QUALITATIVE METHODS
WINTER 2013

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, based on 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.

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<th>A. Papers</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<td>“What are you Studying?” (Introduction, Purpose Statement, Research Question, Research Design) 4-5 page paper</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>“How are You studying it?” (Data Collection, Data Reduction, Data Analysis) 4-5 page paper</td>
<td>3/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>“A Research Proposal” (paper #1+#2 w/ revisions) 8-10 page paper</td>
<td>3/18</td>
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Papers Total 85 pts.

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<th>B. Research Technique Assignments</th>
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• Observation assignment  
  + field notes 1/28 [10]  
  + reflective essay 1/28 [10]  
• Interviewing assignment  
  + conduct & transcribing interview 2/18 [10]  
  + individual interview qualitative content analysis assignment 2/25 [10]  
• Analysis and Interpretation Group assignment  
  + group codebook 3/11 & 18  
  + final analysis project  
    * in-class presentation 3/18 [15]  
    * grounded theory write-up 3/18 [15]  
    * group participation 3/13 [10]  

Research Technique Assignments Total 80 pts.

C. Other Assignments  
• Summarizing a methods-related research article 1/18 5  
• first draft of purpose statement & research questions and 1/15 5  
• explanation of “why use a qualitative approach for this project?” 2/4 5  
• Postmodernist Debate 2/25 10  
• Class Participation 10  

Other Assignments Total 35 pts.

Total Points 200

Grading Scale

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DATE TOPIC

1-7 What is Qualitative Research?  
Readings:  
  • Marshall & Rossman, 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  
  • Lareau, “Using the Terms Hypothesis and Variable for Qualitative Work: A Critical Reflection” pp. 671-677  
  • 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: 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)

1-14 A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Observation I
**Readings:**
- Patton, "Fieldwork and Observation" pp. 70-107
- Morgan, Sample field notes and write up

B. Writing a Qualitative Research Proposal
**Readings:**
- Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #4, pp. 55-77
- 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

NOTE: “a” is due via email by 9 AM Tuesday 1-15-2012

b) observation exercise “ Transportation Stories”
c) write-up of field notes and reflective essay on ”Taking field-notes”

NOTE: “b” & “c” are due in class Monday 1-28-2012

M 1/21 Holiday MLK Jr. Day
**Readings:**
- Whyte "On the Evolution of Street Corner Society." pp. 11-73
- Special Lecture week 3 W2013 592 history material
- D2L week #3 W2013 592 history (powerpoint slides)

1-28 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
Exercise: discussion of process of conducting observations
To be turned in: a) observation exercise “ Transportation Stories”
b) write-up of field notes and reflective essay on "Taking field-notes"

| assignment: | a) 1 page paper: justification for using a qualitative approach for your study  
b) start putting together paper #1 incorporating feedback from earlier assignments |

2-4 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
C. Collecting Qualitative Data: Interviewing I
Readings:  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #6, pp. 142-149, 151-160

Exercise: come up with interview topics, questions (group work)

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

2-11 A. Collecting Qualitative Data: Interviewing II
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 |

2-18 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. Interpreting Qualitative Data: Qualitative Content Analysis
• Morgan “Qualitative Content Analysis: A guide to Paths Not Taken”

Exercise: develop initial codes;
To be turned in: a) transcribed interview – both hard copy and word file

**assignment:** 

a) Postmodern paper: summarize “constructivist” and “post modernist” perspectives on Qualitative Methods (min. 4 pages max. 6 pages); Explain where your proposed project fits on the continuum between these two positions (min. 2 pages max. 4 pages)  
b) individual qualitative content analysis assignment; your interview 

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2-25 A. Data Reduction, Coding, Memo Writing  
**Readings:**  
• Marshall & Rossman, Chapter #8, pp. 205-219  
• Charmaz, Chapters #3, 4 & 5, pp. 42-122  

B. Computer-assisted Qualitative Analysis:  
Dedoose Workshop  
C. Class Project: Data analysis I  

**Exercise:** divide into groups and continue code development  
To be turned in: a) Postmodern paper  
b) individual qualitative content analysis assignment

**assignment:** 

a) paper #2  
b) coded individual interviews with memos

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3-4 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 grounded theory to explain patterns in groups’ interviews  
To be turned in: a) paper #2  
b) coded individual interviews with memos

**assignment:** 

a) develop initial group codebook  
b) begin to organize notes/diagrams on group theory development process  
c) since the final proposal is a combination of papers #1 & #2, begin work on your final proposal by incorporating feedback from paper #1 into those sections of final proposal while you wait for paper #2 feedback

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3-11 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

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) initial group codebook

Assignment: Preparation for Final Exam Presentations:
each student: final proposal paper
each group: a) final group codebook with memos on codebook development
b) notes/diagrams on group theory development process
c) written version of grounded theory presentation plus slides

3-18 Final Exam Presentations
to be turned in:
each student: final proposal paper
each group: a) final group codebook with memos on codebook development
b) notes/diagrams on group theory development process
c) written version of grounded theory presentation plus slides

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