COURSE: U209 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS: OVERVIEW

LEVEL/UNITS: Graduate/4 51413
VENUE: 315 SE1
TIME: W 16:00-18:50
T.A.s: -

QUARTER: Fall 2005
PROFESSOR: Sanjoy Mazumdar
TEL: 824-5046/824-1906
ADDRESS: 435MPAA
OFFICE HOURS: M 14:30-15:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Introduction to, fundamentals and philosophical underpinnings of "qualitative" research and antipositivist inquiry. Formulation of research questions, selection of method, data collection techniques, and analysis. Overview of several methods from among Ethnography, Naturalistic Field Research, Case study, Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, Ethnoarchaeology, Critical approaches. (Catalog Description)

Curious about different methodologies for social research? This course will provide a quick 10-week overview of and introduction to the varieties and richness of "qualitative" research methods. We shall explore the philosophical underpinnings of social research, the formulation of research questions, selection of method, and of data collection techniques. We shall examine the nature and fundamentals of "qualitative" research and of non-positivist inquiry, as well as of distinctions from "quantitative" approaches. We describe how qualitative researchers do their research and why. We look into the strengths and weaknesses of, and special knowledge afforded by a number of qualitative methods, learn how to judge the quality of studies in each tradition so as to be able to make intelligent comments when reviewing studies from these approaches, and explore their applicability and utility in planning, policy studies, computer science, and management.

The methods we shall overview are: ethnographic studies (we shall spend more time on these), naturalistic field research, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical approaches, among others.

REQUIREMENTS:

An interest in and willingness to explore "qualitative" research and to write a proposal to carry out a small (10-week) qualitative ethnographic research project. For the assignments you may select meaningful projects that can lead to your Master's thesis, doctoral second year paper, or even dissertation. There are assignments and exams.

TEXTS:

Required Texts

RECOMMENDED

[209:05F209DES 26-Sep-03]
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WK</th>
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<th>SUBJECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>W28Sep05</td>
<td>Intro to 'Qualitative' Methods</td>
<td>Mazumdar 2003, Lincoln &amp; Guba 1991:7-12; ch.1; Flick 1998; Spradley 1985 et al.</td>
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<td>Intro to research subject, research question, framing Qualitative Research Questions</td>
<td>Lecture, Lincoln &amp; Guba 1991, Cresswell 1998.</td>
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**DESCRIPTIVE APPROACHES**

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**INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES**

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<td>09</td>
<td>W23Nov05</td>
<td>Ethnomethodology *</td>
<td>Zimmerman 1970; Burrell &amp; Morgan 1979:261-269; Schwartz &amp; Jacobs 1979:ch.8; Manning 1970</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Positional Approaches</td>
<td>Keller 1966; Abrams 1986; Burrell &amp; Morgan 1979:283-298; Cresswell 1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>W07Dec05</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>Eisenhardt 1980; Coser 1975</td>
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**EXAM**

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<td>Ethnographic Research Techniques</td>
<td>Spradley 1980:esp. 2, 3.4.5; Zeisel 1981; Spradley &amp; McCurdy 1972:ch.1,2,3,4.5; Kottack 1979:39-59; Emerson 1987; Gilson 1982; McCurdy &amp; Carlson 1984</td>
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<td>Case Study *</td>
<td>Lee 1989; Schwartz &amp; Jacobs 1979:ch.11; Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985:ch.13; Mazumdar &amp; Geis 2001; Cresswell 1998</td>
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Burrell & Morgan, Lincoln & Guba, Kuhn are for philosophical bases. Lincoln & Guba, Lofland & Lofland, Strauss & Corbin, Rubin & Rubin, are techniques for research. Rubin & Rubin, Krale, & McCracken provide techniques for interviewing. Strauss & Corbin is for deriving themes. Mazumdar Reader provides examples. Material with strike-out is extra readings for those interested. Schedule subject to change at professor's discretion. *

* = subject to revision or omission
# 05F U209 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS: OVERVIEW

## GRADING SYSTEM FOR COURSE

### GRADING SCALE:

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<td>Review of readings</td>
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<td>Selection of group/phenomenon</td>
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<td>Qualitative Research Questions</td>
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<td>Complete Proposal for &quot;Qualitative&quot; Research</td>
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## GRADING POLICIES:

Grading will be based on "absolute" standards, not on relative basis. Numerical scores will not be rounded off; for example, 79.85 is a B-.

Inc will not be given except in extraordinary cases, with timely information, and after an agreement is signed.

Tardiness will incur penalties.

The instructor of record reserves the right to change the assignments, due dates, grading distribution, or grading criteria.

Grade Challenges: Errors in computing or grading should be brought to the attention of the professor immediately. Challenges to grades require a one page written explanation of why the grade is being challenged and resubmission of the assignment.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY & RESPONSIBILITY:** Consult the Schedule of Classes and UCI General Catalog for guidelines. Manufacture, falsification, and embellishment of data are considered academically dishonest.

## ASSIGNMENTS: GENERAL GUIDELINES

General guidelines are provided below. Additional guidelines will be provided in class.

The assignments have been designed to assist you in doing a good qualitative final report/proposal, with the earlier assignments useful in the completion of later ones. So, it is important to do each assignment well. Other sensitizing assignments may be given in class.

The assignments require you to use concepts, knowledge, and techniques taught in class to apply to all assignments.

It is extremely important to get into the mind frame of "qualitative" research to start using the terminology, concepts, and approaches of this mode of research.

Presentation is very important. Try to be professional and creative in the way you present your assignments. Include a header similar to the one used here. For assignment 3 & 4 make sure to have cover sheet with relevant information such as: title, author, ID #, Year and quarter of study, submitted to (Name of professor). Design and compose text and images carefully. Legibility of information is crucial. Some points will be assigned for quality and creativity of presentation.
ASSIGNMENT # 1  Literature Familiarization

The objective of this assignment is for you to conduct archival/library research to familiarize yourself with the literature that has used empirical "qualitative" research. The field should be planning, a subfield, or closely related, or allied field. Examples of closely related fields are environmental design research, urban design, design, landscape design, interior design. Examples of allied fields are: sociology, anthropology, geography, archaeology, management, etc. For allied fields, find pieces related to the primary or related fields listed. Thus, a purely sociological piece dealing with marriage does not qualify, but a sociological piece dealing with relationships between spouses as it affects the layout of the building or an urban area will qualify.

Please find several citations/references to works that have used "qualitative" research, has discussed it as a method, or dealt with qualitative research as a primary matter. Critiques of "qualitative" research are also acceptable. The publication can be journals, book chapters or books. There is no limitation on the time period. You can go back in history as far as you would like, but I recommend starting with more recent years and working backward. If you were to circumscribe the time period as say 1940 to 2005, that would be acceptable. Select especially good pieces that excite you.

Provide a bibliographic list of all references you are able to find. The references should follow the style provided in class.

Read and annotate at least 5 of these pieces. The annotation should provide a summary of the piece (not a reprint of the abstract), relevant and important quotes, and how it is important for qualitative research.

ASSIGNMENT # 2  Review of readings

For this assignment you are required to carefully read a selected piece from the Reading List for the course, analyze it using concepts and ideas presented in class, and write a review. For this you are called on as an expert in "qualitative" research to use your knowledge to do this review.

Structure your review in the following way:

First provide a brief a précis of the piece. The précis should be in your own words, although you are welcome to provide quotes (with appropriate citation) from the original to have greater impact.

Next, discuss the genre of the piece, including what might be expected of a good piece in that genre. In the following section, utilizing readings you have done, and materials discussed in class, provide a review of the piece. Delve into details of what was done well and what problems there were with the piece.

In the next section, provide your considered, knowledgeable overall assessment of the piece. Your position or vantage point should be made clear. This will enable you to be creative while eliminating unconsidered opinions. Not expected are unsupported personal opinions.

The review should be no more than 2 double-spaced typed pages.

Grading criteria include importance of points raised, richness of the review, ability to show expertise and understanding of materials covered in class, strength of arguments.

ASSIGNMENT # 3a  Selection of Social Group / Research subject & setting

For the qualitative research project, you are expected to select an approved a social group/social phenomenon, and social setting. Additional information will be provided in class. Try to select a small social group or phenomenon and small social setting; try not to be too ambitious in these selections. It helps if the setting is not geographically distant. Approval by the Professor of the selection is mandatory before you can proceed with the rest of the assignments. It is your responsibility to select an appropriate group/phenomenon and setting. Changes will not be allowed beyond the third week.

Submit the name and location of the group/phenomenon, along with a brief description of the social group/phenomenon, its size, what it they are about, etc. You are encouraged to submit three alternatives so that if the first is not acceptable, we can immediately consider the second, or the third. Approximately 0.5 pages.

ASSIGNMENT # 3b  Qualitative Research Question

An important skill in this form of research is the ability to frame appropriate research questions. Based on instructions given in class, and readings, develop the primary research question you wish to pursue. In addition, develop five secondary questions. 0.5 pages.
ASSIGNMENT # 4 Observational Component

To fulfill this component you will have to visit the setting of research you proposed. The data collection technique to be used for this assignment is observation. Using observational powers and skills described in class, you will be expected to spend some time observing the physical setting, the people in it, the activities, the social and cultural manifestations, and any other particulars that emerge as important.

There are many kinds of observations. Use of the sense of sight will be predominant in this exercise. But you will also have opportunities to hear, touch, feel, smell, and perhaps even taste. All of these constitute legitimate data, and so you ought to make sure to pay attention to all of them, though it is possible that sight might provide the largest amount of observations.

You should plan on many visits. You should conduct as many observation field sessions as necessary for as much duration as necessary for you to obtain a good understanding of the setting and its components listed above. My guess is that you will need to visit it at least five on site sessions.

You should make an effort to conduct these data collection sessions at various times in the day and on different days of the week. The primary consideration is that you should not have lack of knowledge of any period. In addition, you ought to try to be there for important happenings and special events, particularly those that are meaningful to those who are primary stakeholders of that setting.

You should also make sure that you pay attention to all kinds of people in the setting, including those who are not easily visible. Oft forgotten are persons with disabilities, older people, children, youth, women, particular ethnic groups and races, those servicing the primary stakeholders, and others. Your observations should not neglect them.

Record your observations in a thorough and systematic way so that you are able to return later to do a complete and thorough analysis. See observational record below.

Observation Record:

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This, of course, is only one technique among many for collecting data, but the intention here is to increase your observation skills and to make you a very sharp and astute observer of the social scene and setting. Do not worry if you feel that this use of a single technique for data collection is restrictive, this is an academically parsed assignment as explained.

Write a report/paper based on analysis of all your observations. It should be a description of your learnings from the several data collection sessions, not be a sequential record of one observation session. Be sure to provide an in-depth, rich, description and understanding of the research subject. Categorize your learnings and describe them in sections with as much detail and depth as possible. Approximately 5-7 pages.

In the unlikely event that the research setting approved for you is not easily accessible for such an empirical study you will need to select an identical or similar local setting in which you can conduct the observational assignment.

ASSIGNMENT # 5 PROPOSAL FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

For this assignment you are required to write a proposal for conducting “qualitative” research.

The proposal should have:
* An appropriately selected social group/phenomenon to study
* An appropriate setting
* An appropriately formulated primary research question,
* Appropriately formulated secondary questions
* Context of the research
* A description of what method you will use and why. You will need to justify why you wish to use
that method.

* Description of data collection techniques you will utilize.
* A discussion of what you expect to learn from this research highlighting those learnings that would not be possible through the use of other methods.

Use the knowledge from lectures, readings, texts, assignments (especially the literature familiarization one), and your own research to argue strongly for qualitative research in your proposal. You need to convince a strong, die-hard non-qualitative person (me) that you have written a proposal worthy of support. You are not expected, in the short time available, to conduct an empirical study.

You may notice that this major assignment was disaggregated into several parts you have already complete, such as selection of a social group/phenomenon, framing of primary and secondary research questions, the context, and the observation assignment. However, these may need elaboration, editing, reformatting before they can be incorporated into this assignment.

Describe the social group or phenomenon you have selected to study. Set the context for it because context is important in qualitative research. For the historical context describe the development, important incidents/activities/happenings that make the phenomenon important, and provide a very brief history stating dates and mentioning prominent figures who were influential in the way the phenomenon turns out today. This information may be obtained through examination of historical records, archival data in libraries or available with people in the form of memos, letters, news articles, etc. Provide an analyzed account of what is important for the reader to know in order to understand the rest.

Select the appropriate method for the research. Describe its properties/characteristics, perhaps even the background. Justify why this is the most appropriate method for the study.

Describe the data collection techniques you will be using. Explain what kind of data you will need, and how you will ensure that you will obtain that kind of data. How will you know that you are obtaining good data?

Describe how you hope to analyze the data.

The Research Proposal will contain an empirical observational component as a way of indicating to the reader that the project is worthwhile pursuing. This component enables the inclusion of observations from the initial brief and cursory observational study you conducted. Include either a summary or modified report to be included in the complete research proposal.

Describe what the final write up will be arrived at and what is likely to be learned.

Provide a time line for the project.

Finally, include a references section citing appropriate authorities.

Some caveats: No literature review of the substantive component of the project is required. Remember that the selection of research question is dependent also on what is known in the field (i.e. if the specific question you have selected has already been researched, then you will need to reframe your research question. But we shall not worry about that at this time). Nor are we doing a complete study.

This proposal will I expect be 8-10 pages.

**FINAL EXAM**

There will be a final exam testing understanding and knowledge of important concepts covered in the course.

[209/05F U209ASS 26-Sep-05]