COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides an introduction to qualitative methods used in the social sciences and comparative education. It is intended to provide an overview of particular techniques in research design, data collection, and data analysis most commonly associated with qualitative research. Upon completing this course, you should be able to:

(1) understand and critique qualitative studies that you read;
(2) supervise someone else’s qualitative work (e.g., an independent consultant hired to conduct a qualitative study for an organization for which you work);
(3) conduct your own qualitative inquiry, having acquired a particular skill set which should be highly valued in your future jobs (keep your reference books on hand!).

Part One includes an introduction to qualitative methods. We will begin with an overview of key perspectives on research, different types of studies, and the main differences between qualitative and quantitative traditions. In addition, understanding how to think, write, critique, and argue about social science research is an important piece of this section.

Part Two focuses on research design and data collection. We will read “how-to” methods books and you will employ these methods. We will also read examples from experienced researchers that illustrate how these researchers employ these methods and to what effect. We will debrief your experiences, discuss issues that arise, and answer questions you have about hands-on practice. Key methods include individual interviews, focus groups, document review, and observation.

Part Three focuses on data analysis, writing-up research and presenting it. It provides the opportunity for you to share your own research experiences from the semester, draft reports, and completed studies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION
This class requires the active participation of all class members through small and large-group activities, presentations, active listening, debate, and discussion. It is based around weekly lectures and recitations. We will benefit from the experience of special guests who will give first-hand insight into their qualitative research and research experiences. You are expected to work with other students outside of class to prepare assignments. Please feel free to take advantage of my office hours to talk about questions concerning assignments and comments or questions you have about course readings and topics. If you have logistical questions, please consult with a classmate first, then contact me with your question if your classmate cannot help you.

Specific requirements are as follows:
1) **Class Attendance and Participation (20%):** Class attendance (lectures and recitations) and regular participation is required for this course. This includes active listening, comments on readings, and small group activities. Your participation should demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings. If you must miss a class for any reason, please let me know in advance.

2) **Protection of Human Subjects tutorial and approval (P/F):** All students must take and pass the University Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects on-line Tutorial by **Tuesday, February 3rd** prior to class to receive a “P” for this assignment. This can be found at http://www.nyu.edu/ucалиns/tutorial. Students must post a copy of their score on Classes under the “Assignments” tab by the start of class on the due date.

3) **Academic Integrity Wagner Oath (P/F):** I take academic integrity very seriously. All assignments must adhere to standards of academic ethics. Your work must reflect your own writing and ideas. According to the Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity, you violate the principle of academic integrity by turning in work that does not reflect your own ideas or includes text that is not your own; when you submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from the instructor; when you receive help on a take-home examination when you are expected to work independently; when you cheat on exams; and when you plagiarize material.

Any student who submits work that constitutes plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary sanctions, which range from failure of the course to dismissal from the school.

By **Tuesday, February 10th, prior to class,** please complete the NYU Wagner Academic Oath form located at: http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/academicOath Post the acknowledgement that the form has been completed on Classes under the “Assignments” tab. You will receive a “P” for this assignment if you complete the oath. If you do not complete this oath, you will fail the class.

4) **Group Problem Statement with Research Question (20%):** Working in groups of 3 or 4, please develop a problem statement with potential research question(s) (two-three pages, maximum) related to a topic of your own choosing. The problem statement should summarize the intellectual puzzle, or the gap in knowledge, that requires your investigation. The research question should be focused enough to be answerable and feasible in the course of the semester and should clearly require qualitative, not quantitative, methods. Please also list methods you anticipate using as well as your anticipated data sources (sample). In no more than one page, explicitly consider how you could use each of the methods explained in this course to answer your questions (interviews, focus groups, observational or document analysis techniques) and why you choose (a) particular method(s) over the others. This assignment should include five to six academic references that relate to your question and support/defend your problem statement. Submit your problem statement, research question(s), data collection methods and sources, and references in a Word file in Classes under the “Assignments” tab by **Tuesday, February 24th,** prior to class. Bring a hard copy with you to class. Your research question must be approved before you proceed with data collection. Gaining approval of your question may require resubmission of this assignment.

5) **Data Collection Protocols (10%):** In your groups, create protocols to use in collecting the types of data appropriate to your research question(s). (Each group must develop at least two protocols.) More specific guidance in developing data collection protocols will be provided in class. You must receive feedback from the TA and I as well as a grade on the protocols prior to collecting any data in the field. The protocols are due on **March 10th at 11:59pm and should be posted in Classes under the “Assignments” tab. You may be requested to bring a hard copy to class March 24th.**

6) **Transcripts/Field Notes and Researcher Memo (10%):** Each student is required to prepare and submit a Researcher Memo plus at least one of the following four types of transcript/field notes (i.e., raw data). The transcript/field notes and Researcher Memo are due on **Tuesday April 14th, prior to class and should be posted in Classes under the “Assignments” tab. Please bring hard copies of your transcripts/field notes to class that day.** Although researchers do not usually share field notes with others, we will share and discuss these notes in class. **NB:** Transcripts and field notes are critical ingredients for qualitative work. To yield the most accurate results, it is best to transcribe and record your notes as soon as possible after you have completed the field work.

   a) **Researcher memo:** You will complete one 2-3-page (double-spaced) Researcher Memo in which you reflect on two aspects of qualitative research: 1) reflexivity/subjectivity (i.e., your role as researcher in the process of collecting data), and 2) preliminary “insights,” “a-ha moments, etc. from the data you have collected to date.
PLUS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

b) Observation field notes: These field notes should reflect at least one 1.5-hour observation of a public or private setting of your choosing using the observation protocol you developed. Choose a setting that allows you to engage with some aspect of the research question you have chosen. Remember, private settings require verbal permission from the people you will be observing. Observations must conform to NYU’s guidelines regarding research involving human subjects. Please use common sense, as well, in conducting this work and do not put yourself or your “subjects” at undue risk.

c) Individual interview transcript: This transcript should reflect the (1-hour, minimum) individual interview you will have conducted using the interview protocol you developed. Choose an individual who will allow you to engage with some aspect of the research question you have chosen. Interviews must conform to NYU’s guidelines regarding research involving human subjects. Please use common sense, as well, in conducting this work and do not put yourself or your “subjects” at undue risk.

d) Focus group discussion: This transcript should reflect a focus group discussion you will have conducted (1-1.5-hour, minimum) using the focus group discussion protocol you developed. Group members may conduct the focus group session together (in pairs), however if you submit the transcript for this assignment you must have been the focus group facilitator.

e) Document review: These document review notes should reflect your analysis of at least one document (comprising at least 5 pages) or other material (non-human) data source.

7) Group Data Analysis and Final Research paper (40%): After you have completed the data collection for the research question you are studying, you will write it up in a paper (15-20 pages maximum (not including References or Appendices), double-spaced, 12 pt. font). The paper should contain the following sections:

a) Introduction (1-2 pages): This contains your problem statement, research question(s), and the significance of the investigation. You should include a thesis statement/argument (This paper argues that…). You should also provide a “road map” of the rest of the paper—i.e., a paragraph containing a sentence summarizing each of the following sections (First, this paper will…Second it will…).

b) Literature review (3-5 pages): This section describes the key academic literature on the topic under study. Be sure to discuss only the literature that is relevant to your research. Do not quote sources extensively—it is almost always better to paraphrase and cite than to quote.

c) Methods and Sample (3-5 pages): Here you will describe how you selected your informants, how you chose the sites for observation, how you conducted your data collection, which difficulties you ran into in the process, and how you attempted to address these difficulties, and limitations. (NB: for this paper this section should be longer and more detailed than it would be for a typical article or organization report.)

d) Findings and Discussion (6-8 pages): Here you categorize and describe your key findings, along with explanation (interpretation) as to what your findings mean. Provide support for your argument, and be sure to clearly distinguish your opinions from those of your participants.

e) Conclusion (1-2 pages): Briefly recap what you have told your reader up to this point, and summarize your main arguments/conclusions in answer to your research question(s), and note areas/questions meriting future research. If appropriate, provide recommendations for policy or practice.

All first drafts are due (P/F) on Tuesday, April 28th, prior to class, to be posted under the “Assignments” tab in Classes. You will present your research in class Tuesday May 5th. During these sessions, you will receive feedback from your classmates and me. You will be able to incorporate this feedback into your final paper. Final papers are due by 11:59pm May 15th and should be posted under the “Assignments” tab in Classes.

8) DEADLINES and Policy on late assignments: Papers are due on the dates and at the times listed. In other words, if a paper is due at 4:55 p.m., that means 4:55 p.m., not 4:56 p.m. In fact, Classes will not let you post an assignment past the time at which it is due. Barring serious illness or family emergency (both require documentation), late papers will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each 24-hour period for which they are turned in after the deadline. For example, a paper turned in one day late with a grade of B would be marked down to a B-. Exceptions are granted only in extreme circumstances and require written documentation. Examples of exceptional circumstances include a learning disability (documented by NYU in the form of a written
letter from the Center for Students with Disabilities) or hospitalization. Changing topics, regions, countries of study for an assignment, poor time management, and procrastination do not count as exceptional circumstances.

Time management is critical to success in this class. Your group research project should be a semester-long activity, following along with the class topics. Each stage of this project will likely take longer than you expect. For example, given deadlines, you will need to begin setting up your data collection activities (booking interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.) prior to receiving feedback on your protocols.

9) **Criteria for grading written work:** Prior to each assignment’s due date, your TA will provide a grading rubric with clear criteria for grading. Key criteria include preparation and accuracy of data, strength and clarity of written arguments, quality and logic of analysis, and clarity and accuracy of writing.

10) **Special Accommodations:** Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd.

**STRONG RECOMMENDATION**
The NYU library offers guided tours. I strongly recommend that you make an appointment with the library staff for a tour. They will describe which search engines and other kinds of tools are available and will explain how to conduct on-line searches for academic literature, among other key research activities. They have an excellent reputation. This type of tutorial can save you tremendous time in preparing your research study.

**ASSIGNMENTS SUMMARY TABLE:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage of grade</th>
<th>Date due:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>All classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Human subjects</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>All assignments/activities &amp; Feb 3 (Tutorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Academic integrity</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>All classes/assignments &amp; Feb. 10 (Form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Problem statement/RQ(s)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Feb 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Data collection protocols</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>March 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Transcripts/field notes &amp; Researcher memo</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>April 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Final research paper (draft)</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>April 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Draft research presentation</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>May 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Final research paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>May 15</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS**
The required readings are available in the NYU bookstore and on line via the NYU Classes webpage. The required readings that are not available either in the bookstore or on NYU Classes are available through the NYU library’s ejournals. Additionally, we have requested that these materials be made available at the course reserves desk at Bobst Library (to be checked out for two hours at a time). If you have difficulties locating readings, please ask the NYU library staff or a classmate to assist you.

**NYU Bookstore:**

4. King, Elisabeth. (2014). *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*. Cambridge University Press. (approx. $90, hardback at bookstore; flyer/discount for 20% off posted on NYU Classes if order from Cambridge. Please feel free to share copies with classmates)

**OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:**


Please recommend others to add to this list.

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Please note: this schedule and the assigned readings are subject to change (with advanced notice to you).

* Readings with one star are available on NYU Classes. The rest are in your required books, online through the links provided, or available via the NYU library databases.

Part I: Introduction to qualitative methodology

(1) January 27: Course introduction; syllabus review

Introduction to Social Science Research & the Qualitative Paradigm


Rubin, H. & Rubin, I. Chapter 2.


(2) February 3: Qualitative Research Design

What are different types of qualitative research? What is research ethics?


Rubin & Rubin, Chapters 3 and 6


Human Subjects Tutorial: http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/tutorial/

Recommended:


DUE by posting to Classes: Human Subjects Exam Results

(3) February 10: Logic, Argument, and Theory in Social Science Research

Developing your question, significance and contribution
Part II: Qualitative Data Collection

(4) February 17: Reviewing the Literature and Constructing a Problem Statement
Key Methodological Techniques: Protocol Design and Sample Selection
King, E. introduction
Maxwell, J., Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

DUE by posting to Classes: Wagner Academic Code Form (Test Results)

(5) Feb 24: Key Methodological Techniques: Semi-Structured and Unstructured Individual Interviews
Rubin, H. & Rubin, I.: Chapter 3.

DUE by posting to Classes: Problem Statement

(6) March 3: Key Methodological Techniques: Focus Group Interviews; Observation
Morgan, D. (1997). Focus groups as qualitative research (pp. 1-65) *

March 10th: no class or recitation, CIES

March 10th by 11:59 pm, DUE by posting to Classes: Data collection protocols

March 17: no class, spring break

(7) March 24: Key Methodological Techniques: Document Review


Additional Reading TBA

(8) March 31: Key Methodological Aspects: Self-presentation, reflexivity/subjectivity, building credibility; Researcher Memos


Recommended:

(9) April 7: Stuck in the Field: Problem-Solving and Overcoming Obstacles


King, E. pp. 10-13 and chapter 4

Part III: Research Process and Results

(10) April 14: Data Coding and Analysis; Writing the results


LeCompte, M. & Schensul, J.: Analyzing & interpreting ethnographic data (Chapters 4-7).*
Maxwell, Chapter 6

Rubin & Rubin: Chapters 11-12.


King, chapters 2-3

Recommended:

Due by posting to Classes from each individual student:
Researcher Memo and any one of the following: Observation Field Notes, Individual Interview Transcript, Focus Group Interview Transcript, Document Review Analysis

(11) April 21: Data Coding and Analysis continued; Presenting your research

Special Guest: Atlas-ti presentation or Dedoose TBA

Readings as above

(12) April 28: Dos and Don’ts of qualitative research; Examples of qualitative research studies in comparative and international education

Special Guests TBA

Due by posting to Classes: First Draft of Research Project

(13) May 5: (last class, (14) double class): Mini-conference: Presentation of research reports

May 15 by 11:59pm Due by posting to Classes: Final Research Papers