QUALITATIVE METHODS
WINTER 2012

TEXT: There are 2 required texts. Additional Course reading materials will be distributed in class
2. Constructing Grounded Theory Charmaz

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
This course provides a general overview of qualitative research. One part of the course describes what qualitative research is and why you might want to use qualitative research methods. The second part of the course describes a variety of methods that researchers use to collect and analyze qualitative data. After you complete this course, you should have a clear idea of what qualitative research is and the work that is involved in doing this kind of research.

On one hand, this course does not assume that you personally will be doing any qualitative research in the future. Instead, the assumption is that you are likely to encounter such research in your future career, so you need to be an effective “consumer” of qualitative research, even if you yourself are not going to be a “producer” of qualitative research.

On the other hand, if you do plan on doing a qualitative thesis or dissertation, the course readings, exercises, and assignments -- culminating with the final paper -- will walk you through the steps of developing a qualitative research proposal.

Learning Goals
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate:
• increased understanding of strengths, limitations and fundamental logic of qualitative research
• increased awareness of the history of qualitative methods
• increased awareness of the issues relating to conducting field research
• increased awareness of the issues relating to conducting “high quality” qualitative research
• the ability to conduct, write-up and analyze field observations
• the ability to conduct and transcribe an individual interview.
• the ability to develop a codebook and code interviews
• the ability to develop grounded theory through aggregating and analyzing interview data
• the ability to produce a qualitative research proposal.
Basic Guidelines
• Attendance is required.
• In order to have productive class meetings, students are required to complete all assigned readings prior to class.
At the beginning of each class, each student is expected to turn in a hard copy of ONE question, suitable for class discussion, from that week’s reading.

Assignments and Grades
A. Papers  85 points total
NOTE: Even if you will not be completing a research project in your degree program or if you plan on actually doing a quantitative Master’s thesis, you will still have to develop a qualitative proposal for this class.

There are three papers assigned for this class; the final paper will take the form of a complete qualitative research proposal. Please note that in the final paper, students are expected to combine the first two papers, while addressing my earlier feedback and suggestions for revisions.

B. Research Technique Assignments  80 points total
There are two data collection assignments for this class – one involving observation and the other interviewing. There are also two analysis assignments – an individual qualitative content analysis and a group project based on the collected interviews. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be passed out in class.

C. Other Assignments  35 points total
Other assignments include developing a first draft of your purpose statement and research questions, reviewing a qualitative research article that uses similar methods (e.g. design or data collection) as your proposed project, and a critique of positions relating to postmodernism and qualitative methods. “Class Participation” refers to whether you attend class regularly, are well prepared to contribute (including providing the weekly discussion question), and actually participate. It does not refer to the amount that you speak in any single class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Papers</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. “How are You studying it?” (Data Collection, Data Reduction, Data Analysis) 4-5 page paper</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. “A Research Proposal” (paper #1+#2 w/ revisions) 8-10 page paper</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers Total</td>
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<td>85 pts.</td>
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## B. Research Technique Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Extra Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation assignment</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>[10]</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ field notes</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>[10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ reflective essay</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>[10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewing assignment</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>[15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ conduct &amp; transcribing interview</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>[15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ individual interview qualitative content analysis</td>
<td>2/29</td>
<td>[5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis and Interpretation Group assignment</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>[5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ group codebook</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>[15]</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ final analysis project</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>[15]</td>
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<tr>
<td>* in-class presentation</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>[15]</td>
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<tr>
<td>* grounded theory write-up</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>[15]</td>
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<tr>
<td>* group participation</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>[15]</td>
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Research Technique Assignments Total: 80 pts.

## C. Other Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summarizing a methods-related research article</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First draft of purpose statement &amp; research questions</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postmodernist Debate</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Participation</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
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Other Assignments Total: 35 pts.

Total Points: 200

## Grading Scale

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>186</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>180</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
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## DATE            TOPIC

**W 1/11** What is Qualitative Research?

**Readings:**
- Marshall & Rossmann, Chapter #1, pp. 1-16; Chapter #2, pp. 17-20
- Charmaz, Chapter #1, pp. 1-12
- Hood, “Teaching Against the Text: The Case of Qualitative Methods,” pp. 207-223
- Lamont & White, “Promising topics in qualitative research”

**B. Introduction to Writing a Qualitative Research Proposal**

**Exercise:** discussion of proposed research projects
To be turned in by email by 1-13: a) description of own research project

**assignment:** a) find a qualitative research article that uses a similar data collection method to what you propose to use in your project.
   - summarize the article particularly the design and methodology (approximately 2 pages)
   - explain how this article relates to your proposed project. (approximately 2 pages)

W 1/18  
A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Observation I  
Readings:  
• Patton, "Fieldwork and Observation" pp. 70-107  
• Whyte "On the Evolution of Street Corner Society." pp. 11-73  
• Morgan, Sample field notes and write up  
B. Writing a Qualitative Research Proposal  
Readings:  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #4, pp. 55-77  
• Creswell "The Introduction," & "The Purpose Statement," pp. 73-104  
• Creswell, "The Research Question" pp. 105-108 and 114-116  

Exercise: discussion of methodology articles  
To be turned in: a) research article assignment

**assignment:** a) first draft purpose statement and research questions  
b) explain how using a qualitative approach will allow you to fulfill the stated purpose of your study and answer your research questions

W 1/25  
A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Observation II  
Readings:  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #6, pp. 137-142  
B. Justifying a Qualitative Approach and the Literature review  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #4, pp. 77-88; Chapter #5, pp. 89-92  

Exercise: discussion of purpose statement and research questions  
To be turned in: a) first draft purpose statement and research questions  
b) explanation of how using a qualitative approach will allow you to fulfill the stated purpose of your study and answer your research questions

**assignment:** a) observation exercise “Transportation Stories”:  
b) write-up of field notes and reflective essay on "Taking field-notes"

W 2/1  
A. Basic Issues in Doing Qualitative Fieldwork  
Readings:  
• Lareau, “Common Problems in Fieldwork: A Personal Essay” pp. 195-236  
B. Writing a Qualitative Research proposal – Research Design  
Readings:  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #5, pp. 92-136
Exercise: discussion of process of conducting observations
To be turned in: a) final write-up of field notes and reflective essay on “Taking field-notes”

Assignment: a) Post Modern debate paper: AFTER READING 2-8 CLASS READINGS: summarize “constructivist” and “post modernist” perspectives on Qualitative Methods (minimum 4 pages maximum 6 pages); Explain where your proposed project fits on the continuum between these two positions (minimum 2 pages maximum 4 pages)
b) line up interview with a graduate student from an earlier cohort in your program for week of 2-8

W 2/8 A. Postmodern Debate
Readings: • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #2, pp. 21-37
• McKenzie & Knight “Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology”
• Denzin & Lincoln “Together - from the Handbook of Qualitative Methods”
• Snow & Merrill “Handbook for Revolution?” (review of Denzin & Lincoln)
• Denzin & Lincoln “Transforming Qualitative Methods: Is it a Revolution?” (response to review)
• Snow & Merrill “Ironies, Puzzles, and Contradictions” (response to Denzin & Lincoln’s response to review)

B. Interviewing I
Readings: • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #6, pp. 142-149, 151-160
Exercise: come up with interview topics, questions (group work)
To be turned in: a) Post Modern paper

Assignment: a) interview a graduate student from an earlier cohort in your program
b) paper #1 – first “half” of research proposal

W 2/15 A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Interviewing
Readings: • Charmaz, Chapter #3, pp. 13-41
• Qualitative Sociology Review: An Interview with Kathy Charmaz
• Patton, “Depth Interviewing,” pp. 108-143
• Hughes, "Turning Points in the Lives of Young Inner-City Men Forgoing Destructive Criminal Behavior: A Qualitative Study."

Exercise: discussion of interviewing experiences
To be turned in: a) paper #1 – first “half” of research proposal

Assignment: a) transcribe interview

W 2/22 A. Data Reduction, Coding, Memo Writing
Readings: • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #8, pp. 205-219
• Charmaz, Chapters #3, 4 & 5, pp. 42-122

B. Interpreting Qualitative Data: Qualitative Content Analysis
• Morgan “Qualitative Content Analysis: A guide to Paths Not Taken”

Exercise: develop initial codes;
C. Class Project: Data analysis I

Exercise: divide into groups and continue code development
To be turned in: a) transcribed interview – both hard copy and word file

| assignment: | a) initial group codebook |
|            | b) coded individual interviews with memos |
|            | c) individual qualitative content analysis assignment |

W 2/29
A. Interpreting Qualitative Data / Constructing Grounded Theory
Readings: • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #8, pp. 219-227
• Charmaz, chapters #6 & 7, pp. 123-176

B. Class Project: Data analysis II

Exercise: groups connect individual interviews; start to develop ground theory to explain patterns in groups’ interviews
To be turned in: a) coded individual interviews with memos
b) individual qualitative content analysis assignment

| assignment: | a) develop final group codebook |
|            | b) begin to organize notes/diagrams on group theory development process |

W 3/7
A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Focus Groups
Readings: • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #6, pp. 149-151
• Morgan “Focus Groups”
• Collier & Morgan "Is That Paper Really Due Today? Differences in First-Generation and Traditional College Students' Understandings of Faculty Members' Class-Related Expectations,"
• Morgan “Seeking Diagnosis for a Cognitively Impaired Family Member: Evidence from Focus Groups”

B. Class Project: Data analysis III

Exercise: groups connect individual interviews; continue to develop ground theory to explain patterns in groups’ interviews
To be turned in: a) paper #2
b) final group codebook

| assignment: | a) complete organization notes/diagrams on group theory development process |
|            | b) group write-up of grounded theory presentations |
M 3/14       Doing High Quality Qualitative Research
Readings:    • Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #3, pp. 39-53
             • Charmaz, Chapter #8, pp. 177-185
             • Johnson: "Examining the Validity Structure of Qualitative Research."
                        pp. 282-292
             • Lincoln & Guba "Judging the Quality of Case Study Reports." pp. 205-216
             • Freeman, et al. “Standards of Evidence in Qualitative Research: An
                           Incitement to Discourse,” pp. 25-32
             • Cho & Trent “Validity in qualitative research revisited” pp. 319-340

Exercise: Final group presentations
To be turned in: a) notes/diagrams on group theory development process
                 b) written version of grounded theory presentation

assignment:    a) final version of qualitative research proposal”

W 3/21 1400    final Exam period final proposal paper due

The schedule listed in the course syllabus is subject to
change during the term. Any changes will be
announced in class.