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COMX 561.01: Qualitative Research Methods

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COMX 561 - Communication Research Methods: Qualitative
Tuesdays and Thursdays – 2:30 to 3:50pm

Spring, 2019
LA 305

Instructor: Betsy Wackernagel Bach, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Mondays, 2:30 – 3:30pm;
Thursdays 9:40 – 11:00am; and always by appointment

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Required Readings

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2019). *Qualitative communication research methods* (4th Ed.). Los Angeles, Sage.

Other readings can be found on Moodle.

Course Description

This course is a practicum in the qualitative case study. It emphasizes a) learning to write qualitative case studies and b) using them in the development of theories of human communication. We will examine the nature of qualitative inquiry by reading, talking about what we have read, and engaging in qualitative research.

Course Objectives

As a result of satisfactorily completing this course, you should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the philosophical assumptions of qualitative (ethnographic) inquiry;
2. Understand and evaluate the different methods of and uses for qualitative research;
3. Identify and enact phases of the qualitative research sequence, specifically:
 - a. identifying a class of phenomena to be the subject of study,
 - b. carrying out QI following a specified descriptive framework (or by generating a DFW of your own),
 - c. observing naturalistic behavior,
 - d. recording naturalistic behavior,
 - e. coding the behavior "openly,"
 - f. writing the case study,
 - g. interpreting what is observed, recorded, and coded.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are probably different than many graduate courses you have taken. There are several papers to write which will not be graded. They will be submitted to me for feedback before you write your final case study. Specific due dates are as follows:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Date Due</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Research Site Permission	1/31	-
Practice Case Study	2/12	-
Midterm Examination	2/19	30%
Literature Review and Research Q's	3/05	-
Interview Guide and Notes	3/19	-
Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings	4/16	-
Peer Critique	4/25	5%
Final Case Study	5/10	50%
Class Participation		15%
	Total	100%

Instructional Policies

This course will be taught much like one does qualitative research. We will begin with a broad overview of qualitative methodology and then become more specific about methods as the course progresses. It is hoped that this approach will parallel what goes on in the field. As one gains entry, and begins to gather and analyze qualitative data, the task seems overwhelming and out of control. Let me assure you that there is pedagogical merit in the way that I have designed the class—it has worked very well for the 30 years that I have taught it. It is hoped that, upon completion of this course, that you will be able to retrospectively make sense out of the process of qualitative inquiry.

Because of the pedagogical strategy adopted, I expect that you will read all assigned material prior to class and be prepared to discuss that material. Know that some of the readings are "purposefully redundant." I want you to read what different (and respected) field researchers have said about the nature of qualitative inquiry, so that you get different perspectives on the issues at hand. Moreover, you will be reading early, key articles on many different topics. Rest assured that these articles are not "out of date." Rather, they are essential to the understanding of qualitative inquiry. As such be prepared to come to class with questions and comments about the readings. Specifically, I'd like to see you do the following in our class discussion:

1. show knowledge of reading and thinking about what you read;
2. argue effectively for your positions;
3. transfer the information in the readings to your own fieldwork and testing/extension of theory;
4. contribute to a lively discussion;
5. have fun with what you're learning!

Course Outline and Readings

January 10

Introduction to Course
Pre-Assessment

January 15 and 17

Historical Overview of Qualitative Methods
Definitions of Qualitative

Text, Chapters 1 and 2

Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). The discipline and practice of qualitative research In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative of qualitative research* (4th Ed, pp. 1-19). Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage.

Halfpenny, P. (1979). The analysis of qualitative data. *Sociological Review*, 27,(4), 799-823.

January 22 and 24

Philosophical Assumptions of Qualitative Inquiry
Qualitative Paradigms: Phenomenology/Autoethnography; Interpretive Research

Text, Chapter 3

Ellingson, L. L. (2011). Analysis and representation across the continuum. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative of qualitative research* (4th ed, pp. 595-610). Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage.

Autoethnography – perspective and example

Ellis, C. S., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hocker, J. (2015). Growing up with civil rights: A developmental autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(8), 732-740.

Interpretive – perspective and example

Braithwaite, D.O., Moore, J. Abetz, J.S. (2014). “I need numbers before I will buy it”: Reading and writing qualitative scholarship on close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(4), 490-496.

Braithwaite, D. O., Bach, B. W., Baxter, L. A., DiVerniero, R., Hammonds, J., Nunziata, A. M.,

Willer, E. K., & Wolf, B. (2010). Constructing family: A typology of voluntary kin. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 388-407.

January 29 and 31

Qualitative Methods: Culture and Ethnography
The Qualitative Case Study: An Overview
Institutional Review Board Procedures

Text, Chapters 4 and 5

Ethnography - perspectives

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 3-27). New York: Basic Books.

Philipsen, G. (1992). *Speaking culturally* (pp. 3-17). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Ethnographic research examples

Carbaugh, D., & Rudnik, L. (2006). Which place, what story? Cultural discourses at the border of the Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier National Park. *Great Plains Quarterly*, 26(3), 167-184.

The Qualitative Case Study: Theory

Philipsen, G. (1982). The qualitative case study as a strategy in communication inquiry. *The Communicator*, 12, 4-17.

Philipsen, G. (1977). Linearity of research design in ethnographic ways of speaking. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 42-50.

The Qualitative Case Study: Practice

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 26-35). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

February 5 and 7

Developing Research Questions
Development and Use of Descriptive Frameworks-Bring in Sample DFW's
Practice Using Hymes
RESEARCH SITE PERMISSION DUE!

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4), 431-447.

Foundations of descriptive frameworks = Speech events

Hymes, D. (1972). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication* (pp. 52-72). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hymes, D. (1995). The ethnography of speaking. In B. G. Blount (Ed.), *Language, culture, and society* (pp. 248-282). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. (reprint of 1962 original)

Roberts, P. (1994). Speech communities. In V. P. Clark, P. A. Escholz, & A. F. Rosa (Eds.), *Language: Introductory readings* (5th ed.) (pp. 509-518). New York: St. Martins Press.

Example

Katriel, T. (1985). "Griping" as a verbal ritual in some Israeli discourse. In M. Dascal (Ed.), *Dialogue: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 367-381). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

February 12 and 14

Entry, Ethics, and Roles

PRACTICE CASE STUDY DUE 2/12

Punch, M. (1998). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp.156-184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1984). *Analyzing social settings* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 1-30; 31-43.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 20-25). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

February 19 and 21

MIDTERM EXAMINATION (Oh joy, oh rapture!) DUE at 5:00 pm 2/19

No class 2/21 – you've earned a break!

February 26 and 28

Observation Techniques

Discussion: What did you learn doing your practice case study?

Text, Chapter 6

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 53-62). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377-392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

March 5 and 7

Observation Techniques and Interviewing Your Informants
LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS DUE!

Text, Chapters 7 and 8

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Chapters 1 and 2

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview* (pp. 45-68). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Whyte, W. F. (1982). Interviewing in field research. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual* (pp. 111-122). London: George Allen & Unwin.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Blum, F. H. (1970). Getting individuals to give information to the outsider. In W. Filstead (Ed.), *Qualitative methodology: Firsthand involvement with the social world* (pp. 83-89). Chicago: Markham Publishing Co.

March 12 and 14

Writing Up Fieldnotes
Coding Your Data
INTERVIEW GUIDE AND NOTES DUE!

Text, Chapter 9

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 171-199.

March 19 and 21

Coding and Analyzing Your Data

Text, Chapter 10

DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., Marshall, P. L., & McCulloch, A. (2011). Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. *Field Methods*, 23(2), 136-155.

LeCompte, M. D. (2000). Analyzing qualitative data. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 146-154.
 Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and Procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (pp. 101-162).

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality- Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.

March 26 and 28

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK!

April 2 and 4

Validity and Reliability
 Analyzing and Interpreting Your Results

Text, Chapter 11

LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic data. *Review of Educational Research*, 52, 31-60.

Creswell J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1999). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp. 101-115).

Denzin, N. (1995). The art and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 500-515). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

April 9 and 11

Writing Your Case
 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS DUE!

April 16 and 18

NO CLASS - FIELD WORK

April 23 and 25

Preliminary Research Presentations and Course Wrap-up

May 10

PAPER DUE AT NOON!

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MID-TERM EXAMINATION

1. Compare and contrast the basic assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. What types of research questions are best explained using qualitative methods? (60 minutes)
2. We have talked about the importance of using qualitative inquiry to generate, test, and support theory. How does one generate, test, or support theory with qualitative data? (30 minutes)
3. What is ethnography? Explain how it is a reliable method for gathering and analyzing qualitative data. What seven steps can be used in qualitative/ETHNOGRAPHIC inquiry? Explain these steps using examples. (60 minutes)
4. What is a descriptive framework? Why does one use a DFW rather than entering a situation *tabula rasa*? What benefits (if any) are there to using a DFW? (30 minutes)
5. Identify the components of Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic. Provide an example for each of the components using data from your practice observation. How is Hymes' framework useful in identifying ways of speaking in a given speech community? (30 minutes)
6. What is a speech community? What are the parameters used to identify speech communities? Identify a particular group that you perceive to meet the criteria for a speech community and explain how it fits the criteria. (30 minutes)

Other questions may be added as the course progresses

PRACTICE CASE STUDY

Rationale

The assignment of this project assumes there is some value in practicing your observation skills, testing a specific descriptive framework (DFW), and writing a sample case study before you begin your "formal" observation and case study preparation.

Procedure

You are to observe (alone or with one other person) the public behavior of a group of people for approximately 3 - 4 hours in a setting of your choice using a descriptive framework of your choosing.

Task

You are to produce a "mini" case study of no more than 10 double spaced pages in which you engage in both qualitative description and qualitative abstraction by doing the following:

1. describe the location and setting of your observation;
2. report your methods for gathering data;
3. identify the descriptive framework (DFW) you choose to "test;"
4. provide a rationale for the use of your DFW;
5. report your findings;
6. interpret your findings in light of your DFW;
7. provide an addendum in which you explain your feelings about your "practice" observation, and describe any biases you had;
8. include in the addendum a discussion of what went well and what you'll do differently in your "real" case study.

Evaluative Criteria

There are no formal evaluative criteria for this practice case study. I will read your papers and make comments and suggestions on each.

FINAL CASE STUDY

Task

The final case study should be no more than 25 pages in length. It is a summary report of your project, written to be interesting to communication scholars and persons interested in behavioral science and ethnomethodology who know little of communication theory. The style should be precise and careful, but more toward the readable, case study style than toward the factual, academic style. Use liberal amounts of anecdotes, speculations (supporting them with theory or observation), vivid (not verbose) description, and stories. Your case should include the following information:

I. Rationale and Literature Review.

Introduce your work (1-2 paragraphs) where you "set the stage" for your paper. Identify your class of phenomena (e.g., what ways of speaking are used to socialize newcomers to an organization) and then cite and summarize relevant previous research to reinforce the phenomena you have identified (typically you should argue what communication theory you are testing/extending in order to articulate how your research is a communication study). In many cases, your DFW will be part of the relevant research you cite. Make sure you identify and defend your choice of DFW. Also, end the section with your research questions (those you used during the data gathering process) (3-6 pages).

II. Methods.

(Remember, you don't have to spell this information out directly; rather, some of the best ethnographies make this point in the actual writing of the case)

- A. Describe your speech community. (2-4 paragraphs)
- B. Identify procedures for entry and data gathering. (2-4 pages)
 1. How did you gain entry?
 2. What was your role in the speech community (e.g., full participant, observer, participant/observer)? How did you account for your role when asked by members of the speech community?
 3. Note any ethical considerations (within footnotes).
 4. How did you gather data (e.g., Did you write brief notes in the field and then immediately go home and make full field notes? Did you record and then transcribe interview notes? Did you use videos, etc.?)?
- C. Discuss your data analysis. (3-5 pages)
 1. Procedures for data analysis - how were data coded and what decision rules were used to code data? Were the data coded into categories that you generated or were data coded into pre-existing categories (e.g., a DFW)? What did you do with "deviant cases?"
 2. How did you analyze your data (e.g., did you use constant comparison, generate

- grounded theory, use clustering techniques, etc.?)? If you are generating grounded theory, what decision rules were used to generate categories? How were these categories, organized, narrowed, added to? If you are using a DFW, how did you "test" or extend your DFW? In either case, how were categories of findings generated, organized, narrowed, added to, etc.?
3. How reliable are your findings?

III. Findings/Interpretations.

Here you describe as well as interpret the results of your data analysis. Make sure that your interpretations are made in light of your DFW (or the categories you discovered through analytic induction). In this section it is important to give enough supporting information such as dialogue, description of events (e.g., case descriptions) so the reader can understand and make sense of what you found. Give the "flavor" of the informants' and respondents' social reality (this is where you use thick description without being overly detailed or verbose). Arrange your findings in some order that makes sense to you. (10-15 pages)

IV. Discussion of Findings.

Here you persuade the reader of the importance of what you accomplished. What have you contributed to the literature by doing all of this work?

- A. How do your findings relate to the literature? What new information is added, extended?
- B. What's the "news?" (e.g., What do we know about the communication behavior of this particular speech community that we didn't know before? What do we know about communication in general that we didn't know before you did this study?)?
- C. What are the theoretical implications (e.g., how have you tested or extended existing communication theory?)?
- D. What are the possible applications? (How can we apply this information to train or teach others about communication?)?
- E. What future research could be done based upon what you found? (5-7 pages)

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION OF YOUR PAPER!!

Evaluative Criteria

Your paper will be evaluated upon the following criteria:

1. The extent to which there is evidence of each "task" area mentioned above.
2. The extent to which you write in an organized fashion and present your information clearly and cogently.

