

## SO225 The Craft of Social Research: A Qualitative Approach

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Office Hours: By appointment

How can we develop knowledge and assess information about the social world around us? What are the steps involved in developing a plan for pursuing social research? What are the rationales of different research methods and how do we use these techniques in practice? Crafting social science research requires diverse methodological tools. Such tools include a variety of instruments and techniques we use to acquire knowledge, which can be broadly grouped into two approaches: those which deal with the in-depth study of the qualities and traits of a small number of cases (qualitative), and those which quantify, measure and standardize the attributes of a larger set of cases to conduct statistical analysis (quantitative). This course will focus on qualitative approaches to social inquiry, providing students with the research skills and methodological knowledge to implement a research project. Throughout the course, students will comprehend the stages of the research process and develop the necessary skills to elaborate a researchable question, evaluate existing scholarship, conduct a literature review, set up a theoretical framework, derive theoretical-based or empirical-driven arguments, as well as discussing broader implications of research outcomes. Furthermore, the course will endow students with a portfolio of qualitative methods of analysis and data collection strategies to elaborate a comprehensive research design. Students are expected to implement the research skills and methodologies learnt throughout the course by conducting their own research projects.

### Requirements

#### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

#### Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

#### Assessment

Students are expected to participate in in-class exercises as well as complete two assignments: a mid-term (group) project and a final (group) project. The final project builds on work completed for the mid-term project. Students will be assessed on the quality of their (group) work product (see the *Evaluating Quality* sections in the assigned text).

#### Assignments

### **Mid-term project.**

Working in groups, students must develop a 5-page (max.) detailed outline of a qualitative research project plan (25% of final grade).

“The purpose of a proposal is to explain and justify your proposed study to an audience of non-experts on your topic” (Maxwell 2005:118-119). It should therefore:

- clearly articulate what you will do and how you will do it
- compellingly explain why you will do it
- only include the information that is directly related to the explanation and justification of the study

The project proposal will include:

1. Introduction
  - The research goals and context for the study (why is it important to research this topic with this data/group of participants)
  - The epistemological and methodological framework, including whether this will serve as a standalone qualitative project or as part of a mixed methods project and the appropriate data analysis approach
2. Literature review
  - A brief overview of the relevant literature and how it has informed the research goals, questions, and the epistemological and methodological framework and decisions.
3. Methods
  - The research question(s);
  - The study setting(s), including intended respondents or sources, recruitment or collection locations, and selection criteria;
  - The data collection procedure(s).

### **Final project.**

Working in groups, students must submit a 15-page (max.) technical (methods) report of their qualitative research project (45% of final grade). In order to fulfill this assignment, students will be required to collect and analyze their own qualitative data. Each student is responsible for collecting/ preparing the equivalent of:

- **30 minutes of audio/ visual data (interview or performance)**
- **3 photos/ visual art pieces**
- **5 pages (single spaced) of text document**

"A technical report is a document written by a researcher detailing the results of a project and submitted to the sponsor of that project" (Georgia Tech Library's [Technical Reports](#) guide, 2023)

The technical report will include:

1. Introduction
  - The objectives of the report and outline of how the report will be treated.
2. Methodology
  - What was done to answer the research question(s);
  - All technical details including materials used or prepared, research protocol, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures (including coding procedures and intercoder reliability).

3. Results
  - Summary of data collected (number/description of sources, type of data collected);
  - Discussion of findings.
4. Annexes (excluded from word count)
  - Materials used or prepared (informed consent, data collection/ interview guide);
  - Codebook;
  - Short description of each data source;
  - Other supporting materials.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Work that is up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept work that is more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Students will be graded on their participation in class discussions and exercises (30%), their completion of the (group) mid-term project (25%), and the (group) final project (45%).

### **Schedule**

This course meets on Thursdays from 15:45-19:00. Students are expected to have completed any assigned readings in advance. The required book for this course is *Qualitative Research Methods* (QRM), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2020), by Hennick, Hutter, and Bailey. All other required texts (articles) are either publicly available or will be provided directly to students.

#### Week 1 – Introduction to qualitative research

- QRM chs 1, 2

#### Week 2 – Setting up a qualitative research project

- QRM chs 3, 4
- Ferber, R. 1968. How not to do research. *Journal of Marketing Research*. V:104.
- Tomaszewski, L.E., Zarestky, J., & Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning qualitative research: Design and decision making for new researchers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 19:1-7.

#### Week 3 – Preparing for the field (1)

- QRM ch 5
- FitzGibbon, A. 2021. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. In H. Kara, & S. Khoo (Eds.), *Qualitative and Digital Research in Times of Crisis. Methods, Reflexivity, and Ethics* (pp. 17-29). Policy Press. <https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/321842664/Because.pdf>
- Guillemin, M., Gillam, L., Barnard, E., Stewart, P., Walker, H., & Rosenthal, D. 2016. "We're checking them out": Indigenous and non-Indigenous research participants' accounts of

- deciding to be involved in research. *International Journal for Equity in Health*. 15(8):1-10.
- Small, M.L. 2009. 'How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography*. 10(1):5-38.

**NB:** Students must inform the instructor of group membership and schedule a meeting to discuss the intended research project by end of class.

#### Week 4 – Preparing for the field (2)

- QRM ch 6
- Broman, K.W., & Woo, K.H. 2018. Data organization in spreadsheets. *The American Statistician*. 72(1):2-10.
- Morse, J. 1995. The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*. 5(2):147-149.
- Pezalla, A.E., Pettigrew, J., and Miller-Day, M. 2012. Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*. 12(2):165–185.

**NB:** Group consultations

#### Week 5 – Observational data

- QRM ch 9
- Iacono, J., Brown, A., & Holtham, C. 2009. Research methods—A case example of participant observation. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*. 7(1):39-46.
- Paterson, B. L., Bottorff, J. L., & Hewat, R. 2003. Blending Observational Methods: Possibilities, Strategies, and Challenges. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2(1):29-38.
- Taylor-Powell, E., & Steele, S. 1996. *Collecting evaluation data: Direct observation*. Program Development and Evaluation. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Extension. 1-7.

**NB:** Group consultations

#### Week 6 – Interviewing and focus groups

- QRM chs 7, 8
- Opdenakker, R. 2006. Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 7(4). <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/175/392>

#### Week 7 – Visual data

- Lynn, N., & Lea, S.J. 2005. Through the looking glass: considering the challenges visual methodologies raise for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 2(3): 213-225.
- Mason, P. 2005. Visual data in applied qualitative research: lessons from experience. *Qualitative Research*. 5(3): 325-346.
- Phoenix, C. 2010. Seeing the world of physical culture: The potential of visual methods for qualitative research in sport and exercise. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise*. 2(2): 93-108.
- Smith, S.K., Mountain, G.A., & Hawkins, R.J. 2015. A scoping review to identify the techniques frequently used when analysing qualitative visual data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 19(6):693-715.

#### Week 8 – Documentary data

- Bowen, G.A. 2009. Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research*

*Journal*. 9(2):27-40.

- Morgan, H. 2022. Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*. 27(1):64-77.
- Wach, E., & Ward, R. 2013. *Learning about Qualitative Document Analysis*. ILT Brief 13. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/2989/PP%20InBrief%2013%20QDA%20FINAL2.pdf>
- Additional readings TBD

**NB:** Mid-term projects are due by 00.00 Monday, 18 March. Grades will be submitted on 22 March.

### Week 9 – Spring break (no class)

No reading

### Week 10 – Data preparation and management

- QRM ch 10
- Davidson, C. 2009. Transcription: Imperatives for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 8(2):36-52.
- Giesen, L., & Roeser, A. 2020. Structuring a team-based approach to coding qualitative data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 19:1-7.
- Hemmler, V.L., Kenney, A.W., Langley, S.D., et al. 2020. Beyond a coefficient: an interactive process for achieving inter-rater consistency in qualitative coding. *Qualitative Research*. 1-26.

### Week 11 – Analyzing qualitative data

- QRM ch 11
- Burck, C. 2005. Comparing qualitative research methodologies for systemic research: the use of grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy*. 27:237–262
- Cho, J.Y., & Lee, E.H. 2014. Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report*. 19(64):1-20.
- Frost, N., Nolas, S. M., Brooks-Gordon, B., Esin, C., Holt, A., Mehdizadeh, L., & Shinebourne, P. 2010. Pluralism in qualitative research: The impact of different researchers and qualitative approaches on the analysis of qualitative data. *Qualitative Research*. 10(4):441-460.

### Week 12 – Writing and disseminating a qualitative research project (1)

- Al-Natour, R. J. (2011). The Impact of the Researcher on the Researched. *M/C Journal*. 14(6). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.428>
- Kapiszewski, D., and Karcher, S. 2020. Transparency in practice in qualitative research. PS: *Political Science & Politics*. 1-7.
- Small, M.L. 2015. De-exoticizing ghetto poverty: On the ethics of representation in urban ethnography. *City & Community*. 14(4):352-358.

### Week 13 – Writing and disseminating a qualitative research project (2)

- QRM ch 13
- The Editors. 2009. For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research. *Academy of Management Journal*. 52(5):856-862.
- Eldh, A.C., Årestedt, L., and Berterö, C. 2020. Quotations in qualitative studies: Reflections on constituents, custom, and purpose. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 19:1-6.

- Smagorinsky, P. 2008. The method section as conceptual epicenter in constructing social science research reports. *Written Communication*. 25(3):389-411.

#### Week 14 – Researching for impact

- QRM ch 12
- Davidson, L., Ridgway, P., Kidd, S., Topor, A., & Borg, M. 2008. Using qualitative research to inform mental health policy. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 53(3):137-144.
- Edwards, R., & Brannelly, T. 2017. Approaches to democratising qualitative research methods. *Qualitative Research*. 17(3): 271-277.
- Leung L. 2015. Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care*. 4(3):324-7.

#### Week 15 – Public holiday (no class)

No reading

#### Week 16 – Completion week (no class)

No reading

**NB:** Final projects are due by 00.00 Monday, 13 May. Grades will be submitted 31 May.

**Graduating seniors:** Grades are due 16 May at noon. If a student is a graduating senior, inform the instructor by the end of Week 15.

### Project Deadlines

Mid-term projects are due by **00.00 Monday, 18 March**.

Final projects are due by **00.00 Monday, 13 May**.

### Grades Submission

Mid-term grades will be submitted on **22 March**.

Final project grades will be submitted **31 May**.

**Graduating seniors:** Grades are due **16 May at noon**. If a student is a graduating senior, they must inform the instructor by the end of **Week 15**.

### Library and Book Purchase Policies

The required book for this course is *Qualitative Research Methods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2020), by Hennick, Hutter, and Bailey. Several copies are available in the Bard College library; however, it is recommended that students purchase a copy for reference purposes. All other required texts (articles) are either publicly available or will be provided directly to students.