

## Psychology 9558A. Qualitative Research Methods (Fall 2018)

### COURSE OUTLINE

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*office hours:* by appointment

*time, start date, and location:* Thursdays 1:30 – 4:30 (starts Sep 13) SSC 3022

### I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An overview and in-class practice of qualitative research methods including in-depth interviewing, focus groups, naturalistic observation, content analysis, and thematic analysis of textual information. The course focuses on five qualitative research perspectives: grounded theory, descriptive and interpretive phenomenology, case study research, narrative psychology, and applied ethnography. These methods are valuable for (1) collecting rich textured data (2) discovering themes and categories from textual data, (3) developing mid-range theories that explain how people experience and work through and attribute meaning to various problems. In psychology, these methods are particularly useful in research programs investigating new concepts and fostering content and construct validity at the early stages of psychometric work. The first part of each class will consist of lecture material and discussion of theory and methodology. The second half will be dedicated to hands-on class activities such as practicing in-depth interviewing, conducting focus groups, and coding contextual data. Although much qualitative research can be done with a simple text editor, students will be exposed to special software applications such as NVivo 11 and RQDA (in R). Note that this course is also open to third-year level undergraduate students (PSY3860F) and that performance expectations and assignment standards will be higher for graduate students. Course work and evaluation consist of an individual pilot project using interviews or existing textual data sources, three thought papers framed as summarized research proposals, and a short presentation.

### Course Objectives

The lectures, class activities and assigned projects will help students develop skills in the areas outlined below.

**The qualitative research process from start to finish.** The course covers the entire qualitative research process. Students develop and complete a small empirical pilot project from start to finish. In previous years, students have developed projects on topics of their choice such as “how two cultures affect one’s identity,” “resilience of emergency responders,” “emotion and reasoning in important life decisions,” and “body image in young women.” Opportunities also arise to work on common service projects. For example, in a previous year, students in the

course conducted interviews with fourth-year psychology students about their experiences in the Psychology program at Western as part of a curriculum evaluation in the department.

**Conducting in-depth interviews.** Students will gain concrete experience in conducting one-on-one in-depth interviews through in-class practice and individual projects. Students also practice other data collection techniques including focus groups and observation methods.

**Analytic skills.** Data in qualitative methods consist mainly of words, whether from the transcripts of in-depth interviews or focus groups or from archival sources such as newspaper or magazine articles, blogs, speeches, songs, movie transcripts, accident reports, or field notes. The next stage is the systematic interpretation of these data using a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. The researcher typically combs through the text, word by word, line by line, or sentence by sentence to extract meaningful units of information and patterns, categories, or themes. These units are evaluated as part of a theory “grounded in the data” or simply as an emerging meaningful classification of concepts.

**Critical thinking skills.** Students will learn to apply validation and reliability concepts in qualitative research such as transferability, trustworthiness, inter-coder agreement, triangulation, auditing, member checks, and clarifying researcher bias through systematic reflexivity.

**Writing well.** Qualitative researchers need to be able to communicate interpretation and meaning from their findings, being aware and taking into account how their own lenses through which they see the world (i.e., reflexivity) probably differ from those of their participants. Students will develop their skills at uncovering themes from their data and presenting these in a research report. They will present describe their original ideas in three mini proposals that apply specific qualitative methods.

**Applying ethical principles and critical thinking in the evaluation of qualitative research.** We will see that the researcher-participant interaction in qualitative research can be fairly extensive and deserves particular attention. Researchers listen and have conversations with their participants during interviews, often in the field (e.g., a hospital, an addiction centre, a music studio, an organization) about potentially sensitive topics.

## II. COURSE READINGS

No textbook. Key articles (see lecture schedule) will be used. These will be available in the course OWL site.

## III. EVALUATION

1. **Interviewer practice performance (5%).** Students will have several opportunities to practice developing their interviewing skills in class sessions. They will be evaluated in one of these sessions. Graduate students will be expected to show higher levels of interviewing skills

especially with respect to follow up questions, building rapport, and engaging the interviewee.

2. **Project (50% total).** Students will have the opportunity to conduct an individual small project on a topic of their choice (approved by the instructor). The project will entail a collection of qualitative data from in-depth interviews (or focus groups, naturalistic observation, or content analysis), transcription, coding and data analysis using a thematic approach. Graduate students will be required to incorporate one of the five qualitative methods within their project.
  - a. Pilot interview and one-page report (15%, due Oct 25). Once research proposals have been approved by the instructor, students who select the interview method as their data collection approach will conduct one preliminary 30-60 min interview related to their topic with a participant, transcribe the interview, and write a one-page summary report summarizing the experience and suggested modifications, especially with respect to the interview script. Students who conduct observation research will be expected to report on an observation session 30-60 min and prepare a similar report. Students can also elect to do a content analysis (qualitative or quantitative) of archival textual material. In this case, students will be expected to report on a preliminary subset of the coding and prepare a one-page summary report. Standards will be higher for graduate students with respect to depth of interview data and relevance to topic.
  - b. Complete project (35%, due Dec 13). Students will conduct 2 to 3 additional interviews (the total should add up to approximately 120 minutes of interviewing). Those who select other data collection methods should have comparable amount of work (i.e., comparable amounts of material in data collection, transcription, and analysis; see me for approval). The transcribed interviews or other material will be coded using the steps described in class. Graduate students will write a 20-page (roughly 5,000 words) report describing their findings within the framework of one of the five qualitative methods. Graduate students will be expected to develop a more advanced research question with stronger evidence of a link to psychological theory of similar quality to studies found in the journal *Qualitative Research in Psychology*.
3. **Three thought papers – “mini proposals” (10% each = 30%).** Five of the lectures will focus on the five following qualitative methods: (1) Case study research, (2) Grounded theory, (3) Narrative research, (4) Phenomenological approaches, and (5) Ethnography/Field observation. Students will be required to select three of these topics and write one-page thought papers (approximately 500 words each) on how they could use the method to develop a research proposal. These will be due the week following the lecture on the given topic. (See topic schedule below). Graduate student standards will be higher with respect to the application of qualitative method theory from the readings and content depth.
4. **Pecha Kucha presentation (15%).** Students will select one of their thought papers and expand on the idea in an oral-visual presentation known as Pecha Kucha. This is a fairly new

presentation format that consists of presenting 20 slides for no more than 20 seconds each (total of 6 min 40 sec). We will view some examples in class but see also: <http://www.pechakucha.org/> or <http://www.pechakucha.org/presentations/failure>. Graduate standards will be higher with respect to presentation skills and depth of content.

#### IV. STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

#### V. LECTURE SCHEDULE

##### **Sep 13. Introduction and foundational concepts (LAB: Developing good research questions)**

Gergen, K. J., Josselson, R., Freeman, M. (2015). The promises of qualitative inquiry. *American Psychologist, 70*, 1, 1-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038597>

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 137-145. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 126-136. doi: 10.1037/0022-167.52.2.126

##### **Sep 20. Overview of thematic analysis and five other qualitative research methods (LAB: Interviewing)**

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

##### Resources for interviewing

Abell, J., Locke, A., Condor, S., Gibson, S., & Stevenson, C. (2006). Trying similarity, doing difference: the role of interviewer self-disclosure in interview talk with young people. *Qualitative Research, 6*(2), 221-244. doi: 10.1177/1468794106062711

Kirkegaard Thomsen, D., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). An interviewer's guide to autobiographical memory: Ways to elicit concrete experiences and to avoid pitfalls in interpreting them. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 6*, 294-312. doi: 10.1080/14780880802396806

## Sep 27. Developing a research proposal (LAB: Interviewing)

Tri Council Policy Statement (TCPS2 2014) *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (see especially ch. 10)

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*, 25-41. doi: 10.1080/14780887.2013.801543

## Oct 4. Data collection and introduction to coding (LAB: Focus groups)

*Getting Started with NVivo 11 for Windows*

<http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo11/11.4.0/en-US/NVivo11-Getting-Started-Guide-Pro-edition.pdf>

or

*Getting Started with NVivo for Mac (Version 11)* <http://www.qsrinternational.com/learning/getting-started/mac11>

Resources for focus groups:

Cyr, J. (2016). The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method. *Sociological Methods & Research, 45*(2), 231-259. doi: 10.1177/0049124115570065

Grudens-Schuck, N., Lundy Allen, B., & Larson, K. (2004). Methodology brief: focus group fundamentals. *Extension Community and Economic Development Publications, 12*.  
[http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/extension\\_communities\\_pubs/12](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/extension_communities_pubs/12)

## Oct 11. No class (Fall reading week)

## Oct 18. Coding procedures continued and analysis of textual data (LAB: coding exercise)

Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research, 42*(3), 294-320. doi: 10.1177/0049124113500475

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods, 15*, 85-109. doi: 10.1177/1525822X02239569

Syed, M., & Nelson, S. C. (2015). Guidelines for establishing reliability when coding narrative data. *Emerging Adulthood, 3*, 375-387. doi: 10.1177/2167696815587648

## Oct 25. Validation process and writing the qualitative research report (LAB: coding exercise)

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 250-260. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

### **Nov 1. Case study research (LAB: Developing a case study proposal)**

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. doi: 10.1177/1077800405284363

Meyer, C. B. (2001). A case in case study methodology. *Field Methods*, 13(4), 329-352.

Wang, S. C., Plano Clark, V. L., & Scheel, M. J. (2016). The Enculturation experience of three Chinese American adolescents: A multiple case study. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 44(5), 661-694. doi: 10.1177/0011000016633875

### **Nov 8. Grounded theory (LAB: GT proposal exercise)**

Charmaz, K. (2015). Teaching theory construction with initial grounded theory tools: A reflection on lessons and learning. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(12), 1610-1622. doi: 10.1177/1049732315613982

Enko, J. (2014). Creative writers' experience of self-determination: An examination within the grounded theory framework. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 14, 1-10.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2014.06.004>

Fassinger, R. E. (2005). Paradigms, praxis, problems, and promise: Grounded theory in counseling psychology research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 156–166. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.156

### **Nov 15. Descriptive and interpretive phenomenology (LAB: Video and discussion of neurophenomenology and embodied cognition)**

Broomé, R. E. (2011). An empathetic psychological perspective of police deadly force training. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 42, 137-156. doi: 10.1163/156916211X599735

Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 43, 13-35.

Feldman Barrett, L., Mesquita, B., Ochsner, K. N., & Gross, J. J. (2007). The experience of emotion. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 373-403. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085709

Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 167-177. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.167

### **Nov 22. Narrative research (LAB: Group discussion and proposal exercise)**

McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 233-238. doi: 10.1177/0963721413475622

O'Shaughnessy, R., Dallos, R., & Gough, A. (2013). A narrative study of the lives of women who experience anorexia nervosa. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 10, 42-62. doi: 10.1080/14780887.2011.586100

Singer, J. A., Blagov, P., Berry, M., & Oost K. M. (2013). Self-defining memories, scripts, and the life story: Narrative identity in personality and psychotherapy. *Journal of Personality, 81(6)*, 569-582. doi: 10.1111/jopy.12005

**Nov 29. Ethnography and field observation (LAB: How can we use applied ethnography in psychology?)**

Burke, S. M., Durand-Bush, N., & Doell, K. (2010). Exploring feel and motivation with recreational and elite Mount Everest climbers: An ethnographic study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 8*, 373-393. doi: 10.1080/1612197X.2010.9671959

Krane, V., & Baird, M. (2005). Using ethnography in applied sport psychology. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17*, 87-107. doi: 10.1080/10413200590932371

Tanggaard, L. (2014). Ethnographic fieldwork in psychology: Lost and found. *Qualitative Inquiry, 20(2)*, 167-174. doi: 10.1177/1077800413510876

**Dec 6. Student presentations**