

Note: This syllabus may represent a past offering of this course and future course offerings may differ.

HCDE 545: Qualitative Research Methods

Instructor: Charlotte P. Lee

Course Description

Qualitative research methods are powerful tools for approaching certain kinds of research questions. Questions regarding how people experience and make meaning of the world around them and how they undertake activities and participate in their worlds are questions that are well-suited to qualitative analysis. The products of qualitative research are useful in their own right, but they are also useful for informing quantitative research. Qualitative methods can be used to construct models for quantitative exploration and to ensure that specified categories are valid. In situations where practices are diffuse or poorly understood or where understanding how change comes about is paramount, qualitative research may be the best way to understand the activities that people undertake.

Course Objectives

The goal of this class is to introduce you to qualitative research methods, particularly the use of grounded theory methods to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. We will discuss ethnographic methods and how they are used in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW). Primarily, however, this course will be a workshop on how one goes about conducting ethnographic research and analysing materials. We will focus in particular on ethnographic methods as a set of practices for producing, interpreting, manipulating, and shaping texts.

Students will undertake projects based on ethnographic techniques. We will devote as much class time as we can to “data sessions,” where we collectively explore and analyze data that you bring to class. Project work will be supplemented with a range of in-class discussions and readings.

Grading and Assignments

Week 2 Individual Reference List: 10%

Week 3 Individual Memo: 5%

Week 5 Group Presentation: 20%

Week 6 Individual Interview Transcript: 15%

Week 8 Individual Participation Grade (1/2 team and 1/2 instructor): 5%

Week 10 Group Final Presentation: 10%

Finals Week: Group Final Paper and Binder: 35%

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Course Schedule

WEEK	TOPICS	Readings / Deliverables
Week 1	Introductions, introduction to qualitative research, IRB.	
	Discussion of research sites, introduction to observing, jottings, notebooks. In Class: Observation exercise.	Bogdan and Biklan, pp 1–10; Emerson et al., Chap.1+2D.group: List of Group Members, research site, preliminary research question
Week 2	No Class today. CPL at Workshop.	
	Research site and research question discussions. Writing up field notes from jottings. Telling the story. Show actions unfolding. Field note template. In Class: Writing exercise—taking different perspectives.	Emerson et al., Chap.3 + 4, D.individual: Reference List (6 references with full citation and abstract. For 3 of the 6 articles also prepare a 2 to 3 paragraph statement saying how the article influences your thinking about the research question.
Week 3	Pursuing member’s meanings. In Class: Discuss final research questions, share jottings and early observations.	Emerson et al., Chapter 5, Heath and Luff. pp 1-30D.group: Final research question D.individual: Bring jottings to class.
	Processing Field Notes: Coding and Memoing	Emerson, Chap. 6, Hughes et. al. pp123-141D.individual: Bring field notes to class.
Week 4	Coding and grounded theoretic approaches. Collecting documentation, organizing data, projects	More examples of fieldwork. QDA webpage: http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/what_is_qda.php (Also follow links to How and What to Code and to Examples of Coded Text. D.individual: Bring field notes to class.
	Introduction to	Seidman, pp.7–14, Weiss, Chap.1 —

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	Interviewing, In Class: Presentations and Discussion, Interviewing Exercise	3D.individual: Bring one memo, discussing one theme from your own field notes that could address the research question. Make sure to include your research question at the top.
Week 5	Data session: discussion of early findings Constructing a good interview protocol	Weiss, Chap.4+5, pp61-83D.group. Each group should bring PowerPoint slides detailing their research question, and 2 pairs (or triplets) of quotes from your collective field notes that may represent a theme that could answer your research question.
	Data session: discussion of early findings. In-class: First Draft of Interview Protocols	Weiss, Chap. 6+7D.group. Each group should bring PowerPoint slides detailing their research question, and 4 triplets of quotes from your collective field notes that may represent a theme that could answer your research question.
Week 6	Interviewing Techniques- Data session: discussion of early findings.	D.group. Submit a Interview protocol with no more than 12 questions with questions grouped by theme. Catalyst: Team Member Evaluations
	Informal presentations. Working in groups.	D.group. Each group may bring PowerPoint slides detailing their research question, presenting two memos on developing themes other than those discussed the previous week.
Week 7	No Class Today . Use time to collect more data and to code. Note: CPL will be having office hours during class time.	
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Week 8	Data sessions, share coding examples	D.individual: Interview Transcripts Due before Class D.individual: Bring transcripts. Bring fieldnotes.
	Data sessions, share memos. Codebooks.	D.individual: Bring memos. Bring field notes.
Week 9	Data sessions.	D.groupA: Each group informally presents for 6 minutes on: 1) quotes and analysis relevant to illustrating emerging themes for only two interview protocol questions of your choice and quotes and analysis for one new theme (supported by three quotes from field notes and or interviews) that helps to answer your research question. D.individual: Bring memos. Bring field notes.
	Data sessions	D.group B: Each group informally presents for 6 minutes on: 1) quotes and analysis relevant to illustrating emerging themes for only two interview protocol questions of your choice and quotes and analysis for one new theme (supported by three quotes from field notes and or interviews) that helps to answer your research question. D.individual: Bring memos. Bring field notes.
Week 10	Class presentations	D.group A: 15 minute presentation, 10 minutes questions
	Class presentations	D.group B: 15 minute presentation, 10 minutes questions
	Final papers and binders are due by 4pm	