I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of this course is to provide an overview of the use of qualitative and mixed methods in social, clinical and health services research. The course is divided into three components:

1. Reasons for using qualitative and mixed methods, criteria for their use in scientific research, and strategies for development of research questions and designs;

2. The pragmatics of conducting different types of qualitative methods (e.g., grounded theory, case study, thematic and content analysis) using different types of data collections: ethnographic participant observation, open-ended and semi-structured interviews, and focus groups; and

3. Case studies of the use of these methods in social, clinical and health services research.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able:

1. To identify the rationale for using qualitative methods in social work research.
2. To identify the types of mixed method designs and the procedures for selecting a particular design to meet study aims and objectives.
3. To explain the procedures used to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study.
4. To describe and apply the standards for assessing the quality of qualitative methods.
5. To describe and apply principles of sampling and recruitment of study participants.
6. To describe and apply principles of obtaining informed consent and adhering to ethical guidelines for data collection and management.
7. To engage in participant observation.
8. To analyze qualitative data including field notes and interview transcripts.
9. To analyze qualitative data, using techniques such as grounded theory, case study, thematic and context analysis.
10. To understand the benefits/challenges of using qualitative analysis software programs.
11. To understand and apply guidelines for presentation of qualitative data in manuscripts and presentations.
III. COURSE FORMAT

Three primary learning modalities will be used: 1) didactic presentation by the instructor, 2) case analysis and class discussion, and (3) in-class exercises and small group activities. On a rotating basis, students will be responsible for selecting an assigned reading and leading the class presentation and discussion on that reading.

IV. COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING

All students are expected to regularly attend class and be on time. A student with more than two unexcused absences during the course of this class may receive a no credit. A student who is tardy three or more times to class may receive a grade of no credit. If a student receives a no credit grade in this seminar, they will be required to repeat this class.

Class grades will be based on the following:

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<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>93 – 100 A</td>
<td>90 – 92 A-</td>
<td>87 – 89 B+</td>
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<td>83 – 86 B</td>
<td>80 – 82 B-</td>
<td>77 – 79 C+</td>
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<td>73 – 76 C</td>
<td>70 – 72 C-</td>
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Your grade will be based on the following:

1. CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (25%). Attendance and active participation at all class meetings is critical for a successful seminar course. Each week, students are expected to have read and thoughtfully analyzed all assigned readings prior to class, and to participate in discussion and in-class activities. Students should come prepared to class with a list of questions, reactions, and discussion points on the assigned reading. Throughout the semester, students will be asked present on required reading and will be expected to: (1) present/explain the study (e.g. background, significance, design, findings); (2) discuss how it relates to other articles we have previously discussed and/or were assigned for that week; (3) provide critical analysis; and (4) explain how the study informs the student’s research agenda.

2. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (20%) Students will be required to complete two homework assignments. The first assignment will be data coding due week 7, or February 23. The second assignment is to conduct a minimum of one hour of participant observation in which you take field notes that you will bring to share with the class. Observation should be done in a public place (e.g., restaurant, campus quad, coffee shop, etc). Assignment 2 is due week 8, or March 2.

4. FINAL PAPER (50%). Final papers should be doubled spaced and between 10 and 12 pages in length, not counting tables, figures, supplementary materials, and references. The paper should take the form of a research proposal using qualitative methods, either alone or in combination with a quantitative design. The proposal should focus on a topic of your own choosing. The proposal should include a specific hypothesis or question to
be answered, your rationale for conducting the study, and a description of how the study would be conducted. Students should have ample opportunity and are encouraged to ask questions throughout the semester related to their research proposal.

V. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend every class and to remain in class for the duration of the session. Failure to attend class or arriving late may impact your ability to achieve course objectives, which could affect your course grade. Students are expected to notify the instructor by telephone or email of any anticipated absence or reason for tardiness. University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class, without penalty, for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations which conflict with students’ observance of a holy day. Students must make arrangements in advance to complete class work which will be missed, or to reschedule an examination, due to holy days observance.

VI. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Students are expected to attend class sessions, complete all reading assignments, participate in class discussions and activities, submit work on the date and time specified by the instructor, and contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect and civil discourse.

VII. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS


**VIII. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. *Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible.* DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**IX. EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION**

To receive information, call main number (213)740-2711, press #2. “For recorded announcements, events, emergency communications or critical incident information.”

To leave a message, call (213) 740-8311

For additional university information, please call (213) 740-9233

Or visit university website; [http://emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, please go to the following locations carefully and using stairwells only. Never use elevators in an emergency evacuation.

**University Park Campus City Center**
- MRF – Lot B Front of the building (12th & Olive)
- SWC–LotB
- WPH – McCarthy Quad Orange County Campus
- VKC – McCarthy Quad Faculty Parking Lot
- Skirball Campus
- Front of building

Do not re-enter the building until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel.
COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

PART 1: QUALITATIVE METHODS

Week 1 (Jan 10): Introduction: What are qualitative methods and why do we use them

Topics:
- The “art” and “science” of qualitative methods
- Rationale for using qualitative designs and methods
- Examples of when qualitative methods are used in social, clinical and health services research

Required Readings:
Padgett Chaps 1-2 (T)

Suggested Reading:

Week 2 (Jan 17): Qualitative Research Questions and Study Designs

Topics:
- Linking Methods to Aims
- Types of Research Questions
- The Use of Theory
- Design and Methods Decisions

Required Readings:
Padgett, Chap 4, pages 65-72(T)

Suggested Readings:
Week 3 (Jan 24): Sampling, Recruiting and Protecting Research Participants

Topics:
• Sampling of informants and other participants
• Recruiting
• Managing relationships with informants
• Ethics

Required Readings:
Padgett, Chap 4 & 5 (T)

Suggested Readings:

Week 4 (Jan 31): Qualitative Interviewing and focus groups

Topics:
• Deciding what type of interview
• Number of interviews/implications for sample size
• Tips for maximizing interviewing

Required Readings:
Padgett, Chap 7 (T)

Suggested Readings:
Week 5 (Feb 7): Qualitative analysis – Grounded theory

- Grounded theory
  - Coding
  - Memo writing
  - Constant comparison
  - Saturation

Required readings:
Padgett, Chap 8 (T)

Recommended:
*Charmaz, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 8*

Week 6 (Feb 14): Qualitative analytic approaches

*In-class coding exercise w/coding assignment

Topics:
- Coding data
- Content & Thematic analysis

Required readings:

Other Readings:
Bowen, G. (2008) Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 8*(1), 137-152
Ryan, G. & Bernard, H.R. (2003). *Techniques to identify themes. Field Methods, 15*(1), 85-

Drisko, J. Qualitative Software: A user’s appraisal. [book chapter]


**Week 7 (Feb 21): Qualitative analysis – Case study**

*Coding assignment due and observation assignment*

- Case study
  - Case summaries
  - Data matrices

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested readings:**


**Week 8 (Feb 28): The Ethnographic Study, Participant Observation, & formal ethnographic methods**

*Observation assignment due*

**Topics:**

- Objectivity and subjectivity in participation and observation
- Getting into the field
- Collecting and recording data

**Required readings:**

Padgett, Chap 6, pages 109-117 (T)


**Suggested readings:**


Week 9 (March 7): Presenting and evaluating qualitative research

Required readings:
Padgett, Chap 9,10 and Appendix

SPRING BREAK (No class March 14)

Week 10 (March 21): What are mixed methods and why use them?

Topics:
• Rationale for using mixed designs and methods
• Example of mixed methods

Required Readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chaps 1-2 (T)
Padgett, Chap 3 (T)

Suggested readings:

Week 11 (March 28): Mixed Methods Research Questions and Study Designs

Required readings:
Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chaps 3 (T)


Suggested readings:

**Week 12 (Apr 4): Examples of Mixed Methods**

**Required readings:**

Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chaps 5 (T)

**Recommended:**


**Week 13 (Apr 11): Conducting Mixed Methods**

**Required readings:**

Cresswell & Plano Clark, Chap 6 & 7 (T)

**Suggested reading:**


**Week 14 (April 18): Photo-voice, photo-elicitation, and participatory methods**

**Required readings:**


Suggested readings:

Week 15 (April 25): Course summary and student research agendas.
Final: Qualitative Research Proposal

The final proposal should be 10-12 pages long, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1 inch margins. Parts I-III should be ready for class discussion by Feb 12th. Additional sections will be discussed thereafter. The complete proposal will be due in the last class. Follow the outline and suggested page limits below.

I. Introduction/Background to the Study (1-2 pgs). This is not an exhaustive literature review but must cite enough literature to delineate the proposed study and establish the need for it. Be sure and include a rationale for qualitative methods—why they are needed. State which qualitative method(s) you will use.

II. Research Questions/Specific Aims (1/2 to 1 pg). State the general questions guiding the study, then list 2 to 4 explicit research questions (you may substitute 2-4 specific aims or ‘action goals’ for the study research questions)

III. Theoretical Frameworks Informing the Study (1 to 1 ½ pg). Describe the appropriate theories informing your study and their relevance.

IV. Research Design and Sampling (2 pgs). Is the study longitudinal or cross-sectional? Which qualitative method(s) will be used? What sampling techniques will be used? Inclusion/exclusion criteria? How many participants? How many interviews per participant? How and when will observational data be collected? Be very explicit.

V. Ethical Issues, Recruitment, Data Collection (2 pgs). How will you gain access to the study site and/or participants? What ethical issues need addressing and how will you do that? How will data be collected? transcribed? Include some sample questions you will ask and/or append an interview guide.

VI. Data Analysis Plans (1-2 pgs). Describe how you will analyze the data using specifics and terminology/citations appropriate to the method.

VII. Strategies for Rigor (1 pg). Which strategies will be used? How?