Introduction
This course will introduce students to qualitative methods in education and the social sciences, meeting one unit of the research methods requirement for undergraduate students in the School of Education and Social Policy. In this course, students will learn about qualitative research, including field notes, classroom observation, document analysis, and interviewing by reading and discussing a variety of theoretical work and undertaking their own qualitative research study. The readings, topics for discussion, and assignments in this course are centered around three closely related issues:

- First, the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of various approaches to qualitative research. Students will also consider issues such as reliability, validity, and generalizations.
- Second, the practice of qualitative inquiry. Students will explore observation and interview techniques and approaches to data analysis and data presentation.
- Third, key issues and dilemmas that researchers encounter in doing qualitative research. Students will consider a range of practical issues that they will have to deal with as researchers including access to sites and ethical issues relating to qualitative work.

In order to tie these core issues together, the course will be conducted as a seminar. Each session will be organized around prescribed readings on a particular issue. Materials (e.g., instruments, data) from students' research projects (a required assignment for this course) and from one of the instructor's research projects will be used to ground discussions.

Textbooks


Coursepack from Aaron Akins, Student Affairs Office, first floor Annenberg.
Assignments & Evaluation
Class attendance is required. Students are expected to participate in discussing the topics and readings during each class. To participate in this way, you will have to read the assigned texts carefully before each class, as well as draw on the readings and your experience in class discussion. Class participation and attendance will account for 20% of your final grade.

There will be four written assignments for this course (see below for due dates):

Assignment #1 is a narrative based on a set of field notes that will account for 15% of the final quarter grade. The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with an opportunity to practice observing and taking field notes. Students will observe a brief video segment during class and take field notes using a particular research question to guide their observation. Based on field notes taken during class, students will be asked to write-up a narrative in which they respond to the research question provided to them. Careful attention to dialogue, description of behaviors and actions, and separating inferences from descriptions is imperative. The purpose of this exercise is to develop students’ skills in gathering evidence and marshalling it to develop an argument. Further detail will be given during class. The assignment is due in class on January 26th.

Assignment #2 is a set of fieldnotes and a reflection that will account for 15% of the final grade. Students are encouraged to submit fieldnotes that will best represent the fieldwork they have done up to this point. The reflection should include your thoughts on:
1. The research question(s) you would like to follow for your final research project (see Assignment #4 below).
2. The methods (who/how you will observe, who you might interview, etc.) that will help you answer this question.
3. How the fieldnotes brought you to the question that you would like to investigate.
4. Literature that might inform this perspective.
The assignment is due in class on February 9th.

Assignment #3 is a set of fieldnotes that will account for 15% of the final grade. Students are encouraged to submit fieldnotes that will best represent the fieldwork they have done up to this point. They cannot be the same fieldnotes that were submitted for Assignment #2. There is no reflection required; however, we expect you to have built upon the feedback we have given for Assignments #1 & #2 to make these the most in-depth and thoughtful set of fieldnotes. A portion of these fieldnotes must include an interview transcript; more detail will be given in class. The assignment is due in class on February 25th.

Assignment #4 is the final research report and will account for 35% of the final grade. Each student should plan to spend a minimum of 10 hours during the quarter collecting data in the field. Based on fieldnotes from these observations and interview(s), you will develop an assertion, which you will expand in this final research report. You may share fieldnotes with other students to strengthen the validity of your assertion, but your final must be written individually. All fieldnotes/interviews, jottings, analytical memos, and coded documents must be turned as part of the final report. The assignment is due on March 16th by noon.

As noted above, classroom participation will account for the remaining 20% of your grade.
What is Qualitative Research?

Mon., Jan. 5: Introductions & Course Overview

What is Social Research? Why conduct social research? Is it different from journalism?

Wed., Jan. 7: Qualitative Research: Overview

Ragin, C. pp. 31 – 53 (Course Readings).

Emerson et al., pp. vii - 16.

Spradley, pp. 3 – 25.

Mon., Jan. 12: Figuring out a Question & Selecting a Site

Ragin, C., pp. 81 – 103 (Course Readings).

Spradley, pp. 26 - 52.

Emerson, et al., pp. 108 – 141.

Case # 1: Observing

Wed., Jan. 14: Observing # 1

Emerson et al., pp. 17 - 38.

Spradley, pp. 53 - 84.

Video Case # 1: Taking Field notes.

Mon., Jan. 19 (MLK Day: Class until 11am): Observing # 2

Ragin, C., pp. 55 – 76 (Course Readings).

Video Case # 2: Observing with a Frame.

Wed., Jan. 21: Observing # 3

Spradley, pp. 85 – 121.


Video Case # 3: The Intersection of Ideas & Evidence.
Mon., Jan 26: Observing # 4


Video Case # 4: *Performance Based Assessment*

*Assignment #1 due (15% of Final Grade).*

Wed., Jan. 28  Ethics

Spradley, pp. 130 – 139.

Fine, Gary Alan. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research"

Emerson, R. Contemporary Field Research, pp. 269-287  "The Moral Fix: On The Ethics of Fieldwork."

Mon., Feb. 2: Subjectivity and Objectivity, Generalizability, and Validity

Stake, R., pp. 107 – 120 (Course Readings).

Kvale, pp. 59 – 74 (Course Readings).

Wed., Feb. 4: Fieldwork Time 1

Mon., Feb. 9: Interviewing 1

Kvale, pp. 17 – 36; 124 – 143 (Course Readings).

Spradley, pp. 122 – 129.

Sample interview transcripts for analysis (Course Readings).

*Assignment #2 due (15% of Final Grade).*

Wed., Feb. 11: Interviewing 2

Kvale, pp. 160 – 175 (Course Readings).

Sample interview transcripts for analysis (Course Readings).
Mon., Feb. 16: Data Analysis

Coffey & Atkinson, Chapter 2 & 4, pp. 26 – 53; 83 – 107 (Course Readings).
Kvale, pp. 187 – 209 (Course Readings).
Sample field notes for data analysis (Course Readings).

Wed., Feb. 18: Data Analysis Tutorial

Mon., Feb. 23: Drawing Conclusions: Reporting 1

Spradley, 160 - 172.

Wed. Feb. 25: Drawing Conclusions: Reporting 2

Stake, R., pp. 121 - 132 (Course Readings).
Kvale, pp. 253 – 276 (Course Readings).
Sample Case (Course Readings).

Assignment #3 due (15% of Final Grade).

Mon. Mar. 1: Fieldwork Time 2


Kvale, pp. 277 – 298 (Course Readings).
Emerson, et al., pp. 211 - 216.

Mon. Mar. 8 & 10: Open Office Hours for Paper Questions & Comments

Bring any questions you have on your paper to class.
Bring an outline or draft paper for comments.

Assignment #4 due in SESP Student Affairs office by noon on Tuesday March 16th. (35% of Final Grade)