Overview

What are the theories, study designs, data gathering methods, and analytical approaches used by qualitative researchers? When and where are qualitative approaches most valuable and appropriate? How should rigor be assessed in qualitative research? In this, the first of two courses on qualitative research, you will learn how to think like a qualitative researcher. You will explore a range of research designs, data collection methods, analytical strategies, and theoretical frameworks, and learn how to thoughtfully evaluate qualitative studies. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Describe differences between qualitative and quantitative research.
- Describe a variety of qualitative study designs and sampling strategies.
- Discuss common qualitative data collection methods and their applications.
- Describe and differentiate among qualitative analytical strategies.
- Identify common theoretical perspectives in qualitative research.
- Describe criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research.
- Competently review qualitative manuscripts.

Resources

Selected articles and chapters in Canvas. These articles will serve as the basis for class discussion.

Responsibilities

Attendance: Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. If you must miss a class session, talk to one of the course instructors about how you can make up the work. You cannot miss more than 2 class sessions without losing 10% of your final grade. Please talk to the course instructors regarding any extenuating circumstances.

Participation: Much of the value of this class will come from discussion, so please come to class prepared to discuss readings, ask questions, and participate actively. Participation is worth 20% of your grade.

Assignments:

- Article Annotations: For Sessions 2, 3, and 4, you will collaboratively annotate the assigned articles. Your annotations should reflect thoughtful consideration of the article’s merits and deficiencies, pose substantive questions, share information about any concepts that you
were not familiar with and looked up, and build on the comments of your classmates. You will do this work in Perusall, an e-reader platform.

- **Article Reviews:** For Sessions 5 and 6, you will respond to the assigned articles as if you were reviewing the manuscript for a journal. Your comments should offer constructive feedback to help the author improve their work. You will submit your reviews via Canvas.

- **Theoretical Exploration:** For Session 7, you will read two of four articles, each representing a different theoretical orientation in qualitative research, and use it to distill what you believe to be the key characteristics of that theoretical framework.

All assignments are due by 5 pm the day before class. Each is worth 10% of your overall grade. A half grade will be docked per day for an assignment received late.

**Final Exam:** Your final exam will involve writing a high-caliber review of a draft manuscript.

If you anticipate problems concerning an upcoming deadline, please consult with the course directors to determine whether alternative arrangements are possible. All assignments must be completed to receive credit and a final grade for the course.

**Grading**

- Participation: 20%
- Assignments: 60%
- Final Exam: 20%

**Webcam Policy**

We prefer to be able to see your face during class, and would like you to activate your webcam if you can. However, we recognize that circumstances do not always allow for webcam activation, so this is not a requirement.

**Course Recording Policy**

We will record class sessions in Zoom and make them available to you for later review. If we use the lecture portions of these videos for any purposes outside of the context of this class, we will do so with student video and audio edited out, out of respect for your privacy. For the same reason, please do not share screen shots or segments of chat outside of this course.

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

**University Academic Integrity Policy**
Students in this course are 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.

**ICRE Equity and Inclusion Statement**

An equitable and inclusive environment strengthens our institution, invigorates our scientific research, and elevates the practice of medicine. Diversity of students, faculty, and staff is critical to the ICRE’s educational mission. By cultivating an equitable and inclusive learning environment, the ICRE seeks to train clinical and translational researchers and medical educators who value and respect the unique perspectives, experiences, behaviors, worldviews, and backgrounds of all individuals.
## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Session 1: Qualitative Research Overview

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Describe the goals, focus, and format of the course
- Discuss the purpose of qualitative research and its principle strengths and weaknesses
- Discuss the key characteristics of qualitative research

Before class:

### Session 2: Research Design

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Recognize the importance of a thorough, thoughtful, not-limited-to-Pub-Med literature review (and the downstream costs of neglecting to do one)
- Apply FINER criteria to evaluate research questions
- Identify appropriate research designs (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) for your research question
- Identify appropriate data collection methods for your research question

Assignment 1 – Read and annotate in Perusall:

### Session 3: Data Collection – Interviews and Focus Groups

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Describe each data collection method, identify its variations and subtypes, and describe its strengths and limitations
• Evaluate research articles exemplifying these data collection methods, identify markers of quality, and discuss how they should be justified in a research proposal.

• Recognize the time, effort, and budget required for transcription, and weigh choices in transcription style.

Assignment 2 – Read and annotate in Perusall:


Session 4: Data Collection – Observation and A-Traditional Methods

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

• Describe each data collection method, identify its variations and subtypes, and describe its strengths and limitations.

• Evaluate research articles exemplifying these data collection methods identify markers of quality, and discuss how they should be justified in a research proposal.

Assignment 3 – Read and annotate in Perusall:


Session 5: Data Analysis – Approaches to Coding

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

• Define what codes are, why we use them, and how they correspond to later stages of analysis.

• Distinguish between inductive, deductive, and combined approaches to coding.

• Discuss coding styles (e.g., lumping and splitting) and the pros and cons of each.

Assignment 4 – Read and write a review:
- **Deductive Coding**: Jih, Jane; La Chica, Trish; Antonio, Luisa M.; Villero, Ofelia O.; Roque, Mary N.; Domingo, Joseph R.; Landicho, Joshua F.; Napoles, Anna M.; Kaplan, Celia P.; and Nguyen, Tung T. (2018) "Application of Photovoice with Focus Groups to Explore Dietary Behaviors of Older Filipino Adults with Cardiovascular Disease," *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 8. Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/jhdrp/vol11/iss2/8

**Session 6: Data Analysis – Content and Thematic Analysis**

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Describe content, thematic, and template analyses.
- Identify the overlap and distinctions between each type of analysis.
- Recognize situations in which you might choose one analytical approach over another.

**Assignment 5 – Read and write a review:**


**Session 7: Theory and Ethics in Qualitative Research**

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Describe four theoretical orientations in qualitative research (qualitative description, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography) and identify their focus, strengths, and limitations.
- Recognize when a term or theoretical perspective is used inappropriately.
- Identify the ethical issues unique to (and not unique to) qualitative inquiry, as well as areas of ethical complexity

**Assignment 6 –** You will be assigned two of the following articles. Please read them before class, and come prepared to describe the key characteristics of the theoretical framework each represents.
Session 8: Assessing Rigor in Qualitative Research

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Identify a range of ways to evaluate the quality of a qualitative research study
- Discuss the pros and cons of qualitative check-lists

Read before class and come prepared to discuss (no written assignment):