RESCH-GE.2140 Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry  
Spring 2012 30 Hours, 3 credits

Instructor: Elizabeth Norman PhD, Professor  
Contact info: (212) 998-5412  
Elizabeth.Norman@nyu.edu  
Office hours: By appointment and Tuesday 10-12n  
246 Greene St 3R

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the group of approaches to social science and humanistic research known as qualitative inquiry. These approaches include historical research, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, and narrative research, and employ methods of interviewing, discourse/content analysis, and participation observation. Emerging technology used includes digital analog recorders, videotape, voice recognition software, and software such as NVivo, and Atlas for data ‘mining’ and coding. The course is designed as an introductory training course for students who plan to conduct qualitative research for theses or dissertations. Students will explicate studies that employ these approaches; discuss assumptions of qualitative inquiry; evaluate current technology; discuss standards of sampling, ethics, and validity, and design a qualitative research proposal.

This course is the first in the qualitative series offered at Steinhardt. It is geared toward first or second year doctoral students who have not yet begun their dissertation research but plan to use qualitative methods in their work. This course is the prerequisite to the more advanced and specialized qualitative methods courses offered in the school. It is not meant to constitute the entirety of students’ methods training. Rather, it provides an introductory treatment of the range of methods that students might employ if they are interested in researching a question that lends itself to a qualitative approach.

The course will be a combination of learning about and reading examples of the methods we study – drawing from anthropology, sociology, history, and cultural studies – and of “hands on” training in some of these methods (interviews and observation). In the settings and people students choose to study, students will apply these methods, for instance, online communities, classrooms and identity-focused clubs.

Course Format

The course design includes lectures, discussions, in-class workshops, out-of-class reading and writing assignments. Each week we will explicate readings to uncover the researcher’s argument, how it is supported throughout the text, and what types of data sources are used. We will spend a portion of each class discussing the progress of each student’s research experiences.

Required Texts


**Suggested Texts:**


**Suggested Websites**

Please check the Blackboard site for this course under the external links tab. There are links to qualitative software sites, and NYU Human Subjects information and tutorial. I’ve also included two links I find particularly helpful for doctoral students: UNC’s dissertation advice and Rutgers Writing and Grammar sites.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

*See assignment tab on Blackboard for more information*

**Human Subjects Tutorial. (No grade but required to complete the course)**

Federal law mandates that all researchers complete a short module on involving human subjects in research. Go to: [http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/tutorial/](http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/tutorial/)

Complete the tutorial, print out your grade (A minimum score of 80 is required), and hand in this page. If you have already completed this tutorial, you do not have to repeat it. Simply provide evidence of your grade.

Due: April 26 (or earlier)

**ALL BLACKBOARD POSTINGS TO BE POSTED BY 9pm the SUNDAY BEFORE CLASS**

**Weekly Class Research Questions (10%)**

Each week when we are discussing a particular qualitative approach –ethnography etc— you will write a research question from your area of interest, using the wording of that particular approach. We will begin those classes by reviewing what you posted on Blackboard.

**1. Analysis of qualitative software (10%)**

*Post on Blackboard Discussion*, a 250 word evaluation of: a bibliographic software program (Refworks, EndNote, Zotero), Voice recognition software (dragonfly naturally speaking), video
analysis (transana), data analysis (NVivo, Atlas), organization/writing (DT search, Scrivener) and other software program. You can work in teams of two to four students. I need to approve your choice of software in-class or via email. Answer the questions listed on page 174 in Creswell plus add the cost of the software. See External Links tab on Blackboard for qualitative software sites. Mac users—make sure the software is compatible with your system.

DUE: February 14

2. **Participant Observation (15%)**
   Students will conduct a two-hour observation of a public setting at New York University or another setting with prior approval. Students will choose a setting that allows them to engage with some aspect of the broad question of their interest. Prior to this observation post on the Blackboard Discussion Forums an outline of how you plan to organize your observation, define the population you will observe, and present a rationale for your choice of population on the Discussion Board.

DUE: March 6

3. **Field notes: (15%)**
   After students conduct their two-hour observation they will post field notes on Blackboard Discussion Forums. Researchers maintain a record or diary which details the events of the observation, reactions to these events, and changes in the researchers view over time. These notes become the foundation of developing (or refining) research questions, concepts, theories, and provide the basis for answering research questions.

DUE: March 27

4. **Interview (15%)**
   Students will conduct one interview with someone in the NYU community or someone who represents a population of their interests. You must inform the subject that information will only be used in this class, and you must give your subject anonymity. Prior to the interview, you will post your questions on the Blackboard Discussion Forums.

DUE: April 3

5. **Content analysis (15%)**
   Students will post the transcript of their interview as an attachment on Blackboard Discussion and using software (see above) and their own review, present an analysis on their interview. You must include codes and themes in your analysis. DUE: April 17

6. **Final paper (20%)**
   Using the semester assignments as a foundation, design a qualitative research study. Maximum length 10 pages. Points will be reduced if the paper exceeds this length. Does not include reference pages or appendices. Paper must be formatted in APA or Chicago. No formatting errors. No spelling errors. No grammar errors. See Guideline for Final Paper on Blackboard assignment tab.

DUE: May 8

**Deadlines and Policies:**
1. All assignment deadlines are firm. 

_I will not grant extensions_, except in the case of absolute emergency. For each day that an assignment is late, the final grade will be lowered by one-third of a grade (e.g., an A- becomes a B+ if an assignment is one day late). _Assignments also are considered late if they do not meet the time deadline_ (e.g., an assignment due at 9 p.m. is due _promptly_ by 9 p.m.).

2. _Special Accommodations_: Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, and 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](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

3. If you are not familiar with the current Bobst data bases and how-to search, sign up for a free library class: [http://webapps.library.nyu.edu/classes](http://webapps.library.nyu.edu/classes)  
   Or complete a tutorial: [http://library.nyu.edu/research/tutorials/](http://library.nyu.edu/research/tutorials/)

**WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE**

1. **January 24. Introduction**

_Readings:_


2. **January 31 Qualitative Approaches to Research**

_Readings:_

1. Creswell; “Philosophical, Paradigm, and Interpretive Frameworks” p. 15-34; “Designing a Qualitative Study” p. 35-52, “Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry” p. 53-100; 211-213 “Post Positivism” “Evaluation criteria, Qualitative perspectives.”

_Assignment_: set up team to review software (assignment #1, due February 14)

3. **February 7. The Tools of Qualitative Research. Getting organized. Standards of Validation and Evaluation**

_Readings:_


Student led groups will summarize and evaluate select software programs that can be used in qualitative research.

**Assignment:** To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class — Assignment #1 evaluation of software. Post as a group. In narrative or outline form. Your group will also be presenting in class. You can use PowerPoint slides.

5. February 21. Qualitative Methods: Interviewing, content analysis, and participation observation.

**Readings:**

3. Evans and Kotchetkov (2010) “Qualitative research and deliberative methods: promise or peril?” Qualitative Research, 9, 625.
4. Taylor and Coffey (2010) “Qualitative research and methodological innovation.” Links for both articles on Blackboard under Weekly Reading List.


6. February 28. Ethnography and Participant Observation

**Readings:**

2. Wolcott, H. 27-29 (review);34-36 (review);78-81 (review)
4. Review participant observation notes on Assignment tab.

7. March 6. Ethnography and field notes

**Readings:**

**Assignment:** To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums:
1. A ethnographic research question
2. Assignment #2 Your Participant Observation Guide.

8. **Spring Break March 13**

9. **March 20. Case Study and interviewing**

**Readings:**

1. Review interviewing notes on Blackboard assignment tab
2. Creswell p. 135-136, 140-141
3. Boothe, p. 87-100, “Engaging sources actively.”

10. **March 27. Case study and interviewing**

1. Creswell, “Case Study” p. 9-10 (review); 73-75 (review); 103-107; 112-113; 125; 129; 132; 141; 150-151; 163; 195-199; 218; 225
2. Qualitative study Creswell “Campus response,” 92; 337-353.

**Assignment:** To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class – A case study research question.
To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class —Assignment #3 Field notes.

11. **April 3. Historical research and content analysis.**

**Readings:**

3. “Content Analysis.” (Link on Weekly reading list)
4. Cassie-notes on an evacuation” (Link on Weekly reading list)

**Assignment:** To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class – An historical research question.
12. April 10. Phenomenology

Readings:

1. Creswell 57-62; 89; 103; 105-111; 121; 131; 142; 159-160; 170; 187-189.
2. Qualitative study: Jenkins “Portrait of Culture in Contemporary America” (On Blackboard Weekly Readings tab)

Assignment: To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class – A phenomenological research question.

13. April 17. University Committee Activities Involving Human Subjects (UCAIHS)—ethical issues with qualitative research.

Jane McCutcheon DDS, PHD from UCAIHS will be a guest speaker.

Assignment: Human Subjects Tutorial on-line http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/tutorial/. I only need to see your score to know that you’ve completed the tutorial. If you are a PhD student know that UCAIHS requires a minimum score of 80.

Assignments: To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class:
2. Assignment #5 content analysis of interviews.

14. April 24 Narrative research and writing

Readings:

1. Wolcott, p. 45-63.
2. Creswell, p. 9-10; 53-57 (review); 94; 103-106 (review); 110; 119-123; 126; 131; 155-158; 183-187; 213-215.

Assignments: To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class:
1. A narrative research question

15. May 1. Mixed methods. Challenges for qualitative scholars

Reading:

**Assignments:** To be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums before class:
1. A mixed method question

**May 8. No class. Assignment: Final paper due on Blackboard.**

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