



Advanced Qualitative Methods

Spring 2023

None

None

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Course Information

Code

5242VAQM

ECTS

5.0

Level

200

Period

Semester 2, Blocks 1-2

Instructors

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Office hours by appointment only.

Dates & Locations

session	date	time	location	due
1	Feb 6	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	
2	Feb 13	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	Assignment 1
3	Feb 20	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	
4	Feb 27	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	Assignment 2
5	Mar 6	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	
6	Mar 13	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	Assignment 3
7	Mar 20	11:15-13:00	SH 13.13	
Exam Week	Mar 27	n/a	n/a	Midterm
8	Apr 3	11:15-13:00	SH 13.12	Self-Assessment
9	Apr 17	11:15-13:00	SH 13.12	Assignment 4
10	Apr 24	11:15-13:00	SH 13.12	Assignment 5
11	May 1	11:15-13:00	SH 13.12	
12	May 8	11:15-13:00	WH 3.16/3.46	Final Presentation
End of course	May 15	n/a	n/a	Proposal

All times CE(S)T unless otherwise noted.

Note: There is *no class* on April 10.

Readings

The required book for this class is Forrest Stuart, *Ballad of the Bullet* (Princeton University Press, 2020). It is available electronically through the university library catalog.

Other required and supplementary readings are either contained in Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2012) or will be [available for download](#).

Assessment

Assessment in this class is based on a mix of individual and group assignments, each counting for half of your grade.

Individual Assignments

The take-home [midterm](#) counts for 50 percent of your overall grade.

Group Assignments

You will be working in groups of 3-4 students to develop a research proposal. As a group, you will complete several group assignments (pass/fail) to prepare parts of the proposal over the course of the semester. In [session 10](#), groups will have a chance to get feedback on an early draft of their proposals from peers and instructors. In [session 12](#), you will have opportunity to present your proposals.

Your presentation will count for 10 percent of the overall grade of group members. After the presentations, you will submit your written proposal, which will count for 40 percent of the overall grade of all group members. The group assignments will be factored into your proposal grade.

Academic Integrity

This class adheres to Leiden University's [regulations on academic integrity](#). According to the university, "Plagiarism is understood as presenting, intentionally or otherwise, someone else's words, thoughts, analyses, argumentations, pictures, techniques, computer programmes, etc., as your own work."

We will refer **all suspected violations** of these regulations to the examination committee. Be careful to **properly cite** all works you draw on in your assignments. The University Library offers [tutorials and advice](#) on what and how to cite.

Changes

This syllabus is a living document and may be adapted as the course progresses. You can keep track of changes in the [timeline](#).

1. Sessions

Session 1: Introduction

In this session we cover some fundamental concepts of (qualitative) social research and discuss how to formulate good research questions for urban inquiry.

We will also discuss [assignment 1](#).

Readings

- Desmond (2014)
- *BB*, Preface, Introduction and Author's Note

Session 2: Understanding the Field

We will discuss ways of conceiving of the field and choosing a site for urban research.

We will also form groups and discuss [assignment 2](#).

Readings

- Burrell (2009)
- *BB*, chapter 1

Session 3: Talking to People

This session is dedicated to talking to people, whether through informal conversation or semistructured interviews. Why do we do it, when should we avoid it, and what is a good way to use talk for research purposes?

Readings

- Jerolmack and Khan (2014)
- Spradley (1979)
- *BB*, chapter 2

Session 4: Hanging Out

Urban ethnography is a central paradigm in urban research since the early twentieth century. However, ethnography has transformed over the last few decades, leading to the emergence of a large variety of modified ethnographic approaches. We discuss some that have application in urban research, including digital ethnography.

In addition, we will talk about [assignment 3](#).

Readings

- Christin (2020)
- *BB*, chapter 3

Session 5: Multisensory Methods

We discover the world not just by looking and listening, but also by being immersed in it as embodied beings. In this session we talk about how we can learn about the world by walking around in it.

Readings

- Powell (2018)
- Kusenbach (2003)
- *BB*, chapter 4

In addition to the readings, we ask that you listen to an [episode](#) of your choice of the podcast [The City Unfinished](#).

Session 6: Studying Non-Humans

In urban field sites we encounter not just people but a large number of diverse non-human entities. How can we include them in our research? That's what we'll discuss today.

We will also talk about the [midterm](#).

Readings

- Callon (1984)
- *BB*, chapter 5

Session 7: Qualitative Data Analysis

Note: Due to unforeseen circumstances, this session is canceled. The readings from this week will not be on the midterm.

What do we do with data gathered through qualitative research methods? We analyze it to create new knowledge. This session revisits the Grounded Theory process introduced in Data Collection Methods, and discusses how data visualization and text analysis can be used in the analysis of qualitative data.

Readings

- Graebner, Martin and Roundy (2012)
- Nelson (2020)
- recommended: Bryman, chapter 24
- *BB*, chapter 6

Session 8: Mapping Controversies and Networks

In this session we cover additional methods that help us study the world relationally: controversy mapping and social network methods.

We will also discuss [assignment 4](#).

Readings

- Yaneva and Heaphy (2012)
- adams, Santos and Williams (2019)
- *BB*, chapter 7 and Conclusion

Session 9: Writing Up

Most qualitative research results in a written work such as a paper, research report, or a monograph. How can we use qualitative evidence effectively as we present our arguments and analysis in writing? In this session, we are joined by a guest lecturer, **Dr. TK**, who will discuss the writing process with us.

We will discuss [assignment 5](#).

Readings

- Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011), ch. 7

Session 10: Feedback Session

Groups review each other's research projects and receive feedback on their proposals.

Readings

- TK

Session 11: Oral Exams

Most students will not have to attend this session.

Anyone who failed the midterm exam after an honest attempt will be able to earn a passing grade by taking an oral exam on this day. We will set these up on a case-by-case basis.

Session 12: Final Presentations

During this session, groups will present their research proposals. This session will be open to the wider urban studies community.

2. Assignments

Assignment 1: Research Question

Due date

February 17, 15:00

Content

This is an individual assignment.

Write down a first formulation of the **research question** for your research proposal.

Drawing on Desmond (2014), briefly discuss what **relations**, processes, or constellations of actors your question promises to illuminate.

Explain your choice of research question. What piques your **curiosity** about this topic? What do you hope to **discover** or contribute? This will likely require **referencing additional literature** in order to position the question within a wider issue or debate or to provide necessary context for it.

You may want to additionally consult Bryman, chs. 2-3, as you prepare this assignment.

The approximate length of this assignment is 500 words, but you may write more if need be. Please submit this assignment to the discussion thread on Brightspace.

Assignment 2: Starting a Group Project

Due date

March 3, 15:00

Content

This is a group assignment. Each group should submit:

1. a *revised* research question (one per group) along with a brief discussion of what motivated you to settle on this question and how you revised it;
2. a discussion of how to approach a field site relevant for your group's research question that addresses the following questions: What are possible entry points for research? What strategies can you employ to access your site so you can talk to people, hang out, observe, and possibly administer other research instruments? Justify your strategies and explain what possible tradeoffs may be involved.

Write no more than one page. Please submit this assignment to the discussion thread on Brightspace. (Please post inline text, not an attachment. If you wrote your assignment in a Word file, you can just copy-and-paste the content.)

Assignment 3: Interviews

Due date

March 17, 15:00

Content

This is a group assignment putting into practice the lessons from [session 3](#) and, to a certain extent, [session 4](#). It will provide preliminary research to bolster your research proposal.

Find a suitable division of labor within your group, and conduct two interviews of at least 20 minutes each with somebody connected to your field site. Record the interview with an audio recorder and transcribe the interview.

If audio recording is not possible (for instance, because your participants do not consent to being recorded), make sure to take detailed notes, and write a report on the interview based on them.

Write a brief reflection including:

1. your research question
2. a list of topics you covered in the conversation
3. a list of topics that, in retrospect, you should have included in your interview guide/topic list
4. a one-page discussion of how the interview informs your project: what do your preliminary findings say about the phenomenon you are studying?

Please submit this assignment, along with your interview transcript, via Brightspace.

Assignment 4: Including the Non-Human

Due date

April 14, 15:00

Content

This is a group assignment.

Write a brief reflection (up to one page) focusing on the question of what non-human actors you might encounter in your field site. Discuss how their agency or presence is relevant for your research question, and what methods and procedures you need to adopt to collect the relevant data. The goal is to strengthen your research proposal by concocting an appropriate methods mix.

Please submit this assignment via Brightspace.

Take-Home Midterm

Exam due date

March 31, 23:59 [AoE](#)

Self-assessment due date

April 4, 23:59 [AoE](#)

The midterm will consist of short essay questions asking you to relate *Ballad of the Bullet* to the content of lectures and other course readings. You will find these questions on Brightspace on March 27.

Self-Assessment

The midterm will be self-assessed. This means that, after submitting your answers, you will grade your own effort. Here's how that works:

1. We will prepare "model answers" for each of the essay questions on the midterm. Read each of these model answers and the assessment criteria that they are intended to demonstrate. The "model answers" are *not* the definitive answers, and it is possible that a good answer will differ significantly in its content provided it successfully demonstrates understanding and analytical thinking.
2. You will write a brief reflection on your own answers. Think of your reflection as a letter addressed to the instructors in which you explain what you think was successful about your answer, and what, with the benefit of hindsight, you think could have been improved. What did you find challenging about writing your answer? What did you learn as a result of preparing your answer and reviewing it?
3. Finally, you will tell us what grade you would give yourself for the exam as a whole. (Ideally, we would give everyone the grade they give themselves, but we reserve the right to raise or lower grades as appropriate.)

You will find the self-assessment as an assignment on Brightspace after you have submitted your attempt and the deadline has passed.

Assignment 5: Draft Proposal

Due date

Session 10 (April 25)

Content

As a group, write as complete a draft as possible of your research proposal.

1. your research question and any necessary background information
2. a brief discussion of related literature (at least one monograph and three journal articles) that inform your project's conceptual framework
3. choose one method discussed in this class, apply it in the context of your project, and provide a rationale for using the method in your project
4. methods, data, and findings: what did you do and what did you learn so far?

You will share your draft with fellow students during [session 10](#). This will be a chance to get valuable peer (as well as instructor) feedback as you finalize your proposal.

Research Proposal

Presentation date

May 8

Proposal due date

May 16, 23:59

Your research group will prepare a research proposal on the basis of the preliminary research carried out in this course. You will submit this proposal to the annual Urban Research Grant competition of the Ruth Glass Foundation for Urban Research.

Recommended reading: Adam Pzreworski and Frank Salomon, [On the Art of Writing Proposals](#) (Brooklyn, NY: Social Science Research Council, 1995).

Further details are provided on Brightspace.

3. References

- adams, jimi, Tatiane Santos, and Venice Ng Williams. 2019. "Strategies for Collecting Social Network Data: Overview, Assessment and Ethics." SocArXiv. March 2019. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/zgawf>.
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- Spradley, James P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart; Winston.
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