CLRES 2400  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH  
METHODS  
Dates: Spring Term

Overview and Objectives:

- **OVERVIEW:** This course will introduce participants to the characteristics and various approaches to designing and conducting qualitative research projects in health and health services research. Students will gain hands-on experience in various qualitative methods and analysis techniques while carrying out a research project related to their area of interest.

- **OBJECTIVES:**
  - To become familiar with the characteristics, language and logic of qualitative research methods;
  - To understand the available techniques for designing a qualitative research study;
  - To understand the available techniques for qualitative data analysis;
  - To be able to recognize and assess quality and rigor in evaluating a qualitative research study.

Responsibilities:

- There will be reading assignments in the textbook in addition to selected articles and handouts distributed during class. The readings of book chapters assigned in the syllabus are expected to be completed before class.

- Students will have homework assignments. Homework assignments should be submitted to both of the following class instructors via e-mail. They should also be posted on Blackboard.

- Homework assignments are due to these instructors no later than 5:00 PM on the Monday before the session in which the assignment is discussed. Students will receive a 5% (1/2 grade) deduction per day on the points awarded by the instructor for an assignment received late.

- A student who anticipates problems concerning an upcoming deadline should consult with the course director to determine whether alternative arrangements are possible. All assignments must be completed to receive credit and a final grade for the course.

- Class attendance and participation are required.
**Course Requirements:**

Letter grade, based on participation, assignments and final research paper.

30% Participation  
35% Course assignments  
30% Final paper  
5% Complete online class evaluation

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to sign-in to each class (computer provided in suite lobby). If a problem is encountered with the sign-in system, please contact the course instructor(s).

**Course Grading Scale:**

- 100-90 –A  
- 89-80—B  
- 79-70—C  
- 69-60—D  
- 59 and below--F

**Required Textbook(s):**  

**Supplemental Textbook(s):**  
NA

**Website resources:**

Assignments and readings listed on the web or available in the Course Packet.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.
Course Schedule

Session 1: Topic(s)  Overview of Course

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:
• Explain the characteristics, language and contributions of qualitative research to health and health services research.

Topics:
• Session overview, assignments, expectations, etc.
• Student introductions and research interests.
• Distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research approaches and methods
• Basics of creating an interview script.

Competencies
Methodology: Compare strengths and weaknesses (feasibility, efficiency, generalizability, validity, and ability to derive unbiased inferences) of different research paradigms and methodologies.

Required Reading(s):
• Giacomini MK, Cook DJ. 2000. User’s guide to the medical literature: XXIII. Qualitative research in health care B. What are the results and how do they help me care for my patients? JAMA 284(4): 478-482
• Giacomini MK, Cook DJ. 2000. Users’ Guides to the medical literature: XXII. Qualitative research in healthcare, are the results of the study valid? JAMA 284:357- 62.

Due Today:
Think about and write down some research questions you would like to address using qualitative methods.

Homework assignment(s):
• Interview/Focus Group Script Assignment—due next week.
  Create or revise interview or focus group questions.
Session 2: Topic(s) Study Design and Interview Data Collection

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:
• Conduct a qualitative interview

Topics:
• Sampling
• IRB issues
• Interviewing
• Brief overview of field observation and other methods

Competencies
Methodology: Understand and explain Federal regulations regarding human subject research, and prepare an IRB application
Methodology: Recognize the impact of diverse populations and local demography on research designs, and modify research design accordingly.
Sampling: Determine appropriate and ethical methods to assemble and retain informed study participants
Ethics and Professional Norms: Provide examples of the norms of professional integrity with regard to designing and conducting research including: data collection, sharing, and protection; and reporting of findings.

Required Reading(s):
• Elizabeth H. Bradley, PhD; Eric S. Holmboe, MD; Jennifer A. Mattera, MPH; Sarah A. Roumanis, RN; Martha J. Radford, MD; Harlan M. Krumholz, MD A Qualitative Study of Increasing β-Blocker Use After Myocardial Infarction: Why Do Some Hospitals Succeed? JAMA 285 (issue 20) 2001, 2604-2611.

Due Today:
• Interview/Focus Group Script Assignment
  Based on class discussion and readings, create or revise interview or focus group questions. Submit for discussion.

Homework assignment(s):
Interview Assignment—due in Session 4 (2 weeks to complete).
Identify and recruit 1 interview participant. Conduct 1 audio-taped interview using your interview script. Listen to entire interview, take notes on: challenges/insights in the interview experience, interesting findings, ways to revise questions for future use. Transcribe a minimum of five double-spaced pages of the interview.
Session 3: Topic(s) Focus Group Data Collection

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:
• Discuss focus group data collection

Topics:
• Focus groups: theory and practice.

Competencies
Measurement: Describe the characteristics underlying data quality and their ability to answer clinical or translational research problems.

Required Readings:
• Kitzinger J. Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. BMJ. 1995 Jul 29;311(7000):299-302.
• Judy C. Chang, Michele R. Decker, Kathryn E. Moracco, Sandra L. Martin, Ruth Petersen, Pamela Y. Frasier, Asking about intimate partner violence: advice from female survivors to health care providers, Patient Education and Counseling, Vol 59 (Issue 2) 2005, 141-147.

Due Today: N/A

Homework assignment(s):
Identify and recruit 1 interview participant. Conduct 1 audio-taped interview using your interview script. Listen to entire interview, take notes on: challenges/insights in the interview experience, interesting findings, ways to revise questions for future use. Transcribe a minimum of five double-spaced pages of the interview.
Session 4: Topic(s) Qualitative Data Collection Theory and Codebook Development

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:
• Understand how to transcribe a qualitative interview.
• Understand the basics of qualitative data analysis and codebook development.

Topics:
• Reviewing the interviewing and transcription processes
• Qualitative schools of thought
• Initial thoughts on qualitative analysis
• ABCs of Codebook development

Competencies
Methodology: Compare strengths and weaknesses (feasibility, efficiency, generalizability, validity, and ability to derive unbiased inferences) of different research paradigms and methodologies.
Applied Analytic Techniques: Describe appropriate data analysis plans for addressing specific research questions.

Required Reading(s):
• Patton, pp. 96-99 (Module 10, “Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry Frameworks”)
• Patton, pp. 541-552 (Module 67, “Qualitative Analysis Approaches: Identifying Patterns and Themes”)

Due Today:
Interview Assignment
Identify and recruit 1 interview participant. Conduct 1 audio-taped interview using your interview script. Listen to entire interview, take notes on: challenges/insights in the interview experience, interesting findings, ways to revise questions for future use. Transcribe a minimum of five double-spaced pages of the interview.

Homework assignment:
Beginning qualitative data analysis—due next week.
Please type up a minimum of 1 paragraph on what was interesting in the interview you conducted and transcribed, what would be important to capture in developing future codes as you begin analysis.
Session 5: Topic(s) Qualitative Data Analysis Instruct

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:

• Develop an analysis plan for qualitative research

Topics:

• Coding
• Building analysis/theory

Competencies

Applied Analytic Techniques: Describe appropriate qualitative data analysis plans for addressing specific research questions.

Required Reading(s):

• Patton, pp. 553-559 (Module 68, “The Intellectual and Operational Work of Analysis”)

Due Today:

Please type up a minimum of 1 paragraph on what was interesting in the interview you conducted and transcribed, what would be important to capture in developing future codes as you begin analysis.

Homework assignment(s):

• Coding Assignment,
• Using your interview(s) or any focus group scripts do a close reading of the data with a focus on important emerging themes, keeping in mind key issues critical to answering the research questions. Develop a preliminary codebook. Use a fine-grained coding approach with the goal of capturing more themes than you expect to remain after the refinement process. Type up a list of the codes, and how many times they were encountered in the coding process.
Session 6: Topic(s) Qualitative Data Analysis

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:

- Develop an analysis plan for qualitative research

Topics:

- Coding
- Building analysis/theory

Competencies

Applied Analytic Techniques: Describe appropriate qualitative data analysis plans for addressing specific research questions.

Required Reading(s):

- Patton, pp. 570-573 (Module 70, “Interpreting Findings, Determining Substantive Significance, Elucidating Phenomenological Essence, and Hermeneutic Interpretation” through “Interocular Significance”; optional but recommended; pp. 576-580 beginning with “Heuristic Inquiry”)

Due Today:

- Coding Assignment,
  Using your interview(s) or any focus group scripts do a close reading of the data with a focus on important emerging themes, keeping in mind key issues critical to answering the research questions. Develop a preliminary codebook. Use a fine-grained coding approach with the goal of capturing more themes than you expect to remain after the refinement process. Type up a list of the codes, and how many times they were encountered in the coding process.

Homework assignment(s):

Chose a partner and share your transcript and the coding list you developed above and train your partner in your codebook to see codes the same way you do. Code your partner’s transcript using your partner’s coding list (your partner will be coding yours using your coding list). Meet to compare your coding and discuss differences in interpretation of the transcribed text. Work together to refine and redefine the code list based on your shared interpretations/agreements, note where you disagree. Write a 1 paragraph description of your experience and perceptions of this codebook refinement process.
Session 7: Topic(s) Mixed Methods and Qualitative software

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:

• Use the basic functions of Atlas.ti

Topics:

• Combining qualitative and quantitative methods
• Software tools, data tracking and management
• Writing up the thematic analysis section of an article

Competencies

Methodology: Compare strengths and weaknesses (feasibility, efficiency, generalizability, validity, and ability to derive unbiased inferences) of different research paradigms and methodologies.

Written Communication: Prepare written presentations of research at a variety of stages to a range of audiences, technical and non-technical, and respond to constructive criticism and questions.

Required Reading(s):


Due Today:

Chose a partner and share your transcript and the coding list you developed above and train your partner in your codebook to see codes the same way you do. Code your partner’s transcript using your partner’s coding list (your partner will be coding yours using your coding list). Meet to compare your coding and discuss differences in interpretation of the transcribed text. Work together to refine and redefine the code list based on your shared interpretations/agreements, note where you disagree. Write a 1 paragraph description of your experience and perceptions of this codebook refinement process.

Homework Assignment:

Nothing due next session but may wish to begin Final Paper Assignment
Session 8: Topic(s) Course Wrap up & Writing About Qualitative Research

At the conclusion of this lecture, the student will be able to:

• Discuss the basic elements of writing qualitative manuscripts.

Topics:

• Publishing qualitative research (Guest Lecturer: Bob Arnold)
• Writing up the qualitative data collection methods
• Discussion of final papers
• Overview and assessment of course

Competencies

Written Communication: Prepare written presentations of research at a variety of stages to a range of audiences, technical and non-technical, and respond to constructive criticism and questions.

Required Reading(s):

• Sandelowski M. Barroso J. Writing the proposal for a qualitative research methodology project. Qualitative Health Research. 13(6):781-820, 2003 Jul.

Due Today:

NA

Homework assignment(s):

Final Paper Assignment

For the final assignment you should provide either a grant or an article methods/analysis section as described throughout the class. The goal is to use this opportunity to refine the prose of the sections that have already been created in order to walk away with a polished approach to qualitative data collection and analysis that you can use for grants and articles. The one segment that is included here that has not been previously assigned and workshopped is a thematic analysis. The methods and approach to this final paper will be spelled out as we go along, as will the final thematic analysis, which will be based on the class codebook refinement assignment.

FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT E-mail an electronic version of the paper to BOTH instructors.