

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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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, 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.

Competences

- 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 handed-out	Assignment due (at the beginning of class Online)
16 October	Introduction to Social Science Inquiry and Research Design:	Assignment 1: Research Proposal	

Qualitative vs.
Quantitative
Research,
Hypotheses, and
Variables

23 October	Asking the right questions & Problematizing and designing your research		
30 October	Deconstructing theory and literature reviews		
6 Nov	Tips for Research Proposals		
13 Nov	The preparation of field work and ethics in social research		
20 Nov	Case Study Approaches and Measurement, Reliability, and Validity		
27 Nov	Conducting interviews and observations and Writing out field notes	Assignment 2: Field work preparation	Assignment 1
4 Dec	Presentation of Research Proposals by students	Assignment 3: Practicing field work	
11 Dec: NOTE THAT THE CLASS WILL EXCEPTIONALLY	Data Analysis: Grounded		Assignment 2

LAST 4H TO ALLOW FOR THE TRAINING	Theory + software Training		
18 Dec	Participant Observation and Focus Group Discussions		
8 Jan	Social Sciences in Transdisciplinary research	Final Assignment 4: Data analysis and writing	Assignment 3 due
15 Jan	Structuring and Writing a Scientific Article	FINAL ASSIGNMENT DATE TO BE CONFIRMED	

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 assignments	10	0.4	
Conducting and practicing fieldwork	8	0.32	
Individual assignments	20	0.8	

Readings	40	1.6
Transcription/analysis/writing	30	1.2

Assessment

Assignment 1: Research Proposal (30%) - Due Nov 27th

Assignment 2: Fieldwork preparation (interview instrument) (10%) - Due Dec 11th

Assignment 3: Practicing field work (interviews): (20%) - Jan 8th

Assignment 4: Data analysis and writing a research report/detailed qualitative memo based on interviews (30%) - TBC

Assignment 5: 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

Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Assignment 1	30%	2	0.08	6, 3, 5, 4, 7
Assignment 2	10%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 4, 7
Assignment 3	20%	1	0.04	1, 6, 3, 2, 7
Assignment 4	30%	2	0.08	1, 6, 3, 5, 2, 4, 7
Assignment 5	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.
 Seron, Carroll. The Business of Practicing Law.
 Spradley, James. You Owe Yourself a Drunk.
 Spradley, James and Brenda Mann. The Cocktail Waitress.
 Slyomovic, Susan. The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco.
 Traweek, Sharon. Beamtimes and Lifetimes.
 Tuchman, Gaye. Making News.
 Vale, Lawrence Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half-Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods
 Vaughan, Diane. Uncoupling.
 Walley, Christine. "Rough Waters: Struggles over the Environment, Development Weatherford, Jack. Porn Row.
 Weinstein, Deena. Heavy Metal.
 Whyte, William F. Streetcorner Society.
 Willis, Paul. Learn to Labour.
 Zuboff, Shoshana. In the Age of the Smart Machine.
 Zussman, Robert. Intensive Care.