P12 EdPOL 549B: Special Topics in Qualitative Methods: Observations & Interviewing
University of Washington, College of Education
Spring Quarter 2015
Wednesdays, 4:30 – 6:50
Dempsey Hall, Room 124

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30 + by appointment

Recommended Text

Course Objectives
This seminar focuses on using interviews and observations as key methods in qualitative research. We will read texts that explain various approaches to these methods, as well as read and critique research papers that use the methods. By the end of the course, students will have an in-depth understanding of how to choose an appropriate approach given a specific research question and context and how to implement the approach to gather high-quality qualitative data.

Concurrently, students will write and pilot both interview and observation protocols for their own research study. Depending on individual students’ doctoral level, these can be beta versions of dissertation data collection protocols, those used for the yearlong qualitative methods course, those used for a research project, or for a class paper. Our focus will be on the methods rather than the outcomes from the data (although those are clearly related—we work on the methods to have outcomes to talk about!).

After the second week, the course will be structured as part class/part workshop: we will spend the first hour and a half discussing the readings, looking at protocols, and discussing the topic of the week, and the last 45 minutes as a “workshop” for students’ work on methods. In addition to the assigned reading and writing assignments, then, students will be required to both workshop their own writing and read/critique their colleagues’ writing.

In this course, students have one final project: tested versions of interview and observation protocols. These protocols will be bookmarked by an extensive discussion of methodological choices (including research that lead students to their decisions), and a discussion of the process, illustrating what students’ learned and next steps. There are several assignments along the way to help guide work towards this final product, as well as a peer review. These assignments are described below, as well as expectations for classroom participation:

Please see Canvas for the most updated version of the syllabus.
1) **Course project.** Your final project should adhere to APA 6th edition style. A detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric will be handed out in class. In addition to the final project, students will turn in a final draft and a peer review. There will be three sections of the project:
   a. *Introduction/Discussion of Methods:* in the front section of the project, you will introduce your research topic, research questions, and the justification for the selected methods. You will also describe the protocols’ development—how did they change through the quarter? Why?
   b. *Protocols:* you will include final versions of both interview and observation protocols appropriate for your research topic.
   c. *Analysis/Next Steps:* in the last section of the project, you will discuss the data you gathered using the protocols, and what those say about the protocols themselves—What did you miss? What will you change for next time?

Due dates: Draft 5/27 (4:30pm); Peer Review 6/3 (4:30pm); Final Project 6/8 (midnight)

2) **Memos (5).** Throughout the course, you will have five separate “memos” due about elements of your final project. Elements of these memos should end up being a part of your final project (especially the protocols). More details and a rubric will be given out in the class before the assignment is due. All assignments are to be uploaded to Canvas by 4:15pm before class.
   a. **First Memo:** Research questions and description of project; due: 4/8
   b. **Second Memo:** Draft of interview protocol + justification; due: 4/15
   c. **Third Memo:** Interview data + discussion; due: 4/29
   d. **Fourth Memo:** Draft of observation protocol + justification; due: 5/13
   e. **Fifth Memo:** Observation data + discussion; due: 5/27

3) **Peer Reviews.** Starting in the third week of the course, students will read peers’ writing for our workshop. You will provide feedback on your peers’ writing that is specific, actionable, and tied to what we are learning about qualitative methods. The person whose work is being workshopped will post their work to Canvas by Monday night, others will have until class time to read and comment on the papers (also on Canvas).

4) **Class participation.** This class relies on active and thoughtful participation to make it work. I have the following expectations about class participation: a) students attend class consistently and promptly; b) students come to class having read the readings carefully and critically; and c) students participate in class in an active, thoughtful, and respectful manner. Your grade will also reflect the degree to which you come to class prepared to discuss the readings and your peers’ writing. Please note that you cannot pass the course if you miss more than two class sessions, and late assignments will be graded down one grade for every day they are late (from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, etc).

**Grading**
- Final Project: 50pts.
- Memos: 30pts.
- Peer Review: 5pts.

Please see Canvas for the most updated version of the syllabus.
Classroom Participation: 15pts.

Students with disabilities
If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

Schedule of classes:

Module 1: Introduction
Week 1 (4/1): Introductions, Research Questions, & Epistemology
- Readings:

- Assignments Due: None

Module 2: Interviews
Week 2 (4/8): Question Types
- Readings:

- Assignments Due:
  - First Memo: Research questions and description of project, including epistemology (2 pages max)

Week 3 (4/15): Interviewing Techniques
- Readings:
    - Read chapter 1, 3, and Appendix 1
    - Optional, but interesting (and an easy read): Appendix 2

- Assignments Due:
  - Second Memo: Draft of interview protocol + justification
  - Peer Review #1

Week 4 (4/22): Special Topics in Interviewing: Focus Groups
- Readings:

• Optional Readings:

• Assignments Due:
  • *Peer Review #2*

**Week 5 (4/29): Special Topics in Interviewing: Large Research Projects + Interviewing Children**

• Readings:
  • Sample transcripts from MIST interviews

• Optional Readings:

• Assignments Due:
  • *Third Memo*: Interview data + discussion
  • *Peer Review #3*

**Module 3: Observations**

**Week 6 (5/6): Observation: from structured to participant observation**

• Readings:

• Recommended Reading:

Please see Canvas for the most undated version of the syllabus.
• Assignments Due:
  o  **Peer Review #4**

**Week 7 (5/13): Observations: taking field notes [Special Guest: Morva McDonald]**

• Readings:

• Optional Reading:

• Assignments Due:
  o  **Fourth Memo:** Draft of observation protocol + justification
  o  **Peer Review #5**

**Week 8 (5/20): Observing Classrooms + Children [Special Guest: Kristen Bottema-Beutell]**

• Readings:

• Assignments Due:
  o  **Peer Review #6**

**Week 9 (5/27): Special topics in observations: using video [Special Guest: Katie Taylor]**

• Readings:

• Assignments Due:

Please see Canvas for the most updated version of the syllabus.
Fifth Memo: Observation data + discussion
Draft: Final project

Module 4: Bringing it all together
Week 10 (6/3): Where the researcher comes in

- Readings:

- Optional Readings:

- Assignments Due:
  - Project peer review

Final Project Due: midnight, June 8th