

Qualitative Research Methods

Course Syllabus

Faculty:

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Course Description:

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.

Course Objectives:

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

Location:

2nd floor Parkvale Building, Room 222

Course Credits and Contact Hours:

1 credit, 16 contact hours, 1 session/week for 8 weeks (2 hours/session)

Grading:

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

- 30% Participation
- 40% Course assignments
- 30% Final paper

Overview of Sessions

Session 1 (1/11/11): Overview of Course

- Understanding the characteristics, language and contributions of qualitative research to health and health services research.
- Distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research approaches and methods.
- Session overview, assignments, expectations, etc.
- Student introductions and research interests

Session 2 (1/18/11): Study Design and Interview Data Collection

- Designing research questions
- Sampling
- IRB issues
- Designing an interview guide and interview questions
- Interviewing
- Brief overview of field observation and other methods

Session 3 (1/25/11): Qualitative Data Collection Theory and Codebook Development

- Qualitative schools of thought
- Initial thoughts on qualitative analysis
- ABCs of Codebook development

Session 4 (2/1/11): Writing About Qualitative Research

- Publishing qualitative research (*Guest Lecturer: Bob Arnold*)
- Writing up the qualitative data collection methods

Session 5 2/8/11: Focus Group Data Collection

- Focus groups (*Guest Lecturer: Martha Terry*)

Session 6 (2/15/11): Qualitative Data Analysis

- Coding
- Building analysis/theory
- Working with teams
- Intercoder reliability

Session 7 (2/22/11): Mixed Methods and Qualitative software

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

Session 8 (3/1/11): Intercoder Reliability, Qualitative Check-List, Course Wrap up

- Calculating intercoder reliability
- Discussion of final papers
- Overview and assessment of course

Course Readings

Readings: The course readings will come primarily from the Course Packet and *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* by Michael Quinn Patton (pub 2002 by Sage Publications). Readings described as “required” are those that we feel provide important general insight/information regarding particular qualitative research topics. These are readings from which we intend to build our course lectures and discussions. Readings described as “suggested” are those we felt would further enhance your knowledge and understanding of specific topics with further detail and description. Through the next 8 weeks of this course, we may also bring in additional articles, chapters or articles that we find would be helpful and relevant to your learning.

For each session, students are expected to come with the following reading assignments completed:

Session 1:

- 1) 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

Session 2:

- 1) Kvale S. 1996. “Thematizing and Designing an Interview Study” in *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 83-108.

Session 3:

- 1) Patton, pp. 440 – 442 (Organizing the Data and Protecting the Data) and Patton 452-471 (start with section entitled “Pattern, Theme, and Content Analysis”)
- 2) (*Suggested but not required*): Strauss A and Corbin J. 2000. *Grounded theory methodology: an overview*. In *Handbook of qualitative research*. NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Session 4:

- 1) Patton MQ. 1999. Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research* 34:1189-1208.
- 2) (*Suggested but not required*): Mays, N and Pope C. 2000. *Assessing quality in qualitative research*. *British Medical Journal* 320(7227): 50-52.

Session 5:

- 1) Stewart DW, Shamdasani PN. 1990. “Chapter 1: Introduction” in *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 9-32.
- 2) Stewart DW, Shamdasani PN. 1990. “Chapter 6: Analyzing Focus Group Data” in *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 102-121.

Session 6:

- 1) Pope C. 2000. Qualitative research in health care: analyzing qualitative data. *British Medical Journal* 320(7227): 114-116.
- 2) Sandelowski M. 1998. Writing A Good Read: Strategies for Re-Presenting Qualitative Data. *Research in Nursing & Health* 21: 375-382.

Session 7:

- 1) Morgan DL. 1998. Practical Strategies for Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Applications to Health Research. *Qualitative Health Research* 8(3): 362-378.
- 2) (Suggested but not required): Devers KJ. 1999. How will we know "good" qualitative research when we see it? *Beginning the dialogue in health services research. Health Services Research* 34(5): 1153-1188.

Session 8:

- 1) 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.
- 2) Rowan M, Huston P. 1997. Qualitative Research Articles: Information for Authors and Peer Reviewers. *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 157: 1442-6.

Course Assignments

Assignments: We feel that to best appreciate and understand qualitative methodology, one must experience some of the process—with its various rewards and challenges—first hand. These assignments will serve as the focus of discussion for many of the sessions and, thus, are considered mandatory for full participation in this course. For each session, students are expected to come with the following assignments completed:

Session 2: Interview/Focus Group Script Assignment

Based on class discussion and readings, create or revise interview or focus group questions. Submit for discussion.

Session 4: Interview/Focus Group Assignment

Identify and recruit 1 interview participant or choose 5 interviews or 2 focus groups from data you have already collected. If completing new data collection, conduct 1 audio-taped interview or focus group using your revised interview script. Listen to entire interview/focus group tape(s) or transcript(s), take notes on: interesting findings, ways to revise questions for future use, your/your assistants' interviewing/focus group moderating skills – good and bad. Please type up a minimum of 1 paragraph. on what was interesting in the text you examined, what would be important to capture in codes, what qualitative methods you would use for your data collection/analysis. Also turn in a revised interview/focus group script.

Session 5: Grant/Article language

Turn in your first draft of the qualitative data collection methods. Be sure to include: Description of the sampling frame, qualitative data collection methods, any piloting of the script, training of the interviewers/focus group staff, details of data collection (description of the focus group details, method/procedure for collecting interview data, etc.), method of capturing information (note taking, audio recording, etc.), whether transcripts are used or audio file and details specific to that process.

Session 6: Coding Assignment, Part 1.

You will either work with your own interviews or focus group scripts (or ones provided by the class). Read 5 interviews or 2 focus groups in conjunction with its script and the research questions. 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, provide initial definitions, and how many times they were encountered in the coding process.

Session 7: Coding Assignment, Part 2

Take the coding list developed above and add 5 more interviews or 2 more focus groups. Train your partner in your codebook to see codes the same way you do. Type up a list of these refined codes, provide refined definitions, and how many times they were encountered in the coding

process. Note the frequency of agreement/disagreement per code. Add a 1 paragraph description of success and challenges in this codebook refinement process.

Session 8: Analysis Assignment.

Turn in your first draft of the qualitative analysis section for an article or grant. Be sure to include: qualitative methods used with a description of the overall approach, the codebook development process, the team or individuals who will be involved in coding and the process you will use for training, describe the codebook refinement process, intercoder reliability process, data management, and the approach to the final thematic analysis.

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 DUE MARCH 7, 2011 Email an electronic version of the paper to BOTH Susan Zickmund and Judy Chang (Susan.Zickmund@va.gov and jchang@mail.magee.edu).