

INTD 2252F

INTRODUCTION TO INTERDISCIPLINARY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Fall 2001

Course Outline

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Class Times: Wednesday 1:30 – 4:30 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory lecture course in Qualitative Research Methods that draws mainly from the Social Sciences, but also from the Humanities. We will explore the potential usefulness of three main information gathering strategies - Fieldwork (including Participant Observation), In-Depth Interviewing, and Unobtrusive Research – and will see how these methodological approaches are tied to research questions and goals, project design, information analysis, and research writing. We will also consider ethical and power issues related to qualitative research, and will look at recent qualitative research trends. A number of research examples (including work done by the course instructor) will be presented. Students will have a chance to explore their own research interests and carry out small research assignments.

Prerequisite: Interdisciplinary Studies 3310F/G

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours, 0.5 credit course

REQUIRED READINGS:

Van Den Hoonaard, Deborah K 2000 Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Custom Course Book - available at the bookstore

A few (no more than 3) additional required readings will be made available on course website

COURSE EVALUATION: (see Evaluation Details on page 3)

Assignments (10% x 3) 30%

In-class tests (15% x 3) 45%

Final exam 25%

Total 100%

CLASS SCHEDULE:

DK = Deborah K Van Den Hoonard 2012

CCB = Custom Course Book – IS 2252F (2013)

Sept. 11 – Main Concepts no readings assigned

18 – Research Questions and Goals DK: 1-32

25 - Research Approaches CCB: Neuman (79-109)

- Research Design DK: 34-51

Oct. 02 - In-class Test #1

- Reflexivity in Research CCB: Davis et al. (201-224)

- Fieldwork and Participant Observation DK: 52-74

09 - Assignment #1 Due

- Interviewing DK: 75-94

CCB: Koenig (1999- excerpts)

16 - Unobtrusive Research DK: 95-112

CCB: Babbie and Ben. (2000:276-303)

23 - In-class Test #2

- Analyzing Findings DK: 114-130

CCB: Ryan (1990:208-214)

30 - Assignment #2 Due

- Writing as Knowledge Production DK: 131-149

Nov. 06 - New Directions DK:150-164

- Virtual Ethnography CCB: Bird and Barber (2000:139-148)

13 - In-class Test #3

- New Directions (Continued) CCB: Coffey (1999:17-37)

- Ethnography and the Self Berger and Ellis (1998:161-176)

20 - Assignment #3 Due

- New Directions (Continued) CCB: O'Reilly (1996:157-174)

-Visual Methods and Sound

27 - Assignment #4 Due

- Ethics DK:165-182

Dec. 04 - Ethics (Continued) CCB: Madison (2000:79-97)

- Course Review and Wrap-up

Final Exam date will be announced via the University Exam Schedule.

EVALUATION DETAILS:

Note: Late assignments will be penalized five marks out of one hundred for every day past the deadline. See below regarding medical reasons for missed tests or assignment submissions.

Assignments – Do any 3 of the 4 Assignments (3 x 10% = 30%)

Assignments should be double-spaced and easily readable. Include a title page or heading that identifies the assignment (include course number), who is submitting it, the submission date, and to whom it is submitted (the instructor). Number your pages so the person marking it can refer to them in comments if necessary. Assignments should be submitted in class on or before the due date (at the start of class), or left in the appropriate drop off location (see drop off details below). Hard (printed) copies are required for marking. Your assignment marks will be based half on formal features (e.g. clarity, conciseness, organization) and half on content features (e.g. fitting guidelines, insightfulness, originality). If you'd like to collaborate with one or two other students on an assignment please bring a written proposal for doing so to me for discussion. You'll need my approval to do an assignment collaboratively.

Assignment #1 – Participant Observation (10%)

Attend and participate in a group event or activity. This could be something you already have on your schedule, such as a wedding, a music concert, or a work shift; or it could be something not yet scheduled. Do not ask people research-related questions: just participate in the event, observe things, and record the information you gather. If you make field notes during the event, elaborate on them as soon after it ends as possible. If you don't make notes during the event, make notes as soon as possible afterward. Additional information about how to do this project appropriately (e.g. ethically) and effectively will be provided in class.

Write a report (about 3 pages). The main purpose of the report is to demonstrate what you learned about the Participant Observation method through this exercise. First provide a concise description of the event and your involvement – what the reader needs to know to assess your report (a half page). Using brief but clear examples from the information you gathered, answer the following questions. What sorts of things were you able to gather good information about through participant observation - you might also speculate here on what the method is not particularly useful for (a page). Also discuss what insights you likely would have missed if you had just observed from a distance, and not participated; and conversely, what kinds of things you might have missed had you just participated without making a special effort to observe (a half page). Was there one particularly interesting insight into the event that you felt you gained (a half page)? What is the main thing that you learned about Participant Observation by doing this exercise (a half page).

Assignment #2 – Interviewing (10%)

Interview a friend or family member about the history of a particular group that they (or both of you) belong to. Plan for about a 30 minute interview. Prepare and use a consent form and record how consent was obtained (e.g. in writing, verbally). Prepare a series of interview questions that will help you explore your topic – a few identification questions and 4 or 5 content questions. Record the interview either using written notes (or word processing), or sound recording equipment. In either case you need to end up with a written document/transcription that you can use as your information source. Submit the consent form, interview guide (questions), and interview transcription along with a 3 page report.

In the report, describe your interview assignment/project – who, where, when, why, how, etc (about a half page). Using brief but clear examples from your interview, explain what kinds of information were easily gathered with the interview method: you might also speculate on what kinds of information might not be easily gathered using this method (a half page). How does interviewing compare with participant observation in this regards (a half page)? Speculate on how your relationship with your interviewee might have had an impact on the information you gathered (a half page). Was there one particularly interesting insight into the research topic

that you gained (a half page)? What is the main insight into the Interviewing method that you gained by doing this exercise (a half page)?

Assignment #3 – Virtual Ethnography (10%)

The purpose of this assignment is to learn experientially about the potential of using the internet as a source of social research information. It is also meant to increase your familiarity with the concept of “ethnography”.

Ethnographies have typically been produced with reference to real-world communities or groups of people. Countless groups (and individuals representing groups) are constructing virtual (internet) sites where group members can communicate or interact, and where information is made available. Social researchers have begun applying methods and approaches associated with more typical ethnographic work to these new research sites.

Explore some of these many virtual “communities”. Select one and examine it in detail. Using brief but clear examples from the information you have gathered, write a 3 page report that assesses the usefulness of ethnographic approaches for understanding the social significance of virtual sites. What kinds of information are easy to access, and what kinds are difficult? You may mention a particular interesting insight into the group that you gained, but remember that for this assignment our focus is not so much on the group itself (fascinating though it may be) but on the method you are using to try to understand and explain the group.

Assignment #4 – Research Using Visual and Sound Objects (10%) Do Option A or B

A) Visual Methods – Use a visual object (e.g. photo, art piece, building, landscape) as part of an information gathering and analyzing exercise. You might for example use a photo as the basis of interview questions (photo elicitation), or you could do a content analysis of a poster. Write a 3 page report. First describe your exercise. Using examples from the information you gathered assess the usefulness of using visual objects or tools for understanding and explaining social worlds – what are the strengths and weaknesses of the visually based method that you used?

B) Audio Methods – Attend a musical/sound performance/event (live or virtually). Gather information that may allow insights into the social significance of the event. Write a 3 page report. Describe your event and the information you gathered. Using examples assess the usefulness of using sound as an object or tool for understanding and explaining social worlds. What are the strengths and weaknesses of audio source methods?

In-Class Tests (15% x 3 = 45%)

In-class Tests will be written at the beginning of class on the dates noted on our course schedule. You will have 45 minutes to write them. We will continue regular class activities after

the tests are written. The tests will cover material from readings and lectures. They may include T or F, multiple-choice, matching questions, and definitions, as well as brief written answers.

OTHER NOTES:

Although you get to formally evaluate the class toward the end of the course, please feel free to discuss issues/suggestions with me at any time.