

COMM 561 Qualitative Research Methods

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Office Hours: Tues 11-12, 2-3 Other days by appt.

Another note on communication – I do not perpetually check email, but do so most work days. I also consider answering an email question in class as a sufficient answer.

Course Description and Objectives

Through presentation of scholarly readings and immersion into one's own in-depth research project, this course is designed to explore a variety of qualitative research approaches in communication studies, taking into account issues of epistemology (ways of knowing), methodology (ways of examining) and representation (ways of writing and reporting). We will discuss various qualitative methodologies including: in-depth interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, examination of written or visual texts, and/or other cultural artifacts. We will read examples of qualitative research that illustrate important theoretical traditions and methodologies. In our review of this research, we will consider key issues such as ethics, interpretive validity, self-reflexivity, and writing style.

In addition to reading past work, each of you (alone or in conjunction with one other class member) will develop and complete your own interpretive research project. This project will require you to locate a research site, gather data, analyze data, and prepare a case study paper which includes a literature review and rationale for the study, research questions/hypotheses, a clear description of methodology and analysis, and preliminary results and discussion.

Course Objectives

Once you have completed this course, you should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry;
2. Understand and evaluate the different methods of and uses for qualitative research;
3. Identify and enact phases of the qualitative research sequence, specifically:
 - a. identifying a class of phenomena to be the subject of study,
 - b. carrying out QI following a specified descriptive framework (or by generating a DFW of your own),
 - c. observing naturalistic behavior,
 - d. recording naturalistic behavior,
 - e. coding the behavior "openly,"
 - f. interpreting what is observed, recorded, and coded.
 - g. writing the case study.

Required Readings

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Other readings – How should we distribute it?

Instructional Policies

This course will be taught much like people do qualitative research. We will begin with a broad overview of qualitative methodology and then become more specific about methods as the course progresses. It is hoped that this approach will parallel what goes on in the field. As one gains entry, and begins to gather and analyze qualitative data, the task seems overwhelming and out of control. Thus, I have a good excuse for the madness. This is sort of like building a plane and flying it (a tired metaphor, but appropriate) because we are reading about qualitative inquiry and doing it at the same time.

You are expected to read the materials thoroughly and engage the material in inquiry. Know that some of the readings are "purposefully redundant." I want you to read what different (and respected) field researchers have said about the nature of qualitative inquiry, so that you get different perspectives on the issues at hand. Be prepared to come to class with questions and comments about the readings. Specifically, I'd like to see you do the following in our class discussion:

1. show knowledge of reading and thinking about what you read;
2. argue effectively for your positions;
3. transfer the information in the readings to your own fieldwork and testing/extension of theory;
4. contribute to a lively discussion;
5. respond to the comments of others.

Course Requirements

Unswerving Attendance and Passionate Participation (10 % of course grade)

I'll expect students to complete assigned readings before class and verbally participate in seminar discussions in an enthusiastic and informed manner. To participate, students can offer (among other things) a simple factual question, a point which reveals a methodological assumption, a critique of a research piece, a strong point which merits our admiration, a clarification that will help everyone to understand a class concept better, an application of the research to your research site or to some other personal experience, etc. I will evaluate the participation part of the grade by making weekly notations regarding the quality and quantity of evidenced preparedness and *informed* participation in discussions.

Integrating Ideas—Midterm Celebration of Knowledge (25% of course grade)

You will have a midterm exam that assesses your understanding and integration of course concepts. If you read and take good notes along the way, this should not be too stressful or time-consuming. It is designed to help you review and learn the major course concepts, not to pull you away from your major focus on the semester research project.

Inspiring Semester Research Paper & Presentation (40% of course grade)

The culminating core requirement for this course is writing a 25-30 page paper based upon your original qualitative research. This project involves locating a "site," immersing yourself in its social action, analyzing the significance of that social action through the eyes of its participants, and constructing an informed account of how the phenomena implicates and/or extends our understanding of practice and theory. This should not be a research proposal, but a complete

research paper with literature review, research questions, methods, findings, implications, etc. Please use APA style.

Practicum Assignments (25% of course grade).

Practicum assignments are based upon theoretical debates in the reading as well as participation and research at your research site, and are specifically designed to serve as practical building blocks toward your final paper (the goal being that you will have a conference-quality paper by the end of the semester). Details of each assignment appear below and further details/requirements may be given in class. Practicums will be evaluated, in part, based on their informed reflection upon and incorporation of concepts from course readings. Please type these assignments and be prepared to share your ideas from these assignments with the class.

1. **Proposed Site & Phenomenon of Study** In 2-3 pages, discuss the site (or potential sites) you want to study throughout the semester. How are your chosen site of study and your research/scholarly interests complementary? Discuss your plan of having access to this site by week four.
2. **Human Subjects Paperwork** Become familiar with UM's human subjects requirements, complete the required training (if you have not already done so for another course) and turn in the application forms provided in class.
3. **Practice Case Study** You are to produce a "mini" case study of no more than 10 double spaced pages in which you engage in both qualitative description and qualitative abstraction by doing the following:
 - a. describe the location and setting of your observation;
 - b. report your methods for gathering data;
 - c. identify the descriptive framework (DFW) you choose to "test;"
 - d. provide a rationale for the use of your DFW;
 - e. report your findings;
 - f. interpret your findings in light of your DFW;
 - g. provide an addendum in which you explain your feelings about your "practice" observation, and describe any biases you had;
 - h. include in the addendum a discussion of what went well and what you'll do differently in your "real" case study.
4. **Preliminary Conceptualization** Using Lindlof and Taylor's description (pp. 85-90), prepare a 7-8 page research proposal addressing the following issues: 1) rationale and significance of your study; 2) conceptual areas of inquiry and literature review (point to current discussions, controversies, gaps and unanswered questions in lit and how your study might address these issues); 3) research questions; 4) proposed methodology, protocol and logistics. You can also hypothesize as to your findings if you would like (not required). This preliminary conceptualization will serve as the opening for your final case study and will guide you as you collect your data.
5. **Interview Guide** Prepare an interview guide for use at your site. Identify the type (or types) of interviews you are likely to engage in and explain why these types are most appropriate for your research. For the questions you propose, identify the types of questions and their purpose. Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.
6. **Article Summary/Discussion Questions** Periodically, each of you will lead a discussion about an article from the course reading packet. You should prepare a 2-3 page article summary complete with discussion questions prior to class.

7. **Paper Presentation** During one of the final class periods, you'll be asked to give a 12-minute oral presentation of your final paper. Use this as an opportunity to practice a conference-quality presentation, complete with visual aids if appropriate.

The Fine Print

Make-ups: Make-ups for exams will be arranged for University Excused Absences only. Naturally, the format of the assignment or exam may differ from the original to preserve academic integrity.

Work Submitted: All work submitted for a grade must be typed and in final draft form. Work is always due at the beginning of class. **Assignments become late when they are turned in after the class period of their due date. A late assignment grade will drop by one full letter grade for each weekday that it is late.** Please do not slip assignments under my office door or leave them in an envelope attached to my door without asking me first. If you are absent when an assignment is due and want to turn it in late, you must provide a legitimate (see above) note that indicates the days that you were unable to attend class. The note must be turned in with your completed assignment. Spelling, grammar, and editing errors will negatively affect your grade.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services for Students, in Emma B. Lommasson Center 154. The phone number is 243-2243.


A Word to the Wise: There will be no cheating or plagiarizing in any form in this class. Please familiarize yourself with the University's definition of these terms and the University's penalty for these offenses. The Student Conduct Code is available for review at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>

If you have any questions about these rules, course assignments, or course readings, please ask! I am happy to talk with you about any difficulties you may be having in the course, but I can't be of assistance unless you ask.

Course Calendar and Readings

| Date | Topic & Readings | Assignment Due |
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| Jan 27 | <p>Orientation and Course Overview Definitions and Introduction to Qualitative Research Bird by bird excerpt Taylor, B. C., & Trujillo, N. (2004). Qualitative Research Methods. In F. M. Jablin & L. Putnam (Eds). <i>The New Handbook of Organizational Communication</i> (pp. 161-194). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.(Read 161-168 & 181-186 carefully, skim the rest)</p> <p>Application: Talk about research and stuff</p> | |
| Feb 3 | <p>Philosophical Assumptions and Metaphors of Qualitative Inquiry</p> <p>Lindlof and Taylor, Chapters 1 and 2 Taylor & Trujillo Reading Kvale Reading Janesick Reading</p> <p>Applications: Kitchens – G.A. Fine</p> | |
| Feb 17** or other date since I will be as WSCA | <p>The Qualitative Case Study: An Overview & Some Classics Institutional Review Board Procedures</p> <p>Lindlof & Taylor, Chapters 3 & 4 Other readings TBA</p> <p>Application:</p> | <p>Review the IRB guidelines and complete the human subjects protection course of your choice.</p> <p>http://www.umt.edu/research/irb/irboverview.htm</p> <p>Submit proposed site and phenomenon of study.</p> |
| Feb 24 | <p>Entry, Ethics, and Roles</p> <p>Christians, C. G. (2000). Ethics and politics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), <i>Handbook of Qualitative Research</i> (pp. 133-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten lies of ethnography. <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i>, 22, 267-294.</p> <p>Read American Anthropological Association Principles of Professional</p> | <p>Submit IRB Application and Site Consent Form</p> |

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| | Responsibility. Available: http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm | |
| | Applications: | |
| Mar 3 | Interviewing L&T Chapter 6 Trethewey Brown & Iverson | |

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| March 10 | <p>Observation</p> <p>Lindlof & Taylor, Chapter 5</p> | |
| March 17 | <p>Mid-term Exam and Fieldwork Questions WE MAY SWITCH THIS WITH 24th!</p> | |
| March 24 | <p>Writing Up Fieldnotes Coding Your Data</p> <p>Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, Chapters 1-3.</p> <p>L& T Chapter 5</p> <p>Applications: An example to be on the way</p> | |
| March 31 | <p style="text-align: center;">SPRING BREAK</p>  | HAVE FUN!!! |
| April 7 | <p>Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw Chapters 4-6</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed red;"/> <p>Parker, A., & Tritter, J. (2006). Focus group method and methodology: Current practice and recent debate. <i>International Journal of Research & Methods in Education</i>, 29, 23-37.</p> <p>Ellis, C. (1999). Heartful autoethnography. <i>Qualitative Health Research</i>, 9, 669-693.</p> <p>Applications:</p> <p>Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Alberts, J. (2006). Nightmares, demons, and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. <i>Management Communication Quarterly</i>, 20, 148-185.</p> <p>Schrodt, P., Baxter, L. A., McBride, M. C., Braithwaite, D. O., & Fine, M. A. (2006). The divorce decree, communication, and the structuration of coparenting relationships in stepfamilies. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>, 23, 741-759.</p> <p>Brummans, B. H. J. M. (2003). Reconstructing Opa: Last meditations of a meteorologist. <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i>, 9, 828-842.</p> <p>Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (1992). Telling and performing personal stories: The constraints of choice in abortion. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), <i>Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience</i> (pp. 79-101). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.</p> | <p>Article Summary Due</p> |

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| | <p>Cherry, K. (1996). Ain't no grave deep enough. <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i>, 25, 22-57.</p> <p>Clark, C. (2001). Incarcerated women and the construction of self. In R. M. Cervero, B. C. Courtenay, & C. H. Monaghan (Eds), <i>Cyril O. Houle scholars in adult and continuing education program: Global research perspectives</i>. Athens, GE: University of Georgia.</p> <p>Siegel, T., & Conquergood, D. (1990). <i>Heart broken in half: Chicago's Street Gang</i>.</p> | |
| April 14 | <p>Coding and Analyzing Your Data</p> <p>Lindlof & Taylor, Chapter 7</p> <p>Charmaz, K. (2006). <i>Constructing Grounded Theory</i>. (pp. 42-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Applications:</p> <p>Harry, B., Sturges, K. M., & Klinger, J. K. (2005). Mapping the process: An exemplar of process and challenge in grounded theory analysis. <i>Educational Researcher</i>, 34, 3-13.</p> <p>Iverson & Brown as well as other examples</p> | |
| April 21 | <p>Validity and Reliability Analyzing and Interpreting Your Results</p> <p>Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). <i>Naturalistic Inquiry</i>. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (pp. 289-331).</p> <p>Denzin, N. (2000). The practice and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), <i>Handbook of qualitative research</i> (pp. 897-922). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Applications:</p> <p>Some examples of methods sections...TBA</p> | Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings |
| April 28 | <p>Writing Your Case: Writing Workshop</p> <p>Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 9</p> <p>Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, Chapter 7</p> | Bring in a problematic section of your paper for review and discussion by the class. |
| May 5 | What Paradigmatic Controversies? Does Research Matter? | Bring a completed draft of your paper |

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| | <p>Schwartz, H. S. (1993). Deconstructing my car at the Detroit airport. <i>Organization Studies, 14</i>, 279-281.</p> <p>Calas, M. (1993). Desperately seeking? Or Who/what is Howard's car? <i>Organization Studies, 14</i>, 282</p> <p>MCQ Forum on focusing on problems in the field: <i>Management Communication Quarterly, 16</i>, 81-117.</p> | for peer review |
| May 12 | Research Presentations and Course Wrap Up | Final Case Due |