Qualitative Research Methods
Hybrid Course
Fall 2017

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Office Hours: TBD

This is a hybrid (online and face-to-face) course. There will be five class meetings, all of which will be held on the Arlington Campus.
Dates: Saturdays 9/9, 9/30, 10/28, 11/16, 12/9
Times: 9:30am-12:30pm

Prerequisites: Please note PUBP/PUAD/GOVT 511 is a prerequisite for this course.

Course Description

This course is a practical introduction to qualitative methods for graduate students in public policy, political science, and related fields. After completing this course, students will be able to:
1. Explain the place of qualitative methods in their discipline and the kinds of questions that call for qualitative methods;
2. Discuss best practices and ethical considerations in gathering, organizing, and managing qualitative data;
3. Code and analyze qualitative data using NVivo software;
4. Interpret preliminary results of qualitative analysis and use those results to refine a research question; and
5. Write a proposal for a qualitative research project.

Course Materials

Students will need access to NVivo software. The cost for a 12-month student NVivo license is $75 for PC and $103 for Mac, as of March 2017. (I will look for further discounts commonly offered at the beginning of the semester.)

We will use open access and library-provided electronic resources for all other course materials.

Components of Final Grade

Participation
• In face-to-face class meetings
• In online discussions

Exercises
• Mini literature review of qualitative & quantitative studies on a given topic
• Qualitative data gathering
• Exercise: Approaches to coding

Student research project
• Preliminary Codebook
• First round coding, with memo & revised codebook
• Second round coding, with memo & revised codebook
• Preliminary findings statement
• Final deliverable: Research proposal

Week by week:

Week 1 (8/28): What are qualitative research methods?

Week 2 (9/4): When are qualitative methods appropriate?

CLASS MEETS Saturday 9/9

Week 3 (9/11): Gathering qualitative data: Ethnographic field notes

Week 4 (9/18): Gathering qualitative data: Interviews

Week 5 (9/25): Gathering qualitative data: News articles & social media

CLASS MEETS Saturday 9/30

Week 6 (10/2): What is coding?

Week 7 (10/9): Approaches to coding

Week 8 (10/16): Developing a codebook

Week 9 (10/23): Introduction to NVivo software

CLASS MEETS Saturday 10/28 – NVivo workshop

Week 10 (10/30): First-round coding & memo writing

Week 11 (11/6): Second-round coding

Week 12 (11/13): Analysis in NVivo

CLASS MEETS Saturday 11/16 – NVivo workshop

Week 13 (11/20): Preliminary findings
Week 14 (11/27): Writing up qualitative research (methods appendices & discussion)

Week 15 (12/4): Peer review of draft proposals

CLASS MEETS Saturday 12/9. Proposals due in class.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should:

1. Make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need.
2. Talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Academic Integrity**

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely.

**Academic Integrity in Group Work & Class Discussions**

When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

**Academic Integrity in Written Work**

Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.