

Qualitative Research Seminar
Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) 108, 2 Credit Hours
Fall 2012
Oxford College of Emory University

Day & Time: Thursdays, 1:40-3:20pm
Location: FTDC (between East Village & Emory st.)

Dr. Satu Riutta
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Tues 3-4:30 & by appt
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Course Description

This is a new, hands-on seminar introducing students to qualitative research methods used in the social sciences and in the field of education. It contrasts qualitative with quantitative methods and focuses on applying research skills in practice by having students conduct focus groups and analyze data gathered. The course teaches students about collecting, managing, and analyzing qualitative data and about the research process in general. So notice: the course is about methods, not content knowledge. The skills to be taught also include respondent selection, interviewing, and report writing. Students collect data from their peers at Oxford, code the answers, write a report, and, as a final product, make a formal presentation to Oxford faculty, staff (and students). They will also learn about ethical conduct of research, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should have made progress in the following skills:

1. *Applying* knowledge of qualitative research methods, specifically, focus group/interviewing skills in practice, including *analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of interview material* --PRIMARY COURSE GOAL
(In the language of the IDEA course evaluation form: "Learning to apply course materials (to improve rational thinking, problem solving and decisions)")
2. Learning to *identify and ask relevant questions* to solve a research puzzle--PRIMARY COURSE GOAL
(Closely related objective on the IDEA course evaluation form: "Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers")
3. Being mindful of research ethics--PRIMARY COURSE GOAL
4. Working as part of a research team--listening, communicating, compromising, sharing responsibility
(In the language of the IDEA course evaluation form: "Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team")
5. Summarizing findings effectively in a written report
(In the language of the IDEA course evaluation form: "Developing skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing")

Assignments & Grading

Grades (A, B, C, D, and F, with plus/minus a possibility) will be based on the following assignments and weights:

	<u>Weight:</u>
Research Ethics: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Citi Certification	10%
This is the official training/certification program that each person conducting “research involving human subjects” at Emory University is required to complete. It involves reading documents online and taking multiple-choice tests online, quizzing you on the contents of each module. Completion takes about 4.5 hours. <u>Bring a printed copy of your results to class. Due on September 13th.</u>	
Reflection paper (“How I Did as an Interviewer & How We Did as a Team”)	20%
This is about a 5-page (double spaced, 1-inch-margin, 12-point-font) paper in which you are asked to evaluate yourself <u>as a focus group interviewer and note taker over the course of the semester, as well as how your team worked together</u> . Please evaluate your performance in the focus group process from the point of view of issues discussed in the course so far, including ethical considerations, effective questions, running the focus groups, etc. Which ethical principles did you follow? Do you feel you/your team improved over time? How? Did you obtain the information you wanted? Please include some observations of both what you/your team did well, and how you think you could improve. Feel free to also reflect on how you think the whole focus group session(s) could have been improved (context, respondent selection, etc.). Please note: grading will not be based on how you rate yourself, but on how thoughtful your reflection is (and how clearly you express it in writing). <u>Due on November 8th, with optional draft paper due to me in class on Nov. 1st. Only hard copies of each will be accepted.</u>	
Attendance & Participation	20%
Since we only meet once a week, attendance in each class session is expected. So are thoughtful contributions that demonstrate completion of required readings/assignments.	
Concept Maps/Summaries of Text/Other Assignments	10%
For some readings, you will be asked to prepare your own concept map in which you organize the key concepts in the reading and their interrelationships with one another in a chart/diagram, which you will hand in on the day the reading is due. You may be asked to share yours in class. Think of this as “categorically” presenting how the chapter makes sense to you. For some other readings, you might be asked to summarize the text in, say, 100 words, or do something else.	
Final Written Report	20%
You will write a 10-12 page (double spaced, 1-inch-margin, 12-point-font) paper summarizing the findings from the focus groups in which you participated (further instructions will be forthcoming). Note: the paper will be evidence to me of how you analyze, synthesize, and evaluate interview material so as to answer your research question. <u>Due on Dec. 13th, with optional draft paper due to me at 5pm on Dec. 10th. Only hard copies of each will be accepted.</u>	
Oral Presentation	20%
You will make about a 20-minute oral presentation with 1-3 other students about your main findings to a group of students, faculty and/or staff (audience TBD), and answer follow-up questions from them. Half of the grade comes from the overall group presentation, the other half from your part in the presentation. See schedule for possible dates.	

About submitting assignments: You might be asked to submit assignments via Blackboard’s SafeAssign feature, which screens the material against a variety of databases. The purpose of this feature is to minimize plagiarism and

to help educate students about the proper citation of any borrowed content. The submission of another's work as one's own without adequate attribution is a violation of the Honor Code and may result in disciplinary action.

Readings

Available at the Bookstore:

Merriam, Sarah B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Revised and Expanded from *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Available Online (www.euclid.emory.edu):

Barbour, Rosaline S. 2007. *Doing Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Class Policies

1. Attendance is mandatory. Absences can be excused without penalty only for documented and college approved reasons. Class roll will be taken at the beginning of the class, and if you are late, it is your responsibility to contact me after class to make sure I change your attendance record for that day.
2. Late work will be accepted but will not receive the same grade as the same work submitted on time would.
3. In this class we adhere to the Oxford College Honor Code, and I assume your understanding of the Code. This means, for example, that any writing you submit must be your own, and quotations as well as information paraphrased from another source must be appropriately acknowledged through citations in the proper form. If you have any questions about this, please contact me.
4. Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

Tentative Schedule

*Note: Readings are due on the day they are marked in the schedule.

August 30: Introduction, Plan of the Course

September 6: Survey of Qualitative Methods
- Chapter 1 ("What is Qualitative Research") in Merriam
- Concept Map due
* Research project introduced
* Instructions for CITI certification distributed

September 13: Research Ethics
- IRB's CITI certification due
* Talk by Emory IRB rep.

September 20: Formulating Good Questions
- Chapter 5 ("Conducting Effective Interviews"—only pp. 87-91 & pp. 95-109) in Merriam
- Concept Map due
* Wabash National Study survey questions distributed
* Instructions for the (Reflection Paper and) Final Written Report distributed

September 27: Sampling, Participant Recruitment, Running of Focus Groups

- Chapters 5 ("Sampling") and 6 ("Practicalities of Planning and Running Focus Groups"--only until end of "Ordering of Questions and Exercises" section) in Barbour

October 4: Modeling a Focus Group in Class; Coding of Data

- Chapter 9 ("Starting to Make Sense of Focus Group Data") in Barbour
- Optional reading: Chapter 8 ("Qualitative Data Analysis") in Merriam (the chapter can help you understand data analysis)
- Concept Map due

October 11: "Quality" in Qualitative Research

- Chapter 9 ("Dealing with Validity, Reliability, and Ethics") in Merriam
- Concept Map due

Oct. 17-18: Conduct First Focus Group (scheduling to be worked out)

October 18: Discuss First Focus Group Experience in Class

(October 19: Last day to withdraw from class without academic penalty)

Oct. 22-26: Conduct **Two** Focus Groups (scheduling to be worked out)

October 25: NO CLASS

Oct. 29-Oct 31: Conduct Last Focus Group (scheduling to be worked out)

November 1: Analyze Focus Group Experience and Work on Focus Group Data in Class

- OPTIONAL Draft Reflection Paper due in class. If you select to do this, please come and see me during the office hour on Nov. 6th (or make an appointment) to receive feedback.

November 8: Methods Section of a Written Report

- Appendix ("The Methodology Section of a Qualitative Research Study") in Merriam
- A draft Methods Section due in class (~1-2 pages).
- Reflection Paper due in class

November 15: Written Report

- Reading and/or assignment TBA

November 22: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

(a)

Nov. 29 (12:00) Group 1 Presents Findings to Faculty at a "Lunch and Learn"
Lil's (Dean's Dining Room)

November 29: Work on Presentations or Research Paper in Class

(b)

Dec. 5th (9am) Group 2 Presents Findings to Staff at Oxford Staff Organization Meeting
Tarbuton Hall?

(c)

Dec. 5th (12:00) Group 3 Presents Findings to Faculty at a “Lunch and Learn”
Lil’s (Dean’s Dining Room)

Dec. 6th Summary of Course; Course Evaluations

(Dec. 10th: OPTIONAL draft Final Written Report due to me by 5pm)
- If you select to do this, please make an appointment to come and see me for feedback starting at 3pm on Dec. 11th.
- The draft report must be a hard copy. Emailed reports will not be accepted.

Dec. 13th: Final Written Reports due at 5pm in my office
- The Report must be a hard copy.

Note: this syllabus outlines a general plan for the course; modifications may be necessary.