



# Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Methods for Environmental Studies

**ENSP306**  
Spring 2022

## Learning Outcomes

This course will be 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](https://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

Monday & Wednesday  
2:00-3:15pm  
EGR 0135

### Office Hours

Online & in-person  
Tu/Th/F 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](https://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 Structure

This course will be organized in a seminar format, with lectures supplemented by discussion and class exercises. This course meets twice a week, and you are expected to attend these sessions, whether online or in-person. The nature of this class will push you to take an active role in the learning process. You will do this by engaging and collaborating with other students and the instructors on a regular basis.

## Tips for Success in Class

1. **Participate.** Discussions and group work are a critical part of the course. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** Make time for your online learning and participation in discussions each week. Give yourself plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems.
3. **Login regularly.** Log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts. You may need to log in multiple times a day when group submissions are due.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
5. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me, your TAs, and your classmates, for support.

## Netiquette Policy

Netiquette is the social code of online classes. Students share a responsibility for the course's learning environment. Creating a cohesive online learning community requires learners to

support and assist each other. To craft an open and interactive online learning environment, communication has to be conducted in a professional and courteous manner at all times, guided by common sense, collegiality and basic rules of etiquette.

### ***Participation***

- Given the interactive style of this class, attendance will be crucial to note-taking and thus your performance in this class. Attendance is particularly important also because class discussion and activities will be a critical component for your learning.
- Each student is expected to make substantive contributions to the learning experience, and attendance is expected for every session.
- Students with a legitimate reason to miss a class session should communicate in advance with the instructor, except in the case of an emergency.
- Students who miss a class session are responsible for learning what they miss from that session.
- Additionally, students must complete all readings and assignments in a timely manner in order to fully participate in class.

### **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 property

Please visit [www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://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 Evaluation**

Please submit a course evaluation through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses. Please go directly to the [Course Eval UM website](#) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

### **Course-Specific Policies**

#### ***Turnitin***

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***

**For the first 2 weeks of class – the 4 class meetings on 1/24, 1/26, 1/31 and 2/2 – we will be meeting online via Zoom.** After that, starting on Monday 2/7, this course will meet in-person twice a week during the scheduled time, MW from 2:00-3:15pm in EGR0135, unless announced beforehand that we will not have a meeting. You are expected to attend the class sessions regularly and on-time, for both in-person and online meetings. **If you have a situation that will prevent you from attending class regularly (i.e. you have a schedule conflict, etc.), please email me immediately at the start of the semester so we can discuss your situation.** 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>.

If you miss an in-class activity and your absence is excused, I will provide a make-up assignment.

### **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](https://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.
- Be flexible and understanding of student needs and challenges with learning in an online environment.

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.
- Be flexible and understanding about the challenges of online teaching.

## 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.

## Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live and believe this may affect your performance in this course, please

visit [go.umd.edu/basic-needs](http://go.umd.edu/basic-needs) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

## 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/](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/apps/saddr/)).

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

Assignment	Point
Student Participation in class	50
In-class activities (10-25 pts each)	50
Discussion boards (5 total, 1 dropped)	40
Reflection Assignment	50
IRB Human Subjects online training	110
Midterm Exam	150
Qualitative Interview Assignment	75
Presentation on Qualitative Interview Assignment	75
Outline & Bibliography of Research Design	50
Final Research Design Project and IRB Proposal	200
Final Presentation	150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>

## 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  $\neq$  90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

## **Assignment Descriptions**

### *Qualitative Interview Assignment*

For this assignment, you will conduct a qualitative interview with a person of your choosing. This could be someone in your career field, a family member or friend. We will discuss your research question, and the questions you will ask ahead of time, as well as best practices for approaching and speaking with your interviewee. More details will be given later in the semester.

### *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.

### *Qualitative Interview Presentation*

Each student will give a 5-10 minute presentation sharing your experience in collecting data from human subjects. This will be an opportunity for the class to learn from each other about challenges, recommendations and lessons learned when working in social science research.

### *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 feedback that I will give you on your outline and bibliography, and how you have incorporated course content and your learning from the CITI training into your final proposal.

### *Discussion boards*

The class will be divided into two groups of 4-5 students for the purposes of online discussion as well as some in-class activities. There will be five online discussion boards that students are expected to participate in. The discussion question will be posted every other Monday starting on 2/14 and ending on 4/18, and will be open for one week until the following Monday at 2:00pm. Your initial response is expected by that Friday at midnight. Then, you are expected to respond to at least one peer's post between Friday at midnight and the following Monday at 2:00pm. A rubric for discussion boards expectations is on ELMS in the assignments. Discussion board questions will sometimes be incorporated into in-class activities. For example, you might meet with your discussion group during class time and discuss the week's discussion board question. You would be able to use this time to write your discussion board response in class in this case. Each discussion board (one board includes both your initial post and your peer response) is worth 10 points, and the lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

### *In-class Activities*

There are in-class activities regularly during live class sessions. Some of these will be for points and some will not be. These will be based on the readings and if you have been attending class and doing the reading, they should not be a challenge. There is a total of 50 points for in-class activities, and I have not decided on the final point break down for them yet.

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.

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment/Reading Due
<b>UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS; DATA COLLECTION</b>			
1	1/24	Review syllabus and course goals; Introductions.  Zoom: <a href="https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09">https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09</a>  Passcode: 612629	
	1/26	Research Design: What is Research?  Zoom: <a href="https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09">https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09</a>  Passcode: 612629	Chapters 1 and 2 in text (Kanazawa) – you can skip pgs. 18-25 (section called “The Origins of Knowledge in the Ancient World)
2	1/31	What are qualitative methods and why use them?  Writing a research question; Choosing a research approach.  Zoom: <a href="https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09">https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09</a>  Passcode: 612629	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chpt 3 in text (Kanazawa)</li> <li>• Chpt 9 in text up to page 171 (stop before Validity section)</li> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide, Page 1-4</li> </ul>
	2/2	Ethics and the IRB  Zoom: <a href="https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09">https://umd.zoom.us/j/98344833187?pwd=dCttVINhVkxiQ1k2b0l4NTZgWXJjZz09</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chpt 18 in text (Kanazawa)</li> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide, Page 8-12</li> </ul> <p><b>Reflection Assignment Assigned</b></p>

		Passcode: 612629	
3	2/7	Sampling Approaches and Sampling Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marshall 1996</li> <li>• Cleary et al. 2014</li> </ul>
	2/9	<b>Guest Lecture: Andrea Dragan, IRB Manager, UMD</b>	TBD
4	2/14	Recruiting and Key local contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Katigbak et al. 2015</li> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 6-7.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reflection Assignment Due (midnight)</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Board 1 open</b></p>
	2/16	What is a case study?	Chpt 10 in text (Kanazawa)
5	2/21	Methods: Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breen 2007</li> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 51-68</li> </ul> <p><b>CITI Online Ethics Training Assigned</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Board 1 closes (2pm)</b></p>
	2/23	Methods: Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breen 2007</li> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Page 51-68</li> </ul>
6	2/28	Methods: Interviewing I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chpt 17 in text (Kanazawa)</li> <li>• Weiss, In their own words 2004</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion Board 2 open</b></p>
	3/2	Methods: Interviewing II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Module 3: In-depth interviews</li> <li>• Conducting an Interview, Open University</li> </ul> <p><b>CITI Online Ethics Training Due (midnight)</b></p>
7	3/7	Methods: Ethnography	<p>Chpt 11 in text (Kanazawa)</p> <p><b>Discussion Board 2 closes (2pm)</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative Interview Assigned</b></p>
	3/9	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	

8	3/14	Methods: Community-based and PAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chpt 14 in text (Kanazawa)</li> <li>• Community-based Participatory Research, Community Toolbox</li> <li>• CPBR by Foundation for Sustainable Development</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion Board 3 open</b></p>
	3/16	<b>Guest Lecture: Dr. L. Jen Shaffer, Real life Examples of Qualitative Research Methods</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>9 SPRING BREAK</b>			
<b>UNIT 2: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION</b>			
10	3/29	Methods: Surveys in Qualitative Research	Chpt 16 in text (Kanazawa) <b>Discussion Board 3 closes (2pm)</b>
	3/30	Reliability and validity in Qualitative Research	Golafshani 2003 or Shenton 2004 (TBD) Text, Kanazawa, pages 171-180
11	4/5	Writing a Research Proposal	Chpt 19 in text (Kanazawa) <b>Qualitative Interview Due</b> <b>Discussion Board 4 open</b>
	4/6	<b>Qualitative Interview Presentations</b>	<b>Qualitative Interview Presentations</b>
12	4/11	<b>Qualitative Interview Presentations</b>	<b>Qualitative Interview Presentations</b> <b>Discussion Board 4 closes (2pm)</b>
	4/13	When do you have enough data? Data saturation	Fusch and Ness 2015 <b>Research Proposal Outline &amp; Bibliography Due (midnight)</b>
13	4/18	Analyzing your data; Coding Text	Savin-Baden and Major (2013), Chapter 28 In-class coding activities <b>Discussion Board 5 opens</b>
	4/20	Interpreting your data:	Savin-Baden and Major (2013), Chapter 29

		Software Tools	
14	4/25	Mixed methods approaches	Chpt 15 in text (Kanazawa) <b>Discussion Board 5 closes (2pm)</b>
	4/27	Presenting your Findings: How to communicate qualitative research	TBD
15	5/2	Creatively visualizing qualitative data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Henderson and Segal 2013 <a href="#">How to Visualize Qualitative Data</a></li> </ul>
	5/4	Final class discussion and reflection	
16	5/9	<b>Last Class: Final Presentations</b>	<b>Final Presentations</b> <b>Final Research Design Project and IRB Proposal Due (midnight)</b>
	5/11	Reading Day	
	5/16	Final Presentations Final exam slot 1:30-3:30pm	<b>Final Presentations</b>

**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.

### Copyright Notice

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