Applied Qualitative Research Methods

<mark>Fall 2015</mark>

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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.

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. Develop the knowledge and skills to collect, manage, and analyze qualitative data.

3. Define and recognize and address IRB and ethical concerns that may arise in a qualitative study.

4. Understand indicators of quality and validity in qualitative research and effectively use these to critically evaluate the qualitative literature.

5. Communicate qualitative study findings effectively to various audiences.

TEXT BOOK:

 Bernard. Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 4th edition. Alta Mira Press. *This text is not directed at health research, but is a comprehensive resource for many qualitative methods.*

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.

<mark>**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.**</mark>

Class #	Topic	Deliverables due or notes:
1. (8/25)	**Introduction to Qualitative Research**: *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.*	
2. (9/1)	**Designing a Qualitative Study and Introduction to Data Collection Methods**: *What methods are available to you? What factors need to be considered in designing and conducting a qualitative study?* Reading: Bernard Chapter 1	
3. (9/8)	**Sampling and Sample Size:** *We'll discuss how to choose a population, develop a sampling scheme, and different strategies for actually getting the sample you want/need.* Reading: Bernard, Chapter 8 Nonprobability Samples and Choosing Informants	**Problem Statement**
4. (9/15)	**Ethics in Qualitative Research:** *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.*	
5. (9/22)	**Methods I: Interviews:** *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.* Reading: Bernard, Chapter 9, Interviewing: Unstructured and Semistructured. Optional: Chapter 13, Participant observation	**Article Critique 1**
6. (9/29)	**Methods II: Cognitive Interviews** *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 for our study. We will discuss how to use qualitative methods –specifically cognitive interviewing - to develop or evaluate measures.*	*Guest Speaker, Dr. Lauren Arnold*

7. (10/6)	**Strategy Session: What are your Measures? Asking Good Questions** *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?*	**Interview Skills Packet**
8. (10/13)	**Methods III: Focus Groups:** *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.* *Class Exercise: Practice Focus Group*	**Question Development Exercise**
9. (10/20)	**Analysis I : Field Notes and Data Management** *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?* Reading: Bernard, Chapter 14, Field Notes	
10. (10/27)	**Analysis II: Creating and Coding Transcripts**: *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.* Reading: Bernard, Chapter 17, Qualitative Data Analysis I: Text Analysis AND Chapter 18, Qualitative Data Analysis 11: Models and Matrices	**Article Critique 2**
11. (11/3)	**Analysis III: Rigor and Quality in Qualitative Research; Evaluating Qualitative Research** *Reliability, validity, and rigor all apply to qualitative research, but we measure them sightly 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.*	
12. (11/10)	**Analysis IV: Presenting and Writing Up Qualitative Research: Choosing Quotes, (Revisit Coding)** *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.*	**Analysis Skills Packet**

13. (11/17)	**Special Topic: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods**	*Guest Speaker,*
	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.	*Dr. Karyn Stewart*
14. (11/25)	**Special Topic: Patient Centered Research and Engaging Stakeholders: How can we learn from Qualitative Methods?**	
	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.	
15. (12/2)	**Special Topics (Class Choice)**	
16. (12/9)	**Class presentations of your research proposal**	
17. (12/16)	**Software to Support Qualitative Research**	**Research Proposals**
	What are your options and why is it useful? Can software analyze your data at the push of a button?	

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 be turn in.

   b. **Question Development.** For this assignment you will take a clinical or public health topic, specify a research question, and develop 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 your interviews, you should be prepared on how to train them.

   b. **Practice interview and Transcript** You will conduct a brief practice interview and audio record it. You will transcribe your audio recorded interview 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

✓ **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.

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 due on the last day of class. 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 in length. Further instruction will be provided.

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. You can miss up to 2 classes before losing participation points.

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 15, 2015[h]. 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