Qualitative Research Design – ENV 254L

Instructor: Lisa Campbell  
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Meetings: Tuesdays, 1-3pm; Wednesdays, 1:30-3pm

Office hours: TBA

Location: OCC

Purpose:

The purpose of the course is two-fold: 1) to examine the concept of ‘research’ (philosophy and epistemology, as well as practice) along with methods used widely in the social sciences. The focus is on qualitative methods, often appropriate when dealing with policy and human behavior; 2) to explore the relevance and utility of such methods in the specific context of understanding activities and policy in the marine environment.

Contacting your instructor by email: rules of engagement

During the week, I will respond to email sent by 5pm on the same day the message is sent. Emails sent on the weekend will not be addressed until the following Monday.

Schedule:

Tentative schedule (subject to change – updated on Oct. 15, 2007)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td>Introduction and course planning</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Thinking about research (models, concepts, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Importance of method; theory-methods links</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Sept. 4</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
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<td><strong>Methods paper critique no. 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Issues of ownership (advanced ethics)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td><strong>Focus group</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td>Methods seminar 1, 2 (Myriah Cornwell, Focus Groups)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Methods seminar 3</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>Methods seminar 4, 5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>Methods seminar 6</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>Methods seminar 7, 8</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>Methods seminar 9</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>Mid term break</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Mid term break</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Post-seminar follow-up and discussion/ Qualitative data</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Qualitative data analysis II</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Qualitative data analysis III</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Methods critique no. 2.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Real world examples</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Qualitative data: computer assisted analysis</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Computer lab: CAQDAS</td>
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<td>A1 due: methods critique no. 3</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Computer lab: CAQDAS</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Validity and Reliability</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Participatory research methods</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>A3 oral due: speed session presentations</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>A3 written due: focus group analysis</td>
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<td>Mapping</td>
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**Readings**

Readings are posted on Blackboard and/or available in the course reading box in the library.

2 Aug. 29 Kitchen & Tate, 1999. Table 1.2. Conducting Research in Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice


3 Sept. 4 NO CLASS


5 Sept. 11 Focus group


7-12 Sept. 18 – Oct. 3 Student seminars: updated weekly on Blackboard

13/14 Oct. 9-10 NO CLASS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Morse, J. and Richards, L. 2002. 'Read Me First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods' California: Sage. Ch.6-Coding &amp; Ch.7-Abstracting</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Oct. 30</td>
<td>Real life examples: Janna Shakeroff and Noella Gray, on doing qualitative analysis</td>
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<td>21/22</td>
<td>Nov. 6-7</td>
<td>Computer labs</td>
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<td>25-26</td>
<td>Nov. 20-21</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>A3 due: speed presentations</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>No reading. A3 due, focus group write up</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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Assignments/grade structure

- Method paper critiques – (2 in group sessions, 1 in writing) – 30%
- Method seminar – 30%
- Focus Group project – 30%
- Participation – 10%

Self/Peer evaluation

Peer evaluation serves several purposes: it is one way of addressing issues that sometimes arise in collaborative projects regarding ‘who did what’, it makes students aware of their role in and contribution to a larger group, it increases self-evaluation skills, it supplements the instructor’s evaluation, and it provides additional feedback to students.

We will use two types of peer evaluation: evaluating participation, and evaluating performance.

Evaluating participation

Participation in weekly sessions is expected. At the end of term, all students will be provided with evaluation forms to grade their peers and themselves. Students will collectively award the ‘Gold Star’ for participation.

Evaluating performance

For all oral presentations, students will evaluate their peers using forms provided by the instructor. Grades assigned will not be shown to the student, but they will receive the written portion of the comments. Evaluations will be anonymous.

Nicholas School Honor Code

All activities of Nicholas School students, including those in this course, are governed by the Duke Community Standard:

The Duke Community Standard

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Citizens of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and nonacademic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.

To uphold the Duke Community Standard:

- I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors;
- I will conduct myself responsibly and honorably in all my endeavors; and
- I will act if the Standard is compromised
ENV 254L: Qualitative Research Design

Assignment 1: Critiques of research articles

Activities:

Several research articles will be critiqued over the course of the term. The first two critiques will be done in class, working in groups. The final critique will be submitted in writing.

Objective:

To develop critical reading skills, specifically in relation to the importance of clarity in method.

Process (1st two reviews):

- Read the article
- Evaluate the article in terms of the criteria listed below (in addition to any others that you deem relevant and appropriate)
- Come to the designated sessions prepared to share your findings

Process (3rd review):

- Submit your written review (6-8 pages, double spaced) at any point in the term on or before October
- The grade for this assignment will be based on the written review, but full participation in class discussion is expected

Suggested criteria (‘Suggested’ is the key term. You can expand or add to this list, and not all questions will be equally useful to consider for all articles):

- Positionality: Does the author make her/his own personal and philosophical position clear?
- Does the article provide explicit and sufficient information on the methods used for both data collection and analysis? Is it clear exactly what was done and how?
- What sources (if any) are cited in explaining or justifying the methodology and methods? E.g. Are there references to general “methods” texts, or to other individual pieces of research that employed similar methods?
- Were the methods used appropriate to (a) the philosophical and theoretical position of the author(s) and (b) the research topic or problem tackled?
- Were multiple methods used, and if so were these successfully integrated?
- Does the article explicitly address or implicitly reveal some of the broader issues we’ve discussed relating to qualitative research, e.g. ethics, cross-cultural issues etc.?
- Does the article reveal any practical problems or difficulties associated with doing qualitative research (e.g. psychological demands on the researcher; establishing and maintaining relationship with research subjects?)
• Was the “qualitative” component of the research method restricted to data collection, or is it carried through to the interpretation, analysis and presentation of the findings?

We will evaluate the first article on **September 5:**


We will evaluate the second article on **October 24:**


The third article you will evaluate individually, in writing, by **November 6** is:


The assignment is worth 30% of the course grade.
Activities:

Working in pairs, students will prepare and present a ‘state of the art’ seminar on a particular qualitative research method, or issue related to doing research (topics listed below).

Purpose:

To provide students with in-depth knowledge of a particular research method or issue; to develop oral presentations skills; to develop group work skills.

Process:

Each group will select a particular research method or issue from a list provided (alternative topics should be discussed with the instructor). Each group will provide one directed reading for the class to use in preparation for the seminar, present a 30-35 minute seminar in class, and lead a group discussion. A total of 50 minutes will be allotted to each group.

Content:

Reading: The reading provided can take many forms, for example, a case study showing use of your method or a review paper related to your method or issue. Know why it is that you want us to read it, and make your reasoning clear during the course of your seminar. You should provide a copy of the reading in the library in our course folder, or provide a PDF to the instructor for posting on Blackboard. Readings must be received at the latest by Friday (at noon) prior to the week of your seminar. Marks will be deducted for failure to provide the reading by this time (5% per day).

Seminar: The idea is to provide the class with an overview of your selected method or issue. There is no ‘template’ for the presentation, as they will vary considerably depending on whether or not you are looking at an issue or a method. Some ideas are listed below, but the lists are not meant to be exhaustive.

If you are looking at an issue, you might talk about the nature of the issue, why and when the issue arose, the importance of the issue, the types of research for which your issue is relevant, how we can deal with or accommodate or address the issue, the philosophical or epistemological ideas are associated with the issues, and how relevant these issues are in marine studies.

If you are looking at a specific method, you may consider variations in the method, what you actually do in data collection, the kinds of research questions your method might suit,
examples of types of theories that might support your method, the type of analysis required, strengths and weaknesses of your method, examples of applications (case studies), how your method is (or might be) used specifically in marine studies.

Everyone should provide a reference list related to their topic as a slide in their seminar. These references sheets will be posted on Blackboard, for future reference by class members.

Discussion: All groups need to leave room for discussion/active engagement. The structure you choose (free for all, guided by questions, a game, a debate, an activity…) is up to you. Think about what you want to accomplish in the discussion and choose an appropriate format.

The assignment is worth 30% of your course grade. You will receive peer evaluations (FYI only) in addition to the assessment and grade provided by the instructor.

Topics

General issues regarding research
• Gender issues and research
• Cross-cultural research
• Researcher and/or activist?
• Situated knowledge
• Field work

Specific methods
• Case studies
• Policy evaluation methods
• Content analysis
• Participant observation
• Interviews

Seminars will be scheduled from Sept. 18 – Oct. 3.
ENV 254L – Qualitative Research Design
Assignment 3: Focus group

Activity:

Members of the class will participate in a focus group on September 12. Following the focus group, each student will undertake analysis of two focus groups, both this year’s and one conducted on the same topic in 2006. Students will submit a written report detailing results and analysis. Students will also present a brief overview of their findings to the class.

The use of two transcripts increases the amount of data available in analysis (believe me, this is a good thing). Both video recordings and the transcripts of focus groups will be available for analysis.

Purpose:

- To familiarize the class with a popular method of research, particularly in the field of policy evaluation.
- To analyze qualitative data.
- To practice written presentation of research results.
- To practice succinctly summarizing results for an audience

Preparation:

Several course lectures will assist in preparing for assignment three. Sessions include a background lecture on focus groups, 3 lectures on qualitative data analysis, and a lab on using computer software for qualitative data analysis.

Readings on focus groups will be available in the reserve readings box in the library.

Steps to completing analysis:

Students should identify a research question that drives their analysis. Ideally, this would be done in advance of conducting the focus group, and each student would have run groups themselves. Thus, the question may seem somewhat arbitrary, or contrived, but don’t worry about this. The main purpose of the assignment is to practice data analysis methods.

Once a research question is established, students will devise a coding scheme that allows them to analyze their results (instructions on coding will be provided in course lectures).
**Presentation of results - written**

There are two components to the written report:

**Part A:** Research report. Headings should include: purpose/research questions; methods (of data collection and analysis); results; analysis/discussion. This part of the report deals with the actual research you’ve done, rather than the research process (~80% of written report).

**Part B:** Reflections on the research process. Comment on the experience of conducting this particular type of research. In what ways did your experience reflect on what you have read in the methods literature? What were the most difficult and the most straightforward components of the process? How have your views on focus groups (or qualitative methods in general) evolved from the beginning of the project? While there are opportunities here for personal reflection, make sure these are grounded in or linked to what we have been reading all term (~20% of written report).

**Presentation of results - oral**

Students will participate in a ‘speed’ session (popular on the conference circuit at the moment). Each student will have 5 minutes to present their research, focusing on their research question, their methods of analysis, their results, and any conclusions they make from these.

This assignment is worth 30% of your course grade. Of that 30%, 80% will be assigned to the written report and 20% to your speed presentation.

The written report is due on Nov. 27
The speed presentation is due on Nov. 28