

## Qualitative Research Program

Course title: **QUAL 8410 61-142, Designing Qualitative Research**  
Instructor: **Melissa Freeman**  
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Email: [freeman9@uga.edu](mailto:freeman9@uga.edu)  
Office Hours: **By appointment**

Class Times: **M, T, W, Th, F: 5 – 7:45 pm**  
Location: **River's Crossing 136**  
Maymester 2008: **May 13, 2008 – June 3, 2008**  
Credits: **3.0**

*When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences.... Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the world views that inform them.*

(Personal Narratives Group, 1989, *Interpreting women's lives*.  
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 261)

### **Course Description**

Disciplinary origins and cross-disciplinary uses, variations, applications, and evaluations of methods of collecting qualitative data. Choice of methods in the overall construction of qualitative designs, practice in selecting and collecting qualitative data for educational research, and examination of naturalistic data in the educational literature.

### **Prerequisites and cross-listings**

Prerequisite: ERSH/QUAL 8400, NO exceptions!

### **Required Texts** (Available UGA Campus Bookstore)

Rossmann, Gretchen B. & Rallis, Sharon F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-7619-2651-8

Prior, Lindsay (2003). *Using documents in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-761-95-7472

Seidman, Irving (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd edition). New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN 0-8077-4666-5

### **Additional Readings**

All additional readings have been scanned and are available electronically as PDF files. To access the documents, go to the Course Reserve module in GIL (<http://gil.uga.edu>). The password access is the last word in the file's title.

### **Nature of this Course**

This course on qualitative data collection addresses both theoretical and practical dimensions of conducting qualitative research. Data collection concerns are embedded within the larger processes of qualitative research methods and must be considered in holistic ways. For example, data collection decisions are inherently tied to particular epistemological stances of the researcher as well as the research focus. In addition, data collection processes are interwoven with analysis and often occur simultaneously. Therefore, this course examines data collection issues within the larger framework of qualitative research.

I assume that most students enrolled in this course have a desire to acquire the knowledge and methodological skills that are part of qualitative research methods for application within your academic program, for writing a doctoral dissertation and/or for your future career. The course is designed with flexibility so that you should be able to develop projects that suit your own academic and professional needs. The workload in the course is extensive; however, I hope that you will find the course intrinsically interesting and valuable.

An important aspect of the course will be ongoing collaborative interactions with your classmates. You will be working in a collaborative group for many of the class activities and projects. You will be learning a great deal from each other, and will need to make an effort to contribute constructively both to your group work and to the entire class. We are all learners and teachers in this class. The quality of your participation both in the whole class and in your collaborative group will be considered as part of your grade in the course.

### **Objectives**

1. Students can conceptualize appropriate research problems and design a qualitative research approach to examining such problems using observation, interviewing, document analysis, or other related methods. They can prepare a proposal for a qualitative project using the format of

- the UGA Institutional Review Board (human subjects review). They can identify the common qualitative data collection methods, specify how data are formulated into units, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different methods and formulations.
2. Students can reflect on the personal and conceptual presuppositions and assumptions that they bring to their proposed research project and compose a subjectivity statement to be reviewed by their peers.
    - a. They can project the ethical issues and dilemmas that may be associated with various phases of their proposed research and discuss how they expect to handle such challenges.
    - b. They can identify their conceptual frameworks and connect such frameworks to scholarly theories and pedagogies.
  3. Students can analyze their skills in conducting high quality qualitative research interviews, in taking detailed field notes during observations in field placements, and in collecting and interpreting archival data. They can design and conduct a plan to improve their skills in these areas. They can select and assess different means for recording qualitative data: prerecorded, recorded (manual and automatic), and nonrecorded (from human memory).
  4. Students can apply the qualitative research skills they are developing in critically analyzing their own and others' proposals and completed studies. They can identify and apply the alternative standards used to assess qualitative research.
  5. Students can work collaboratively in research group design and interpretation activities.

### **University of Georgia Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy**

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A culture of Honesty." All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. Learning to appropriately quote and paraphrase and to cite and attribute sources is a skill that is key to honest and creative scholarship. All students should review the guidelines at the website <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>. If you have questions about what would be considered violations of the standards, please raise them in class or with me.

### **Need for Editorial Assistance**

This course requires substantial writing. Students who need editorial assistance are encouraged to make such arrangements. A good place to start is the UGA Writing Center: <http://www.english.uga.edu/~writingcenter/home.html>.

## **Expectations and Evaluation of Learners**

1. I expect regular and punctual attendance and will take excessive absences into account in the final course grade (3 or more absences will result in the drop of your grade by one grade regardless of your grade point average on the assignments, e.g. an A will be an A minus, a B+ will be a B). If you have a conflict with a session due to a prior commitment, please email ahead of time.
2. I expect people to come to class prepared and to contribute to class discussions and activities. Your participation in these activities is essential. Frequent lack of preparation or failure to contribute will be taken into account in your final participation grade.
3. I expect all assignments to be turned in by the due date. Points will be deducted for papers submitted after the due date. Remember that both the content and the quality of your writing will be assessed.
4. All students are required to use the WebCT services that support this course. Some course material will be available only on the course WebCT site. We will use WebCT to post messages, ask questions, and for sharing resources on specific topics. Assignments are to be submitted on the WebCT site. For access go to: <http://www.uga.edu/> click on "My WebCT," then log in using your UGA MyID.
5. All students are required to complete the following written assignments with the final grade based on the distribution indicated below:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
IRB/Description of Study	0	5/14
CITI Training	5	5/19
Observation Project	25	5/23
Interview Project	35	6/2
Document Analysis	25	6/6
Participation	10	
Total:	100	

### **Assessment Criteria**

Written assignments should show:

- Understanding and use of relevant readings
- A critical engagement with the idea presented
- Clear organization and structure, fluent and accurate writing

## **Descriptions of Assignments**

### **(1) IRB/ DESCRIPTION OF STUDY DUE 5/14**

**For the INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT you will need IRB approval, either your own or one approved by the instructor.**

- **Individual IRB-approved project**

If you have an active IRB application that includes interviewing, you may work on your own research project for this assignment. I will need to see a copy of your current IRB authorization and a short outline of when you plan to conduct your one-hour interviews. Interviews conducted prior to this class are not permitted for this assignment.

- **Class-approved IRB**

**If you are conducting your interview as a class project, you need to receive my approval PRIOR to conducting your interview!**

If you do not have an active IRB, you may still conduct the interview project for use in this class only. **To receive my approval**, you need to fill out:

- ☞ The application for student project, signed and initialized
- ☞ The consent form you will use with your participants
- ☞ An overview of your recruitment and selection procedures, including any permissions from institutions that need to be sought.

Your project should meet the following requirements:

- NO MINORS:** The project cannot include minors or any other vulnerable populations like pregnant women, prisoners, those who lack the capacity to consent, non-English speaking individuals, etc.
- NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK:** “Minimal risk” is the probability and magnitude of harm that is normally encountered in the daily lives of healthy individuals. This also precludes the study of any illegal activities.
- NO DECEPTION:** The project cannot include any deception. Individuals must be fully informed and given the opportunity to voluntarily consent to participation.
- NO PUBLICATION:** You may not use data from the study for publication or for thesis/dissertation research.
- NO VIDEOTAPING:** Audiotaping is allowed if the recording is erased upon transcription or no later than the end of the semester.

The IRB has given the instructors of QUAL 8410 the right to grant approval for your research project as part of the course requirements. We will spend time in

the early part of the course to ensure that you are clear on your research purposes and questions and that you understand the whole IRB process. Links to the IRB webpage, IRB guidelines and sample consent forms, and human subject applications may be found on our WebCT site under “Useful Links.” The addresses of the above sites are as follows:

IRB webpage: <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso>

A consent form should be included with your outline as specified by the IRB <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/Sample.leic.doc>

You may not use data generated from this project for publication purposes.

## **(2) CITI IRB TRAINING DUE 5/19**

You will also take and complete the online IRB Training, a requirement for researchers conducting human research. To register and take the CITI course, go to <http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp>

Bring a copy of the certificate of completion on Monday May 19

## **(3) PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION PROJECT DUE 5/23**

You will develop and refine your participant observation skills through this project. As a group, you will observe in a public place for 20 minutes, then after debriefing and comparing notes, for another 20 minutes. Your paper will include four sections: (1) introduce the topic, research questions, and the location for the observations, (2) expanded fieldnotes, (3) reflective essay, and (4) analytic essay.

- (1) Introduction of topic, research questions, and location of observations.
- (2) Expanded fieldnotes: This section will include ONLY the fieldnotes you took and typed up – running record and observer comments (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 196). The time, date, and location should head each entry.
- (3) Reflective essay (1-2 pages): This section should draw from the literature (at least 2 different sources) to show me how well you have understood the purpose and practice of participant observation. Your essay should describe your reason for using participant observation to answer the question the group set out to answer, the participant observation role you and your group took in the setting you were observing, your thoughts and reactions to the group’s debriefing process, and your overall reflection/evaluation of the quality of your fieldnotes: how clear, detailed, and useful did you find them? What would you seek to improve next time?

- (4) Analytic essay (1-2 pages): This section should focus on your fieldnotes in terms of what they offer analytically in regards to your research question. Working from Spradley's (1980) distinction between place, actors, and activities, describe what your fieldnotes reveal about each of these elements in relation to your research question. What preliminary themes, patterns, or connections do you see emerging in your data? How well do these relate to your research question? What else struck you as interesting or important? If you were to continue to conduct observations in this setting, what questions/topics would you consider in planning your next observation?

#### **(4) INTERVIEW PROJECT DUE 6/2**

You will develop and refine your interviewing skills through this project. You will conduct two one-hour interviews for this assignment. Your paper will include three sections: (1) your introduction and interview appraisal (2) a reflective essay; and (3) two complete transcribed interviews.

Please include the following in your appraisal:

- (1) Introduce your topic and research questions.  
Describe your participants and the context for the interviews.  
Describe your interview methodology (references here)  
Insert a passage (5 pages worth **prior** to your comments being inserted) from your verbatim transcript. You will conduct a close reading of this passage and insert your own commentary within the 5 pages using **a different color font** for your comments (Please be candid, the point of the activity is to learn about interviewing, not to have conducted a perfect interview):

Include comments about what your participant is saying and what you in turn are thinking either about the content of the information or as you looked ahead to the next question.

Include comments about the kind of information you generated and, related, comment on the kinds of questions you asked (were they close-or-open-ended questions?): Did you get the information you wanted? If yes, how do you think the question assisted that? If not, what kind of information were you hoping to get? How might a different question or probe have helped you get the kind of information you wanted?

Include comments about your interviewing style and where you feel you are "leading" your participant, or talking too much, or interrupting. Also include positive comments about questions or strategies that helped build rapport and understanding.

- (2) Your reflective essay (1-3 pages) should describe how you selected and invited the participants to be interviewed, how you felt the interviews went in terms of rapport and content of information. Then discuss what you learned from assessing the transcript and the changes you made prior to the second interview, and how well your second interview went. Finally, what did these interviews contribute to your developing understanding of the interview process and of yourself as an interviewer. For example, what kinds of information were you trying to get at and how well do you think you accomplished that? What questions worked well and which ones didn't? (Provide specific examples from your transcript to illustrate your points).
- (3) Both transcripts as appendices
  - Please upload your entire transcript along with your Interview appraisal titling one lastname\_transcript1, lastname\_transcript 2 and the other lastname\_appraisal

I strongly urge you to transcribe your own interview tape so as to become intimately involved in your participant's stories. Transcription involves making analytic choices, and some scholars argue that it is the first stage of analysis. Transcription machines may be checked out from the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT), located on the second floor of Aderhold Hall, 542-8007.

### **(5) DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROJECT DUE 6/6**

Lindsay Prior (2003) states: "In attempting to define the nature of a document one is, of course, presented with very similar problems to those posed by the attempts to define art. Thus, paintings, tapestries, monuments, diaries, shopping lists, stage plays, adverts, rail tickets, photographs, videos, engineering drawings, the content of human tissue archives and World Wide Web (WWW) pages can all stand as documents in one frame or another. Yet as with the gold weights, their status as documents depends not so much on features intrinsic to their existence, nor on the intentions of their makers, but on factors and processes that lay beyond their boundaries. Indeed, we shall note throughout this book that if we are to get to grips with the nature of documents then we have to move away from a consideration of them as stable, static and pre-defined artefacts. Instead we must consider them in terms of fields, frames and networks of action. In fact, the status of things as 'documents' depends precisely on the ways in which such objects are integrated into fields of action, and documents can only be defined in terms of such fields" (p. 2).

For this assignment you will come up with a research question that can be explored or examined through documents (think broadly of documents, such as, diaries, letters, maps, diagrams, advertisements, webpages, billboards, bloggs, reports, lesson plans, etc.. You will consider the field, frame or network of action for how you intend to analyze the document. For example, is this an active policy

or report being implemented, the analysis of which might include a description of the target context, or follow its use or non-use? Is it a series of documents or artefacts collected in a bounded time/context, the analysis of which would reveal how certain people, for example, heroin users, pregnant teenagers, African American fathers are constructed in print as being a certain type of person? Think focused, for example, one educational report's discourse on the achievement gap, or how five major newspapers covered one historic event, or one children's book for its portrayal of a construct like fairness. Use theory and other studies to back up your argument (references are important here).

### **Grading**

Grading follows the University of Georgia policy:

100 – 93 = A	79 – 77 = C+
92 – 90 = A-	76 – 73 = C
89 – 87 = B+	72 – 70 = C-
86 – 83 = B	69 – 60 = D
82 – 80 = B-	59 – 0 = F

### **Accommodations for Qualified Individuals with Disabilities**

It is the policy of The University of Georgia to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and desire accommodations to complete your course requirements, please notify the course instructor as soon as possible to discuss your request.

### **Syllabus Changes**

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

## Schedule of Class Meetings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings/ Activities</b>	<b>Part Obs Project</b>	<b>Interview Project</b>	<b>Document Project</b>
<b>5/13</b>	<b>Introduction and Research Interests</b>				
<b>5/14</b>	<b>Research Questions and Proposals</b>	<b>Seidman (Ch. 3 &amp; 5)  Rossman &amp; Rallis (Ch. 5)</b>		<b>Interview Project class IRB Hard copy, signed and initialized DUE 5/14</b>	
<b>5/15</b>	<b>No Class</b>	<b>Charmaz (2003)  Seidman (Chs. 1, 2, 4, 6 &amp; 7)</b>		<b>Work on interview protocol</b>	
<b>5/16</b>	<b>No Class</b>	<b>Take the Citi IRB Training</b>			
<b>5/19</b>	<b>Types of Interviewing</b>	<b>Rossman &amp; Rallis (Chs. 7)  Rafalovich (2005)</b>		<b>Bring Citi IRB Certificate Bring interview protocols to class</b>	
<b>5/20</b>	<b>Participant Observation</b>	<b>Have (2003)  Rossman &amp; Rallis (Chs. 6)</b>	<b>Form groups, plan observation project</b>	<b>Conduct first interview and transcribe</b>	
<b>5/21</b>	<b>Participant Observation Continued</b>	<b>Rossman &amp; Rallis (Chs. 8 &amp; 9)</b>	<b>Between 5- 6:30 pm Conduct 2 X 20 minute observations with debriefing in between</b>		
<b>5/22</b>	<b>Analytic</b>	<b>Rossman &amp;</b>	<b>Bring copies</b>		

	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Rallis (Ch. 10) Seidman (Ch. 8)</b>	<b>of typed up fieldnotes for group analysis</b>		
<b>5/23</b>	<b>Conducting Focus Groups</b>	<b>Work on Participant Observation Project</b>	<b>Participant Observation Project DUE 5/23</b>		
<b>5/26</b>	<b>No Class</b>				
<b>5/27</b>	<b>Interviewing Issues and Strategies</b>	<b>Dilley (2000) Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003)</b>		<b>Bring transcript Interview 1 to class</b>	
<b>5/28</b>	<b>Documents: What are they?</b>	<b>Prior (Ch. 1)</b>		<b>Conduct Second Interview and Transcribe</b>	
<b>5/29</b>	<b>Documents in Action</b>	<b>Prior (Ch. 3)</b>			<b>Come with an idea for your document project</b>
<b>5/30</b>	<b>Validity and Ethics in Qualitative Research</b>	<b>Wolcott (1990) Rossman &amp; Rallis (Ch. 3)</b>			
<b>6/2</b>	<b>Framing Document Analysis</b>	<b>Prior (Chs. 5 - 8)</b>		<b>Interview Project DUE 6/2</b>	
<b>6/3</b>	<b>Wrapping Up</b>				<b>Document Project DUE 6/6</b>

**Course Readings: Required and Optional**

Charmaz, Kathy (2003). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 311-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheng, Maria (2002). The standoff – what is unsaid? A pragmatic analysis of the conditioned marker ‘if.’ *Discourse & Society*, 13(3), 309-317.

Dilley, Patrick (2000). Conducting successful interviews: Tips for intrepid research. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 131-137.

Have, Paul Ten (2003). Teaching students observational methods: visual studies and visual analysis. *Visual Studies*, 18(1), 29-35.

Jewett (2006). “If you don’t identify with your ancestry, you’re like a race without a land”: Constructing race at a small urban middle school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 144-161.

Johnson, Eric (2005). Proposition 203: A critical metaphor analysis. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 69-84.

Rafalovich, Adam (2005). Relational troubles and semiofficial suspicion: Educators and the medicalization of “unruly” children. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(1), 25-46.

Roulston, K., deMarrais, K., & Lewis, J. B. (2003). Learning to interview in the social sciences. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(4), 643-668.

Sinner, Anita (2004). Chronic pain and returning to learning: Exploring the lived experiences of three women. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 4(1).

Tjora, Aksel H. (2006). Writing small discoveries: an exploration of fresh observers’ observations. *Qualitative Research*, 6(4), 429-451.

Vanderstaay, Steven L. (2005). One hundred dollars and a dead man: Ethical decision making in ethnographic fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(4), 371-409.

Wolcott, Harry F. (1990). On seeking – and rejecting – validity in qualitative research. In E. W. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education* (pp. 121-152). NY: Teachers College Press.