

Social Research Method (2)

Semester 2, 2023/24

Lecture Time: Wednesday Period 2-4 (09:10 AM – 12:10 AM)

Tutorial Session: Friday Period 8-9 (15:30 PM – 17:20 PM)

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Course Description

This course introduces both the theories and the hands-on approach to qualitative research in sociology. We will examine the epistemology of qualitative methods, the debates of this approach, and some criteria of assessing quality. In light of both recent and “classics” qualitative studies, we highlight how qualitative studies seek to accomplish objectives like rendering the invisible visible, developing concepts and typologies, understanding meanings and change, augmenting quantitative work, and advancing social theories. As for the methods of data collection, we focus predominantly on ethnographic and interview research, and briefly touches upon content analysis and discourse analysis.

Our goal is to develop the skills to design a qualitative research project, gather qualitative data, and begin to analyze data. The course is in the form of lectures, field trips, and tutorial sessions. Students will also do a group project guided by the teaching assistants.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain the underlying assumptions of qualitative research methods;
- 2) Identify research questions and the appropriate method(s) to answer them;
- 3) Evaluate the quality of study design in qualitative studies you read;
- 4) Develop the skills to conduct and begin to analyze field research

Reading material and assignments

We will use some chapters in Neuman's book on qualitative research. In addition, we also draw on different texts, including *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Methods of Qualitative Interview Studies*, and *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*.

Assessment

We have two major components in the assessment, but actually you see them as one big research project because Part A is the research work that leads to the write-up in Part B. Part A is for data collection and analysis as a team; Part B is an individual write-up.

A. Group Assignments and Presentation (70%)

In groups of 3-4, come up with a research question that can be studied by qualitative methods: 1) ethnography and 2) in-depth interviews. Then, present the project in Week 16.

1) Team Ethnography (25%)

Each member goes to the field to jot notes. The members can strategize: whether you want to interact with anyone or not, go at the same time or not, go in groups or in pairs or individually, etc. Compare notes with your friends.

For each group, submit:

- a) 2-3-page summary of the answer to your research question (Try to discuss whether your observation inform you about any sociological concepts/theories).
- b) Field notes

2) In-depth interviews (25%)

Each group member has to interview at least 1 person. Remember to contextualize your answer to the research questions.

Each group has to submit:

- a) 2-page summary of the answer to your research question (Try to discuss whether your observation inform you about any sociological concepts/theories).
- b) interview recordings
- c) transcripts

The tutorials are designed to guide students with their group project.

Presentation (20%)

Present your work in Week 16. The presentation is formal, meaning that it should start with an introduction, then theories that drive your study, methodology,

results/findings, conclusions. The presentation is around 15-20 mins (depends on the number of groups).

Not required:

Bonus points (+5 points): The group can do some content analysis (e.g., analysing media content, government documents, online platforms) to augment to analytical power of your study.

B. Group write-up or Individual write-up (30%)

Write up a research paper based on the data collection you and your group has collected. If you want to write an individual paper, you can still use the group data (i.e., the quotations, the archival materials, fieldnotes, etc.) However, the theoretical angle and the arguments should be different.

Lecture Plan

Week 1 (2/21): Epistemology of Qualitative Research

Readings

Annette Lareau and Aliya Hamid Rao. 2016. "It's about the Depth of Your Data," *Contexts*. <https://contexts.org/blog/its-about-the-depth-of-your-data/>

Further readings

Mario Luis Small. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-based Research," *Ethnography* 10(1):5-38.

Tutorial (2/23): Ice-breaking & sharing of the best qualitative work students like

Week 2 (2/28) Peace Memorial Day

No tutorial

Week 3 (3/6): Developing Research Questions

Readings

Kristin G. Esterberg. 2006. "Deciding What to Research" (pp. 28-33). Chapter 2 in *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Murray Davis, "That's Interesting!" *Philosophy of Social Science*, v1 1971

Further readings

Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 4. (pp. 51-98)

Tutorial (3/8): Brain-storm topics, form groups, formulate preliminary research questions

Week 4 (3/13): Revisit Measurement, Sampling, Ethics, Positionality of Qualitative Research

Readings

Lawrence Neuman Ch. 7-8 (only parts about qualitative research methods)

Further readings

Luker, Chapters 6-7.

Holmes, Andrew Gary Darwin. "Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide." *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (2020): 1-10.

Tutorial (3/15): Present to the peers about the preliminary research questions, the literature that gives rise to these research questions, what motivate them, etc.

Week 5 (3/20): Grounded Theory

Half of the class time will be spent on doing observation at NTU with an open mind. Come back to the class and discuss about what surprises you.

Reading

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. sage, 2006. P. 1-24.

Sinikka Elliott, Joslyn Brenton, and Rachel Powell. 2018. "Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers." *Social Problems* 65(4): 442-444 (method section only).

Tutorial (3/22): Brainstorm and discuss how the groups' research question can utilize grounded theory approach.

Week 6 (3/27): Extended case method

Reading

Burawoy, Michael. 1991. "Extended Case Method." Pp. 271-290 in Michael Burawoy ed., *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press.

Further reading

Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. "Two cases of ethnography: Grounded theory and the extended case method." *Ethnography* 10, no. 3 (2009): 243-263.

Tutorial (3/29): Brainstorm and discuss how the groups' research question can utilize grounded theory approach.

Week 7 (4/3): Participant Observation (Lecture)

Lareau, Annette, and Aliya Hamid Rao. "Intensive family observations: A methodological guide." *Sociological Methods & Research* 51, no. 4 (2022): 1969-2022.

Small, Mario Luis. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. Pp. 37-46, 69-79, 91-98, 135-144

No Tutorial this week due to Ching Ming National Holiday(清明連假).

Make an appointment with your TA and discuss how to apply participant observation in the group project. Think about the strategy to approach the field on Week 8. Coordinate with your team mates about how to conduct that.

Week 8: (4/10) Participant Observation (Field Trip)

Field trip (guided and accompanied by TAs/ Instructor)

Tutorial (4/12): Show the TAs the fieldnotes. And TAs should guide students to do Group Assignment 1.

Week 9 (4/17): How to evaluate qualitative research?

Small, Mario Luis. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. Pp. 23-36, 46-69, 80-91, 99-118, 111-134

No tutorial. Submit Group Assignment 1.

Week 10 (4/24): In-depth interview (Lecture)

Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Methods of Qualitative Interview Studies* (Selected chapters).

Tutorial (4/26): Draft an interview guide.

Week 11 (5/1): In-depth interview (Do interview this week)

NO LECTURE

Tutorial (5/3): Share with your TA about the experience of interview. The TAs should guide students to do Group Assignment 2.

Week 12 (5/8): Coding, Memoing, Theoretical Sampling, Saturation, and Theory construction

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. sage. P. 42-95.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. sage, p. 96-150

Tutorial (5/10): Practice coding using your interview transcript

Week 13 (5/15): Qualitative Paper Writing

Weaver-Hightower, Marcus B. 2018. *How to write qualitative research*. Routledge.

Tutorial (5/17): Submit Group Assignment 2. Discuss how to write the final paper.

Week 14 (5/22): Other methods/ new methods in qualitative sociology

Suggested Readings (not required)

Mahoney, J. (2004). Comparative-historical methodology. *Annual Sociological Review* 30, 81-101.

Stephen Kemmis, Mervyn Wilkinson. 1998. Participatory Action Research and the Study of Practice. In *Action Research in Practice*. Routledge

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Dempsey, Nicholas P. "Stimulated recall interviews in ethnography." *Qualitative sociology* 33 (2010): 349-367.

Harper, Douglas. "Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation." *Visual studies* 17, no. 1 (2002): 13-26.

Markham, Annette N. "Ethnography in the digital internet era." *Denzin NK & Lincoln YS, Sage handbook of qualitative research, Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications* (2016): 650-668.

Tutorial (5/24): Discuss how the groups should present their results. What should be there, etc.?

Week 15 (5/29): Preparation for presentation

No lecture, no tutorial. Instructors' Office hours

Week 16 (6/5): Presentation Week