







QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN PUBLIC HEALTH (USC PM 587--DRAFT)

A graduate-level course on qualitative research methods in public health research (draft)

Course instructor: Rachel Carmen Ceasar, PhD

Course website: <https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/qual-methods-pubhealth-pm587>

Dates and times: Every Thursday, 9:00am to 12:20pm PT. The class will meet in-person and readings and assignments are expected to be completed in preparation for Thursday discussion. ([course catalog](#))([academic calendar](#))

- **Academic honesty**
- **Students with disabilities**
- **Format and style of teaching**

- **Attendance and grading on assignments (needs 2022 update)**
- **Communications and office hours**
- **Student basic needs and resources at USC**

Course description: What is this course about?

This course is designed to introduce common uses of qualitative research methods in public health research and application. Theoretical and practical background of qualitative methods will be examined as well as related ethical and human subject protections issues.

Course format: How will this course be taught

The course will be divided into three components:

- (1) weekly didactic presentations of the material/topic by the instructor
- (2) student-led discussion and reflection of the readings.

This includes students being assigned a topic/readings that they will lead a class presentation and discussion for that week.

- (3) methods lab component to examine the qualitative research process from start to finish, using lessons learned, case studies, and students' own work.

This includes: how to setup a up qualitative study (IRB, ethics), data collection (ethnography, participant observation, focus groups, interviewing), data analysis (grounded theory, textual/content analysis, and triangulations approaches), synthesis and dissemination of qualitative data and findings (presentation and manuscripts).

Course objectives: What will I have learned by the end of this course?

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Describe the rationale and application of qualitative research methods in public health.
 - Thoughtfully interpret, critique, and appreciate qualitative research methods and how they can be used to address public health issues.
 - Identify major scientific, societal, communal, and ethical issues in qualitative research methods.
 - Use qualitative methods to address public health issues.
 - Identify and explain procedures used to conduct qualitative methods in a single study.
 - To conduct a semi-structured interview and/or focus group.
 - To analyze qualitative data using techniques such as grounded theory and thematic and content analysis.
 - To describe the benefits and challenges of using qualitative analysis software programs.
 - To describe and apply guidelines for presenting and writing up manuscripts and presentations.
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Course outline: What are we reading and discussing this week? (from 2021)

Week 1. January 18. No class in observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Week 2. January 25. The role of the researcher. What is the role of the researcher and qualitative research in public health?

Guest speaker: n/a

Lab: n/a

Assignment: Submit introduction / wellness card by end of the week (twitter conversation)

1. Vincanne Adams, Nancy Burke, and Ian Whitmarsh. Slow Research: Thoughts for a movement in global health ([article](#))
2. Lisa Bowleg. The Problem with the phrase 'women' and 'minorities:' Intersectionality – an important theoretical framework for public health ([article](#))
3. Richard A. Williams. Letter to the Editor, The New York Times, from Dr. Richard A. Williams, Subject: The Death of George Floyd: Anatomy of a Murder ([letter to the editor](#))
4. Leslie London et al. Israel-Gaza conflict ([response](#))
5. Martha Lincoln. The missing link of Biden's COVID strategy: social scientists ([news article](#))

Additional readings + resources:

Bourgois et al. Structural Vulnerability: Operationalizing the Concept to Address Health Disparities in Clinical Care ([article](#))

Nolwazi Mkhwanazi. Medical Anthropology in Africa: The Trouble with a Single Story ([article](#))

Week 3. February 1. Research design. What makes a good qualitative study, and how is quality determined? [add theory articles to frame qual study, life course theory + positive -- Derek Dangerfield suggestions]

Guest speaker: [Thurka Sangaramoorthy, PhD, MPH](#) (9:30-10:30)

Lab: Developing a research question / problem

Assignment: Present statement of research topic (proposal or paper).

1. D Cohen and B Crabtree. Evaluative criteria for qualitative research in health care: Controversies and recommendations ([article](#))
2. M Dixon-Woods et al. The problem of appraising qualitative research ([article](#))
3. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy. Chapter 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3 (book)
4. Thurka Sangaramoorthy and Karen Kroger. Mobility, Latino Migrants, and the Geography

of Sex Work: Using Ethnography in Public Health Assessments ([article](#))

5. Richard Needle, Karen Kroeger, and et al. Sex, drugs, and HIV: Rapid assessment of HIV risk behaviors among street-based drug using sex workers in Durban, South Africa ([article](#))
6. Karen Kroeger, Thurka Sangaramoorthy, and et al. Pathways to Congenital Syphilis Prevention: A Rapid Qualitative Assessment of Barriers, and the Public Health Response, in Caddo Parish, Louisiana ([article](#))
7. STEAM Salon with Dr. Thurka Sangaramoorthy ([video](#))

Additional readings + resources:

Poth and Creswell. Chapters 1-2 ([book](#))

McMullen et al. Chapters 1-3 ([book](#))

Week 4. February 8. Ethics in qualitative public health research. How do we create an ethical study in human subjects research (beyond just the IRB)?

Guest speaker: [Liza Buchbinder](#), MD, PhD (11:30-12:30pm)

Lab: Preparing an ethical study, writing an IRB

Assignment: Complete human subjects training through USC iStar system and Citi if you have not done so already.

1. Liza Buchbinder. How doctors' fears of getting COVID-19 can mean losing the healing power of touch: One physician's story (short [article](#))
2. P Marshall. Informed Consent in International Health Research ([article](#))
3. P Tovey. Narrative and knowledge development in medical ethics ([article](#))
4. Harriet Washington. Medical apartheid: The dark history of medical experimentation on Black Americans from colonial times to the present (book. Chapter 1)

5. You're wrong about: Tuskegee syphilis study (podcast, Parts [1](#) & [2](#))
6. Elisa Sobo. Theorizing (Vaccine) Refusal: Through the Looking Glass ([article](#))
7. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy. Chapter 2 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

V Smith. Ethical and Effective Ethnographic Research Methods: A Case Study with Afghan Refugees in California ([article](#))

Poth and Creswell. Chapter 3 (book)

McMullen et al. Chapters 12 (book)

[More on](#) Tuskegee Syphilis Study, including an interview with author Harriet Washington ([news interview](#))

Week 5. February 15. No class in observance of President's Day.

Week 6. February 22. Biases, stereotypes, and "culture" in public health research.

How can we ethically study and collect data on "culture"?

Guest speaker: [Lourdes Baez Conde, PhD](#) (10-11 am)

Lab: Data collection prep and developing community-based partners

Assignment: Submit your research proposal or paper with the following sections: a) research problem or topic, its significance, and your research question; (b) literature review of at least five qualitative research articles pertaining to your topic; (c) methods plan for addressing your research question; (d) criteria for your proposed sample or setting; and (e) relevant ethical issues.

1. K Brooks. A Silent Curriculum (short [viewpoint](#))
2. Linda Hunt et al. Should "acculturation" be a variable in health research? A critical review of research on US Hispanics ([article](#))

3. Joan DeFattore. Death by Stereotype? Cancer Treatment in Unmarried Patients (short [article](#))
4. Erika D Smith. 'Why won't Black folks trust us' on COVID-19? These doctors and nurses have answers ([news article](#))
5. Tricia Rose. COVID-19: Systematic racism (short segment, [radio](#))
6. Nancy Krieger. ENOUGH: COVID-19, Structural Racism, Police Brutality, Plutocracy, Climate Change—and Time for Health Justice, Democratic Governance, and an Equitable, Sustainable Future ([article](#))
7. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy. Chapter 3 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

Poth and Creswell, Chapters 4-5-6, Appendices B-F (book)

McMullen et al, Chapter 12 (book)

[#coronasyllabus](#)

[Resources](#) on understanding COVID and pandemics from anthropological perspective

Carolyn Smith-Morris. Indigenous Peoples Turning to Traditional Knowledge on COVID-19 Response ([online article](#))

David R. Williams. How racism makes us sick ([TED talk video](#))

Week 7. March 1. Data collection and positionality. What positions and biases do we bring to our research?

Guest speaker: [Sabrina Smiley, PhD, MPH, MCHES](#) (10-11 am)

Lab: Developing community-based partners and preparing research materials (consent, information guide, compensation, piloting and finalizing interview guides)

1. Kirsten Bell and Amy Salmon. What women who use drugs have to say about ethical research: findings of an exploratory qualitative study ([article](#))

2. P Davidson and K Page. Research participation as work: comparing the perspectives of researchers and economically marginalized populations ([article](#))
3. Seth Holmes. We Are Field Workers ([book, Chapter 2](#))
4. Beverly Ann Davenport. Witnessing and the medical gaze: medical students learn to see at a free clinic for the homeless ([article](#))
5. Rhian Twine et al. The 'experimental public' in longitudinal health research: views of local leaders and service providers in rural South Africa ([article](#))
6. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy. Chapter 3-4 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

C Pearson and P Bourgois. Hope to die a dope fiend ([article](#))

McMullen et al. Chapter 11 (book)

Trauma-informed care from Women's Downtown Center ([online resource and video](#))

Week 8. March 8. Data collection and intersectionality. How do I respectfully conduct research with people who have different experiences and access to resources than myself?

Guest speaker: [Helen Kim, BFA](#) (11:30-12:25pm)

Lab: How to do better interviews and focus groups

Assignment: Turn in your interview guide, focus group, and/or observational plan.

1. Ricky Bluthenthal. Syringe exchange as a social movement: a case study of harm reduction in Oakland, California ([article](#))
2. RC Fox. Observations and Reflections of a Perpetual Fieldworker ([article](#))
3. N Deeb-Sossa. Helping the "Neediest of the Needy": An Intersectional Analysis of Moral-Identity Construction at a Community Health Clinic ([article](#))
4. Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki. Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork ([book](#), bottom of p.50-68 middle, p.173-179)
5. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthv. Chapter 5 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

D Dohan. Managing indigent care: a case study of a safety-net emergency department ([article](#))

Poth and Creswell. Chapter 7 (book)

Week 9. March 15. Data collection and ethnography. How do I ask questions, observe, and listen to experiences without imposing my own expectations upon them?

Guest speaker: [Derek Dangerfield II, PhD](#) (**TBD TIME**)

Lab: How to do ethnography, participant observations, and fieldnotes

Assignment: Complete one pilot interview or one observation, and state how you will revise your approach after evaluating your data and how it worked.

1. Jamie Chang. The Docent Method: A Grounded Theory Approach for Researching Place and Health ([article](#))
2. V Healey-Etten and S Sharp. Teaching Beginning Undergraduates How to Do an In-depth Interview: A Teaching Note with 12 Handy Tips ([article and tip sheet](#))
3. B DiCicco-Bloom and BF Crabtree, The qualitative research interview. Medical Education ([article](#))
4. Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards, How many qualitative interviews is enough. National Center for Research Methods ([review paper](#))
5. Aj Umana-Taylor and MY Bamaca, Conducting focus groups with Latino populations: Lessons from the field ([article](#))
6. Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, From research to real life: Increasing visibility and use of family-to-family centers. Using focus groups to guide interventions ([brief](#))

Additional readings + resources:

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EJ Halcomb et al., Literature review: considerations in undertaking focus group research with culturally and linguistically diverse groups ([article](#))

Michael Crossley. "Could you please pass one of those health leaflets along?": exploring health, morality and resistance through focus groups ([article](#))

[Doing fieldwork during the pandemic](#), crowdsourced collection of remote research resources

Week 10. March 22. Data analysis theory. How can I accurately, succinctly, and holistically make sense of what people in my study say to me?

Guest speaker: [Jessica Barrington-Trimis, PhD](#) (9:30-10:30am)

Lab: Data management, HIPAA tools for collecting and storing data, transcription

1. Kathy Charmaz, Premises, Principles, and Practices in Qualitative Research: Revisiting the Foundations ([keynote address](#))
2. J Tan, Grounded theory in practice: issues and discussion for new qualitative researchers ([article](#))
3. Karen Kroegeer and Thurka Sangaramoorthy, Appendix 7 and 8 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

McMullen et al, Chapters 4-5-6 (book)

Week 11. March 29. Data analysis in practice I. How does qualitative data become organized and analyzed into digestible chunks, themes, or statements?

Lab: Initial memoing, developing a codebook (no guest this week to accommodate analysis lab)

Assignment: Complete second in-depth qualitative interview or observation.

1. B Charnetzky, Coding in Classic Grounded Theory: I've Done an Interview; Now What? ([article](#))
2. Daniel Dohan and Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, Using computers to analyze ethnographic data: Theoretical and practical considerations ([article](#)) [not assign again]
3. Kathy Charmaz, The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory ([article](#))

Additional readings + resources:

McMullen et al, Chapters 7-8-9 (book)

Week 12. April 5. Data analysis in practice II. How do I combine my quantitative data with my qualitative data?

Guest speaker: [Ryan McNeil](#), PHD (11-12pm)

Lab: Coding, memoing, and analyzing

1. RS Barbour, Mixing qualitative methods: quality assurance or qualitative quagmire? ([article](#))
2. DL Morgan, Practical strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative methods: applications to health research ([article](#))
3. KD Wagner et al, Reconciling incongruous qualitative and quantitative findings in mixed methods research: exemplars from research with drug using populations ([article](#))
4. S Moffatt et al., Using quantitative and qualitative data in health services research - what happens when mixed method findings conflict? ([article](#))
5. Lawrence Palinkas et al., Innovations in mixed methods evaluations ([article](#))

Additional readings + resources:

McMullen et al, Chapter 10 (book)

Week 13. April 12. Synthesis and dissemination. How do I share my research findings so

Week 13. April 12. Synthesis and dissemination. How do I share my research findings so that they can have an impact beyond academia?

Guest speaker: [Lisa Yoshiko Radecki, MDes](#) (11:30-12:25)

Lab: Dissemination and sharing of research findings

Assignment: Construct a theoretical statement or demonstrate how an existing theory fits your analysis (1–2 pages). Complete it after you have developed your analysis.

1. Ricky Bluthenthal et al., Witness for Wellness: preliminary findings from a community-academic participatory research mental health initiative ([article](#))
2. JW Creswell et al., Designing a mixed methods study in primary care ([article](#))
3. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy, Chapter 6 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

Poth and Creswell, Chapters 9-10 (book)

Week 14. April 19. Writing up and implementation. How do I get my qualitative research published and implemented?

Guest speaker: [Alison Hamilton, PhD, MPH](#) (10-11am)

Lab: Review of qualitative article that was rejected numerous times, and the changes it took to get it accepted

Assignment: n/a. Continue to work on final presentations.

1. LM Broyles et al., Confronting inadvertent stigma and pejorative language in addiction scholarship: a recognition and response (short [article](#))
2. D Dowell et al., Opioid Analgesics—Risky Drugs, Not Risky Patients (short [viewpoint](#))
3. J Neale and R West, Guidance for reporting qualitative manuscripts (short [article](#))
4. Lisa M. Vaughn et al., Latinos Unidos por la Salud: The Process of Developing an Immigrant Community Research Team ([article](#))
5. Alison Hamilton and Erin Finley, Qualitative methods in implementation research: An

introduction ([article](#))

6. Karen Kroeger and Thurka Sangaramoorthy, Appendix 11 (book)

Additional readings + resources:

Poth and Creswell, Chapter 11 (book)

Week 15. April 26. Final presentations.

Week 16. May 3. Final presentations.

Assignment: n/a. Continue to work on final presentations.

Images above (from top to bottom): [Peter Zelei Images/Getty Images](#), [David L. Ryan/The Boston Globe](#), and [Mike Reddy/Stat](#).
Website and syllabus designed inspired by Ahmed Ansari's [Modernity and Coloniality seminar](#).