Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Methods for Environmental Studies

Learning Outcomes

This course will is an introduction to research design and research methods, with an in-depth focus on qualitative research methods and an application to environmental studies. Students will learn how to write an appropriate research question, identify relevant methods, submit a project to the Institutional Review Board, choose appropriate sampling approaches, conduct interviews, focus groups, ethnographies, analyze textual data, and present qualitative results.

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- *formulate* a research question
- *identify* the appropriate methodology to answer different types of research questions
- *understand* sampling and recruiting approaches in qualitative research
- *compare* different methods of qualitative data collection
- *design* tools for use in a qualitative study, such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation and ethnography
- *develop* a qualitative research proposal
- *present and discuss* qualitative findings and data

Required Resources

Course website: **elms.umd.edu**

Required Textbook:
Kanazawa, Mark (2017). Research Methods for Environmental Studies: A Social Science Approach. Routledge: New York City. ISBN: 978-1138680173 (pbk).

Dr. Caroline Boules
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Class Meets
Tuesdays & Thursdays
2:00-3:15 BPS 1238.

Office Hours
0222 Symons Hall
Tu/W/Th by appointment

Prerequisites
NA

Course Communication
I will send time-sensitive information to students mostly as ELMS announcements, so you need to log in and check ELMS at least once a day. The best way to contact me is to email me, send a message through ELMS, or come by my office hours. Here is a link with helpful guidance on writing professional emails: ter.ps/email.

Course Description

This course will provide students with a general knowledge of research design, and a more specific knowledge of qualitative research methods. The semester will start with broad topics that will teach students how to write research questions and choose the most appropriate method for collecting the data to answer their question. We will then dive into very specific qualitative data collection methods such as: interview, focus groups, participant observation and ethnography, and learn how to identify which data collection methods to use in a project. The students will learn about sampling approaches in qualitative and quantitative research, choosing a research site, and validity in qualitative and quantitative work. During the last third of the semester, the students will learn how to analyze qualitative data using textual content analysis. Finally we will learn how to present and discuss qualitative data and results.

The course will be a mixture of lectures, discussion, and in-class activities. Grades will be based on a midterm exam, participation in class, writing of discussion questions, completing the online Human Subjects Training, and a final research proposal (see detailed assignment list below). Students will have an opportunity to design their own qualitative research project for their final paper. Students will be required to develop a research question, literature review, proposed methods, significance of the study and sample data collection tools. Students will also be required to complete the IRB Human Subjects training and write an IRB application for their mini-project.

Course Requirements, Grading and Expectations for Students

The instructor will post all course materials and critical course information on the ELMS/Canvas system http://elms.umd.edu , so it is important that you use this system. Please note that they will also communicate with the class through ELMS regarding any class cancellations, changes in meeting times, or room changes. Please be sure that your preferred and current e-mail address is listed in the Directory, and that email notifications are enabled for ELMS. You can check and update this information by going to Testudo (www.testudo.umd.edu/apps/saddr/).

You will have the opportunity to earn up to 1000 points based on the following:

Type of work	Points/unit
• Student Participation in class	50
• Discussion Questions	50
• Reflection Assignment	50
• Midterm Exam	200
• IRB Human Subjects online training	100
• Midsemester Proposal Presentation	100
• Outline & Bibliography of Research Design	50
• Final Research Design Project and IRB Proposal	250
• Final Presentation	150
TOTAL	1000

Grades

Grades will be awarded by converting the points earned into a percentage. 100-98% = A+, 97-92 = A, 91-90 = A-; 89-88 = B+, 87-82 = B, 81-80 = B-; 79-78 = C+, 77-72 = C, 71-70 = C-; 69-68 = D+, 67-62= D, 61-60 = D-; ≤ 59 = F. You may calculate your percentage grade at any time during the semester by dividing the number of points earned by the number of points possible at that point in the semester. Please see me if you have any questions.

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet in my office. If you would like to **appeal any grade** that you have received in this course, you may file an appeal within one week of the return of the assignment. Please submit a typed explanation of the reason why you think your grade should be changed, and deliver it to the instructors mailbox in the ENSP Office (Symons 0220).

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same this as making the cut (89.99 ≠ 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

Assignment Descriptions

Discussion Questions

I will assign each student two classes throughout the semester, and you will come up with two discussion questions for the class based on the readings for that topic. You will then share your questions in the class and help facilitate some discussion. You will send me a copy of your discussion questions after class. Assignments will be given in the second week of class.

IRB Human Subjects online training

This is an online course that you will complete through the CITI Program. It should take a few hours to complete and you can send me the certificate once you have completed it. There will be more information given about this in class.

Reflection Assignment

There will be one short (2-3 pages) reflection writing assignment. The writing prompt will be assigned on the date listed in the syllabus.

Mid-semester Proposal Presentations

Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation halfway through the semester on your qualitative research proposal idea. This will be an opportunity for me to give you feedback on your ideas and your progress before your outline and final paper are due.

Research Proposal Outline & Bibliography

You will submit an outline of your proposal paper and a bibliography of scholarly sources for feedback. More details will be given in class.

Final Research Design Project and IRB Proposal

Your final paper in the class will be a research proposal for a project using qualitative research methods, and will include a section on IRB for human subjects research. I will give you a format to follow for the proposal and we will talk about this in more detail in class.

Final Presentation

You will present your final research proposal to the class, including updates and changes from the midsemester presentation, and how you have incorporated course content and your learning from the CITI training into your final proposal.

Further detail on each of the assignments, including rubrics for the larger assignments, will be made available throughout the semester on the ELMS/Canvas system. Due dates and times are posted on ELMS as well as listed on the course schedule below. Please remember that final grades for this course are earned through individual assignments. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be submitted electronically via the ELMS/Canvas system.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual propert

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Course-Specific Policies

Laptops are permitted in class for note-taking purposes only. I expect you to make the responsible and respectful decision to refrain from using your cellphone in class. If you have critical communication to attend to, please excuse yourself and return when you are ready. For more information about the science behind the policy watch: http://youtu.be/WwPaw3Fx5Hk

For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit Turnitin Originality Checker for Students.

Late Policy

All papers and assignments are due on the designated date. Unless you see me in advance of the due date and obtain an approved extension, 5 percent of the total possible points will be deducted from your score for every day the paper or assignment is late, including weekend days. (So, for example, on a 100-point scale, a student who would have earned a 94 on a timely paper will earn 89 if the same paper is turned in one date late, 84 if turned in 2 days late, etc.). Late discussion questions will receive 0 points.

Attendance and Absences

In accordance with University policy, students are expected to attend classes regularly and on-time. Please email me ahead of time if you will need to miss class. An absence will only be considered "excused" under the circumstances described by the University's attendance policy, available at: https://president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/files/documents/policies/V-100G.pdf.

Academic Accommodations

If you have a documented disability, please contact Disability Support Services 0126 Shoemaker Hall to apply to DSS for accommodation request forms which you can provide to me (and your other instructors) as proof of your eligibility for accommodations. The rules for eligibility and the types of accommodations a student may request can be reviewed on the DSS website at http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS. Please submit your paperwork to me as soon as possible and well before any due date or exam to ensure that any accommodation needs can be satisfied.

Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity.
Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Respect in the Classroom

In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from one another. Please respect each others' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

Instructor responsibilities:

- Start and end class on time.
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect.
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students in the course.

Student responsibilities:

- Come to class on time, and refrain from packing up belongings before class ends.
- Read all of the assigned readings for that class period ahead of time, and be prepared to discuss the topics of the day.
- Turn off all electronic devices that might create a disruption in class.
- Be quiet and give full respectful attention while either instructor or another student is speaking.
- When speaking, use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for you own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so I encourage you to consider visiting http://ter.ps/learn and schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting http://ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit http://www.counseling.umd.edu.

Everything is free because you have already paid for it, and **everyone needs help**…all you have to do is ask for it.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment/Reading Due
UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS; DATA COLLECTION			
1	1/29	Review syllabus and course goals; Introductions.	
	1/31	Research Design: What is Research?	Chapters 1 and 2 in text (Kanazawa) – you can skip pgs. 18-25 (section called "The Origins of Knowledge in the Ancient World)
2	2/5	Writing a research question; Choosing a research approach. What are qualitative methods and why use them?	• Chpt 3 in text (Kanazawa) • Chpt 9 in text up to page 171 (stop before Validity section) • Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 1-4 **Discussion Questions Assigned**
	2/7	Ethics and the IRB I	Chpt 18 in text (Kanazawa)
3	2/12	Ethics and the IRB II	Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 8-12 **CITI Online Ethics Training Assigned**
	2/14	Sampling Approaches and Sampling Size	• Marshall 1996 • Cleary et al. 2014
4	2/19	Recruiting and Key local contacts	• Katigbak et al. 2015 • Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 5-7. **CITI Online Ethics Training Due (midnight)**
	2/21	What is a case study?	Chpt 10 in text (Kanazawa)
5	2/26	Methods: Focus Groups	• Breen 2007 • Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 51-68 **Reflection Assignment Assigned**
	2/28	Methods: Interviewing I	• Chpt 17 in text (Kanazawa) • Weiss, In their own words 2004

6	3/5	Methods: Interviewing II	• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Module 3: In-depth interviews • Conducting an Interview, Open University **Reflection Assignment Due (midnight)**
	3/7	Methods: Ethnography	Chpt 11 in text (Kanazawa)
7	3/12	Methods: Community-based and PAR	• Chpt 14 in text (Kanazawa) • Community-based Participatory Research, Community Toolbox • CPBR by Foundation for Sustainable Development
	3/14	**MIDTERM EXAM**	
8	**SPRING BREAK**		
9	3/26	Surveys in Qualitative Research	Chpt 16 in text (Kanazawa)
	3/28	Reliability and validity in Qualitative Research	Golafshani 2003 or Shenton 2004 (TBD) Text pages 171-180
10	4/2	**Mid-semester Proposal Presentations**	**Mid-semester Research Proposal Presentations**
	4/4	**Mid-semester Proposal Presentations**	**Mid-semester Research Proposal Presentations**
UNIT 2: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION			
11	4/9	Writing a Research Proposal	Chpt 19 in text (Kanazawa)
	4/11	When do you have enough data? Data saturation	Fusch and Ness 2015 **Research Proposal Outline & Bibliography Due (midnight)**
12	4/16	Analyzing your data; Coding Text	Savin-Baden and Major (2013), Chapter 28 In-class coding activities
	4/18	Interpreting your data Software Tools	Savin-Baden and Major (2013), Chapter 29

13	4/23	Mixed methods approaches	Chpt 15 in text (Kanazawa)
	4/25	Examples of Qualitative Research in ENSP: Guest Lecture	TBD
14	4/30	Examples of Qualitative Research in ENSP: Guest Lecture	TBD
	5/2	Presenting your Findings: How to communicate qualitative research	TBD
15	5/7	Creatively visualizing qualitative data	• Henderson and Segal 2013 How to Visualize Qualitative Data
	5/9	Final class discussion and reflection	
16	5/14	Final Presentations	**Final Presentations** **Final Research Design Project and IRB Proposal Due (midnight)**
	5/15	Reading Day	
	5/20	Final Presentations Final exam slot 10:30-12:30	**Final Presentations**

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.