



Sociology 497/597*: Qualitative Methodology
Spring 2014**

Professor: Yvonne Villanueva-Russell
Class Times: Tuesday evenings, 5:00PM – 7:40PM
Office: Social Sciences 232
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday: 8AM-9AM; 1:00 PM – 3:00PM
Friday: 8AM-9AM
I should also be in my office 30 minutes before our class each Tuesday
& by appointment
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eCollege Website: <http://online.tamuc.org>

***This particular course can serve as a substitute for the required Sociology 575 course in our Sociology Graduate program. Please let the Director of Graduate Studies know if you intend to use this course in place of Soc 575

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbooks:

- 1) Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Patricia Leavy. 2011. *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. (2nd edition). Sage. ISBN: 9781412974578
- 2) Reserve readings (which will be posted on eCollege)

Other Required Materials:

- 1) Students may want to invest in a hand-held Digital Voice Recorder (which usually comes with transcribing software). Alternately, students may check out a voice recorder for free at Gee Library, but will need to provide their own batteries for the device
- 2) Students will be required to produce a poster with a summary of their research findings. These are relatively inexpensive (between \$5 - \$15) and can be purchased through the Print Shop on campus.

Optional Materials:

- 1) Although not required, I would highly recommend keeping a journal throughout the semester, particularly as we begin the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. Being conscientious of your personal experience, feelings, challenges and growth over the course of the semester is an essential part of qualitative methodology.

Course Description:

This course will provide an overview of qualitative methodology as used in the social sciences. Special attention will be paid to distinguishing the unique epistemology of qualitative methods. Students will be exposed to a variety of qualitative research techniques, including content analysis, focus groups, ethnography, participatory practices with special attention paid to the grounded theory method. Hands-on, applied exercises will be used to gain first-hand experience collecting and analyzing qualitative data.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will show competency in the area of research ethics by completing CITI ethics training.
- 2) Students will demonstrate proficiency in obtaining, reading, comprehending, critiquing and synthesizing peer-reviewed literature as measured in the creation of a literature review.
- 3) Students will demonstrate competence in conducting, transcribing and coding an in-depth face to face interviews or observations
- 4) Students will demonstrate the ability to cite appropriately and write at a level congruent with the professional standards of their discipline.
- 5) Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the methodological steps necessary to conduct qualitative research as measured in a written description of this in their final research project
- 6) Students will demonstrate the ability to interpret and apply their qualitative data to larger concepts and theories in their discipline, as measured in the findings section of their final research project & the poster presentation
- 7) Students will demonstrate the ability to be reflexive of the qualitative research process, as measured in the appendix essay of their final research project

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Instructional Methods

This course is designed to provide students the opportunity to craft the research project that will go on to serve as the foundation for their thesis or nonthesis project. Unlike other courses where a proposal is produced, in our class we will complete an actual project from beginning to end, producing tentative finding, results and conclusions in a mere sixteen weeks! This research project will be written in cumulative assignments. Additionally, students will complete a set of qualitative interviews or observations, or otherwise will analyze a set of qualitative data, described below:

A. IRB Training (worth 25 points)

This exercise is designed to measure student learning objective #1.

Students will be asked to complete human subjects research training through the CITI website. Students who have already completed this training will be asked to turn in their CITI certificates showing that their IRB training is complete and up-to-date.

IRB training can be found by following this link:

http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool/research/responsible_conduct_training.asp

Students will need to complete:

- 1) Responsible Conduct in Research
- 2) Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course

After completing this training, you will need to print out the CITI certificate that documents you have successfully completed all modules with a score of 80% or higher.

B. Research Project

This assignment is designed to measure student learning outcomes 2, 4, 5, 6, 7. The research proposal will be broken into sections, each due at various times over the course of the semester. A breakdown of each section is briefly described here, although more detailed instructions will be handed out in class.

Introduction: (worth 30 points)

Students will provide a discussion of the background of the topic they have chosen. Specifically, students will provide documentation of the size, nature, prevalence and significance of this topic.

Research Question: (worth 20 points)

Students will present clear, explicit research questions that narrow the focus of their research.

Literature Review (worth 75 points)

Synthesizing peer-reviewed research (5-8 sources for undergraduates; 8-10 for graduates), students will embed their research with relevance to the work that has been done by others. Students will also demonstrate the ability to cite in-text and via a works cited page.

Methodology (worth 75 points)

Students will discuss the qualitative research method most appropriate to investigating their chosen topic of study. Students will present a sampling plan, tentative research questions/observation guidelines.

Findings (worth 50 points)

Students will interpret their qualitative data in light of the concepts and theories of their discipline and in light of prior research done by others (as noted in the literature review).

Conclusions/Suggestions for future research (worth 15 points)

Based on their tentative findings, students will discuss what future steps should be taken by researchers to more fully investigate the topic.

Limitations (worth 10 points)

Students will assess the strength of the method(s) chosen, and clearly and explicitly note shortcomings and flaws with their research.

Reflexive Essay (worth 25 points)

Students will reflexively assess their role as researchers, and how the experience of conducting research changed over the course of the semester.

C. Interviews/Observations & Memos (worth 400 points)

This assignment has been designed to meet student learning objective #4

Students will conduct in-depth interviews or observations based on their chosen topic and research questions. Undergraduate students will complete at least 3 interviews; graduate students at least 5. All of these will be recorded, transcribed, and coded. Each interview/observation should involve at least 30 minutes of field work. Students will also write memos that encapsulate tentative findings based on this information. More detailed instructions will be handed out in class about this.

[Depending on the nature of a student's research project, the actual number of interviews/observations may be negotiable. For example, a student performing content analysis of television commercials will not need to perform interviews, but will need to produce the equivalent batches of data analysis (3 or 5) so as to duplicate the amount of work and level of rigor expected in this course. A specific plan for data analysis should be discussed with your professor.]

D. In-Class Poster Presentation (worth 20 points)

This assignment has been designed to measure student learning objective #6

Students will preside over a poster that summarizes the highlights of their research project. This event is held on the final day of class, modeled on what would be done during an academic conference.

II. Grading Procedures

Grading:

Individual assignments in the course include the following:

<u>GRADUATE STUDENTS:</u>		<u>UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:</u>	
Research Question points	20	Research Question points	20
Introduction points	30	Introduction points	30
IRB training/IRB protocol points	25	IRB training/IRB protocol points	25
Literature Review points	75	Literature Review points	75
Methodology points	75	Methodology points	75
Interview 5 @ 40 points points	200	Interview 3 @ 40 points points	120
Coding 5 @ 40 points points	200	Coding 3 @ 40 points points	120
Memos 2 @ 20 points points	40	Memos 2 @ 20 points points	40
Findings points	50	Findings points	50
Suggestions for future research points	15	Suggestions for future research points	15
Limitations points	10	Limitations points	10
Reflexivity Essay points	25	Reflexivity Essay points	25
<u>Final research presentation</u> <u>points</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>Final research presentation</u> <u>points</u>	<u>20</u>
Total points	785	Total points	625

Grades on individual assignments will be decided in the following manner:

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

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

A = 706 points – 785 points
B= 628 points – 705 points
C= 549 points – 627 points
D= 471 points – 548 points
F= 470 points and below

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:

A = 562 points – 625 points
B = 500 points – 561 points
C= 437 points – 499 points
D= 375 points – 436 points
F = 435 points and below

Grades of Incomplete:

I do not assign grades of incomplete in this course. All coursework must be handed in to me by May 2, 2014. Your grade will be assigned based on the points you have earned from all completed work at that time. It is your responsibility to finish assignments prior to their due dates, or to make alternate arrangements for their completion. Do not assume I can or will extend due dates or course requirements for your individual needs or preferences.

I do not drop students from my courses. If you feel Sociology 497/597 is not the course for you, please take the necessary steps to remove yourself from the class. Simply not attending in hopes that I will remedy the situation for you will not happen. You are responsible for the consequences stemming from either coming to class, or not coming to class.

Late work

Most work in our course will be submitted electronically, through the dropbox on eCollege. Late assignments will receive a 10% deduction in points. Assignments cannot be re-done. Extra assignments cannot be done for extra credit. Assignments will not be accepted beyond one week of the deadline.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Statement on Student Behavior

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

The Student Handbook states: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information) It is your prerogative to come to class but by doing so, you are making the commitment to be alert, attentive and courteous. Gossiping, phone calls and newspaper reading can all wait for our break and will not be tolerated while class lecture and discussion are occurring. If you cannot employ enough willpower to control your behavior during class, please stay home and do not distract more serious students from learning in our class.

All cellular telephones, beepers and electronic devices should be turned off or set on silent mode before entering the classroom. **Cell phones must not be visible and may not be checked during examinations. Students are also not permitted to leave the classroom and re-enter it during an examination.** Be sure to have sharpened pencils, tissues and restroom needs taken care of prior to the beginning of the test.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course handouts, instruction assignments, PowerPoint lectures will be posted on eCollege as a supplement. In order to access eCollege, student will need the following:

Ability to open Adobe Acrobat files (.pdf), PowerPoint files (.ppt) and Word files (.doc)

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you [perform a “Browser Test”](#) prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login to eCollege, click on the ‘myCourses’ tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

For those of you who are not familiar with eCollege, I suggest you take the tutorial offered online. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact the folks in Technology Services.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

eCollege technical concerns: Please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling 1-866-656-5511, or through online chat by clicking on the “Live Support” tab within your eCollege course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

I expect each of you to be active and thoughtful participants within our classroom and learning community. You are to expect the same of me. This includes completing our readings related to course topics, individual written assignments, and completion of exams.

Email [Yvonne.VRussell@tamuc.edu] is the best way to reach me, as I check it daily. You can expect to receive a reply to any inquiry within 24 hours (M-F). It is advisable to include the course number and your full name in any electronic correspondence with me.

In case of emergency, you may leave word for me through the Sociology & Criminal Justice department, who can forward your message to me: 903-886-5332.

Check your MyLeo email account regularly for announcements about our class!!!

I. COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Test dates and written assignments are scheduled tentatively at this time. They may be changed but advanced notice will be given in class. You are expected to read the assigned material prior to its discussion in class.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment/ Notes
(T) January 14	Introductory Remarks	None!	
(T) January 21	Qualitative methods as camping: the epistemology of qualitative versus quantitative methods	1] "The Epistemology of Qualitative Methodology" on eCollege 2] "Gangleader for a Day" on eCollege 3] "Smile or Die" on eCollege	
(T) January 28	1] Creating a good research question 2] Ethics	The practice of qualitative research: Chapters 3 & 4 AND "Looking Upward Meekly" on eCollege	
(T) February 4	1] Content Analysis 2] Unobtrusive Methods (Observation)	The Practice of Qualitative Research: Chapter 9 AND "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis" [See also 2 exemplars posted on eCollege]	Turn in Research Question and Introduction sections of Research Project In-class exercise

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment/ Notes
(T) February 11	1] In-Depth Interviewing 2] Ethnography-traditional and online	The Practice of Qualitative Research: Chapters 5 & 8 [See also 2 exemplars posted on eCollege]	Turn in CITI certificate that IRB training has been completed Guest Lecture: Dr. Tabettha Adkins [Department of Literature and Languages]
(T) February 18	1] Oral History 2] Focus Groups 3] Other Interpretive Techniques	The Practice of Qualitative Research: Chapters 6 & 7 [See also exemplars posted on eCollege]	Guest Lecture: Andrea Weddle [Archivist, Gee Library]
(T) February 25	Grounded Theory: Overview	The Practice of Qualitative Research: Chapter 12 AND	You are officially allowed to “enter the field” to begin collecting data!! You will need to have at least one interview/observation completed and transcribed by March 11 th .
(T) March 4	Introduction to Coding	“Identifying Themes” posted on eCollege	Undergraduates: turn in annotated bibliography Graduates: turn in Literature Review Everyone will also turn in the Methodology section of Research Project
(T) March 11	NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK
(T) March 18	Hands-on Coding,	Constructing Grounded Theory: Chapter 3, posted on eCollege	** In-class exercise: Bring THREE copies of any 5 pages of a transcribed interview with you to class

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment/ Notes
(T) March 25	Research Day***	No class lecture or assigned readings this week: Conduct, transcribe interviews/observations	<u>Undergraduates:</u> Conduct at least THREE interviews/observations
(T) April 1	Memos	Constructing Grounded Theory, Chapter 4, posted on eCollege	
(T) April 8	Research Day***	No class lecture or assigned readings this week: Conduct, transcribe interviews/observations	<u>Graduates:</u> Conduct at least FIVE interviews/observations
(T) April 15	Analysis of Qualitative Data	The Practice of Qualitative Research: Chapter 13 AND "Ethnography and Theory" posted on eCollege [See exemplar "illness and identity" posted on eCollege]	Transcribe and code each of these and turn in anytime between March 18-April 22
(T) April 22	Leaving the Field Reflexivity	"On Being a Quasi-Natural Mother" posted on eCollege AND "Common Problems in Field Work"	<u>Everyone</u> will write TWO MEMOS These can be turned in anytime between April 2-April 29
(T) April 29	Research Day***	No class lecture or assigned readings this week: Conduct, transcribe interviews/observations	Submit Reflexivity Essay to dropbox on eCollege by 11:59PM on Wednesday, May 1st . **You should arrange for your poster to be printed at the Print Shop asap***
(T) May 6	Poster Presentations	Poster Presentations	Poster Presentations Submit complete Research Project by 11:59PM on Wednesday, May 7th

***Although we will not have class lecture on these nights, your professor will be available in her office to meet with you should you have any questions particular to your own research project.