

Qualitative Methods for Research in Social Science

Code: 42409
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

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

Contact

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Teachers

Aimada Sole Figueras

Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

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, 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.

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

Lesson 1. Introduction to research and design in Social Sciences: Qualitative Research vs. Quantitative

Lesson 2. Asking the right questions & Problematization and design of your research. Elaboration of research proposals.

Lesson 3. Deconstructing the theory and literature reviews.

Lesson 4. Ethics in social research. Reliability and Validity.

Lesson 5. Relief maps. Fieldwork preparation I.

Lesson 6. Fieldwork preparation II. Participant observation.

Lesson 7. Conducting interviews & observations and writing field notes.

Lesson 8. Discussion in Focus Groups.

Lesson 9. Qualitative data analysis and Introduction to grounded theory

Lesson 10. Grounded theory + software practice.

Lesson 11. Other qualitative methods.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Class exercises	12	0.48	
fieldwork	6	0.24	
Theory	14	0.56	
Type: Supervised			
Mentoring	8	0.32	
Work in small groups	22	0.88	
Type: Autonomous			
Assigments	36	1.44	
At home short assignements	20	0.8	
Conducting and practicing fieldwork	13	0.52	
Readings	15	0.6	

Work in large group (classroom)

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

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) Class exercises

Work in small groups: Workshops

1) Workshop for qualitative data analysis

2) Fieldwork

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class exercises	40%	0	0	6, 3, 5, 4, 7
Exam	50%	2	0.08	1, 6, 3, 5, 2, 4, 7
Lecture discussions	10%	2	0.08	3, 2, 4, 7

The course will include classroom exercises, discussion of readings, and an exam for evaluation. Attendance and active participation in class discussions, as well as the quantity and quality of participation, will be taken into account. Only the exam will be recoverable.

To participate in the recovery, students must have been previously evaluated in a set of activities whose weight is equivalent to at least 2/3 of the total grade. In this case, to pass the course, the student must attend the recovery when the exam grade is below 4 or the average grade for the course is below 5.

Students will receive the qualification of 'Not evaluable' if they have submitted zero evidence of learning or have not made submissions that account for at least 1/3 of the total grade. If they surpass this threshold, the final qualification for the course cannot be 'Not evaluable,' and it will be based on the provided evidence of learning

In the event that a student engages in any irregularity that could significantly affect the grade of an assessment, that assessment will be graded as 0, regardless of any disciplinary process that may be initiated. If multiple irregularities occur in assessments for the same course, the final grade for that course will be 0. If any irregularity occurs during the exam, it will not be recoverable.

This course does not follow a unique evaluation system.

* For this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is allowed exclusively for support tasks, such as literature or information searches, summarising, proofreading, or translations. Students must clearly identify which parts were generated using AI, specify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on how these tools influenced both the process and the final outcome of the activity. Lack of transparency regarding AI use will be considered academic dishonesty and may result in partial or total loss of marks for the activity, or more serious penalties in severe cases.

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 collection "Qualitative Research Methods" includes excellent guides, such as:

- 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, you'll find a diverse collection of studies (in book format) that utilize 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. Inside 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 MirrorDance.
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.

Software

Microsoft Office or similar.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(TEm) Theory (master)	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed