

Soc 7420 Qualitative Research Methods (3 credit hours)**Thursdays, 11:30-2:30, 335 Isbister**Dr. Laura Funk: Laura.Funk@ad.umanitoba.ca

Office hours (307 Isbister) by appointment

Calendar Course Description

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.

More specifically, this course is designed for graduate students who plan to undertake qualitative research projects. Its **purpose** is a) to provide you with practice in qualitative research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation; and b) to allow 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 presentations. It is highly recommended that you have some previous training in social science research methods. 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
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

Weekly Schedule and Required Readings

Readings noted below MUST be read in ADVANCE of the class for which they are listed. **Each week you must also prepare reading responses** (brief summaries in your own words, OR answers to guiding questions I will distribute) and bring these to class. You are strongly encouraged to independently seek additional readings to supplement your learning and enhance the quality of your submitted work. Purchasing or borrowing a textbook on qualitative research (see me for suggestions) is recommended if this is your first course in qualitative research and if you will use qualitative methods for your thesis.

Week 1: Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry and Paradigms (January 7th)

There are no scheduled readings for this week. I will provide an overview of the course as a whole, clarify expectations, and introduce the concept of paradigms in relation to research.

Week 2: Qualitative Research Questions and Inquiry (January 14th)

This week, you will practice developing your qualitative research question and we will continue to discuss paradigms and research design. Bring reading responses for the following:

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.

Bryman, A. (2004). Introduction. In Bryman, A., *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

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.

Week 3. Rigour, Ethics and Reflexivity (January 21st)

This week we will explore the meaning and practice of reflexivity and rigour in qualitative research, and consider common ethical issues that arise in conducting qualitative research.

Guest speaker Jill Bucklaschuk – Ethics and Process in Qualitative Research

Bring reading responses for the following:

Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: eight “big tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.

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.

Mauthner, N.S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37(3), 413-31.

Week 4: Early Methodological Traditions: Ethnography, Grounded Theory, and Social Phenomenology (January 28th)

**Student presentations, Assignment #1 (approx. 5)*

We will briefly review three methodological traditions common in traditional sociological qualitative research (albeit with paradigmatic differences within each tradition). Bring reading responses for the following:

O'Reilly, K. (2005). "Introduction to ethnographic methods," Chapter 1 in *Ethnographic Methods*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory method: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 3-21.

Gubrium, J.F., & Holstein, J.A. (1993). Phenomenology, ethnomethodology and family discourse. In P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, & S.K. Steinmetz. (Eds.), *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A contextual approach*. (pp.651-675). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Week 5. Observation and Fieldwork (February 4th)

**Student presentations, Assignment #1 (approx. 5)*

This week you are encouraged to consider what kind of fieldwork is relevant to your topic area and what kinds of observations you could conduct. What things would you need to consider when collecting data through observation? Bring your reading responses to class for the following:

O'Reilly, K. (2005). **Chapter 4** in *Ethnographic Methods*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wolfinger, N.H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 85-93.

Coffey, P., Atkinson, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). **Chapter 4** IN *Key Themes in Qualitative Research: Continuities and Changes*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Week 6. Interviewing (February 11th)

**Student presentations, Assignment #1 (approx. 5)*

This week you are encouraged to consider who would interview in relation to your topic, and what you might want them to talk about. What things would you need to consider when collecting data through interview methods? Bring reading responses for the following:

Warren, C.A.B. (2002). 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.

Sinding, C., and Aronson, J. (2003). Exposing failures, unsettling accommodations: tensions in interview practice. *Qualitative Research*, 3, 95-116.

Kvale, S. (1996). "The interview situation," Chapter 7 In *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*****February 15-19 - No class – reading week*****

Week 7. Textual Traditions: IE and Documents, Archival and Visual Methods (February 25th)

**Assignment #2 (data collection) is due in-class*

This week you are encouraged to consider what kinds of texts, images, documents, etc. are relevant to your topic, and how they might be incorporated into your research. What could they tell you that observation or interviewing cannot? Bring reading responses for the following:

DeVault, M. (2006). Introduction: What is Institutional Ethnography? *Social Problems*, 53(3), 294-298.

Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(4), 433-451.

Pauwels, L. (2010). Visual sociology reframed: an analytical synthesis and discussion of visual methods in social and cultural research. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 38(4), 545-581.

Week 8. Critical and Anti-Oppressive Traditions: Participatory Action and Indigenous Research (March 3rd)

Guest speaker Andrew Woolford – unsettling methodologies

This week you are asked to consider how your research approach might differ if you tried to take an anti-oppressive stance. Bring reading responses for the following:

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.

Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. In Brown, L., and Strega, S. (Eds.), *Research as Resistance*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press.

Week 9. Research Logs and Qualitative Data Analysis: Part 1 (March 10th)

This week, we will address how to organize and track your research process, including the possibility of using qualitative data-analysis software. At the most basic, however, analysis starts with facilitating your own thinking about the data. Bring reading responses for the following:

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.

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***

Week 10. Qualitative Data Analysis Part 2 (March 17th)

***NOTE: Voluntary withdrawal deadline March 18, 2016**

Guest speaker Kevin Walby – narrative analysis and The Listening Guide

This week, we continue exploring strategies for and approaches to qualitative data analysis. Bring reading responses for the following:

Dye, J. F., Schatz, I. M., Rosenberg, B. A., & Coleman, S. T. (2000). Constant comparison method: A kaleidoscope of data. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(1), 1-10.

Kohler Riessman, C. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and method* (pp.695-710). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 11. Qualitative Data Analysis: Part 3 (March 24th)

[tentative] Guest speaker Dan Albas – ethnographic concept development

This week, we focus on developing, applying, and refining codes, concepts or themes as a technique for qualitative data analysis. Bring reading responses for the following:

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.

Hsieh, H-F, & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.

Bazeley, P. (2009). Analyzing qualitative data: more than 'identifying themes.' *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 6-22.

Week 12. Interpretation, Theory Building, and Beyond (March 31st)

****Assignment #3 (data analysis) is due in-class***

To prepare for this week, please review your previous in-class writing and bring this with you. We will discuss how to take your work beyond description to sociological interpretation and theoretical development. Bring reading responses for the following:

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.

Beach, D. (2005). From fieldwork to theory and representation in ethnography. In Troman, G., Jeffrey, B., and Walford, G. (Eds.), *Methodological Issues and Practices in Ethnography - Studies in Educational Ethnography*, Vol. 11 (pp.1-17). Emerald Group Publishing.

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.

Week 13. In-Class Exam (APRIL 7th).

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on grades assigned for each of the following components:

Assignment 1 - 15%

Your favourite [sociological] qualitative research article. Presentation due in-class on dates TBD (various presentations dispersed over weeks 4, 5 and 6).

Tracey (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. For this assignment, choose **your favourite sociological qualitative research study** (as reported in a published paper or book chapter), and provide an overview for the class in a brief (no more than 7 minutes) presentation accompanied by a 1 page (single spaced) handout which includes a full citation. As well as an overview of the study, its methods and paradigmatic approach, and just a few key findings, explain why this article resonates with you, and assess other aspects of the quality and approach of the study, drawing on class readings and discussions.

Assignment 2 - 25%

Data Collection Experience. Due in-class February 25. Choose ONE of either:

a) **Observation Assignment:** Conduct at least 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 a 6-8 page (typed, double spaced) informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, and what you learned about your research question.

OR

b) **Interview Assignment:** Conduct about a 1-1.5 hour-long, open-ended interview *with a class-mate* to address a research question of your choice (with approval of the instructor). Submit your notes made during the interview and an 8-10 page (typed, double-spaced) informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, and what you learned about the research question.

Assignment 3 - 25%

Data Analysis Experience. Due in-class March 31st

You will code a qualitative interview transcript (provided in-class) by hand, using an “open coding” approach for open-ended interviews (or other coding approach if approved by me in advance). Submit your coded transcripts, a summary description of each of your codes, and an 8-10 page (typed, double spaced) paper describing what the process was like for you, challenges you faced, and what you learned from analyzing the transcript. What interpretations might be relevant to the findings?

To achieve **excellent** marks on **Assignments 2 and 3**, you must 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.

Class Participation 15%

Based on a combination of a) the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussions¹; b) your contributions to in-class free-writing activities (you will be required to share selected sections with your peers and to create, at the end of term, a summary of evolution of your thinking over the term); c) weekly reading responses (brief summaries OR responses to guiding questions) for the assigned readings.

Final Exam 20%

In-class **April 7**, choice of 3/5 long answer questions. ‘OPEN BOOK’ (though no computers)

ADDITIONAL 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 Missed Tests: Failure to complete a test will result in a mark of zero for that test. Except under exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical issues accompanied by a valid doctor’s note) missed tests cannot be re-taken at a later date. If a make-up test is approved (and this will be a *different* test), you must attend at the scheduled time.

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).

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.

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.

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.

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¹ 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.