Qualitative, non-statistical social science research can form the basis of surprising and profound discoveries about individuals and societies. Through small-scale studies, the need for larger studies is exposed. Narratives, confessions, ethnographies, demographic studies, case studies, and more recently, focus groups contribute insight and depth to our understanding of the human condition.

The central goal of this course is preparing student researchers to design qualitative methods projects. In class, you will develop research goals, observe data collection and practice interviewing.

A particular emphasis of this seminar is anticipating and solving problems that may emerge in fieldwork settings. In social science we may work with traumatized individuals: those from economically-ravaged or war-torn cultures, those from countries with weak or non-existing democratic principles, or those who suffer human rights issues. In this course we will develop fieldwork strategies that prepare us for cross-cultural complexities related to ethnicity, gender, class, culture, age, and power dynamics.

Being attuned to ‘the studied’ will be paramount in this hands-on class. Whether your research is demographic, comparative, or based on a unique personal account, we will apply social and cultural awareness to practical methodological training. We will consider approaches to informed consent and intellectual property. By the end of the course you will have a clearly-defined project, you will know what you need to do, and you will be ready to adapt yourself to fieldwork, even with its many unanticipated events.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Participation (20%): Active contribution to discussion, sharing ideas and insights, is critical to the success of project-centered methods training. Half of each class will be lecture and collaboration; the other half will be devoted to research projects and discussion.

Coursework online assignments (20%): Homework assignments will be online and include interaction/responses to classmates taken from topics covered in class, anything you want to say about your project, and class readings. Assignments will be due Sunday before midnight prior to class on Tuesday.

Mid-quarter presentations and problem-solving exercise (15%): Our first presentations will be informal practice explaining the research project. The aim is to clearly state your research hypothesis, articulate the kind of project you are undertaking, and formulate what questions will be asked or elicited. There will also be a written problem-solving assignment.

Proposal development (20%): is determined by the quality of content, style and foresight developed in your research project. Our shared goal is an outstanding research project and fieldwork experience for you.

Final research project presentation and problem-solving exercise (25%): The complete project is expected here; your finely-honed, carefully-worked research design is presented with scholarly flair. The problem-solving assignment will be similar to the samples above.
REQUIRED READINGS:
The course textbook aids practical organization of your project. This 4th edition is a pragmatic “companion” for advanced undergraduates and graduate students engaging in fieldwork. Course readings fall into categories such as “classics” in social science research, theoretical works that challenge our assumptions, empirical methods works that illuminate our present path, and social science readings that serve us by context and example.


Course Readings: located in PDF online using SUNET ID or on Google. Any modified or additional reading will be discussed and/or distributed in class.

SCHEDULE

(1) APRIL 3 - RESEARCH PROJECTS- GETTING ORIENTED

- Overview
- Research plans
- The mission of research and science in advancing knowledge
- Qualitative research genres and definitions
- Hypothesis-driven versus spontaneous- development approaches to field studies

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 1- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(2) APRIL 10 – DEVELOPING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Value of qualitative studies; creating a rich qualitative study; augmenting quantitative research with ethnographic studies.
- Traditions in preparedness for fieldwork; recognition of methodological gains made on shortcomings of prior research; utility of historical-comparative studies in formulating research design; literate/non-literate interviewees.

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 2- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(3) APRIL 17 – THE SCIENCE OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

- Formulating dimensions of a project-design and implementation.
- Surveys, questionnaires and interviews; pre-project (question order/clarity); pre-testing, parallel-testing, elicitation techniques; response arts; bias in data.
- Random and randomized surveys; design, what to seize upon, how, avoiding pitfalls and errors.
- Project, organizing data in the field; post-project considerations.
- Design of coding; coding to protect privacy.
- Gender, ethnicity, other important forms of identification.

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 3- Designing Qualitative Research (textbook)


(4) APRIL 24 – ENGAGING YOUR RESEARCH PARTICIPANT(S) - METHODS FOR COLLECTING EMPIRICAL DATA

- Evidence, interpretation, and socio-cultural considerations in fieldwork design.
- Personnae versus who people are; political economy of the studied and studier; triangulation.
- Styles of participation and observation.
- Ethics in field research; conduct of investigator and study participants.
Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 4- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(5) MAY 1 – PRELIMINARY PRESENTATION ON PROJECTS

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 5- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(6) MAY 8 – ESTABLISHING ADDITIONAL BREADTH OR CRITERIA FOR SOUNDNESS

- Language-use across cultures; body language specific to culture; social constructions.
- Longitudinal studies and multi-site research.
- Seeking guidance from advisors and finding support if you need it while in the field.
- Outreach initiatives that support the group or individuals being studied, what we might do, and perhaps should not do.

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 6- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(7) MAY 15 – INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION

- Databases and what makes them functional; Boolean fields and other kinds of data; getting to know databases and how statistical programs can be useful; grasp and perception of findings, the fun of outliers, the gift of robusticity.
- Informed consent; intellectual property.
- Social capital and aspects of societies with vigorous informal sectors.

Reading assignment for next week: Chapter 7- *Designing Qualitative Research* (textbook)


(8) MAY 22 – FIELD PREPARATION

- Data generated; planning how to organize it, thinking ahead.
- Caveats.

Reading for next week: to be assigned based on need for computer software.

(9) MAY 29- SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA AND SOFTWARE (SSDS) LAB

- Orientation in the Green Library Social Science Software lab.

No new readings.

(10) JUNE 5 – PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISE/FINAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

- Day of final exam: remaining presentations.

**STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The SDRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodation, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the SDRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The Office of Accessible Education is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066; TDD: 725-1067) http://www.stanford.edu/group/DRC/).
STANFORD HONOR CODE

1. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively that they will:
   a. Not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
   b. Do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.
   a. Examples of conduct which have been regarded as being in violation of the Honor Code include:
      ▪ Copying from another’s examination paper or allowing another to copy from one’s own paper
      ▪ Unpermitted collaboration
      ▪ Plagiarism
      ▪ Revising and resubmitting a quiz or exam for regrading, without the instructor’s knowledge and consent
      ▪ Giving or receiving unpermitted aid on a take-home examination
      ▪ Representing as one’s own work the work of another
      ▪ Giving or receiving aid on an academic assignment under circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that such aid was not permitted