

Qualitative Methods for Research in Social Sciences

Code: 42409
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313784 Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability	OT	0	1

Contact

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Teachers

Isabelle Michele Sophie Anguelovski

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Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisite.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course develops core skills in research design, guides students through the logic of the research enterprise, and provides them with the analytical, methodological, technological tools necessary to conduct qualitative research in the social sciences. Throughout the course, we move from the conceptual and epistemological aspects of research design (including research question and literature review), the development of research methods, ethics, data collection techniques and skills, to data processing and analysis, and writing and presentation of research results.

Students will be able to explain the purpose of their research, design a qualitative study, gain access to the data, prepare field work select the most appropriate sources of information (interviews, observations, participant observation, ethnography, visual records, biographical and autobiographical material, texts from the Internet), take detailed field notes, reflect on and monitor one's research, learn qualitative software (Nvivo), perform different types of data analysis using different techniques, and write analytical memos, reports, or articles. By the end of the course, students should also be able to critique and evaluate the research conducted by other researchers.

The class will be organized and led as a research seminar with weekly readings, discussions, field exercises, in-class exercises, students reports on field exercises, end-of-semester project, and student presentations. Students are expected to come prepared to class with readings completed and assignments written and to participate actively in class discussion.

Training objectives of the course:

1. To train students in sound research design, in asking good research questions, and select appropriate methods for qualitative research
2. To train students to gain the necessary knowledge to understand what it means to do research with qualitative data, how it differs from traditional quantitative research and how both sets of methods are complementary to assist in the advancement of knowledge.
3. To help students develop an adequate knowledge of the main methods of qualitative research and of preparing for field work, accessing data, collecting data, and analyzing data.

4. To introduce students to the methodological and ethical implications related to qualitative research methods.
5. To introduce students to software and other non digital tools designed to help sort, organize, process, and analyse qualitative data
6. To help students learn how to synthesize and write-up results into memos, reports, and articles.

More specific objectives include:

- B06 (Basic) - Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.
- B08 (Basic) - Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
- B09 (Basic) - Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- B10 (Basic) - Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
- E01 (Specific) - Apply knowledge of environmental and ecological economics to the analysis and interpretation of environmental problem areas.
- T01 (Transverse) - Apply specific methodologies, techniques and resources to conduct research and produce innovative results in the area of Environmental Studies.
- T03 (Transverse) - Communicate orally and in writing in English.

Skills

- Apply knowledge of environmental and ecological economics to the analysis and interpretation of environmental problem areas.
- Apply specific methodologies, techniques and resources to conduct research and produce innovative results in the area of Environmental Studies.
- Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Communicate orally and in writing in English.
- Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously.
- Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
- Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.

Learning outcomes

1. Apply specific methodologies, techniques and resources to conduct research and produce innovative results in the area of Environmental Studies.
2. Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
3. Communicate orally and in writing in English.
4. Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously.
5. Design a good research project, by asking good research questions and choosing the appropriate methods for qualitative research.
6. Recognise the different ethical and methodological implications of decisions that must be taken when designing and conducting qualitative research.
7. Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.

Content

Date	Class Topic	Assignment <u>handed-out</u>	Assignment <u>due</u> (at beginning of class C

18 October (Isabelle, Eduard)	Introduction to Social Science Inquiry and Research Design: Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research, Hypotheses, and Variables	Assignment 1 (non graded): Write a research question and bring it on large piece of paper for next class	
25 October (Isabelle)	Asking the right questions & Problematizing and designing your research	Assignment 2: Deconstructing theory and research framework	Assignment 1 (non gr)
8 Nov (Isabelle)	Deconstructing theory and literature reviews		
15 Nov (Eduard)	Secondary Data and Use of Archival Research	Assignment 3: Short presentation of possible research project with refined research question	Assignment2
22 Nov (Eduard)	The preparation of field work and ethics in social research		
29 Nov (Eduard and Sergio)	Case Study Approaches and Measurement, Reliability, and Validity	Assignment 4: case selection	Assignment 3
6 December (NO CLASS)			
13 Dec (Eduard)	Conducting interviews and observations and Writing out field notes	Assignment 5: field work preparation	Assignment 4
20 Dec (Eduard)	Preparing and conducting a Survey	Assignment 6: Practicing field work	
10 Jan (Eduard): NOTE THAT THE CLASS WILL EXCEPTIONALLY LAST 4H TO ALLOW FOR THE TRAINING	Data Analysis: Grounded Theory + software Training		Assignment 5
17 Jan (Eduard)			

Ethnographic Methods: Participant
Observation and Focus Group
Discussions

24 Jan (Eduard)	Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis	Final Assignment 7: Data analysis and writing	Assignment 6 due
31 Jan (Eduard with ICTA panel)	Structuring and Writing a Scientific Article		FINAL ASSIGNMENT TO BE CONFIRMED
7 February (optional for Master's students. Mandatory for registered PhD students)	Data Analysis: Process tracing		
14 February (optional for Master's students Mandatory for registered PhD students)	Writing Research Proposals		

Methodology

Work in large group (classroom)

1) Discussing the assigned papers for the session (critical analysis)

2) Presenting work from the course

Student individual work

1) Preparing weekly work and readings

3) Preparing and conducting observations

3) Preparing, conducting, and transcribing interviews

4) Writing field notes from interviews and observations

5) Writing report/paper/memo from field work

6) Preparation of final project (draft research project or proposal, detailed analytical memos, draft paper/article)

Work in small groups: Workshops

1) Workshop for qualitative data analysis (3 hours, not part of the evaluation)

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Type: Directed			
Work in large group (classroom)	30	1.2	
Work in small groups: Interviews and data analysis	6	0.24	
Type: Autonomous			

At home short assignment(s)	10	0.4
Conducting and Practicing field work	8	0.32
Individual assignments	20	0.8
Readings	40	1.6
Transcription/analysis/writing	30	1.2

Evaluation

Assignment 1: Research question (Non graded) - Due October 25th

Assignment 2: Deconstructing Theory (7.5%) -- Due November 15th

Assignment 3: Short presentation of proposed research project (10%) - Due Nov. 29th

Assignment 4: Case selection criteria (10%) - Due Dec. 13th

Assignment 5: Fieldwork preparation (interview instrument) (7.5%) - Due Jan. 10th

Assignment 6: Practicing field work (interviews): (25%) - Due Jan. 24th

Assignment 7: Data analysis and writing a research report/detailed qualitative memos based on interviews (30%) - First week of February TBC

Assignment 8: Participation in the discussion (each session record): Attendance and active participation in class discussion, quantity and quality of participation, constructive attitude to advance knowledge (10%) - Semester long evaluation

Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Assignment 2	7.5%	1	0.04	5, 4, 7
Assignment 3	10%	1	0.04	5, 7
Assignment 4	10%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 4, 7
Assignment 5	7.5%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 4, 7
Assignment 6	25%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 2, 7
Assignment 7	30%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 5, 2, 4, 7
Assignment 8	10%	0	0	3, 2, 4, 7

Bibliography

The list of references below is exhaustive and includes numerous recommended suggested readings for students. A shorter and selected list of references with weekly obligatory readings will be given to the students at the beginning of the class in the Fall.

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The Sage series in Qualitative Research Methods includes excellent guides. These titles are particularly relevant:

Erickson and Stull, *Doing Group Ethnography* (#42)

Schwartzman, *Ethnography in Organizations* (#27)

Feldman, *Strategies for Interpreting Qualitative Data* (#33)

Gladwin, *Ethnographic Decision Tree Modeling* (#19)

Holstein and Gubrium, *The Active Interview* (#37)

Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (#30)

Below is a very diverse collection of published studies (into books) using qualitative methods.

Adler, Patricia. *Wheeling and Dealing*.
Aitheide, David. *Creating Reality*.
Andersen, Elijah. *Code of the Street*.
Becker, Howard. *Et al, Boys in White*.
Becker, Howard. *Outsiders*.
Bennett, Stith. *Making Music Together*.
Billig, Michael. *Talking of the Royal Family*.
Bittner, Egon, *Aspects of Police Work*.
Blee, Kathleen. *Insides Organized Racism*.
Bourgeois, Philippe. *In Search of Respect*.
Brooks, Peter and Paul Gewirtz (eds.), *Law's Stories*.
Bumiller, Kristin. *The Civil Rights Society*.
Burawoy, Michael. *Making Out on the Shop Floor*.
Cassell, Joan. *Expected Miracles*.
Cavan, Sherri. *Liquor License*.
Conley, John M. and William M. O'Barr. *Rules Versus Relationships*
Crozier, Michel. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*.
Duneier, Mitch. *Slim's Table; Sidewalk*.
Eden, Lyn. *The Whole World on Fire*.
Engel, David and Frank Munger, *Rights of Inclusion*.
Epstein, Steve. *Impure Science*.
Ewick and Silbey, *The Common Place of Law: Stories From Everyday Life*.
Faulkner, Rob. *Music on Demand*.
Gaines, Donna. *Teenage Wasteland*.
Gans, Herbert, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*
Gieryn, Tom. *The Cultural Boundaries of Science*.
Gilliom, John. *Overseers of the Poor*.
Goffman, Erving. *Asylums; Presentation of Self in Everyday Life; Stigma*.
Greenhouse, Carol. *Praying for Justice*.
Gusterson, Hugh, *Nuclear Rites*.
Harper, Doug. *Working Knowledge*.
Helmreich, Stefan. *Silicon Second Nature*.
Hochschild, Arlie. *The Managed Heart*.
Howe, James. *A People Who Would Not Kneel*.
Humphreys, Laud. *Tearoom Trade*.
Jackson, Jean. *Camp Pain*.
Jacobs, Jane *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*
Jasper, Jim and Dorothy Nelkin. *The Animal Rights Crusade*.
Katz, Jack. *The Seductions of Crime; How Emotions Work*.
Knorr-Cetina, Karin. *Epistemic Cultures*.
Krieger, Susan. *The Mirror Dance*.
Kunda, Gideon. *Engineering Culture*.
Latour, Bruno and Steve Woolgar. *Laboratory Life*.
Lynch, Michael. *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action*.
Marorella, Roseann. *The Sociology of Opera*.
Moore, Joan. *Going Down to the Barrio*.
Oldenburg, Ray. *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of the Community*
Pattillo, Mary Black on the Block: *The Politics of Race and Class in the City*
Paxson, Heather. *Making Mothers*.
Petryna, Adriana. *Life Exposed*.
Prus, Bob and C.D. Sharper. *Road Hustler*.
Rock, Paul. *Making People Pay*.
Rosenblum, Barbara. *Photographers at Work*.
Sanders, Clint. *Customizing the Body*.
Sarat, Austin and William Felstiner. *Divorce Lawyers and their Clients*.
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