

Soc 7420 Qualitative Research Methods for Sociological Inquiry (3 credit hours)**Fridays 11:30-2:15 p.m., Isbister 335**Dr. Laura Funk: Laura.Funk@umanitoba.ca¹

Office hours (307 Isbister) 2:30-3:30 p.m. Fridays by appointment

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Course Description and Goals

This course provides an overview of methodologies of qualitative research for sociological inquiry. Discussion focuses on the ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative methods and the variety of approaches and techniques available within interpretive and critical paradigms. Issues such as sampling, reflexivity, analysis, interpretation, theoretical development, rigour, and representation will be addressed.

This course is specifically designed for graduate students planning to conduct qualitative research. It is highly recommended that you have previous training or experience in social science research methods. The course **purpose** is a) to provide practice in qualitative research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation; and b) to help you to understand how your particular methodological choice fits into the spectrum of qualitative approaches and their ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

Classes will integrate traditional lecture, free-writing, group and pair discussion, and guest speakers. You are expected to contribute high quality, original written work and respectful input into class discussions.

Learning Outcomes - Through actively participating in this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain how you would learn something different through qualitative inquiry than you would learn from quantitative inquiry.
2. Distinguish between the paradigmatic foundations underlying qualitative inquiry, and identify your own paradigmatic approach to your research
3. Generate a clear, feasible research question amenable to qualitative inquiry
4. Explain what it means to practice reflexivity in qualitative inquiry
5. Design appropriate data collection procedures for your research question; estimate challenges you may face collecting data and identify techniques for addressing them
6. Explain the value of, and specify procedures for, documenting research steps and analytic decisions through research logs and memos
7. Appreciate the wide range of analytic possibilities of qualitative inquiry and more confidently conduct rigorous qualitative data analysis
8. Understand the role of theory in qualitative inquiry; identify how to develop theoretical interpretations in your own research

¹ I will endeavor to return emails within 2 business days; I do not work evenings or weekends. Responses to phone messages may be slower (e.g., 3 business days).

9. Explain the debates around qualitative research validity and reliability, and identify ways to promote rigour throughout the research process
10. Engage with and critically evaluate existing qualitative research studies

Class Schedule² and Required Readings

Required readings noted below **MUST** be read in **ADVANCE** of the class for which they are listed. **Each week you must bring 2-3 response questions or comments on each** assigned reading, to hand in; be prepared to be called upon to raise at least one of these in-class. You are strongly encouraged to independently seek additional readings to supplement your learning and enhance the quality of your submitted work. Should you wish to purchase or borrow a textbook or need other resources, I can provide suggestions.

Date	Focus	Required Preparation (full references below)	Due Dates
Sept8	Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry and Paradigms	None	
Sept15	Qualitative Research Questions and Methodological Overview	Cresswell (2013) Bryman (2004) Maxwell (2013)	
Sept22	Rigour and Reflexivity Recruitment and Ethics	Tracy (2010) Morse et al (2002) Pillow, W. (2003)	Assign#1
Sept29	Discourse and Document Analysis: Text as Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice document analysis • The analysis of text Guest: Øland - Document Analysis	Taylor (2004) Devault (2006)	
Oct 6 No class (reading break)			
Oct13 *Assign. #1 to be returned	Ethnography and Auto-Ethnography: Observations and Experience as Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief practice observation • Analysis of observational and experiential data 	O'Reilly (2005) Wolfinger (2002)	Assign#2
Oct20	Social Phenomenology, Narrative Methods: Talk as Data Guest: Borisenkova - Narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief practice interview • The analysis of talk 	Warren (2001) Kvale (1996) Sinding & Aronson (2003)	
Oct27 *Assign. #2 to be returned	Focus Groups Case Study Methods Grounded Theory Methods	Smithson (2000) Flyvbjerg, B. (2006)	
Nov3	Arts-Based Research Guest: Woodgate - Arts Based Inquiry		Assign#3

² This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor and/or based on the learning needs of the students but such changes are subject to Section 2.8 of the – [ROASS](#)- Procedure).

	Research Logs and Coding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research logs and memos • Practice coding exercise • Approaches to coding 	Coffey & Atkinson (1996) Morse (1994)	
Nov10	Expanding the Analytic Toolkit, Pt 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant comparison • Case study comparison • Thematic networks analysis 	Attride-Stirling (2001)	
Nov17 *Assign. #3 to be returned	Expanding the Analytic Toolkit, Pt 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Analysis NVIVO Webinar (12-1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Listening Guide 	Rose (2016) Doucet and Mauthner (2008)	Assign#4
Nov17 Voluntary Withdrawal Deadline			
Nov24	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Expanding the Analytic Toolkit, Pt 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing as a tool for analysis • Mixed methods analysis • Concept Development 	Welsh, E. (2002) Richardson (1998)	
Dec1 *Assign #4 to be returned	Anti-Oppressive & Participatory Research Guest: Heinonen – PAR Moving beyond Description	Potts and Brown (2005) Wolcott (1994) Ely et al. 1997	
Dec8	Research Design Presentations		Assign#5

Full Reading List

- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405. [online]
- Bryman, A. (2004). Introduction. In Bryman, A., *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. New York, NY: Routledge. [online]
- Coffey, C., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Concepts and coding. Chapter 2, pp.26-53 in Coffey, A., and Atkinson, P., *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complimentary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [MGMT library]
- Cresswell, J.W. (2013), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed). Chapter 2 (Philosophical Assumptions and Interpretive Frameworks). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (MGMT library)
- Devault, M.L. (2006). Introduction: What is institutional ethnography? *Social Problems*, 53(3), 294-298. [online via JSTOR]
- Doucet, A., and Mauthner, N.S. (2008). What can be known and how? Narrated subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), 399-409 (online)
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). Working in interpretive modes. Chapter 5 (pp.223-73) In Ely, M., et al., *On Writing Qualitative Research: Living by Words*. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press. [online]
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 219-245. [online]

- Kvale, S. (1996). "The interview situation," Chapter 7 In *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Dafoe]
- Maxwell, J.A. (2013). Research questions: what do you want to understand? Pp. 73-86 in Maxwell, J.A. *Qualitative Research Design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Dafoe]
- Morse, J.M. (1994). 'Emerging from the data': the cognitive processes of analysis in qualitative inquiry. Pp.23-43 in Morse, J. (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *Read only to p.34* [Dafoe]
- Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 13-22. [online]
- Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, M. K., & Bertsch, T. (2006). On the Listening Guide: A voice-centred relational method. In Nagy Hesse-Biber, S., and Leavy, P. (Eds.), *Emergent Methods in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [online]
- O'Reilly, K. (2005). Chapter 4 ["Participating and Observing"] in *Ethnographic Methods*, (p.94-111). New York, NY: Routledge. [online]
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196. [online]
- Potts, K., & Brown, L. (2005). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. Pp.255-286 in Brown, L., and Strega, S. (Eds.), *Research as Resistance*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press. [online]
- Richardson, L. (1998). Writing: a method of inquiry. Pp.345-71 in Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [In 2000 edition of Denzin and Lincoln's Handbook of Qualitative Research, Dafoe]
- Rose, G. (2012). Chapter 6 (Semiology) in *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sinding, C., and Aronson, J. (2003). Exposing failure, unsettling accommodations: tensions in interview practice. *Qualitative Research*, 3(1), 95-117. [online]
- Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analyzing focus groups: limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(2), 103-119.
- Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(4), 433-451. [online]
- Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: eight "big tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. [online]
- Warren, C.A.B. (2001). Qualitative interviewing. In Gubrium, J.F., and Holstein, J.A. (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (pp.83-103). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [online]
- Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *FORUM: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), Art26. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/865> (online)
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994). Description, analysis, and interpretation in qualitative inquiry. Chapter 2 pp.9-54 in Wolcott, F., *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Dafoe]
- Wolfinger, N.H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 85-93. [online]

Course Evaluation Methods

Evaluation will be based on grades assigned for each of the following components below. Note that you can use whatever standard social science referencing style you prefer (MLA, APA, Harvard, etc.) as long as it is consistent.

Assignment 1 (15%) DUE September 22nd, 11:30 a.m.
In-Depth Methodological Review

For this assignment, **select one qualitative method** that you would like to learn more about; after approval from the instructor, locate and review a selection of *methodological* (i.e., not empirical) writing pertinent to that method. This might include relevant theoretical material. Then, clearly synthesize what you have learned into a class handout (no more than two single spaced pages; point form may be used). Make enough copies for everyone. Include a list of references (approx. 5 articles or chapters should be consulted). Your mark will be based on demonstrated comprehension of the method, and quality and clarity of your synthesis and written communication.

Assignment 2 (5%) DUE October 13th, 11:30 a.m.
Demonstrating Resonance in Qualitative Research

Tracy (2010) suggests that one indicator of the quality of qualitative research (e.g., empathic validity) is that the final product *resonates* emotionally with readers, who identify or empathize with the experiences or topic being examined. Choose a **qualitative research study** (as reported in a published paper or book chapter) that has resonance. In no more than one single spaced page, concisely and clearly describe and illustrate *why and how* this article resonates with you. Hand in both a copy of the article and your summary. Your mark will be based on the quality of your explication of resonance, demonstrated comprehension of the study, and quality and clarity of written communication.

Assignment 3 (20%) DUE November 3rd, 11:30 a.m.
Data Collection Experience

Choose ONE of either:

a) **Observation:** Conduct approx. two hours of inconspicuous observation in a public area of your choice *on campus*, addressing a research question of your choice (with approval of instructor). Submit your field notes and an 8-10 page (typed, double spaced) paper, devoting approximately 50% to an informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (making connections to class readings and material), and approximately 50% to what you learned about your research question (include detailed description and preliminary analytic insights).

OR

b) **Interview:** Conduct about a 1-1.5 hour-long in-person qualitative interview *with a classmate* to address a research question of your choice (with approval of the instructor). **DO NOT AUDIO RECORD the interview.** Submit your handwritten notes made during the interview and an 8-10 page (typed, double-spaced) paper, devoting approximately 50% to an informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (making connections to class readings and material), and approximately 50% to what you learned about the research question (include description of content and preliminary analytic insights).

For **excellent** marks, demonstrate superior quality work including but not limited to:

- a) Frequent, accurate links between your reflections and readings from class and other sources, as well as what we have learned in class.
- b) High quality writing (e.g., publishable style, no grammatical or spelling mistakes; the writing flows and transitions well and your points are easy to understand).
- c) Considerable “intellectual meat” (i.e., not simply saying the same thing in multiple ways with little depth of thinking). Try to communicate many different, significant points within the constraints of the page limit: to do this you must write concisely.

Assignment 4 (20%) DUE November 17th, 11:30 a.m.
Data Analysis Experience

You will **code a qualitative interview transcript** (provided in-class) by hand, using an “open coding” approach (or similar coding approach if well specified). Submit an 8-10 page (typed, double spaced) paper, devoting approximately 50% to describing what the process was like for you, challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (with links to class readings and content about methodology), and approximately 50% to what you learned from the data. This latter part is a more expansive yet tentative analytical summary and discussion of your codes and how they might be related conceptually/at a more abstract level, and any other analytical insights (including those not 'captured' within codes). While some level of abstraction is welcomed, make it clear how your ideas are grounded in the data. You must **ALSO return** the hard copy of the transcript (which will not be graded) with your paper.

For **excellent** marks, demonstrate superior quality work including but not limited to:

- d) Frequent, accurate links between your reflections and readings from class and other sources, as well as what we have learned in class.
- e) High quality writing (e.g., publishable style, no grammatical or spelling mistakes; the writing flows and transitions well and your points are easy to understand).
- f) Considerable “intellectual meat” (i.e., not simply saying the same thing in multiple ways with little depth of thinking). Try to communicate many different, significant points within the constraints of the page limit: to do this you must write concisely.

Qualitative Research Design (30%) DUE December 8th by 11:30 a.m.

Submit a **qualitative research design** for a hypothetical or actual qualitative research study. Build on your previous in-class work as much as possible. The research design (not to exceed 15 double spaced pages) should be structured like a short version of a thesis proposal, but with much less emphasis on literature review and theoretical approach. You will also present this to the class in a brief (6-7) minute presentation on April 19. Provide detail to explain and justify your design decisions and approach, but be concise. In particular, be sure to address the following aspects:

- Qualitative Research Question
- Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry
- Paradigmatic, Theoretical, Methodological Framework (as appropriate)
- Data sources, Data collection strategies; Sampling, Recruitment, Participant/Document Selection (as appropriate)

- Ethics, Reflexivity, Rigour
- Data Analysis Plan and Strategies

Marks will be based on demonstrated comprehension of the purpose of qualitative methods and class content, demonstrated coherence or alignment between your design elements, and the quality of attention to the abovementioned issues within a clearly communicated proposal. Please write in first person language. Accurate links to supporting methodological references (especially those from class) are required. However, directly connect any methodological literature to your project – i.e., don't just tell me how others say something should be done, explain how you will employ a particular strategy or perspective in relation to your particular research study. Limit the use of direct quotes (paraphrase instead).

Class Participation (10%)

Your participation mark will be based on the quality and quantity of your contributions to group activities and discussions³ including discussions about the course readings. Towards the end of the course you will also write, in-class, a summary of how your thinking has evolved over the course of the term, for submission.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Grading Scheme: The following letter/percentage grading scheme will be used: A+=90% and above (Exceptional); A=80-89% (Excellent); B+=76-79% (Very Good); B=70-75% (Good); C+=66-69% (Satisfactory); C=60-65% (Adequate); D=50-59% (Marginal); F=under 50% (Failure).

Disruptions: Disruptions due to excessive or persistent talking/whispering, late arrivals or early departures are especially distracting. Respect your classmates and your instructor.

Statement of Consequences of Late Assignments: Late assignments will receive a penalty of a 15% deduction. In exceptional circumstances an extension may be granted if you receive my permission in advance and provide documentation (e.g. medical note).

Academic Integrity: University policy on academic integrity will be enforced. A full description of academic integrity matters, including plagiarism and cheating, can be found in Section 8 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements of the University of Manitoba. All work is to be completed independently unless otherwise specified.

Unclaimed term work disposal: Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for four (4) months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will become property of the Faculty of Arts and be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.

Copyright: Please respect copyright. We will use copyrighted content in this course. I have ensured that the content I use is appropriately acknowledged and is copied in accordance with copyright laws and University guidelines. Copyrighted works, including those created by me, are made available for private study and research and must not be distributed in any format without permission. Do not upload copyrighted works to a learning management system (such as UM Learn), or any website, unless an exception to the *Copyright Act* applies or written permission has been confirmed. For more information, see the University's Copyright Office website at <http://umanitoba.ca/copyright/> or contact um_copyright@umanitoba.ca.

Class Communication: All communication between myself and you as a student must comply with the electronic communication with student policy:

³ This is a class that is primarily concerned with methodology. Try to focus your comments on the paradigmatic and methodological approach rather than substantive content of research.

(http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/electronic_communication_with_students_policy.html). You are required to obtain and use your U of M email account for all communication between yourself and the university.

STUDENT SERVICES

Campus and Disability Services: If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, or have a disability or illness which may affect your learning or assessment, you should discuss these issues with me and/or one of the following Student Affairs offices: Disability Services; Student Counselling and Career Centre; University 1; Learning Assistance Centre.

Student Accessibility Services: If you are a student with a disability, please contact SAS for academic accommodation supports and services such as note-taking, interpreting, assistive technology and exam accommodations. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental illness, learning, medical, hearing, injury-related, visual) are invited to contact SAS to arrange a confidential consultation. *Student Accessibility Services* <http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/> 520 University Centre, 204 474 7423 Student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca

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