

Qualitative Methods in Geography

GEOG 11

Winter 2015

Class location: 008 Fairchild Hall

TTh 4:00 – 5:50; x-hour M 5-5:50

Instructor: Abigail Neely
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Office Hours: Thursday, 1:45p.m. to 3:15p.m.

Aims of the Course:

Questions about how knowledge is produced, who produces it, and what "counts" as knowledge are fundamental to the research process. To better understand knowledge production, this course will provide you with an introduction to how human geographers and other social scientists pose research questions and how they go about answering those questions. In particular, we will focus on building understandings of the qualitative research methods and methodologies employed by geographers studying social relations, human perceptions and experiences, and human-environment interactions. Throughout the course, you will be introduced to several of the main qualitative methods available for geographic analysis and interpretation, including ethnography, interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis. By the end of the course, you will be able to place the various methods we learn about in a broader context of how research is conceived and carried out. You will also be better able to critically evaluate research and to plan your own research project.

Learning Goals

Our most important goal is to learn collectively about how human geographers produce knowledge. Successfully accomplishing this goal involves several components:

- (1) Understanding the meaning and uses of qualitative research in the *production of knowledge*.
- (2) Exploring the different ways that researchers in geography and related fields use qualitative methods *through hands-on exercises*.
- (3) Identifying the *range* of qualitative methods and methodologies (e.g., observations, textual, visual) available to researchers working within geography and other social science disciplines.
- (4) Offering you background knowledge and introductory experiences with some *specific qualitative research methods* (e.g., observation, interviewing, archival research).
- (5) Working *together* to better understand how research projects in human geography are conceived, developed, and carried out.

A Note on Course Format:

The best way to learn the value and appropriate use of qualitative methods is to actually *do* those methods. This course is designed to help you gain experience in a number of different qualitative methods, while providing the time and space to reflect on those methods. As such, our in-class time will be split between methods presentations and discussions, and in-class methods practicums. Course readings and assignments are designed to enhance our in-class experience. In an effort to build a truly collaborative and collective learning environment, we will keep lectures to a minimum as we discuss your work and experiences in the context of course readings. In short, all lessons and discussions will be grounded in the work we are doing in and out of class. This combination of activities (and assignments) will provide you with hands-on experience with methods, as well as the time and space to reflect on how to *do* the work of geographical research.

The course is organized around a **group project**, which you will carry out in teams of 3 or 4. On the first day of class, we will identify several research sites on or near the Dartmouth campus. These sites will provide the basis for your ongoing group project and methods practicums. The themes you will explore around each study site will revolve around traditional geographical concerns with space, place, difference, and/or human-environment relations. Example topics include: the social construction of different places on the Dartmouth campus; human-environment relations in particular places; student use of “commons” areas on campus; the gendered character of different campus locales; different experiences of and access to campus spaces; and the meanings attached to the cultural landscape. We will use the data you all gather through qualitative techniques (e.g., observation, interviewing, archival research) as the “raw material” for data interpretation and reflection, and the group project proposal at the end of the course. There are seven separate components of the group project, culminating in the project proposal in Week 9. You will hand in each component of the mini-project as a group. NOTE: While you will be working in a group to investigate your chosen topic, each group member will keep a separate methods journal and will produce separate reflection papers.

Course Materials and Resources:

Course readings are available as PDFs through our Canvas site.

Additional Support For Your Learning:

Dartmouth has many resources to enhance your learning. Please use them! And remember, the writing center can fill up quickly at the end of term, so be sure to visit early.

Academic Skills Center

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/>

The Research Center for Writing and Information Technology (RWiT)

<http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/support-writing-research-and-composing-technology/rwit>

Ground Rules and Course Expectations:

Because this course is a collective endeavor, it requires that our classroom be a space of mutual respect and collective learning; I expect all students to conduct themselves with these goals in mind. Toward that end, I expect all class members (including me) to be fully prepared every day and ready to participate. This means that you should have completed the day's readings and/or assignments and spent time reflecting on the day's work and how you might contribute in class. Remember, readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus; it is your responsibility to read the syllabus carefully and come to class prepared.

Attendance Policy:

Since much of our learning and work is collaborative, it requires that you attend and participate in every class. In short, your presence matters to your learning. If you do miss class you should still complete the readings and get notes from a classmate. If you miss class on a day when an assignment is due, you should give it to a classmate to turn in or put it in my mailbox in the Geography Faculty Lounge across from 021 Fairchild Hall before class. You are also responsible for all information and handouts disseminated in class, as well as all course requirements. Missing more than two class meetings without a previously-negotiated excused absence will affect your course grade: each additional absence will lower your course grade one-third of a letter grade.

Late Work:

The quarter system provides for a very fast-paced learning environment. Turning in assignments late creates a cascading problem for you, the other members of your group, and me. Unless there is a critical problem -- which you speak to me about in advance, -- I will deduct one-third of a letter grade for each day an assignment is late.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Because laptop screens and cell phones are distracting to other students, because the temptation to multitask on your laptop is so enormous, and because much of the research on student learning has found that laptop use in classrooms *inhibits* learning, **the use of laptop computers or other screen-based devices is not permitted in class (unless noted). This prohibition includes cell phones, ipods, and ipads.** If you use your cell phone in class you will be asked to leave and you will receive a no credit for that day. If you have a reason for needing to use a laptop or other screen-based device that has been authorized by Student Accessibility Services, please let me know as soon as possible.

Academic Honor:

I take seriously Dartmouth's commitment to academic honesty. Please review your responsibilities as a student of Dartmouth at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja/honor/index.html>. We will discuss this further in the first week of class. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask in class (others may have the same question!), or come to my office hours.

Student Needs:

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible.

Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office, 205 Collis Student Center, 646-9900, Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu. Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the original signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to their professor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Some students may wish to take part in **religious observances** that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Assignments and Course Grading:

There are five main components of your grade:

Class Participation, 20%:

A full **20% of your grade** will be for **attendance and participation** in class discussions and methods practicums. Class discussion is the place where you have the opportunity to talk about and connect course readings, your experience with various methods, and your group project. The success of the course demands that everyone be ready to articulate and defend her/his ideas, as well as to listen to and work with the ideas of the other participants. In pursuit of active discussion, all students can expect to be called upon during class. However, I define participation quite broadly (it is not limited to sharing your views during class). Other key forms of 'participation' include:

- noting down key words/concepts that arise from readings
- connecting readings to in class discussions
- raising questions about the content of readings
- connecting different students' comments (and professor's) to each other

In short, full participation points requires that you come to every class prepared, having read and thought about the readings, and having reflected on both your experience with a particular method and how that method relates to your group project. It also requires that

you be fully engaged in the method practicums and in the discussions, and learn from your experiences and your classmates.

As an additional part of their participation responsibilities, each student—in groups of 2-4—will **co-facilitate one discussion session** during the term. In addition to reading articles already assigned, this will entail a careful reading of a recent article in a geography (or related discipline) journal that uses the qualitative approach we will be discussing that day. The exploration of methods in the article may be overt, or it may be more “hidden” (requiring greater interpretation on your part). It is the responsibility of each team to identify this article well ahead of the scheduled discussion date (at least 10 days before the class meeting) and send it to the instructor to post on the Canvas site for the rest of the students. For the discussion, you should put that article into conversation with the other readings for the week and in conversation with your experience in the methods practicum. Presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes, so that we can spend the bulk of our time in discussion.

Methods Journal, 15%:

In tandem with the group project, you are required to keep a personal (not group) “research journal” that documents your experiences, reflections, and changing attitudes towards qualitative research. This type of reflection is increasingly recognized as a critical component of the research process. This journal has two components. First, you should keep a journal (it can be electronic) through which you can trace the evolution of your knowledge about and experience with methods. I imagine that this journal will likely include: (a) notes and questions on the in-class methods practicums; (b) notes, comments, questions, and summaries about course readings; (c) plans for methods practicums; (d) notes on or from the different assignments relating to your mini-project; and (e) reflections on how class readings, discussions, and methods practicums shape your thinking about your group project. I will collect these journals periodically (January 22, February 5, February 24, March 10) in order to check your progress and provide some feedback.

Second, the journal should include your field notes, interview transcripts and notes, and textual analysis. As noted on the syllabus, you will be required to turn in various components from this portion of the journal as separate assignments. These include field notes from the direct observation practicum (January 22), a transcription of your in-class, seated interview (February 5), and a textual analysis assignment (February 26). These mini assignments are worth 5% of your total grade or one-third of your journal grade.

Methods Reflection Assignments, 30% (10% each):

For each of the three major methods we investigate (ethnography, interviews and focus groups, and textual analysis), you will write a 2-3-page (double-spaced, 12-point font) reflection paper. You should view this paper as a place to reflect *analytically* on the materials we read about and discuss in class, your experience *doing* that particular method, and what that method has taught you about your group project. You are encouraged to borrow liberally from your ongoing methods journal, but remember that this paper is an *analytical* reflection that should include both your experience and how your experience tallies with the articles and chapters you are reading.

Group Mini-Project Proposal, 20%:

As you know, GEOG 11 is organized around a group mini-project focused on Dartmouth. These projects will culminate in a **class presentation** in the ninth week of the term. In this presentation, group members will pitch their research project to the rest of the class. This will include the research question, the scholarly literatures the group plans to be in conversation with, the methods they chose and why, and their expected analysis and results. Each group will have 25 minutes maximum to present their “proposal” and the class will have 15 minutes to ask questions. Your classmates will then fill out an evaluation and decide whether or not to “fund” your project.

To help you build a solid research proposal, you and your group will complete a number of smaller assignments over the course of the term. These assignments include: a paragraph on your research interests (to be written separately by each member of the group), a group annotated bibliography, participant observation, your group’s preliminary interview questions, your group’s walking interview questions, two additional interviews each, your group’s focus group questions, a group archival research assignment, and additional project-based textual analysis. You will turn these assignments in for feedback, but your grade will be based entirely on your research proposal presentation in which you will have the opportunity to incorporate feedback on the smaller assignments.

Final Paper: Reflection on Methods Project, 15%:

Your final assignment is a 5-page, double-spaced, 12-point font paper in which you reflect on what you learned in class and what you learned in the development of your group project proposal. Be sure to reflect on the relationship between the question you propose to investigate, the literatures you seek to be in conversation with, the methods you choose to carry out that investigation, and the analysis you plan to do on the new data you will collect. You might also like to reflect on why you chose some methods and not others. Be sure to evaluate critically your own position as a researcher and any ethical considerations that shaped your group proposal. Finally, reflect on the opportunities and the limits of your research plan. What can you learn from your choice of literatures and methods? What can’t you learn? You should definitely use your methods journal and methods reflection assignments in completing the final paper.

Assignment Summary:

Assignments		Due Date	% of Final Grade
In-Class Participation		Ongoing	20%
Methods Journal			15%
	Fieldnotes	January 22	
	Interview Transcript	February 5	
	Textual Analysis	February 26	
	Final Collection	March 10	
Interview and Focus Group Reflection		February 12	10%
Ethnography Reflection		February 19	10%
Textual Analysis Reflection		March 3/5	10%
Group Project			20%
	Research Interests	January 13	
	Annotated Bibliography	January 15	
	Interview Questions	January 26	
	Walking Interview Questions	February 3	
	Focus Group Questions	February 10	
	Archival Assignment	February 24	
	Proposal Presentation	March 3/5	
Final Reflection Paper		March 10	15%

NOTE: We may reassess the syllabus as the term progresses to ensure that we are all getting the most out of class.

Weekly Outline of Classes and Assignments

Week 1 (January 5-9): Introduction to Research Methods

Tuesday: Introductions

Thursday: The “ologies”: ontology, epistemology, methodology

Reading: Dwyer, C. and M. Limb. “Introduction: Doing Qualitative Research in Geography.” In *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*, edited by M. Limb and C. Dwyer. New York: Arnold, 2001, pp. 1-22 (focus on pp. 1-13).

“epistemology,” “methodology,” and “ontology” in the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, edited by Derek Gregory, et. al., 5th edition, 2009, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Graham, E. “Philosophies underlying human geography research.” In *Methods in Human Geography*, edited by Flowerdew, R. and D. Martin. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 2005, pp. 8-33.

Week 2 (January 12-16): Research Design and Ethics

Monday (x-hour): Presentation by a representative from Dartmouth’s Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Tuesday: Library Workshop

Meet in the Carson Instructional Center

Bring laptops and/or tablets and Dartmouth ID

Reading: Bradshaw, M. and E. Stratford. “Qualitative research design and rigour.” In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 3rd Edition, edited by Iain Hay. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 69-80.

Flowerdew, Robin. “Finding Previous Work on the Topic.” In *Methods in Human Geography*, edited by Flowerdew, R. and D. Martin. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 2005, pp. 48-56.

“How to Frame a Researchable Questions” in *Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer*, available online at:
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm>

Peruse: "Positioning Your Argument in a Wider Literature" in *Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer*, available online at:
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/positioning.htm>

Assignment: One paragraph summary of your research questions/interests

Thursday: Power, Positionality, Reflexivity, and Entanglements: Ethics and Research

Reading: Becker, H. Whose side are we on? In *Qualitative Research, Volume IV*, edited by A. Bryman and R. Burgess. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, pp. 33-43.

Neely, A.H. and T.R. Nguse. "Relationship and Research Methods: Entanglements, Intra-Actions, and Diffraction" in *The Handbook of Political Ecology*, edited by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, James McCarthy. New York: Routledge, Forthcoming (2015).

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. "A Theory of Abuse." In *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp. 1-23, focus on 1-15.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Ire in Ireland." *Ethnography* 1, no. 1 (2000), 117-140.

Assignment: Group Project Annotated Bibliography

Week 3 (January 19-23): Ethnography

Tuesday: Ethnography Practicum: Direct Observation

Reading: Watson, A. and K. Till. "Ethnography and participant observation." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, edited by DeLyser et al. London: Sage, 2010, pp. 121-137.

Goodall, H.L. "Representing Ethnographic Experiences: From Fieldwork to Fieldnotes to Stories." In *Writing the New Ethnography*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2000, pp. 83-130.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp.16-38.

Thursday: Ethnography Discussion

Reading: Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 132, 4 (Fall 2005), pp. 56-86.

Peruse the research blog I kept while conducting my dissertation research for examples of ongoing thinking and fieldnotes (<http://ngiyazama.blogspot.com/>)

Reading assigned by **facilitation team #1**

Assignment: Turn in Methods Journal including Ethnographic Fieldnotes

Week 4 (January 26-30): Interviews, Part I

Monday (x-hour): Interview Question Workshop

Reading: Seidman, Irving. "Establishing Access to, Making Contact with, and Selecting Participants" and "Technique Isn't Everything, But It Is a Lot." In *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006, pp. 44-59; 81-96.

Weiss, Robert. "Preparation for Interviewing." In *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press, 1995, pp. 39-59.

Assignment: Group Project Interview Questions

Tuesday: Seated Interview Practicum

Reading: McKay, Deirdre. "Negotiating Positionings: Exchanging Life Stories in Research Interviews." In *Feminist Geography in Practice*, edited by Pamela Moss. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 187-199.

Thursday: No class (moved to x-hour)

Week 5 (February 2-6): Interviews, Part 2

Tuesday: "On the Move" Interview Practicum

Reading: Evans, J. and P. Jones. "The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place," *Applied Geography* 31 (2011): 849-858.

Jones, P., et al. "Exploring space and place with walking interviews." *Journal of Research Practice*, 4, no. 2 (2008): Article D2.

Carpiano, Richard M. "Come take a walk with me: The 'Go-Along' interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being." *Health and Place* 15 (2009): 263-272.

Assignment: Group Project Walking Interview Questions

Thursday: Interview Discussion

Reading: Soss, Joe (2013). "Chapter 6: Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered View of Interviewing for Interpretive Research." In *Interpretation and Method*, edited by D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, pp. 314-337.
Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. "The Common Sense of Sex Work" and "Childhood Violence and Sexual Abuse" from Chapter 2 and "Symbolic Violence of Public Health Outreach" from Chapter 3 In *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp. 52-60, 106-111.

Reading assigned by **facilitation team #2**

Assignment: Turn in Methods Journal including Interview Transcript

Week 6 (February 9-13): Focus Groups

Tuesday: Focus Group Practicum

Reading: Cameron, Jenny. "Focusing on the Focus Group." In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 3rd Edition, edited by Iain Hay. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 152-172.

Kneale, James. "Working with Groups." In *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*, edited by M. Limb and C. Dwyer. New York: Arnold, 2001, pp. 136-150.

Pratt, Geraldine. "Studying Immigrants in Focus Groups." In *Feminist Geography in Practice*, edited by Pamela Moss. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 214-229.

Assignment: Group Project Focus Group Questions

Thursday: Focus Group Discussion

Reading: Pratt, Geraldine. "From Registered Nurse to Registered Nanny: Discursive Geographies of Filipina Domestic Workers in Vancouver, B.C." *Economic Geography* 75, no. 3 (1999): 215-36.

Reading assigned by **facilitation team #3**

Assignment: Interviews and Focus Group Reflection Paper

Week 8 (February 16-20): Textual Analysis, Visual Texts

Monday (x-hour): Reading the Landscape

****Meet in front of Baker Library, dress for an hour outside****

Reading: "How to Read the Landscape" in *Learning to Do Historical Research: Sources*, available online at:
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/landscapes.htm>

Duncan, Nancy and James Duncan. "Doing Landscape Interpretation." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, edited by DeLyser et al. London: Sage, 2010, pp. 225-247.

Tuesday: Visual Methods

****Meet in the Hood Museum****

Reading: Aitken, S. and J. Craine. "Visual methodologies: What you see is not always what you get." In *Methods in Human Geography*, edited by Flowerdew, R. and D. Martin. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 2005, pp. 250-269.

Rose, Gillian. "Toward a Critical Visual Methodology" and "Discourse Analysis I: Text, Intertextuality and Context." In *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: Sage, 2012, pp. 19-40; 189-226.

Thursday: Visual Methods Discussion

****Shortened class, ending at 4:45****

Reading: Lutz, Catherine A. and Jane L. Collins. "Comfortable Strangers: The Making of National Identity in Popular Photography" and "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes." In *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 1-14; 187-216.

Reading assigned by **facilitation team #4**

Assignment: Ethnography Reflection Paper (can be turned in earlier)

Week 8 (February 23-27): Textual Analysis, Written Texts

Tuesday: Archival Research

****Meet in Rauner Special Collections****

Reading: Roche, Michael. "Historical Research and Archival Sources." In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 3rd Edition, edited by Iain Hay. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 173-190.

"Manuscripts and Archives" in *Learning to Do Historical Research: Sources*, available at: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/manuscripts.htm>

Dittmer, Jason. "Textual and Discourse Analysis," In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, edited by DeLyser et al. London: Sage, 2010, pp. 274-286.

Assignment: Group Project Archival Source Assignment

Thursday: Textual Analysis Discussion

Reading: Jarosz, L. and V. Lawson. "'Sophisticated people versus rednecks': Economic restructuring and class difference in America's West." *Antipode* 34, no. 1 (2002): 8-27.

Reading assigned by **facilitation team #5**

Assignment: Turn in Methods Journal including Textual Analysis Assignment

Week 9 (March 2-6): Presentations

Assignment (Due on the day you are not presenting): Textual Analysis Reflection Paper

Tuesday: Group Project Presentations

Thursday: Group Project Presentations

Week 10: (March 9-13)

Tuesday: Reflections on the Research Process

Reading: Rabinow, Paul. "Fieldwork and Friendship in Morocco." In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sulka. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 447-454.

Katz, Cindi. "The Expeditions of Conjurers: Ethnography, Power, and Pretense." In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, edited by Diane L. Wolf. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 170-184.

Assignment: Final Reflection Paper