projects

2. Ethics and Politics

3. Institutional Review Board Presentation (For your human subjects certification)

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 4: Fine, M., Weiss, L., Weseen, S., and L. Wong. For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities

Chapter 5: Christians, C. Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research

In miles and Huberman –

Chapter 11: Ethical Issues in analysis

Week 6 (October 8th)

1. Some considerations for building a research framework

2. Nvivo Presentation (qualitative software package we will use for class)

In Miles and Huberman –

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data: The Substantive....
- Chapter 3: Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data: Further Design....
- Chapter 4: Early Steps in Analysis

Week 7 (October 15th)

1. Nvivo demonstration and practice work.
2. Data Collection Considerations

In Denzin and Lincoln –

- Chapter 22: Kemmis, S., and R. McTaggart. Participatory Action Research

- Chapter 23: Miller, W., and B. Crabtree. Clinical Research

Week 8 (October 22nd)

1. Specific Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis: Interviewing

In Denzin and Lincoln –

- Chapter 24: Fontana, A., and J. Frey. The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text

- Chapter 31: Silverman, D. Analyzing Text and Talk

Handout –

- Chapter 25: Heyl, B. Ethnographic Interviewing. Pp.369-384 in P. Akinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland's *Handbook of Ethnography*

Week 9 (October 29th)

1. Specific Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis: Ethnography

In Denzin and Lincoln –

- Chapter 33: Chambers, E. Applied Ethnography

- Chapter 25: Angrosino, M., and K. Mays de Perez. Rethinking Observation: From Method to Context

Handout -

- Chapter 16: Fetterman, D. Ethnography, pp. 473-504 in L. Bickman and D. Rog's *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*

Handout -

- Chapter 24: Emerson, R., Fretz, R., and L. Shaw. Participant Observation and Fieldnotes. Pp.352-368 in P. Akinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland's *Handbook of Ethnography*

Week 10 (November 5th)

1. Specific Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis: Focus Groups

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 32: Madriz, E. Focus Groups in Feminist Research

Handout –

Chapter 17: Stewart, D., and P. Shamdasi. Focus Group Research: Exploration and Discovery, pp. 505-526 in L. Bickman and D. Rog's *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*

Week 11 (November 12th)

1. Analytical Techniques: Part 1

In miles and Huberman –

Chapter 10: Making Good Sense: Drawing and verifying Conclusions

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 26: Hodder, Ian. The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture

Handout –

Chapter 26: Cortazzi, M. Narrative Analysis in Ethnography. Pp.384-394 in P. Akinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland's *Handbook of Ethnography*

Week 12 (November 15th)

1. Analytical Techniques: Part 2

In Miles and Huberman –

Chapter 5: Within-Case Displays: Exploring and Describing

Chapter 6: Within-Case Displays: Explaining and Predicting

Chapter 7: Cross-Case Displays: Exploring and Describing

Chapter 8: Cross-Case Displays: Ordering and Explaining

Week 13 (November 26th)

1. Writing

In Denzin and Lincoln –

Chapter 34: Smith, J., and D. Deemer. The Problem of Criteria in the Age of Relativism

Chapter 36: Richardson, L. Writing: A Method of Inquiry

Week 14 (December 3rd)

1. Presentations of Projects

Week 15 (December 10th)
1. Presentations of Projects