

**Research Design and Qualitative Methods**  
Spring 2016 Elective, Course Reference Number 30229  
Sem 2 B2109, Monday, 6–10 PM, 4 GR credits  
**Shangrila Joshi Wynn**  
Lab I 2024, 867-6505, wynns@evergreen.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

**Course Description**

This graduate course is designed to prepare students to develop and implement qualitative research projects in the environmental social sciences. Students will develop an understanding of the theoretical and practical dimensions of qualitative methodologies in human geography and the social sciences more generally. We will explore the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research methods, and students will gain hands-on experience developing research question(s) and using qualitative methods to gather and analyze data.

The class will begin with an exploration of theoretical perspectives crucial to understanding and conducting qualitative research, including topics such as epistemology, research ethics, cross-cultural power dynamics and reflexivity. Issues of representation, rigor and validity will also be discussed. A range of qualitative research methods will be surveyed and practiced, including interviews, participant observation, narrative storytelling, and focus groups. Students will develop and implement a qualitative research project of appropriate scope utilizing a qualitative research method of their choice. This will include developing a feasible research proposal with clearly articulated research question, literature review and proposed methodology, a Human Subjects Review application, collecting data in the field, transcribing, coding, qualitative data analysis, writing, and oral presentations of research proposal and analysis. The process of publishing in peer-reviewed journals will also be discussed.

**Learning Objectives**

This elective offering has the following objectives for student learning:

- To understand the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research methods
- To develop the capacity to understand and observe ethical guidelines when conducting qualitative research with human subjects
- To be able to assess rigor and validity when practicing qualitative research methods
- To gain hands-on experience developing research question(s), gathering data in the field, and analyzing such data
- To continue to develop skills to articulate a research question and to produced a coherent and well-organized scholarly research paper with a clear thesis
- To continue to develop public speaking and leadership skills through oral presentations of research and facilitation of seminar discussion

**Reading Materials:**

The following text, available at the Greener Bookstore, is required reading. Other readings will be made available as PDFs on Canvas.

Hay, Iain, ed. 2010. Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography, 2010. Oxford University Press.

**Format:**

This class will follow a lecture + seminar discussion format, supplemented by workshops. Each student will make a presentation and facilitate discussion on a specific research technique for approximately half an hour during week 5. This presentation should draw on the corresponding chapter from the text book and at least one research article that utilizes the chosen research method. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first day of classes.

If there is an assigned reading on the syllabus, please expect that there will be seminar discussion on the readings assigned. Productive seminar discussions are only possible when students come to class with assigned readings completed. Please make sure to come to class having read all the assigned reading material, and prepared to contribute your critical reflection, analysis and questions for seminar discussion. Ideas and opinions should always be shared and expressed in a manner that is respectful to all present in the classroom. If a student feels slighted during a classroom discussion, please bring it to my attention as soon as possible. Any student experiencing difficulty with the class for any reason, including due to a disability, should get in touch with me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made in advance.

Students will work in pairs throughout the course to facilitate mutually beneficial peer review of various stages of the work, including field work, coding and writing. Student pairs will be formed on the first day of classes, and this arrangement will continue until one or more students desires to switch partners for any reason. Any peer review work needs to be done in writing and well documented, as well as submitted in your (peer reviewer's) portfolio, since this work will also be evaluated at the end of class.

**Student Assessment:**

In addition to class-room participation, student learning will be assessed through the following written assignments: journals, take-home essays, HSR application, and a research paper. All written work for this program should be submitted in a portfolio at the end of the term.

The **journals** are reflective summaries (~2 double-spaced pages) based on a week's assigned readings. Students are expected to turn in 4 journals for weeks 2-5. In each journal, you are expected to synthesize and summarize the key ideas from a day's readings, followed by a critical reflection on how they contribute to your understanding of qualitative research design, focusing specifically on the week's topic. The critical reflection could take the form of a critique, a comparison with another set of readings, relevant outside source (e.g. journal article), elaboration of a theoretical concept using a real-world example or lived experience, unanswered questions raised by the reading, etc. You are expected to submit your journal on the day class meets to discuss the material. If you do a good job with the journals, they can contribute to stronger take-home essays and research papers.

The **take-home essay exam** will consist of 2-3 essay questions. You will be expected to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the course material, as well as the ability to critically evaluate and synthesize material in your answers. Outside sources may be consulted – but are not required – to answer them. When outside sources are used, they must be properly cited. You are encouraged to draw on your journals to write your essays.

Your **research paper** will give you an opportunity to apply qualitative research methodology skills and theoretical perspectives learned in the course to thoroughly examine a substantive question related to a topic of interest in the field of Environmental Studies, and to produce a clear thesis based on original

research. There will be several deadlines for different segments of this assignment, including brief and detailed paper proposals, HSR application and final paper and presentation. The final paper should be within the range of 10-15 double-spaced pages excluding bibliography and images, tables, etc. You should expect to consult a minimum of 10 peer-reviewed journal articles in the area of your chosen topic. Students will have an opportunity to review a peer's work and will have their work reviewed by a peer as well as the instructor. Each student will present the key findings of your research towards the end of the term in a 10-12 minute presentation, followed by Q and A from the audience. Members of the audience will submit evaluations of each presentation.

---

### Tentative Schedule

(Subject to Revision; check Canvas for most up-to-date syllabus at any given time;  
Last Updated on March 28, 2016)

Week	Topic; Agenda Readings Due	Assignment Due
Week 1:  Monday  March 28	<b>The What, Why and How of Qualitative Research</b>  Introductions, Syllabus review and discussion, Classroom logistics, Seminar  Readings Assigned:  Chapter 1, Qualitative Research and its Place in Human Geography, Winchester and Rofo Chapter 4, Qualitative Research Design and Rigour, Bradshaw and Stratford	
Week 2:  Monday  April 4	<b>Theoretical Framework: Epistemology, Subjectivity and Reflexivity</b>  Workshop Activity: Refining the research question  Readings Assigned: Pascale 2011: Epistemology and the Politics of Knowledge (PDF on Canvas) England 2006, Producing Feminist Geographies (PDF on Canvas) Chapter 2, Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research, Dowling  Optional: Chapter 17, Writing Qualitative Geographies, Constructing Geographical Knowledges, Mansvelt and Berg	Research Proposal with clearly articulated research question Due

Week 3: Monday April 11	<b>Power, Ethics and Representation</b>  Guest speaker: Zoltan Grossman/Laura Grabhorn  Readings Assigned: Chapter 3, Cross-cultural research: Ethics, Methods, and Relationships, Howitt and Stevens  IPSG, AAG Indigenous People's Specialty Group's Declaration of Key Questions About Research Ethics with Indigenous Communities (PDF on Canvas)	
Week 4: Monday April 18	<b>Research Design: Crafting a Research Proposal</b>  Guest Speaker: John McClain, Human Subjects Review  Workshop Activity: present research proposals and receive feedback  Readings Assigned: Chapter 16, Writing a Compelling Research Proposal, Monk and Bedford	Revised Research Proposal Due  HSR Application (if applicable)  Due
Week 5: Monday April 25	<b>Qualitative Research Methods: Different Approaches</b> <b>(Student Presentations; Faculty will present on qualitative content analysis)</b>  Readings Assigned: Chapter 5, Case Studies in Qualitative Research, Baxter  Chapter 6, Interviewing, Dunn  Chapter 7, Oral History and Human Geography, George and Stratford  Chapter 8, Focusing on the Focus Group, Cameron  Chapter 9, Historical Research and Archival Sources, Roche  Chapter 10, Using Questionnaires in Qualitative Human Geography, McGuirk and O'Neill  Chapter 11, Doing Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Waitt  Chapter 12, Undertaking Observational Research, Kearns  Chapter 13, Participatory Action Research	Mid-Term Take home Essay Questions given  Submit revised (if necessary) HSR application to John McClain
Week 6:	<b>After Collecting Data: Demystifying the Analytical and Writing Processes</b>	Mid-Term Take home

Monday May 2	<b>(meet in computer lab)</b>  Workshop: Coding with Atlas.ti  Readings Assigned: Chapter 14, Coding Qualitative Data, Cope  Chapter 18, Communicating Qualitative Research for Public Consumption, DeLyser and Pawson  Optional: Chapter 17, Writing Qualitative Geographies, Constructing Geographical Knowledges, Mansvelt and Berg	Essays Due
Week 7: Monday May 9	<b>Preparing for Fieldwork</b>  Readings Assigned: None  Workshop activity:  Interviews, focus groups  Students present and receive feedback on detailed research proposals	Detailed Research Proposal (Including Literature Review) Due
Week 8: Monday May 16	<b>Transcribing; Coding (meet in computer lab)</b>  Readings Assigned: None  Workshop activity:  Coding using Atlas.ti or other comparable program (including Word)	Bring a complete transcript of one half hour interview (or other qualitative text) to code
Week 9: Monday May 23	<b>Research Presentations</b>  Workshop activity: Peer feedback on writing  Reading Assigned:  Dunlap, Feedback Tool (PDF on Canvas)	Bring one well-written page of your draft paper
Week 10: Monday May 30	Memorial Day – no class	Final Research Paper Due on Canvas
Week 11	Evaluation Conferences; Times TBA (Sign up for conference on Canvas)	