

COMM7630: Qualitative Research Methods
Tuesdays, 9:30-12:20, CVA506

Instructor: Dr. Florin C. Serban, Tel. 3411-8168

Consultation hours: CVA924A, Tuesdays 12:30 to 14:30, Fridays 16:00 to 18:00.

Email: florinserban@hkbu.edu.hk I am happy to answer your messages within 24 hours and set up appointments to discuss your work and progress whenever necessary. Reach out if you have questions.

Course description and aims:

The course is intended to teach students how qualitative research fits into the social sciences, particularly in Media / Communication Studies, and to enable them to conduct such research independently. The course will cover the philosophical and ethical grounding of qualitative research, provide an analysis of individual qualitative research methods, and allow the students to practice these methods to prepare them for their own research projects

Assumptions:

I will be organized, well prepared, efficient with our time, and enthusiastic about the material and your education, and so should you in order for your learning needs to be fulfilled. The success of this course is, in many ways, contingent on your investment in it. We will discuss together in class the key points of your readings so do not be worried if you get stuck on them. Together we will work things out.

Attendance:

Come to class and/or join our Zoom meetings on time. I understand you might be late sometimes. However, I have very little sympathy for students who are always late. If you have a family or medical emergency, get in touch. I am happy to make whatever accommodations are necessary.

Late work:

Assignments are due by the date and time indicated in the course schedule. Following this, the assignment loses points at a rate of 10% per 24 hours until it is either turned in or ceases to be worth points. The official submission record will be the date and time recorded on Moodle. Deadlines (times as well as dates) are firm. Exceptions will be granted only for family or medical emergencies. Computer or printer failure is not an acceptable excuse for late submission. When hard copies are requested, they should be handed in before the start of our class.

Plagiarism: [University rules on plagiarism](#) will be applied strictly. You are allowed to use generative AI tools. However, make sure you disclose/cite any use of such tools. When in doubt, always ask.

ASSESSMENT

Component	Percent of Final Grade
Class Participation	20%
Interim Research Report	40%
Final Research Report	40%

Class participation – 20 points

Class participation points are not freebies but must be *earned* by your active involvement in the course. Throughout this course, you will be asked to provide three short summaries (less than a page) of our weekly readings. It is up to you to choose the weeks for which you will write these three short summaries. Bring the summaries to class and use them as the basis for our discussion on the ways we can apply these theories.

Interim Research Report – 40 points

For the mid-term assessment of this course, you will have to submit an interim research report of 1,200 words that includes: a rationale for the choice of your research method and the validity of the applied method. You will also have to provide evidence for your consideration and awareness of the research subjects and the relationship with the involved respondents.

Final Research Report – 40 points

For the final grade of this class, you will be asked to consolidate the interim report and integrate it in a 3,000-word paper. The final research report should rely on any of the qualitative research method(s) discussed in class. You will have to write and explain how you would carry out the research, why the method is suitable, what are the obstacles you could find along the way? You will have the opportunity to discuss your research project with the instructor throughout the semester, so rest assured this assignment will be completed, although at times, it will seem to be overwhelming.

Grading of each assignment as well as your final grade is based on the following scale: A 93-100 / A- 90-92 / B+ 87-89 / B 83-86 / B- 80-82 / C+ 77-79 / C 73-76 / C- 70-72 / D 60-69

ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

Assignments and Final Paper Rubrics

Criterion	Emerging 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
Content: 20%	Recall of basic knowledge, but with no	Basic knowledge. Student addresses only	Understanding of knowledge, addressing	Full understanding with elaboration in problem solving.

Criterion	Emerging 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
	evidence of understanding.	rudimentary questions.	complex issues.	
Higher-order thinking (Bloom): 10%	Paper is written at thinking competence of knowledge.	3 lower levels of thinking competence.	Clear thinking competencies of synthesis level.	2 of the 3 top levels thinking in the student's narrative.
Information/Data Collection	Student does not collect the correct information.	Less than the basic required information.	Presence of basic required information.	Information beyond the basic required information.
Analyses: 15%	Insufficient analyses/reflections.	Analyses are sufficient but not well organized.	Analyses are sufficient and organized.	Analyses are organized logically, clearly presented.
Organization: 15%	Organization and structure detract from the message. Writing is disjointed and lacks transition of thoughts.	Structure of the paper is not easy to follow. Transitions need improvement. Conclusion is missing.	Structure is mostly clear and easy to follow. Transitions are present. Conclusion is logical.	Structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow. Transitions are logical. Conclusion is logical and flows.
Format: 10%	A weakly formatted product with little proofreading and time input to ensure that the right format is adhered to.	An adequately formatted product but shows errors and inconsistency with the taught format at different places of the final output.	A well-formatted product but shows a small number of errors at different places of the final output.	A perfectly formatted product that contains hardly any format or spelling errors. Good time, thought and sometimes creativity invested in spacing, choice of typeface and margin usage.
Grammar: 5%	There is a distracting amount of errors in grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and/or capitalization, thus obstructing the reader from understanding the content.	There are a large number of errors in grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and/or capitalization. But the overall product is not obstructive to understanding its meaning.	There are sporadic errors in grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and/or capitalization. The overall product is not obstructive to understanding its meaning.	There are hardly any errors in grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and/or capitalization. The overall product shows professionalism, accuracy and seriousness towards its making.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course schedule is tentative – any changes will be announced in class and/or via email. Please complete the readings in the order indicated in the schedule. All the reading materials for this class are posted to Moodle.

WEEK 1: Tuesday, January 9

Introduction to the syllabus, the course, and each other. What is qualitative research, why do we need it, how it differs from quantitative research?

WEEK 2: Tuesday, January 16

Research Paradigms: Positivism vs. Interpretivism

Readings:

Flick, Uwe. 2020. "Worldviews in Social Research." In *Introducing Research*

Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Research Project. (3rd ed.) pp. 23-36.

Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Lincoln et al. 2017. "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging

Confluences, Revisited." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by

Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (5th ed.) pp. 213-264. Los Angeles,

London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

WEEK 3: Tuesday, January 23

Qualitative Research Design

Readings:

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "Qualitative Research Design." In

Qualitative Research Methods. (2nd ed.) pp. 29-48. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Lindlof, Thomas, R. and Bryan C. Taylor .2019. "Design I: Planning Research Projects." In

Qualitative Communication Research Methods. (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

WEEK 4: Tuesday, January 30

From Research Idea to Research Question

Readings:

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "Designing Participatory Research."

In *Qualitative Research Methods*. (2nd ed.) pp. 49-66. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

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Flick, Uwe. 2020. "From Research Idea to Research Question." In *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Research Project*. (3rd ed.) pp. 61-77. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

WEEK 5: Tuesday, February 6

Interviewing as a Research Tool

Readings:

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "In-depth Interviewing." In *Qualitative Research Methods*. (2nd ed.) pp. 115-136. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Rubin, H.J. and I.S. Rubin. 2012. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." In *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. (3rd ed.) pp. 152-172. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

WEEK 6: Tuesday, February 13 Public Holiday

WEEK 7: Tuesday, February 20

Focus Groups as a Research Tool

Reading:

Hennink, Monique M. 2014. "Designing and Conducting Focus Group Research." In: *Focus Group Discussions: Understanding Qualitative Research*. pp. 50-94. New York: Oxford University Press.

Deadline: Decide on a topic for the final assignment

WEEK 8: Tuesday, February 27

Textual Analysis: The power of symbols for denotative, connotative meanings and myth creation

Reading:

Stokes, Jane. 2003. "Analysing Media and Cultural Texts." In *How To Do Media and Cultural Studies*. pp. 51-80. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

WEEK 9: Tuesday, March 5

Production Research and Reception Studies

Readings:

Stokes, Jane. 2003. "Researching Media Institutions and the Culture Industries." In *How to Do Media and Cultural Studies*. pp. 99-127. London: Sage.

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Stokes, Jane. 2003. "Methods of Analysing Audiences." In *How to Do Media and Cultural Studies*. pp. 128-153. London: Sage.

Deadline: Interim Research Report

WEEK 10: Tuesday, March 12

Participant Observation and Ethnography

Readings:

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "Observation." In *Qualitative Research Methods*. (2nd ed.) pp. 169-200. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Machin, David. 2002. "What is Ethnography?" In *Ethnographic Research for Media Studies*. pp. 1-32. London, Arnold.

WEEK 11: Tuesday, March 19

Life Histories: Personal experience method

Readings:

Denzin, Norman and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1998. "What Life Writers Do: The Craft of Biography." In *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. pp. 190-199. London: Sage.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M.. 1994. "Personal experience methods." In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. pp. 150-177. London: Sage.

Cheng, Helen. 2000. Phai-mia. *The Hong Kong Anthropologist* (13). pp. 1-10.

WEEK 12: Tuesday, March 26

Dealing with Data: A qualitative analysis

Readings:

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "Textual Data Analysis." In *Qualitative Research Methods*. (2nd ed.) pp. 235-265. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Flick, Uwe. 2020. "Analyzing Data." In *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Research Project*. (3rd ed.) pp. 261-295. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

WEEK 13: Tuesday, April 2 Public Holiday

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WEEK 14: Tuesday, April 9

Presentation Strategies: Making sense of key findings, building an argument, drawing implications from your research

Readings:

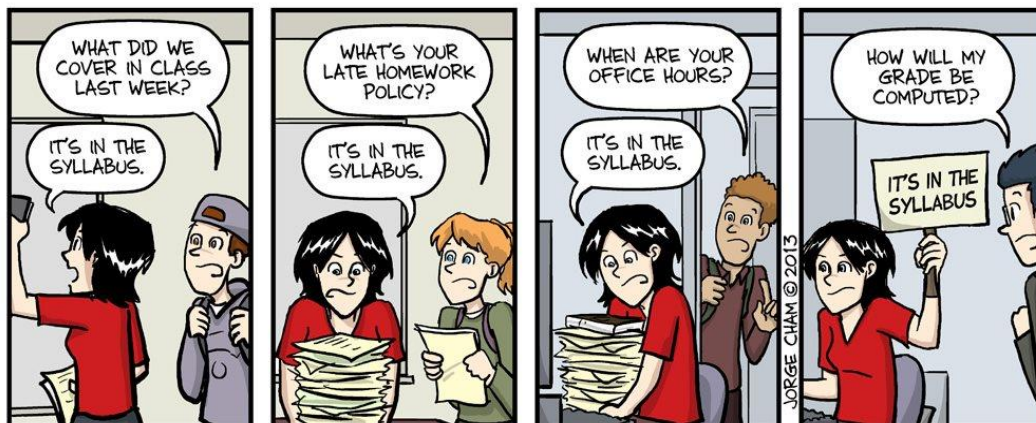
Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey. 2020. "Academic Writing of Qualitative Research." In *Qualitative Research Methods*. (2nd ed.) pp. 291-318. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

Flick, Uwe. 2020. "Writing Up Research and Using Results." In *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Research Project*. (3rd ed.) pp. 325-345. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: Sage.

WEEK 15: Tuesday, April 16

Individual consultations on your final research projects: I will meet you in small groups and provide feedback

****Upload your final projects to Moodle on April 23, no later than 6:00PM****



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

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Weekly Schedule for COMM7630 Qualitative Research Methods

W	Date	Topic	Notes/Assignments Due
1	January 9	Introduction to the course, to each other, course overview & planning	
2	January 16	Positivism vs. Interpretivism	
3	January 23	Qualitative Research Design	
4	January 30	From Research Idea to Research Question	
5	February 6	Interviewing as a Research Tool	
6	February 13	PUBLIC HOLIDAY	
7	February 20	Focus Groups as a Research Tool	Deadline: Decide on a topic for your Research Report
8	February 27	Textual Analysis: The power of symbols for denotative, connotative meanings and myth creation	
9	March 5	Production Research and Reception Studies	
10	March 12	Participant Observation and Ethnography	Deadline: Interim Research Report
11	March 19	Life Histories: Personal experience method	
12	March 26	Dealing with Data: A qualitative analysis	
13	April 2	PUBLIC HOLIDAY	
14	April 9	Presentation Strategies: Making sense of key findings, building an argument, drawing implications from your research	
15	April 16	Individual consultations on your qualitative research projects: I will meet you in small groups and provide feedback	
	April 23, 6:00PM	Upload a soft copy to Moodle	Deadline: Final Research Report