

PUBP 810.3: Qualitative Methods

University of Saskatchewan Campus	
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Office Location:	Diefenbaker Rm 184
Term:	Winter 2010
Room:	EDUC 10
Time:	Fridays 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course is about exploring and understanding qualitative research as it is used for public administration and policy making. It involves reading a textbook on qualitative methods, active participation in class discussions, and learning by doing: in this class, you will also ask a research question, get out into the field, and collect and analyze qualitative data.

COURSE CONTENT AND APPROACH

This course is designed for students who will be evaluating (or even helping to conduct) qualitative research studies on the job, be it within government, a policy institute or a non-profit organization. Please note that this is a survey course, meaning that it is designed to cover a broad range of topics rather than provide in-depth coverage of specific methods.

In terms of objectives, at the end of this course students should:

- Understand how qualitative research differs from quantitative research
- Have a working knowledge of the research process (both generally and as it involves qualitative methods), from formulating a research question to writing-up
- Have a working knowledge of how to collect and analyze qualitative data
- Be able to critically assess qualitative research

REQUIRED READINGS

Ritchie, Jane and Jane Lewis. 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

There is also a course pack available for photocopying in the graduate student room.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

I encourage you to explore the qualitative methods books and the research design books at the Murray Library to see which ones resonate best with you. Ones that I have found especially well-written and accessible for new researchers include the following:

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Kirby, Sandra, Lorraine Greeves and Colleen Reid. 2006. *Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

Robson, Colin. 2002. *Real World Research*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Yin, Robert. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

EVALUATION

Your final grade consists of the following:

- Six homework assignments, worth 5% each (so 30% in total)
- A research “diary” that you will write as you are collecting data, worth 15%
- A critique of a journal article or book chapter, worth 20% (this can be done in groups of twos if you would like)
- Class participation, worth 10%
- A final research paper, worth 25%

To be a full participant in the class, you need to complete the readings and assignments, come to class with questions or comments, and engage in course and guest lectures and discussions. More specifically, one percent will be allotted for classes two to eleven. Thus, class participation is worth 10%. To facilitate participation, please do readings with a pen in hand. Students must bring to every class a minimum of three questions that span the readings assigned for that week. These questions can be hand written and don’t need to be submitted to the instructor. Please note that I will regularly ask for you to share your questions with the rest of the class.

More details on the other components of the evaluation will be provided in class.

Research Project

For this class, you will conduct a research project that relates to a public administration or public policy area of interest to you. This cannot be a question that requires you to collect data from children under 18 years of age, people with cognitive impairments or individuals who are institutionalized. Further, it cannot be a question that is considered by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board to be above minimal risk. According to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, “...minimal risk means that the risk of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life...” (*Behavioral REB Submission Overview*, University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board 2007)

Examples of public policy areas, and the kinds of data you could collect to explore these questions, include the following:

- Parental leave policies: Here you could do in-depth interviews with parents to understand their views on child rearing and the role they see of the state in meeting the needs of individuals with children.
- Food labeling policies in Canada: How do consumers view the labeling of local and organic foods? Here you could conduct a focus group with a group of shoppers and ask them questions about their views of organic food, their understanding of what the term organic means, and their definition of ‘local’.
- Governance and accountability in the non-profit and co-operative sectors: Here you could observe a board meeting and examine how directors make decisions, discuss key issues and consider the input of managers as they deliberate.

Ethical Research Involving Humans

The tri-council policy statement on ethical conduct for research involving humans states that “An ethic of research involving human subjects should include two essential components: (1) the selection and achievement of morally acceptable ends and (2) the morally acceptable means to those ends. The first component is directed at defining

acceptable ends in terms of the benefits of research for subjects, for associated groups, and for the advancement of knowledge. The second component is directed at ethically appropriate means of conducting research.”

Guiding principles for conducting research involving humans include respect for human dignity, respect for free and informed consent, respect for vulnerable persons, respect for privacy and confidentiality, respect for justice and inclusiveness, balancing harm and benefits, minimizing harm and maximizing benefit.

More information on human ethics can be found at the Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan. Their web site is www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Unless you have talked to me at the beginning of the semester about any problems with assignment deadlines, 20%/week will be deducted from any assignment that is late. Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of the class that they are due. The final paper is due at 4:00 p.m., and can be submitted in the main office of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. Assignments will not be accepted by email unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs are invited to speak to me by January 22, 2010 to ensure that adequate and timely arrangements are made. You may also want to contact the Disability Services for Students office at the University of Saskatchewan; their web site is <http://students.usask.ca/disability/dss/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND CONDUCT

Ensuring that you understand and follow the principles of academic integrity and conduct as laid out in the University of Regina’s Graduate Calendar and the University of Saskatchewan’s Guidelines for Academic Conduct is vital to your success in graduate school. Ensuring that your work is your own and reflects both your own ideas and those of others incorporated in your work is important: ensuring that you acknowledge the ideas, words, and phrases of others that you use is a vital part of the scholarly endeavour. If you have any questions at all about academic integrity in general or about specific issues, contact your course instructor and to discuss your questions.

SESSION ONE: January 8, 2010: Overview of Syllabus and Assignments, Introduction to Qualitative Methods

Readings:

Chapter One: The Foundations of Qualitative Research and Chapter Two: The Applications of Qualitative Research Practice in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*.

Rank, Mark R. 2004. "The Blending of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Understanding Childbearing among Welfare Recipients." In *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. Edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. New York: Oxford University Press.

SESSION TWO: January 15, 2010: First Steps: Developing Ideas, Locating the Researcher, and Ethical Considerations

Readings:

Robson, Colin. 2002. *Real World Research*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Chapter Three: Developing Your Ideas.
Kirby, Sandra, Lorraine Greeves and Colleen Reid. 2006. *Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press. Chapter Two: Where Do You Stand? Locating the Researcher and the Researcher.

Web site: University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Ethics Board web site.

SESSION THREE: January 22, 2010: Design Issues in Qualitative Research

Readings:

Chapter Three: Design Issues and Chapter Four: Designing and Selecting Samples in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*.

SESSION FOUR: January 29, 2010: Data Collection through Individual and Group Interviews

Readings:

Chapter Six: In-depth Interviews and Chapter Seven: Focus Groups in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*.

Example: Gibson, Kerri, Susan O'Donnell and Vanda Rideout. 2007. The project-funding regime: Complications for community organizations and their staff. *Canadian Public Administration*. Vol., 50 Issue 3, 411-435.

SESSION FIVE: February 5, 2010: Data Collection through Observation

Readings:

Delamont, Sara. 2007. "Ethnography and Participant Observation." In *Qualitative Research Practice*. Edited by Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Example: Maher, Lisa and David Dixon. 2002. "Policing and Public Health: Law Enforcement and Harm Minimization in a Street-level Drug Market." In *Ethnographic Research: A Reader*. Edited by Stephanie Taylor. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

SESSION SIX: February 12, 2010: Data Collection through Documents, Photographs, Archives and Film

Readings:

Have, Paul ten. 2004. "Natural Documents." In *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Collier, John and Malcolm Collier. 1986. Photographing Social Circumstance and Interaction. In *Visual Anthropology: A Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Example provided in class.

SESSION SEVEN: February 26, 2010: Data Analysis: Thematic Frameworks

Readings:

Chapter Eight: Analysis and Chapter Nine: Carrying out Qualitative Analysis in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*.

SESSION EIGHT: March 6, 2010: Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis

Guest speaker: Evelyn Peters

Readings:

Porter, Jonathan and Margaret Wetherell. 1994. "Analyzing Discourse." In *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Edited by Alan Bryman and Robert G. Burgess. New York: Routledge.

Example: Gamson, Andre and Andre Modigliani. 1989. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *The American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 95, 1, 1-37.

SESSION NINE: March 12, 2010: Writing up Qualitative Research Reports

Readings:

Chapter Eleven: Reporting and Presenting Qualitative Data in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*.

SESSION TEN: March 19, 2010: Community-based Research and Community Action Research

Guest speaker: to be announced

Readings:

Reitsma-Street, Marge and Leslie Brown. 2004. "Community Action Research." In *Critical Strategies for Social Research*. Edited by William K. Carroll. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc.

Stoecker, Randy. 2005. "The Goose Approach to Research." In *Research Methods for Community Change: A Project-based Approach*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Example: Delemos, Jamie. 2006. "Community-based Participatory Research: Changing Scientific Practice from Research on Communities to Research with and for Communities." *Local Environment*. Vol. 11, 3, 329-338.

SESSION ELEVEN: March 26, 2010: Student Presentations - No readings are required for this last class.

Overview of Homework Assignments

- 1) Select and describe a research topic of interest to you. Write your research question(s) and a problem statement, and describe the significance of the research. Please contextualize your questions and significance in terms of public policy. **This is due Jan. 15, 2010.**
- 2) Develop a short bibliography consisting of about 10 relevant empirical sources, and write a short literature review based on these sources. The goal of this exercise is not for you to develop an exhaustive understanding of the relevant research, but to couch your project in a greater body of work. (When you work on this assignment, pay close attention to papers that use qualitative methods. See how questions are framed, how data is collected and analyzed, and how authors address trustworthiness, for example). **This is due Jan. 22, 2010.**
- 3) Compare and contrast how your research question could be answered using a qualitative versus quantitative approach. This assignment should include broader epistemological differences between the two research paradigms, and then describe more narrowly what each approach allows researchers and readers of your study to understand. Describe why a qualitative approach is best suited to your research question (beyond the fact that qualitative methods are the focus of the class!). **This is due Jan. 29, 2010.**
- 4) Prepare a sampling plan for your research. This should include information on your sample, how you will recruit participants, and your role as researcher vis-à-vis participants. **This is due Feb. 5, 2010.**
- 5) Develop a data collection plan (such as an interview protocol) for your qualitative study. **This is due Feb. 12, 2010.**
- 6) Develop a data analysis plan. Discuss how you will establish reliability and validity. **This is due Mar. 6, 2010.**

Overview of Diary

This diary will allow you to reflect upon your data collection as you are doing your field work. In it, you should write about what you are learning, how what you are reading about may differ from what you are learning in the field, challenges you have experienced, questions you have about the method you are using, and questions you have about your role as a researcher and your relationship to the research participants. In this diary, you also need draw upon the work of 4 different authors who have written on the method you are using (authors that are not listed under the required readings for this class). As such, this exercise is designed for both reflection and to provide you with the opportunity to explore a particular method to a greater depth than we will in class.

Because this is a diary, you can submit something that is written by hand (as long as your hand writing is legible!). I'm looking for 4 to 5 pages of hand-written notes (single-spaced), as well as your list of references. **This diary is due March 12th, 2010.**

Critique and Final Paper

Details of these assignments will be provided in class. **The critique is due on March 19th, and the final paper is due on April 20th, 2010.**