

Fall 2021

STS 304-001: Qualitative Research Methods

Theresa Hunt

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Dr. Theresa Hunt

FALL 2021

M/W 11:30 – KUPF 206

Office: CULM 415

Hours: M by appt & W 9-10

Course Description

How do researchers study and make sense of social phenomena? From epidemiologists hoping to understand the spread of disease to app developers hoping to target our interests and compel us to buy their product, the study of human behavior is everywhere. This course introduces you to **qualitative research methods** that will provide a foundation for current and future work in the STS program. It will also provide a foundation for students working with any kind of research involving human subjects, as we learn how to develop good research questions, review and organize existing literature, and engage with the scholarly community through gathering, analyzing and presenting data.

This class is primarily about **practicing qualitative research methods** through a series of small mock projects. We will read first about the history, philosophy and ethics of qualitative methodology, and then participate in hands-on exercises involving data collection and analysis.

The semester will culminate in a **research methods portfolio** that compiles both your data and your reflections on the practices you have learned.

How This Course Will Run

Each week, we will have class lecture and discussion on **Wednesdays** from 11:30-1 PM. We will follow best practices for classroom learning, alternating small group meetings with lectures. Please see the course schedule for more information about these sessions. There are also ongoing research activity and fieldwork requirements that will happen primarily on **Mondays**. Specific details and an overview will be discussed in class on 9/6.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop basic understanding of the history and development of qualitative research methodology
- Develop basic understanding of (and distinctions between) traditions and philosophical frameworks of qualitative research
- Explore in greater depth issues related to subjectivity, role, access, and ethics in qualitative research studies and their relationship to research design
- Develop understanding of Institutional Review Board (IRB) history and procedures
- Complete training modules developed by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)
- Develop strategies for developing appropriate, scalable and realistic questions for human subject research
- Develop basic understandings of specific data collection methods, including interview, focus group, observation, content analysis

- Develop basic understanding of how social scientists attempt to analyze and interpret raw data.
- Strengthen writing and oral presentation skills

Required Texts

Dixon, Jeffrey et al (2019). *The Process of Social Research, 2E*. New York: Oxford Press. ISBN: 978-019087654

Other readings, videos and links to websites will be posted to Canvas.

Other Course Policies

Attendance Policies: Each student is allowed two absences from lecture during the course. Thereafter, one grade point for each absence will be deducted from the final participation grade. Accumulating more than 4 absences results in failure of the course. Excessive lateness/early departure also negatively impact the participation and classwork grades.

Late Submission Policy: Fieldwork assignments and exams posted late will lose 5 points per day, starting immediately after the assigned **time** and **date**. Journal entries cannot be made up, as only 4 of the 6 journal assignments are required. Presentations cannot be made up, but written materials can be submitted to the instructor for a 10-15 grade point deduction.

Plagiarism, presenting someone else’s words, thoughts, or ideas (in whole or in part) as your own, is cheating and will not be tolerated. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. NJIT enforces strict academic integrity policies, and any plagiarized material **will** result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course. Academic probation and possible suspension or expulsion from the university may also be pursued by NJIT administration in cases of plagiarism. **Three very important things to remember:**

- 1) Various plagiarism-detection tools are employed in this course.
- 2) There have been numerous cases of students attempting to submit papers written by students enrolled in earlier versions of this class. These students have received failing grades and academic probation – and the students supplying the papers have also been punished.
- 3) If you’re struggling with the final project or concerned about these policies, I’m happy to work with you! Plagiarism is not worth the risk to your future.

Final Grade assessment formula:

Ongoing Course Engagement (attendance, participation, and discussion boards)	25%
Exam	10%
Fieldwork Assignment Check-in	30%
Presentation	10%
Final Portfolio & Reflection	25%

Final Grade Scale:

A =89.6-100; B+=87-89.5; B =80-86.5; C+=77-79.5; C =69.5-76.5; D+ =66.5-69.5; D = 59.5-64.5; F =59.4 or below

Course Schedule: Readings and Meetings

subject to change as needed; see below for assignment deadlines and summary descriptions

Date	Learning Objectives & Reading Assignments	Fieldwork / Assignments
9/1 W	Introduction: Course Objectives & Social Research	
9/8 W	Intro: Qualitative Research 1. Bailey, Chapter 1 (pp 1-12) 2. Dixon et al, Chapter 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Process of Social Research (pp 5-7) ● Four Facebook Studies (pp 7-12) 3. Dixon et al, Chapter 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Logical Reasoning (pp 20-24) ● Logics of Inquiry (pp 24-32) 	Discussion Forum (DF) Assignment #1 posted no later than 9 AM on 9/8
9/13 M	Intro: Asking a Good Question 1. Dixon et al, Chapter 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research Designs (pp 74-84) ● Designing Research to Answer Qualitative Questions (pp 96-103) 	Classroom Practice: Observation I
9/15 W	Data Gathering: Observation 1. Dixon et al, Chapter 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Field Research Intro (pp. 250-256) ● General Features of Qualitative Research/Observation (pp. 256-257) ● Degrees of Participation and Observation (pp 264-270) 	DF Assignment #2 posted no later than 9 AM on 9/15
9/20 M	Practice Session	Observation II
9/22 W	Intro: Ethics and Fieldwork 1. Dixon et al, Chapter 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Ethics of Research (pp 39-59) 2. Dixon et al, Chapter 9: The Process of Conducting Field Research (pp. 272-282)	Fieldwork Assignment #1 due Upload to Canvas by 5 PM
9/27 M	Practice Session	Ethics Review & Research Design

9/29 W	<p><u>Intro: Lit Reviews and Grounding Studies</u></p> <p>1. Levy & Ellis, "A Systems Approach to Conducting a Good Literature Review" (read through pp. 184)</p> <p>Dixon et al, Chapter 10 (pp. 295-333)</p>	
10/4 M	<u>Practice Session</u>	Bibliographic Research Practice Session
10/6 W	<p><u>Data Gathering: Interview and Focus Groups</u></p> <p>1. Dixon et al, Chapter 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews (pp.257-259) ● Interview Structure (pp. 270-272) ● The Process of Conducting In-Depth Interviews (pp. 282-288) <p>2. Hrastinski (2012)</p> <p>3. Goldman and Waymer (2014)</p>	<p>Fieldwork Assignment #2 due</p> <p>Upload to Canvas by 5 PM</p>
10/11 M	<u>Practice Session</u>	Interview
10/13 W	<p><u>Data Analysis:</u></p> <p>1. Dixon et al, Chapter 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative Research (pp. 289-293) <p>2. Dixon et al, Chapter 13 (pp. 407-434)</p>	
10/19 M	<u>Practice Session – Using NVIVO</u>	<p>Fieldwork Assignment #3 due</p> <p>Upload to Canvas by 5 PM</p>
10/21 W	<p><u>Intro: Samples and Data Collection</u></p> <p>1. Dixon et al, Chapter 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nonprobability Sampling (pp. 169-178) <p>2. Bailey, Chapter 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sampling (pp. 63-65) ● Field Relationships (pp. 73-77) <p>3. Cresswell, "Purposeful Sampling Strategy"</p>	
10/26 M	<u>EXAM WEEK</u>	
10/28 W	<u>EXAM WEEK</u>	Completed Exams uploaded to Canvas by 5 PM on 10/28
11/1 M	<u>Final Project Brainstorm Session I</u> & Conferences A-M	

11/3 W	Final Project Brainstorm Session II & Conferences N-Z	REVISED and updated Research Questions uploaded to Canvas by 5 PM on 11/4
11/8 M	Research Design Proposal: Group 1 Presents	Group 2: Proposal Review Due by 5 PM on 11/9
11/10 W	Research Design Proposal: Group 2 Presents	Group 1: Proposal Review Due by 5 PM on 11/11
11/15 M	Research Design Proposal: Group 3 Presents	Group 4: Proposal Review Due by 5 PM on 11/16
11/17 W	Research Design Proposal: Group 4 Presents	Group 5: Proposal Review Due by 5 PM on 11/18
11/22 M	Research Design Proposal: Group 5 Presents	Group 3: Proposal Review Due by 5 PM on 11/23
11/29 M	Portfolio Preparation Workshop I Presentation Make-up Day	
12/1 W	Portfolio Preparation Workshop II	
12/6 M	Conferences A-M	
12/8 W	Conferences N-Z	

Ongoing Assignments Schedule: Deadlines and Summary Instructions

see Canvas for extended assignment descriptions

Due September 8

Discussion Forum #1: *Prior to reading the assigned intro materials, answer the following:* **What is qualitative research? What is the role of the researcher? What data collections methods are used in qualitative research?**

Submit responses to Canvas no later than 9 AM on 9/8

Due September 15

DF #2: What are some social phenomena you are interested in? How would you turn this into a research question? Notes to be submitted to Canvas no later than 9 AM on 9/15

Due September 22

Fieldwork Assignment #1 (Field Notes) : Upload to Canvas by 5 PM

Due October 6

Fieldwork Assignment #2 (Lit Review + Question) : Upload to Canvas by 5 PM

Due October 19

Fieldwork Assignment #3 (Interview Transcript & Analysis) : Upload to Canvas by 5 PM

Due November 4

Proposal Revision: Upload to Canvas by 5 PM

November 48-22

Project Proposal Presentations & Reviews due – check schedule for your group's dates

Final Portfolios due no later than 12/12 at 5 PM