MGMT 8095
Qualitative Research Methods

Spring 2018: Fridays 12-3; 502 Lindner Hall

Professor: Elaine Hollensbe, Ph.D.  Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Overview:
This course provides an overview of and experience with qualitative research methods. You will be introduced to a wide variety of qualitative methods, including ethnography, participant observation, interviewing, grounded theory, discourse analysis, action research, narrative analysis, content analysis, and case analysis. We will focus particularly on grounded theory and case research, as those are the two methods most typically represented in leading management journals. In the beginning of the course, we will briefly review the epistemological foundations of qualitative research, then move immediately into research design and data collection, taking a more applied focus for the rest of the course. We will examine a variety of techniques for coding and analyzing qualitative data, as well as read several examples of published qualitative studies to deconstruct the methods used. Finally, we will learn tips for crafting qualitative research for publication and conventions for ensuring that qualitative work is rigorous. Throughout the course, there will be opportunities to try on various methods and gain hands-on experience. You will also launch your own qualitative study and begin to collect and analyze data for it as part of the course requirements.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the philosophical perspectives associated with qualitative methods.
- To develop a working knowledge of the array of ways to conduct qualitative research.
- To be able to generate research questions and design a qualitative study appropriate for examining those questions.
- To become proficient at collecting systematically and organizing qualitative data (e.g., interviews, field notes).
- To be able to code data and extract themes/analyze qualitative data.
- To learn methods of establishing trustworthiness and other criteria for evaluating qualitative research.
- To be able to assess and critique qualitative journal articles.
- To learn how to prepare a publishable product from qualitative data analysis.

Required Text:

Highly Recommended Books:

- Spradley, J.P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. [We will read portions.]

Supplementary Books:

**Grades:**

- Mini-exercises: 25%
- Article review: 25%
- Discussion leadership/class contribution: 25%
- Research project/presentation: 25%

**Participant Responsibilities:**

You will be expected to read all of the assigned articles *completely and critically*, and be prepared to discuss the issues raised in each article in class. Your preparation will be guided by questions provided by the discussion leaders (below), but you are also encouraged to develop perspectives of your own that you can present during the class discussion. Overall, class contribution will be calculated based on your attendance, the quality of your discussion questions and article summaries, and your meaningful contributions to class discussion.

**Discussion Leader Responsibilities:**

You will be expected to serve as a discussion leader for several articles during the semester. On the first day of class, discussion leader assignments will be made. As a discussion leader, you will be expected to take the “lead” in class on the discussion of the article(s) you are assigned. This involves preparing a one- to two-page single-spaced summary of the article which addresses the following questions:

**For the content articles:**
1. What do you see as three most important or interesting take-aways from the article?
2. Are there any “arguable” or confusing points based on your reading of the article?
3. **Discussion questions:** What are two questions that you have after reading the article?
   **Note:** Questions should stimulate the class to explore interesting, arguable/confusing issues or points made in the article. *For the Charmaz chapters*, include a more detailed outline of the chapter.

**For the empirical articles, i.e., the articles with two asterisks (**):**
1. How effective has/have the author(s)’ been in describing the study’s purpose, importance, and research question(s)?
2. Briefly describe the method(s) used. Is there anything that bothers you about the method? What and why? Is there anything that you find especially compelling or well done? What and why?
3. How did the author(s) move from the data to theorizing from it?
4. What some things the author(s) did to convince you of the trustworthiness and credibility of the study/method/findings?
5. **Discussion questions:** What are two questions that you have after reading the article?
   **Note:** Questions should focus on your deconstruction of the paper (Q1-4 above), i.e., on the way the paper is structured/argued and on the method.
Both the summary and the discussion questions should be emailed to your fellow students and me at least 24 hours in advance of class. Performance as a discussion leader will be assessed as part of your contribution grade and will be evaluated based on (1) the completeness and clarity of the article summaries; (2) the degree to which the discussion questions highlight or tap major themes in the readings, and (3) the utility of these questions in generating meaningful discussion during the seminar. My goal is that we keep the tone open and informal so that each of us feels comfortable raising questions to clarify and critique, and to bring up interesting issues.

**Mini-exercises**

There will be five exercises assigned during the course of the semester to give you the opportunity to apply what you are learning. Ideally, each will lead and contribute to the final research project in the course. **All projects should be submitted to me electronically no later than noon the day that they are due.**

1. **Research Question.** Come up with a research question that you would like to investigate using qualitative methods. The task here is to develop a question suitable for investigating qualitatively. As is the nature of qualitative research, this question may be adjusted and modified as you get into the data gathering and analysis stages.

2. **Participant Observation - Fieldnotes.** For this mini-exercise, you will identify a site related to the research question(s) that you will develop early in the course. You will conduct an observation at this site in which you record fieldnotes on the setting and any interactions you observe. If you are a participant in the observation, you should also give an account of the interactions in which you participated. I would like for you to spend at least an hour in the setting and shoot for field notes of at least one page, single-spaced. See the Course Schedule for the due date.

3. **Interview – Protocol.** For the third mini-exercise you are to develop an interview protocol, i.e., a list of questions related to your research topic/question(s). You will submit your protocol by the due date on the Course Schedule and integrate feedback before conducting the interview(s). You will need to conduct three interviews of approximately one hour each to fulfill the remaining mini-exercise requirements in the course. You should record all three interviews, but due to time and cost, you need transcribe only one. Note: In transcribing, you do not need to include pauses, verbal interrupters, e.g., “you know,” etc. Even so, transcription of a one-hour interview can take up to four hours. You are free to hire an outside transcriber; in my experience, the cost varies from $35-$100 for a one-hour interview. To facilitate transcribing your interview, you might want to use ExpressScribe software, a free version of which can be downloaded at [http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/](http://www.nch.com.au/SCRIBE/).

4. **Coding - Dictionary/Memos.** For the fourth mini-exercise, you will code the transcript from the interview that you transcribed. We will discuss coding techniques in class, but at a basic level, you will record codes on a hard copy of the transcript. You will also record these.
codes in a separate document (dictionary) and include a brief explanation or definition of the code. As you code, ideas or connections in the data will come to you. These should be recorded as memos in a separate document. The length of the dictionary and memos will depend on the length and richness of the transcript; however, I would anticipate each document would be at least one page. I would like for you to also turn in the coded transcript (hard-copy version) along with your dictionary/memos.

5. Thematic analysis – Data structure. Finally, you will analyze the codes/dictionary/memos prepared for the third mini-exercise and use them to develop themes. For this mini-exercise, you may also use data from the un-transcribed interviews. These themes should take the form of a data structure diagram (with arrows leading from codes to themes). As you develop themes, consider both the data and the literature related to the phenomena you are studying. That is, your thematic analysis should suggest new ideas, but also be anchored somewhat in a related literature to which you hope your study will contribute.

Research Project: Paper/Presentation

In this course, you are responsible for developing a preliminary research paper on a topic of your choice. During the course, you will gather and work with data for this paper through the five mini-exercises described above, as well as archival materials, if relevant. The final paper should: (1) introduce your research question(s) and your study’s purpose; (2) include a literature review or research justification (as appropriate); (3) provide a thorough description of your methodology; (4) develop first- and second-order analytic findings (i.e., thematic analysis/data structure); (5) suggest a model/propositions (as appropriate); (6) discuss implications for future research and practice, and outline study limitations. You should also include a reference list, using a consistent style accepted in your field. (For Management, this would be the AMJ Style Guide.) You will be expected to present your paper on the last class day, as well as turn in a written copy. It is not expected that your data will fully address your research question(s), but it should be a reasonable first step at exploring your topic and provide a good foundation for further research. Another way to think of it – this paper could be a springboard for further data collection and analysis, after which the paper could be submitted to a journal. We are playing a bit of “let’s pretend” with these papers because you would need far more than 3 interviews for journal publication. We are limited to a semester and therefore I’m having you “force” some theorizing onto a very limited dataset for practical purposes.

It is highly recommended that you use NVivo (or similar software) to analyze your data for the project. Check to see if your College has a licensing arrangement for faculty and students (usually around $100). Alternatively, QSR International offers a free 14-day trial of the NVivo software at this website: http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_free-trial-software.aspx. Do NOT start your 14-day trial until after you have transcribed the data to analyze; otherwise, you will run out of time. Other software packages that are popular include ATLAS ti and MAXQDA. We will not include software training as part of the course, since using the software is optional and there are excellent online tutorials for that purpose. I suggest you also speak
with other doctoral students who have used the software; they can recommend their favorites as well as give some advice on its usage.

**Article Review**

You will review a qualitative article or manuscript as a final assignment in the course. Your review will include responses to a list of questions about the research question, approaches taken to data collection and analysis, and effectiveness of data presentation/write-up and theory building. You will be expected to integrate course materials and apply criteria for evaluating qualitative research.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments (in addition to assigned readings listed below)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Research/Paradigms</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Research Questions and Designing a Qualitative Study</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>(Non)participant Observation Ethnography</td>
<td>Mini-exercise #1 due (research question)</td>
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<td>Human Subjects Review forms submitted (if required).</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
<td>Mini-exercise #2 due (fieldnotes from participant observation)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>Interviewing and Sampling</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>Case Studies Action Research</td>
<td>Mini-exercise #3 due (interview protocol)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding</td>
<td>Conduct/transcribe interview(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Analyzing Qualitative Data: Theoretical Sampling Process Research Content Analysis</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>Generating &amp; Elaborating Theory Narrative Analysis</td>
<td>Code transcript(s)</td>
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<td>Guest speaker: Prof. Heather Vough, Management Dept.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>No class...rest &amp; relaxation!</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/23</td>
<td>Multiple Methods and Triangulation</td>
<td>Mini-exercise #4 due (coded transcript(s)/dictionary/memos)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis</td>
<td>Guest speaker: Prof. Gail Fairhurst, Communication Dept.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Presenting Research Findings Convincingly</td>
<td>Mini-exercise #5 due (thematic analysis)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>Establishing Trustworthiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>Presentation of Projects</td>
<td>In-class presentation of research projects/paper due</td>
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<td>Article Review (Day TBA)</td>
<td>Out of class; submit electronically to Elaine</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
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COURSE READINGS

Note: I have included each week (an) article(s) in which qualitative methods have been employed, indicated by two asterisks (**). To the extent you can, when reading these articles, pay particular attention to the discussion of the techniques for collecting and analyzing data and the way the data are presented to develop/support the argument. Try to deconstruct how the authors have gone about crafting their work—this is one of the best ways to learn how to do qualitative research well.

**Week 1:**
Introduction to Qualitative Research/Paradigms in the Social Sciences (95 pages)


Supplementary Readings:


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**Week 2:**
**Research Questions and Designing a Qualitative Study (117 pages)**


Supplementary Readings:

   Chapter 2: Practical Considerations, pp. 19-43.
   Chapter 3: Prelude to Analysis, pp. 45-64.

Week 3:
(Non)participant Observation/Ethnography (129 pages)


Supplementary readings:


**Week 4: Grounded Theory (143 pages)**


**Supplementary Readings:**


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**Week 5:
Interviewing and Sampling (188 pages)**


Spradley, J. P. 1979. The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Read the following selections:
- Informants (pp. 24-39) (16 pages)
- Locating an Informant (pp. 44-53) (10 pages)
- Making an Ethnographic Record (pp. 69-77) (11 pages)
- Asking Descriptive Questions (pp. 78-91). (13 pages)

**Supplementary Readings:**


**Week 6:**

**Case Studies/Action Research (110 pages)**


Supplementary Readings:


Week 7:
Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding (160 pages)


Supplementary Readings:


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**Week 8:**

**Analyzing Qualitative Data: Theoretical Sampling/Process Research/Content Analysis (126 pages)**


**Supplementary Readings:**

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**Week 9:**
Generating and Elaborating Theory/Narrative Analysis (127 pages)

Supplementary Readings:


Week 10:
SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 11:
Multiple Methods and Triangulation (126 pages)


**Supplementary Readings:**


**Week 12:
Discourse Analysis

NOTE: Readings for the week will announced and provided later in the course. Prof. Gail Fairhurst will visit the class.

**Supplementary Readings:**


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**Week 13:**
Writing & Presenting Research Findings Convincingly (139 pages)


Pratt, M.G. 2009. For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research. Academy of Management Journal, 52: 856-862. (7 pages)

Supplementary Readings:


Week 14:
Establishing Trustworthiness/Evaluating Qualitative Research (129 pages)


Tracy, S. J. 2010. Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10): 837-851. (15 pages)
Supplementary Readings:


Week 15: April 20th
Presentation of Research Findings

Week 16:
Article Review (day to be confirmed)