

Public Policy 633 Syllabus

Qualitative Research Methods Thursdays, 2:30-5:30pm Winter 2015

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Qualitative research is enormously important for public policy. Developing a rich and detailed understanding of how the world works—in its infuriating complexity—is pivotal for understanding policy implications, understanding the benefits and drawbacks of different policymaking options, and for navigating the realities of the policy process itself. But qualitative research, which includes interviews, ethnography, comparative and historical analysis, focus groups, and community-based participatory research, is not simply just “stories” or “anecdotes”. This course will help students conduct and evaluate qualitative research, focusing on the following skills:

- Understanding and evaluating different types of qualitative research
- Conducting multiple types of qualitative research
- Conducting a literature review
- Designing and developing a qualitative research project
- Presenting qualitative research findings (both orally and in written form)
- Writing a grant proposal
- Understanding the ethical challenges of conducting qualitative research

Course Requirements

<i>Class participation</i>	10%
<i>Reading Responses</i>	15%
<i>In-class brainstorming/exercises</i>	5%
<i>Lit Review & Tentative Research Plan</i>	10%
<i>Interview Guide</i>	5%
<i>Prelim Analysis/Lit Review</i>	15%
<i>Ideas for Broader Research Plan</i>	10%
<i>Presentation</i>	5%
<i>Project Summary</i>	10%
<i>Grant Proposal</i>	15%
<u><i>Research Proposal TOTAL:</i></u>	75%

- A. ***Class participation.*** This is a discussion-intensive course. Preparation, attendance, and active participation are mandatory and will be important parts of your final grade. Each class session will include discussions and other activities for which participation requires that you have read and digested the week's assignment.

Your participation grade will be based on a number of factors, including: evidence of preparation for and intellectual engagement in class discussions and activities, quality and regularity of contributions to class discussion, contribution to small group discussions, and evidence of attentive listening to peers. You are also expected to come to class on time; coming late is disrespectful to me and to your peers.

- B. ***Reading Responses.*** For those class days marked with an asterisk (**), you should submit a reading response of 250-350 words. The response should assess the empirical readings of the day (marked with a +) according to the day's theme (and also using the tips and analytic guidelines from the other, more methodologically-focused readings). It should address the following questions: What kinds of empirical evidence did the piece use? How did the author(s) use qualitative evidence to make his or her argument? To what extent was the qualitative evidence itself, and the way it used, particularly compelling? In what ways was it not so compelling? These reading responses are designed to help you identify and evaluate qualitative research, and to understand how qualitative evidence is used to make and develop an argument.
- C. ***Grant Proposal.*** The major project in the course is the development of a grant proposal, which will require you to develop a research question, conduct literature reviews, and gather preliminary qualitative data. To help you with this process, you should have a field notebook, in which you keep your class notes and required assignments as well as your field notes as you develop your project. We will discuss this more on the first day of class. I've broken down the grant proposal assignment into the following assignments to make it doable, but I will discuss them in much more detail as the class progresses:

1. ***In-class exercises:*** As appropriate, we will do in-class brainstorming exercises to help you think through the opportunities and challenges of qualitative research, with specific attention to your interests and ongoing research. Subjects will vary, but the object is to help you develop your research project through notes and brainstorming (and often explicit connection to course readings and discussion).
2. ***Literature Review and Tentative Research Plan:*** Once you have developed a tentative research question, you will write a literature review of 500-750 words that analyzes the relevant research in your area of interest. The review should cover a *minimum* of 3 books or 10 articles (or a mixture of the two), and should explain what we know about your research question and what remains to be investigated (focus on what can be investigated using qualitative research techniques).

With the literature review, you will also submit a tentative research plan (200-300 words) that identifies a refined research question (informed by your literature review) and a brief description of the qualitative research you plan to conduct to answer this question (you will likely use a combination of methods, including both document analysis and interviews and perhaps also ethnography, focus groups, or community-

based participatory research). Your plan should justify why your chosen method is the best way to answer your research question. Remember that this is just for conducting preliminary research, so you should choose wisely (as this preliminary research will help you determine the appropriate direction for future research). The plan should also be detailed. Who, exactly, are you going to interview? What are you going to read and analyze? What are you going to observe? Do you foresee problems with access? If so, how will you address them?

3. Interview Guide: The interview guide will provide you with a template for conducting semi-structured interviews. It should include the following: 1) an “objective” (what do you want to learn from the interview?); 2) an interview plan, including a sense of how long you think the interview will last (usually, they last from 30 minutes to an hour) and where you will meet; 3) a consent form; and 4) a list of interview themes or questions.

****If your interview subject declines to be interviewed, you will have to take copious notes. We’ll discuss this in class.**

4. Prelim Analysis/Further Lit Review: For this assignment, report on what you have learned through your empirical research. Reflect on it. What does it mean in the context of the literature you have read? What additional questions does it raise? Does it change (or refine) your overarching research question? Based on the findings from this research and analysis, do additional literature review. This should include at least 2 books or 6 articles, or some mixture of the two. The preliminary analysis should be 400-500 words, while the literature review should be 200-300 words.
5. Ideas for Broader Research Plan: Given what you have learned through your own research and analysis and literature review, sketch a more comprehensive qualitative research study to address your question. What is the best way to answer it (be ambitious!) using qualitative research techniques? What might you gain if you looked at multiple sites, or did a comparative analysis, for example?
6. Project Summary: Write a summary of your analysis to date, but frame it for a broad audience of your peers. What makes this area of research important for public policy or society? How did you go about answering it (and why)? What did you find? And what questions remain? Are there any ongoing challenges you face in terms of research or analysis? And finally, what are your plans for further research? This summary should be no more than 500 words.
7. Presentation: You will give a presentation to your peers of no more than 7 minutes (each student will also have 5 minutes for questions from the audience). The presentation should cover the same terrain as the project summary, but in a more detailed way. It should also include a presentation of the data you generated through your research.
8. Grant Proposal: The final grant proposal will build on all of the assignments, and will essentially be a more polished and thoughtful version of everything you have already submitted. It will also be one cohesive document, not to exceed 15 pages (it can be

single or double-spaced, but should be no smaller than 12-point font and the margins can be no smaller than 1-inch on all sides). It should include: 1) Project Summary; 2) Project Introduction; 3) Literature Review and Research Question; 4) Results of Preliminary Research; 5) Proposed Research Methodology; 6) Conclusion, which will include a discussion about how the research will help address an ongoing social or policy problem (or debate).

Course policies:

Late Papers: Don't do it. You lose one full grade if it's not in the appropriate CTools Assignments folder when the paper is due. You lose another grade every 24 hours afterwards. CTools tells me exactly when a paper has been turned in. My advice is to give yourself a bit of wiggle-room in terms of turning it in, to make sure that the timestamp in CTools does not show that your paper is late. **Remember to submit the paper double-spaced, in PDF form, in the Assignments folder (under the specific Assignment), and to click the SUBMIT or POST button when you turn the paper in.**

Having said that, if some major disaster occurs in your life that could affect your ability to do the coursework, call or email me ASAP. Also, please come and talk to me early in the term if you have special needs that could affect your written work.

Citing Sources: For *all* written work, I expect proper sourcing and citation. To maintain consistency, you should all use the style used by the US Government. The government's Style Guide is available online here:
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008/pdf/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008.pdf>

Also, when citing a source over the course of multiple sentences, cite after the first sentence. In addition, *do not use Wikipedia as a direct source*. It is anonymously produced, with un-vetted contributors from all over the world, so the information you find there should *never* be automatically trusted as legitimate. That said, I understand that **Wikipedia** can be extremely useful to introduce you to a particular topic. My suggestion is that you use it to learn the basics about a particular subject, and then follow the links provided there (or the insights you gain) to find a more credible source.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will be harshly penalized. For more information on what constitutes sourcing, see UM's plagiarism handout:
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/handouts/plagiar.pdf>.

Laptops: I will permit the use of laptops (and other electronic devices) in the classroom, on an honor system. Electronic devices can be helpful for easy access to the readings and note-taking, but they should be used only for PubPol 633-related

activities. It is rude, to both the instructor and your classmates, to surf the web or use your laptop to otherwise distract you during classtime, and I will trust you not to do it. However, if I discover *anyone* doing non-633-related activities on the laptop during classtime, it will impact your participation grade. I reserve the right to ban laptops in the classroom, but I hope I won't have to!

Syllabus: While the syllabus is fairly stable (especially for the first few weeks), I reserve the right to make slight changes to it. I do not expect, however, the themes, assignments, or even the readings to change significantly. If I do make even a slight alteration, I will tell you at least a week in advance.

Course Readings:

Texts available for purchase and on reserve in Weill Hall's library:

Alice Goffman (2014). *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kristin Luker (2008). *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Shobita Parthasarathy (2007). *Building Genetic Medicine: Breast Cancer, Technology, and the Comparative Politics of Health Care*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Robert S. Weiss (1994). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

Other readings are available on CTools.

Course Schedule:

January 8: Introduction to Qualitative Research

Roger Jones (1995). "Why Do Qualitative Research?" *British Medical Journal*. July 1. Vol. 311, p. 2.

Sharan B. Merriam (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass. pp. 2-37.

Laura Tach, Kathryn Edin, Hope Harvey, and Brielle Bryan (2014). "The Family-Go-Round: Family Complexity and Father Involvement from a Father's Perspective." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 654: 169-184.

Stephani Mencimer (2014). "What If Everything You Knew About Poverty Was Wrong?" *Mother Jones*. March 25.

Clifford Geertz (1977). "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

****January 15: How Is Qualitative Research Useful for Policy?**

+Diane Vaughan (1990). "Autonomy, Interdependence, and Social Control: NASA and the Space Shuttle Challenger." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Vol. 35, No. 2. pp. 225-257.

Diane Vaughan (2005). "On the relevance of ethnography for the production of public sociology and policy." *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 56, Issue 3. pp. 411-416.

- Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer (2002). "Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research." In *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Edited by A. Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles. pp. 305-330.
- Janet Ward Schofield (2002). "Increasing the Generalizability of Qualitative Research." In *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Edited by A. Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles. pp. 171-204.
- Bruce Jennings (1983). "Interpretive Social Science and Policy Analysis." In *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis*. Edited by Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings. New York: Plenum Press.

****January 22: Designing a Qualitative Research Study**

- Kristin Luker (2008). *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7.
- Miscellaneous Grant Proposals
Case Selection Exercise In-Class

****January 29: Ethnography**

- Kristin Luker (2008). *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 8.
- +Alice Goffman (2014). *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and Chapters 1-5.
- Example Consent Form

February 2nd, 10am: Literature Review and Tentative Research Plan due

****February 5: Interviewing**

- Robert S. Weiss (1994). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. Chapters 2-5.

****February 12: Considering Ethics and Vulnerable Populations**

- +Alice Goffman (2014). *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 6-7, Conclusion, and Methodological Appendix. (Epilogue recommended)
- Wacquant, Loïc (2002). "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology*. 107.6: 1468-1532.
- Sharpe, Christina "Black Life, Annotated."

February 16th, 10am: Interview Guide due

****February 19: Narrative/Historical Analysis**

- Glenn A. Bowen (2009). "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method." *Qualitative Research Journal*. 9.2: 27-40.
- +Joy Rohde (2013). *Armed with Expertise: The Militarization of American Social Research during the Cold War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Selected Chapters.

February 26: Case Study Analysis

- Kristin Luker (2008). *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 9.
- +Shobita Parthasarathy (2007). *Building Genetic Medicine: Breast Cancer, Technology, and the Comparative Politics of Health Care*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. Selected chapters.

March 5: No class, Winter Recess

****March 12: Community-Based Participatory Research**

Guest Lecture: Roopali Phadke

- +Roopali Phadke (2014). "Green Energy, Public Engagement, and the Politics of Scale." In Daniel Lee Kleinman and Kelly Moore, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Science, Technology, and Society*. New York.
- +Phil Brown (2007). *Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press. Preface and Chapter 1.

****March 19: Interview and Document Analysis Workshop (Transcription and Coding)**

- Robert S. Weiss (1994). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. Chapter 6.
- +Rene Almeling (2007). "Selling Genes, Selling Gender: Egg Agencies, Sperm Banks, and the Medical Market in Genetic Material." *American Sociological Review* 72: 319-340.

****March 26: Representing Qualitative Research Findings**

- Robert S. Weiss (1994). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. Chapter 7.
- Karen Golden-Biddle and Karen Locke (1993). "Appealing Work: An Investigation of How Ethnographic Texts Convince." *Organization Science*. 4.4: 595-616.
- +Stacy Torres (forthcoming). "Where Everybody May Not Know Your Name: The Importance of Elastic Ties."
- Kristin Luker (2008). *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 10.
- Janice M. Morse (2003). "A Review Committee's Guide for Evaluating Qualitative Proposals." *Qualitative Health Research*. 13.6: 833-851.

March 30th, 10am: Preliminary Analysis and Additional Literature Review due

April 2: One-on-one meetings! (No class!)

April 8th, noon (note change in usual time): Project Summaries due

April 9th (2:30-5:30pm and 10th (11am-1pm): Student Presentations

April 15th, 5pmm: Ideas for Broader Research Plan due

April 16th: No Class!

April 27, 10am: Grant Proposal Due!