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Applied Qualitative Research Methods

Fall 2017

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Office Hours: Thursdays 3-5pm (most weeks – check for availability).

WELCOME TO QUALITATIVE METHODS! This class is designed to introduce students to qualitative research methods. You will learn about the applications of qualitative methods to clinical and health related research and when (and why) qualitative methods may be a good approach to addressing a research question. This course focuses on practical skills while laying the foundation for understanding why we do what we do in qualitative research. As the class progresses, we will explore some of the most common qualitative research methods, focusing on the “how” of collecting, managing, and analyzing qualitative data. We will also address emerging topics such as using qualitative methods to develop or refine survey measures or evaluate an intervention, and engaging stakeholders in clinical or other health research. The culminating project will be a complete qualitative research proposal. Activities throughout the semester are designed to apply knowledge, develop skills in qualitative research, and lead up to the final proposal. You may integrate the activities with your research interests. At the end of the course, you will be prepared to propose and conduct a qualitative research study.

Each class includes a didactic and hands-on learning portion. We will often do in-class exercises to reinforce lessons and work through common challenges encountered in qualitative research. The professor may ask for students to volunteer their research ideas for class discussion.

COMPETENCIES:

At the end of the class, students will be able to:

1. Develop a qualitative research question and plan a research study, including selecting the most appropriate method to achieve stated goals.
2. Collect, manage, and analyze basic qualitative data.
3. Recognize and address IRB and ethical concerns that may arise in a qualitative study.
4. Critically evaluate quality and validity in qualitative research and effectively use this skill to critically evaluate the qualitative literature and one’s own qualitative research.
5. Communicate qualitative study findings effectively to various audiences including non-qualitative researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.

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TEXT BOOK:

Russ Bernard. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Alta Mira Press. Currently in the 5th Edition; older editions are acceptable but you will need to figure out which chapter best matches the assignment. *This text is not directed at health research, but is a comprehensive resource for many qualitative methods and offers a quite practical perspective on research.*

Optional Resource:

Maxwell. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Sage Publications.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS:

Each week, we will also use relevant articles to demonstrate and discuss how these methods and ideas are used in practice. Please check Blackboard to obtain links to articles. Readings will be distributed about one week in advance of class.

It is the student's responsibility to check for readings and come to class prepared to talk about the reading. You may also be asked to find a relevant article and come prepared to present it. There may be books or web resources identified during a particular slide set that you will find useful should you decide to pursue more information.

ABSENTEE POLICY:

This is an active learning class. Participation in the class activities is a critical part of the learning process. You are expected to contact the instructor if you will need to miss class, and you will lose a participation point for each class you miss. Excessive missed attendance (> 3) or tardiness will result in additional lost participation points and may result in the professor contacting the MPHS program administrators.

CLASS SCHEDULE

THE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS MAY CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS AND THE CLASS OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

Class #	Topic	Deliverables due or notes:
1. (8/29)	<p>Introduction to Qualitative Research</p> <p><i>In this session we will cover the types and forms of qualitative research, differences between quantitative and qualitative research, underlying philosophies of qualitative approaches and how we develop qualitative research questions. What methods are available to you? What factors need to be considered in designing and conducting a qualitative study?</i></p> <p>Reading: Bernard Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 (54-71)</p>	
2. (9/5)	<p>Sampling and Sample Size:</p> <p><i>We'll discuss how to choose a population, develop a sampling scheme, and different strategies for actually getting the sample you want/need.</i></p> <p>Reading: Bernard, Chapter 5 Sampling 1; and Chapter 7 Sampling III - Nonprobability Samples and Choosing Informants</p>	
3. (9/12)	<p>Ethics in Qualitative Research:</p> <p><i>This interactive class will address IRB issues in conducting qualitative research, and will include a more broad discussion of ethical challenges in qualitative research. Particular attention will be paid to working with under-served or vulnerable populations in our work.</i></p> <p>Reading: See Blackboard for readings</p>	DUE: Problem Statement
4. (9/19)	<p>Methods I: Interviews:</p> <p><i>Interviews are one of the most commonly applied qualitative method, but there are a range of types of interviews and several decisions that must be made when conducting interview research. This class will also address interviewer selection and training, and the characteristics of a good interview/interviewer.</i></p> <p>Reading: Bernard, Chapter 8, Interviewing I: Unstructured and Semistructured. Optional: Chapter 10, Interviewing III- Cultural Domains, and Chapter 12, Participant observation</p>	<p>DUE: Critique 1</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">In-class exercise</p>
5. (9/26)	<p>Methods II: Cognitive Interviews</p> <p><i>Validated measures are great – except when they aren't. We will examine when it is appropriate to use validated survey measures, and how we decide if a measure is appropriate. We will discuss how to use cognitive interviewing to develop or evaluate measures.</i></p> <p>Reading: No Chapters, additional articles may be assigned.</p>	<p><i>Guest Speaker, Dr. Lauren Arnold</i></p>

6. (10/3)	Strategy Session: What are your Measures? Asking Good Open-Ended Questions	
	<i>The questions we use for participants in qualitative work are often very different from what we would put on a survey (Even though the principles are similar). In this class we will address the different types of questions and how to write them, including: What makes a good question? How are qualitative measures different from those used in quantitative approaches?</i>	
	<u>Reading:</u> No Chapters, additional articles may be assigned.	
7. (10/10)	Methods III: Focus Groups:	DUE: Interview Skills Packet
	<i>Most people probably have heard about focus groups, but may be stumped when it comes to how to actually do it. We'll address when focus groups are a good choice and the multitude of factors that go into planning – and conducting – a focus group study.</i>	
	<i>Class Exercise: Practice Focus Group – Come Prepared to Talk!</i>	
	<u>Reading:</u> No Chapters, additional articles may be assigned.	
8. (10/17)	Analysis I : Field Notes and Data Management	
	<i>Qualitative research is complex and collects a wealth of data. How do you capture the things that happen that aren't on an audiotape? How do you keep all those parts organized and not get lost in the mound of data?</i>	
	<u>Reading:</u> Bernard, Chapter 13, Field Notes and Database Management.	
9. (10/24)	Analysis II: Creating and Coding Transcripts:	
	<i>Moving from an audio-recording to actually pulling out information is the key challenge in qualitative analysis. We will discuss issues in transcription (there's more than you think) and introduce the concepts of coding and codebooks – the 'meat' of qualitative analysis.</i>	
	<u>Reading:</u> Bernard, Chapter 15 Introduction to Analysis (very short); Chapter 18, Text Analysis I	
	<u>Recommended:</u> Chapter 19, Text Analysis II	
10. (10/31)	Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods	DUE Article Critique 2
	<i>There are a number of ways in which qualitative research can support or be supported by quantitative methods. This is more than just using two methods, we will discuss how to conduct "mixed methods" research where one method informs – or is informed by – the other approach. This often produces a better understanding of the issue under study.</i>	

11. (11/7)	Analysis III: Rigor and Quality in Qualitative Research; Evaluating Qualitative Research <i>Reliability, validity, and rigor all apply to qualitative research, but we measure them slightly differently from how we do in quantitative work. We will explore how to ensure rigor in our qualitative work, and how to critically evaluate quality in the published literature.</i>	
12. (11/14)	Class presentations of your research proposal, Part 1	
13. (11/21)	Special Topic: Patient Centered Research and Engaging Stakeholders: How can we learn from Qualitative Methods? <i>Increasingly, funders such as PCORI and the FDA call for stakeholders to be engaged in research. We'll talk about how applying qualitative strategies and principles can help us achieve this goal.</i> Special Topic:	DUE Analysis Skills Packet
14. (11/28)	Class Presentations, Part 2	
15. (12/5)	Analysis IV: Presenting and Writing Up Qualitative Research: Choosing Quotes, (Revisit Coding) <i>One of the hardest parts is bringing a bunch of pieces of coded text into a meaningful presentation of our research findings and their implications. We will re-visit coding, discuss how to move from codes to findings, and explore different ways of presenting findings. A critical piece of this is how we identify the quotes we present in a paper or presentation to support our findings.</i>	
16. (12/12)	Wrap Up and Special Topics (Class Choice)	DUE: Research Proposal
17. (12/19)	Class Debrief Software to Support Qualitative Research <i>What are your options and why is it useful? Can software analyze your data at the push of a button?</i>	

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DELIVERABLES

Assignments were developed to allow student to apply the knowledge and skills. Assignments and brief descriptions are listed below; additional details will be provided separately. All assignments, point distributions, and due dates may be changed at the discretion of the Professor. It may help you to focus your assignments on a topic of interest to you, so that each assignment corresponds to the others and builds toward your eventual research proposal.

Homework and in-class assignments (Total 45 points)

1. Problem Statement Worksheet and Specification of Research Question (10 points).

- a. **Problem Statement.** Please follow the instructions on your handout; some of the exercise is provided for you to work on by yourself, the rest should turned in.
- b. **Research Question and Data Collection Questions.** For this assignment you will take a clinical or public health topic, specify a research question, and develop 3-5 interview/focus group questions that you might use.

2. Interviewing Skills Packet (10 points)

- a. **Interviewer guide.** Many times you may have a research assistant do some of your interviews, you should be prepared on how to train them.
- b. **Practice interview and Transcript** You will conduct **TWO** brief practice interviews and audio record them. You will transcribe your audio recorded interviews on your own (not using software).

3. Analysis Skills Packet (10 points)

You will be instructed on how to obtain text to “code” for this assignment.

- a. **Codebook Practice.** Based on your text, you will identify a few (3-5) codes and develop a codebook for these.
- b. **Practice Coding Exercise.** Based on your codebook (3a), code several pages of text and identify 1 or 2 themes that are in the data.

4. In-class activities and participation (15 points). Successful learning in this class will only come from active participation in the class discussions and exercises. Active participation means engaging in the activity or discussion – both in terms of speaking your perspective and listening to and respecting other student’s opinions.

Article Critiques (10 points each, 20 points total):

See the course policies for expectations about written work that is turned in.

- ✓ **Article Critique 1:** Review a Qualitative Article and assess the methods. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research method described by the authors, including whether it fits the research question and whether the sample is appropriate. If appropriate, bring along questions about statements in the text that are unclear or that you have questions about. Expected length = 2-3 pages, double spaced
- ✓ **Article Critique 2:** Using the knowledge gained throughout the semester, critically evaluate and discuss a qualitative article of your choice. Focus on the analysis, results, and conclusions. Overall, how well did the investigators/authors “do”? Can you identify strengths of the study/approach? Are there things you would have suggested/asked as a reviewer? Are there things you might have done differently if you were the investigator? Expected length 2-3 pages, double spaced.

Research Proposal & Presentation (30 points written, 5 points oral; 35 points total)

This is the culminating project of the class. Students will be expected to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the class into a cohesive qualitative research proposal. This includes a research proposal and a class presentation; written proposals will be due at the end of the semester. Proposals vary in length but are generally 8 to 10 pages. Further instruction will be provided. Presentations are in November and this is designed as a chance to present your idea and

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work through any method issues with the instructor and your classmates. The amount of time dedicated to class presentations varies based on class size, but is usually about 20 minutes, including time for discussion.

POLICY ON DUE DATES AND GRADING

Class starts promptly at 1pm. You are expected to arrive on time.

The Late Homework policy is described in Course Policy Document. Assignments are due at the start of class. 1/3 letter grade or the point equivalent will be deducted from the grade for that assignment for each day late (24 hr day), starting the day it is due at the beginning of class.

It is understandable that clinical or personal emergencies may arise unexpectedly. The expectation that assignments are turned in on time is across the board (no exceptions) and you should plan ahead by having assignments done early.

Assignments may be emailed to the instructor (before class) or brought to class.

Attendance will factor into the participation grade and, of course, the in-class work and your learning experience. Please advise the instructor in advance if you expect to be out (an e-mail is acceptable). The point system for the in-class activities is already built in, so there is no additional leeway for missed class days.

EXCEPTION TO LATE GRADE POLICY:

The written Research Proposal must be turned in ON TIME as grades as due to the Registrar within 48 hours of that class. **Proposals are due by 1:00 pm Central Time on December 12, 2017. They will not be accepted after that time.**

GRADING SCALE:

<72 points = C- or below

73-77 points = C

77-79 points = C+

80-82 points = B-

83-87 points = B

88-89 points = B+

90-92 points = A-

>93 points = A

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STUDENT RESOURCES:

WUSM Mental Health Services:

Mental Health Services are available for full-time students enrolled on the Medical School campus. Students can self-refer to a counselor (phone: 314-362-2404, Option # 1 or Option # 2); or make an appointment with Dr. Karen Winters through Student Health Services (SHS), telephone: 314-362-3523, and follow the prompts.

There are also contractual mental health service providers who are available off-campus. More information regarding this coverage and a list of participating providers are accessible via: <https://wusmhealth.wustl.edu/>. Students should then click on Students and scroll down to the Mental Health Information: <https://wusmhealth.wustl.edu/students/mental-health-information/>.

The Brown School has similarly available resources.

ACADEMIC AND NON ACADEMIC TRANSGRESSIONS

Disciplinary actions for non-academic transgressions:

Matters involving possible breaches of professional integrity shall be brought to the attention of the Program Committee. Individual(s) raising concern regarding possible misconduct must inform the Program Director of his/her concern in writing.

Behavior inappropriate to the program includes breaches of personal confidence and trust including cheating or unauthorized use of materials during examinations; abuse, misrepresentations or other seriously improper conduct in relation to patients, faculty, staff, or colleagues; and other misconduct, misrepresentation or failure in personal actions or in meeting obligations. Concerns will be held confidential and reviewed by the Program Committee.

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POLICY ON ABUSIVE CONDUCT:

Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine (WUSM) is committed to having a positive learning and working environment for its students, faculty and staff. All individuals have the right to enjoy an environment free from all forms of conduct that can be considered harassing, threatening or intimidating. In addition, academic freedom can exist only when every person is free to pursue ideas in a non-threatening atmosphere of mutual respect. WUSM is committed to protecting the academic freedom and freedom of expression of all members of the school community and this Policy against abusive conduct will be applied in a manner that protects those freedoms. Abusive conduct is reprehensible and threatening to the careers, educational experience, and well-being of all members of our community and will not be tolerated. This Policy applies to all students, faculty and staff and is in addition to the Washington University Sexual Harassment and Discriminatory Harassment policies.

What Is Abusive Conduct?

Abusive conduct is behavior that creates an intimidating environment and is likely to interfere with an individual's work or education. This conduct can be verbal, visual, physical or communicated in writing or electronically. Such conduct is typically directed against a particular individual or individuals. It includes, but is not limited to, situations in which one person has authority over another. In such situations, abusive conduct is particularly serious because it may unfairly exploit the power inherent in a faculty member's or supervisor's position.

Examples of conduct that may be considered abusive include but are not limited to:

- threatening or intimidating behavior or words (written or oral);
- obscenities/profanities (verbal or gestures) directed at a person;
- threatening or obscene gestures, jokes, or cartoons;

- degrading a person or a group on the basis of a personal or cultural characteristic;
- taunting, jeering, mocking, or humiliating another person through acts or words;
- screaming and/or yelling at or around others;
- insulting someone, especially in the presence of others; and
- endangering the safety of an individual or individuals.

In considering a complaint under this policy, the following understandings shall apply:

- 1) Abusive conduct must be distinguished from behavior which, even though unpleasant or disconcerting, is appropriate to the carrying out of certain instructional, advisory, or supervisory responsibilities. In the context of patient care clear and direct communication may be necessary in order to deliver safe, effective, appropriate, and timely clinical treatment.
- 2) Instructional responsibilities require appropriate latitude for pedagogical decisions concerning the topics discussed and methods used to draw students into discussion and full participation.

The fact that someone did not intend to be abusive is generally not considered a sufficient defense to a complaint, although the reasonableness of the accuser's perceptions may be considered. In most cases, it is the characteristics and the effect of the behavior on the complainant and whether a reasonable person would find the conduct abusive that determines whether the behavior was abusive.

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Reporting Abusive Conduct

The School of Medicine can respond to specific instances and allegations of abusive conduct only if it is aware of them and therefore encourages anyone who believes that he or she has experienced abusive conduct to come forward promptly with inquiries, reports, or complaints and to seek assistance. In addition, any faculty member, manager, or employee who becomes aware of instances or allegations of abusive conduct, by or against a person under his or her supervisory authority, is required to report it to the appropriate dean, director, department head, or other similar administrator or to the WUSM Human Resources Office. Once a complaint is received, it is the responsibility of the dean, director, department head, or similar administrator to respond to the allegations and reports of abusive conduct and take corrective action, if appropriate, or to work with WUSM Human Resources to develop such a response and corrective action, if appropriate. All complaints and their resolution must be reported to WUSM Human Resources.

DISABILITY POLICY

Here are some relevant links for disabilities. If students require accommodations, they need to let the instructor know.

<https://bulletin.med.wustl.edu/policies/washington-university-school-of-medicine/policies-related-to-student-rights-procedures-and-services/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

All relevant policies can be found in the Bulletin of the School of Medicine

<https://bulletin.med.wustl.edu/policies/washington-university-school-of-medicine/>

Per the bulletin posting, students need to share their disability and request for accommodations with the Allison King, MD, MPH, PhD, Associate Director for Medical Students.

RELEVANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES

All students and faculty are expected to adhere to all university policies.

Governance and [Policies](#)

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Policy on Consensual Faculty-Student Relationships](#)
- [Policy on Discriminatory Harassment](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Statement](#)
- [Research Integrity](#)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

- [Academic Integrity Policy for Graduate Students](#)

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OTHER WUSTL RESOURCES

- ✓ English Language Courses for Academic and Professional Communications
<http://oiss.wustl.edu/english-language-programs/courses/>
- ✓ Office for International Students and Scholars
<http://oisshome.wustl.edu/>
- ✓ [Disability Resource Center](#)
- ✓ [School of Medicine Policy for Students with Disabilities](#)