

## INF 391F: Qualitative Research Methods

Fall 2023

Unique Number 28855

Class Meets: Thursdays 3:30 – 6:30 PM in UTA 1.204

### Instructor

Soo Young Rieh, Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Information

Pronoun: she/her

Email: [rieh@ischool.utexas.edu](mailto:rieh@ischool.utexas.edu)

Web: <https://rieh.ischool.utexas.edu/>

Office: UTA 5.328

Office Hour: Thursdays 2-3 and by appointment

### COURSE OVERVIEW

Qualitative research methods are useful for exploring phenomena and translating understanding into theoretical frameworks. The objective of this course is to develop familiarity with and appreciation for these methods as viable research approaches. This course explores a variety of investigation approaches encompassing ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, evaluation research, and action research. This course offers hands-on opportunities for students to practice qualitative research. Students will conduct their own research project giving them the chance to learn, deliberate, and reflect upon the procedures of qualitative research such as developing qualitative inquiries, describing qualitative research problems and questions, identifying key informants, conducting fieldwork and interviews, analyzing and organizing data, interpreting findings, constructing theory from concepts, and writing a qualitative study.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between various qualitative approaches, ranging from ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research, phenomenology, and case studies to action research
2. Acquire familiarity with qualitative research design, encompassing its key components, ethical consideration, and methods for obtaining access
3. Critically review published qualitative research articles, evaluating the choices made in terms of research design and method choices
4. Develop skills in diverse data collection, including observation, the creation of field notes, conducting interviewing and focus groups, and collecting artifact
5. Cultivate proficiency in the qualitative data analysis process and interpretation
6. Gain an understanding of enhancing the quality, credibility, and significance of qualitative research
7. Demonstrate an ability to undertake a qualitative research project and write a conference-ready qualitative research paper

### COURSE MATERIALS

There are two required textbooks for this course:

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Sage.

Bazeley, P. (2021). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Sage.

Multiple chapters from the following books will be included in course readings. But, students DO NOT need to buy them. Chapters from these books will be available through our class Canvas site.

Krathwohl, D. R. (2009). *Methods of educational and social science research: The logic of methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Waveland Press.

Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. (2018). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pearson.

### EXPECTATIONS

**Course Readings:** Read the course readings critically in advance of the class session.

**Before-Class Questions “What I want to know” and After-Class Reflections “What I learned this week”:** Post your questions and reflections every week.

**Canvas:** Check out the Canvas site on a regular basis. Course readings, lecture notes, assignment instructions, grading rubrics, and other course-related resources will be communicated via the Canvas site.

### COURSE POLICIES

1. Email is the most reliable communication method with the instructor. Please include “INF 391F” or “Qualitative Research Methods” in a subject line. Do not use the messaging feature in Canvas because it is often getting lost. Although I will try my best to answer your questions promptly, please give me 48 hours to reply to your email. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, please resend your email for my attention.
2. I use a 100-point scale to grade papers. Unless you are facing an emergency situation and you request an extension with a legitimate reason from me at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, points will be deducted for late submissions (2 points per day, including weekends).
3. Assignment guidelines and rubrics for each assignment will be available on Canvas – Assignments.
4. All assignments should be handed in using Canvas.
5. Every paper should include the course number, a **unique title**, the submission date, your name, and your email address at the top of the first page (no cover page).
6. All citations should use APA (American Psychological Association) style. For more information on APA style, please see <https://apastyle.apa.org>.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Class Participation	10%
Assignment 1: Before-Class Questions and After-Class Reflection	10%
Assignment 2: Presentation of Qualitative Research Methods	15%
Assignment 3: Non-Participant Observation Fieldwork Report	20%
Term Project Part 1: Title and Problem Statement	5%
Term Project Part 2: Research Questions and Interview Questions	10%
Term Project Part 3: Paper	30%
TOTAL	100%

### POINTS AND LETTER GRADE

94-100 = A    90-93.9 = A-  
 87-89.9 = B+    84-86.9 = B    80-83.9 = B-  
 77-79.9 = C+    74-76.9 = C    70-73.9 = C-

### ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Week	Date	Assignment Due	Changes on Course Schedule	Presentation of Research Methods
Week 1	8/24			
Week 2	8/31		[International Conference of Librarians in Mexico]	
Week 3	9/7			Sign up
Week 4	9/14	Project Part 1: Title and Problem Statement		
Week 5	9/21			Researcher 1
Week 6	9/28	Project Part 2: Draft of Research Questions and Interview Questions		Researcher 2
Week 7	10/5			Researcher 3
Week 8	10/12		[iSchool 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event 5-8 PM]	
Week 9	10/19	Assignment 3: Fieldwork Report		Researcher 4
Week 10	10/26			Researcher 5
Week 11	11/2		ASIST Conference [Guest Lecture]	
Week 12	11/9			Researcher 6
Week 13	11/16			
Week 14	11/23	No Class, Thanksgiving Day		
Week 15	11/30	Project Part 3: Term Paper		

### UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH SKILLS

#### **Week 1 - August 21** Course Overview; Continuum of Research Approaches

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 1. The Nature, Niche, Value, and Fruit of Qualitative Inquiry
- Krathwohl, D. R. Chapter 2. The Variety of Research Methods
- Saldana, J. (2011). Fundamentals of qualitative research. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1. Genres, Elements, and Styles of Qualitative Research (pp. 3-30).

#### **Week 2 – August 31** Qualitative inquiry; Paradigms, Perspectives, and theoretical orientation

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 3. Variety of Qualitative Inquiry Frameworks.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chapter 4. Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry (pp. 53-84).
- Talja, S., Tuominen, K. Savlolainen, R. (2005). “Isms” in information science: Constructivism, collectivism and constructionism. *Journal of Documentation*, 61(1), 79-101.

**Week 3 - September 7** Designing qualitative studies; Research problem; Developing research questions

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 5. Designing Qualitative Studies.
- Krathwohl, D. R. Chapter 5. Creating Research Problems.
- Hernon, P. & Schwartz, C. (2007). What is a problem statement? *Library & Information Science Research*, 29(3), 307-309.

**Week 4 – September 14** Preliminaries to data generation, gaining access, identification of informants, sampling; ethical concerns and consideration

- Fetterman, D. M. (2020). *Ethnography: Step by step*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Sage. Chapter 3. Methods and Techniques: A Wilderness Guide (pp. 42-78).
- Burgess, R. G. (1982). Elements of sampling in field research. In R. G. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual* (pp. 75-78). London: Routledge
- Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. Chapter 3. Ethical Issues in Research
- Reddy, M. & Dourish, P. (2002). A finger on the Pulse: Temporal rhythms and information seeking in medical work. *CSCW '02*. 244-353.

## UNIT 2: QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

**Week 5 – September 21** Ethnography; Fieldwork and observation

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 6. Fieldwork Strategies and Observation Methods
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1. Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research (pp. 1-16) and Chapter 2. Chapter 2. In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes (pp. 17-38).
- Pettigrew (1999). Waiting for chiropody: Contextual results from an ethnographic study of the information behavior among attendees at community clinics. *Information Processing and Management*, 35, 801-817.

**Week 6 – September 28** Qualitative Interviewing

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 7. Qualitative Interviewing
- Bernard, H. R. (2006). Interviewing: Unstructured and semistructured. In *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.), (pp. 203-239). Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Dervin, B. (2003). From the mind's eye of the user: The sense-making Qualitative-Quantitative methodology. In *Sense-Making Methodology Reader: Selected Writings of Brenda Dervin*. Edited by B. Dervin, L. Foreman-Werner, and E. Lauterbach (pp. 269-292). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc.

**Week 7 – October 5** Case Studies; Evaluation Studies; Action research

- Krathwohl, D. R. Chapter 23. Evaluation Studies and Action Research
- Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. Chapter 7. Participatory Action Research.
- Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. Chapter 10. Case Studies.

## UNIT 3: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

**Week 8 – October 12** Analysis and Interpretation

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 8. Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation.
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 5. Read, Reflect, and Connect: Initial Explorations of Data
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 6. Coding as an Analytic Strategy

**Week 9 – October 19** Codes, themes, coded categories, interpretation

- Bazeley, P. Chapter 7. Tools to Manage the Coding Process
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 8. Codes, Themes, and Descriptive Writing
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 13. Exploring, Seeing, and Investigating Connections in Data
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 14. Elaborating Concepts, Developing Theory

**Week 10 – October 26** Grounded theory; from concepts to theory

- Corbin, J. M. & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Strauss, A & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273-285). Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage.
- Charmaz, K., Thornberg, R. & Keane, E. (2018). Evolving grounded theory and social justice inquiry. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds). 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp.411-443). Sage.

**UNIT 4: EVALUATION, PRESENTATION, AND WRITING****Week 11 – November 2** [Guest Lecture] Edgar Gómez-Cruz**Week 12 – November 9** Evaluating qualitative inquiry; credibility, internal integrity, reliability, validity

- Patton, M. Q. Chapter 9. Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Studies.
- Bazeley, P. Chapter 16. Defending and Extending: Issues of Quality and Significance
- Krathwohl, D. R. Chapter 16. Quality Considerations, Conclusions, and Reporting in Qualitative Research

**Week 13 – November 16** Writing up and reporting findings

- Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. Chapter 12. Writing Research: Finding Meaning in Data.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chapter 9. Writing a Qualitative Study (pp. 177-200).
- Rieh, S. Y. (2004). On the web at home: Information seeking and web searching in the home environment. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 55, 743-753.

**Week 14 – November 23** Thanksgiving Day**Week 15 – December 2** Class Wrap; Term project presentations**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND TERM PROJECT****Participation (10%)**

This is a graduate course and requires active participation throughout. I will not take attendance each week, but I will be aware of and take note of absences and late arrivals. When you must be absent, please let me know via email. My expectations for class participation and grading criteria are as follows:

**Outstanding Contributor (95-100):** This student consistently asks questions in class and volunteers answers that contribute to the learning of the class by suggesting thoughtful ideas or

encouraging more students to participate in discussions. Posts questions before class and writes reflections after class almost every week. Attends every class session and always arrives to class on time.

**Good Contributor (90-94):** This student often volunteers answers to questions and asks questions that are appropriate and helpful to class. Posts questions before class and writes reflections after class frequently. Absent from 1-2 class sessions and always arrives to class on time.

**Adequate Contributor (85-89):** This student infrequently volunteers answers to questions or asks questions, but his or her contributions are relevant. Posts questions before class and writes reflections after class once in a while. Absent from 3 class sessions. Arrives to class late occasionally.

**Non-Participant (80-84):** This student rarely participates in class. Rarely posts questions before class or writes reflections after class. Absent from 4 class sessions. Arrives to class late consistently.

### **Assignment 1: Weekly Online Discussions (10%)**

**Before-Class Questions “What I want to know”:** Post a question to the Canvas. Avoid posting questions that have already been answered in the readings. Instead, focus on questions that remain unanswered or unsolved, based on your understanding of the readings. I will choose the 'best questions' every week and we will discuss the selected questions during class. To be considered for selection as a 'best question,' make sure to post your question(s) at least 24 hours before the scheduled class time (Wednesday 3:30 PM).

**After-Class Reflections “What I learned this week”:** At the conclusion of each week's class, revisit the Canvas platform and write your reflections on the lectures, readings, and discussions. Alternatively, you can revisit questions posed by fellow students to determine if you are now able to address any of those questions.

### **Assignment 2: Presentation of Innovative Qualitative Research Methods (15%)**

1. Select a paper or book that employs qualitative research methods. Make an effort to choose a work where you believe the methods are notably creative and robust.
2. The sign-up sheet will be available on Canvas – Pages. You will need to provide a citation for the paper you plan to present when you sign up. Please keep in mind that each student should work on one researcher. You also need to submit the PDF file of the paper you'll present to the instructor by September 7.
3. Envision yourself as the researcher who conducted the chosen research. Your primary audience comprises graduate students who might not be familiar with qualitative research methods. Your task is to convey the innovativeness and creativity of your research methods to this audience. Be explicit about how your methods differ from previous works. Emphasize the strengths of research methods. However, it is important to note that not all methods are perfect. Therefore, at the end of the presentation, you should acknowledge the limitations or weaknesses in your research methods.
4. The rough outline of your presentation should cover the following points (feel free to add other aspects if you like):
  - What sparked your interest in a specific research problem?
  - Why was your chosen qualitative approach appropriate for your research topic?
  - What could have been drawbacks and benefits of using an alternative approach?

- How did you collect the qualitative data?
- How did you analyze the qualitative data?
- What methodological contributions do you make to the field?

5. Your presentation should aim for 20 minutes in duration. A 10-minute Q&A session will follow your presentation. Prepare your presentation slides and post your file to the Canvas - Discussions before the class. Your grade will be based both on both the slides and on the presentation itself. While the instructor will provide the grading, peers will offer feedback using the online form.

### **Assignment 3: Non-Participant Observation Fieldwork Report (20%)**

1. Select a field site for observing people's behavior. Choose a site that is naturally public such as a library, bookstore, cafe, playground, train station, or shopping mall. Do not choose an airport due to security concerns. A virtual field site, such as Facebook groups and online communities, is allowed.
2. Conduct observations for a minimum of 6 hours. Note that time spent on the site before this assignment does not count towards these hours. Take field notes about your experience each time you do your observations.
3. You must make trips (physically or virtually) to your chosen site 2-3 times. If possible, observe during different time slots (morning, afternoon, evening; weekdays, weekends) in order to capture a diverse range of people and activities. All observations should be conducted at the same location. Your role as an observer is that of a non-participant, allowing you to focus entirely on observation and develop sensitivity to the significance of what is occurring.
4. Take field notes using various techniques you learned from class discussions, practices, and course readings. Field notes are the observer's record of the observation. They include descriptions of the setting and its purpose, who was present and why people appeared to come to the site, a drawing of the setting's layout, documentation of happenings in general and the types of information that people sought or shared in particular. If you are doing this assignment by choosing an online community, you can analyze its design.
5. Insert "Observer Comments" into your field notes, incorporating your thoughts and reflections on various matters. This could include the process of determining what was important to capture given all that was occurring, challenges encountered while observing and documenting, and suggestions for next steps.
6. Review your field notes and identify distinct behavior patterns that seemed to be repeated or stood out prominently in your observations.
7. Select about 3-5 important behavior patterns and locate relevant field notes that illustrate such patterns with rich descriptions.
8. The outline of your report will be roughly as follows: introduction, site overview, observation methods, findings, conclusion, and appendix containing excerpts of field notes. Your fieldwork report should be about 5-10 pages (single-spaced), not counting the appendix.

### **Assignment 4: Research Project (45%)**

Each student will identify a research problem, design a research project to investigate that problem, and then carry out the project. The purpose of the research project is to provide you with experience in the entire process of conducting a research project. You are expected to turn your term paper into a conference paper or poster for publication.

This project encompasses several phases: defining the research problem and purposes; reviewing related literature; designing qualitative research investigation; executing the investigation; analyzing the data you have collected; and writing up your results. For this

project, you need to collect your data using one or more qualitative research methods. Thoroughly analyze and interpret the collected data. It is recommended for you to go back to your literature review and discuss whether your findings are consistent with other researchers' findings. Make sure to include a discussion of *why* your findings are consistent (or are not consistent) with those of other researchers.

### **Part 1: Title and Problem Statement (5%)**

Submit a problem statement for the project that you intend to work on this semester. You must obtain approval from the instructor before you proceed with your proposed study. Your problem statement should present a logical and persuasive argument about what problem you address, which key concepts you will incorporate, and why it is important for you to address this problem.

### **Part 2: Draft of Research Questions and Interview Questions (10%)**

Develop 3-4 research questions that you plan to examine. Then write a draft of your interview questions. The purpose of this Part 2 is to provide you with suggestions and feedback. Feel free to submit your draft even before the deadline so that you can have enough time to make revisions based on feedback from the instructor.

### **Project 3: Term Paper (30%)**

1. Finalize a problem and research questions based on feedback from the instructor.
2. Include at least 7 publications in your literature review.
3. Recruit at least 5 participants for interviews. Contact them individually to arrange interview schedules. Prepare for conducting each ethnographic interview.
4. Conduct ethnographic interviews, each lasting about 1-1.5 hours each. Your interview questions should have been reviewed by the instructor and revised at least once at this stage. You must record each interview.
5. Transcribe interviews to best of your ability.
6. Analyzing the data, following the process and strategies covered in class.
7. Write a research paper consisting of 8 parts, as follows:
  - Introduction
  - Problem Statement
  - Related Work: Demonstrate you understand related literature and contextualize your topic with previous work.
  - Methods: Elaborate on the methods, procedures (such as when, where, how you collected the data) and instruments (such as interview questions) you used.
  - Results: Present your findings. Rather than trying to cover everything you've found, focus on present your major findings. Highlight three or four key points from your findings.
  - Discussion: Relate your findings to previous literature.
  - Conclusion: Conclude your paper by discussing the implications of your findings.
  - Appendix 1: Data collection instruments (i.e., interview questions)
  - Appendix 2: Coding Book

Your paper should be about 10 pages long (single-spaced). Ensure that your in-text citations and references follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA Style).

### **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan



Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

### SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, my written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials may facilitate cheating. The University is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in initiation of the student conduct process and include charge(s) for academic misconduct, potentially resulting in sanctions, including a grade impact.

### UNIVERSITY POLICY ON TITLE IX

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as Senate Bill 212) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report to the [Title IX Office](#) any information regarding incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive information about incidents of this type (including, but not limited to, written forms, applications, one-on-one conversations, class assignments, class discussions, or third-party reports) must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are [mandatory reporters](#) under federal Title IX regulations and are required to report [a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct](#), including the types of misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex – including pregnancy and parental status – in educational programs and activities. The Title IX Office has developed supportive ways and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX matter.

If you would like to speak with a case manager, who can provide support, resources, or academic accommodations, in the Title IX Office, please email: [supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu). Case managers can also provide support, resources, and accommodations for pregnant, nursing, and parenting students.

For more information about reporting options and resources, please visit: <https://titleix.utexas.edu>, contact the Title IX Office via email at: [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

### DISABILITY AND ACCESS (D&A)

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to

the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

#### **COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

Students who are struggling for any reason and who believe that it might impact their performance in the course are urged to reach out to Bryce Moffett if they feel comfortable. This will allow her to provide any resources or accommodations that she can. If immediate mental health assistance is needed, call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) at 512-471-3515 or you may also contact Bryce Moffett, LCSW (iSchool CARE counselor) at 512-232-4449. Bryce's office is located in FAC18S and she holds drop in Office Hours on Wednesday from 2-3pm. For urgent mental health concerns, please contact the CMHC 24/7 Crisis Line at 512-471-2255.

[Last updated August 19, 2023]