

CONF 812 – Qualitative Foundations: Social Sciences Spring 2013

Instructor: Professor Leslie Dwyer
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Office: 616 Truland Building
Class Time: Mondays 4:30-7:10
Class Location: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 467
Class Prerequisites: CONF 801 or permission of instructor

Course Description:

“Only the weary explorer first lighting upon the mysterious shores of Easter Island has encountered more stone-faced indifference than the unfortunates compelled to teach Social Research Methods 101.”
(Times Higher Education Supplement)

Methodology often gets a bad name. Unlike theory, with its aura of intellectual daring, or practice, with its connotations of transformation and creativity, methods are often seen as the workman-like, technical – even “boring” – means to be mastered on the way to a more exciting end. This semester, we will be challenging such assumptions about methodology. Methodologies, as we will discuss, are not simply tools, but philosophical and ethical and political engagements that both reflect and shape knowledge, in the process changing the researcher herself.

This course is not a lecture course. Nor is it a course designed to offer a programmatic “how to” guide for any and all research. Although we will be intensively engaged in “doing” in the form of various methods exercises and the work of crafting individual research plans, we will be giving equal attention to putting our methodological choices and actions in analytic perspective, recognizing them *as choices* that produce specific ways of knowing and may authorize certain forms of intervention. Some of the key themes we will focus on include: How does one frame a research project? What distinguishes case study, ethnographic or comparative research? How does one design a strategy for answering a research question? What are the epistemological, ethical and political implications of different methodologies? How might we view “methods” as not simply a linear means to an end product, but as a process of dialogue with the world and those who inhabit it? What are the challenges of research across cultural and socioeconomic divides, of collaborative research, and of research that seeks to challenge inequality or ground conflict transformation? We will also be using the classroom as a space for Ph.D. students facing their first major research project to raise practical questions and concerns: how does one turn a general area of interest into a focused research question and a successful research proposal? What kind of preparation must one do before beginning research? How does one begin – and how does one end? How – and when – does one start writing? And how does one survive – or even thrive – in the process?

By the end of the semester, students should be better positioned to craft a feasible and innovative dissertation topic, and to design a methodological approach to the question(s) they seek to answer. While students should not expect to become fully vested “experts” in a particular methodology, by the end of the term they should be standing on a firm foundation from which to

hone their approach and competencies.

Given the nature of this course as an intensive graduate seminar designed to promote collaborative, critical dialogue, participants are expected to arrive in class having thoroughly read and reflected on the week's readings, prepared to actively engage in discussion. There is a large amount of material to be covered, and a number of important experiential exercises. Students will be expected to develop suitable reading strategies and time budgeting techniques.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Grading for the course will be determined as follows:

Participation: 10%

Class facilitation 10%

Short assignments (5) 40%

Final portfolio: 40%

Participation:

Your grade for participation will be based upon the quality and consistency of your contributions to our discussions. Each week, you should be prepared not only to summarize what you have read and discuss the authors' main points, but to provide a critical perspective on our texts and their relation to each other and to issues of research in conflict analysis and resolution. Questions you should be asking yourself as you read for class include the general questions of: What are the authors' main concerns? How are they framing their key concepts? Are their arguments logically compelling? What strengths or weaknesses do you find in their approach? How can you relate the insights they offer to research in the field of conflict analysis and resolution? You should then be thinking about the readings in specific relation to your own evolving dissertation project: How could you incorporate the author's insights into your work? How does the methodological approach or critique thereof intersect (or not) with your aims? A superlative evaluation for participation will require you to regularly contribute your ideas to our discussion, as well as to serve as a generous interlocutor for your seminar colleagues. In other words, it is not the quantity of your contributions but the quality that matters most, as well as your ability to raise issues that spark collaborative consideration and to listen openly to others' ideas.

Short Assignments:

4 short assignments will be required over the semester. In general, they are designed to provide you both with a "hands-on" experience of certain methodological approaches and an opportunity to think critically about methodology in relation to theory, practice, and your own evolving research project. These assignments are also designed to provide useful building blocks for later dissertation research proposals and dissertation research grants.

1) "Salsa" Exercises. Due **Monday, February 11** before class. Complete 3 of the end-of-chapter exercises in Luker's book and add a brief (2-3) page reflection on what you learned from the experience.

2) Interviewing Researchers. Due **Monday, March 4** before class. Conduct a brief exploratory interview (around half an hour to an hour in length) with a qualitative researcher in order to learn how s/he approaches research design and methodology. Be prepared to discuss in class what you have learned through this assignment both about qualitative research and the interview process. Write a short (4-5 page) paper that brings your interview findings and experience into dialogue with one or more course readings.

3) Ethics. Due **Monday, April 1** before class. Complete the CITI online training for research with human subjects available through GMU's Office of Research Subject Protections. Please go to citiprogram.org and register as a new user if you have not done this training before. You will find instructions on how to register for and complete the online training. After you have completed the training and finished the assigned readings on ethics, please write your reflections on the ethics certification process, and on the fit and/or frictions you see between the CITI framing of "ethics" and your own work as a CAR scholar/practitioner. Then discuss the ethical challenges that you anticipate may emerge in your dissertation and your thoughts on how you might approach them (total length of assignment approximately 5-7 pages).

5) Draft Grant Proposal. Due **Monday, April 22** before class. This assignment requires that you craft a brief, highly focused description of a proposed research project (e.g. your dissertation). For this assignment, you should follow the format of USIP's dissertation research grant (research related to conflict for both U.S. and non-U.S. citizens, either abroad or in the U.S. – for more information see <http://www.usip.org/grants-fellowships/jennings-randolph-peace-scholarship-dissertation-program>). Please pay close attention to their guidelines for the project statement, which you should follow exactly as if you were submitting an actual application. There are two required sections for this assignment (text is taken directly from USIP's application):

1. Project and Person Summary: The summary is a crucial part of the application. It is the first item that reviewers will read about the project. In **2,000 characters (including spaces) or less**, you are asked to: "Provide the title of the dissertation; a brief summary of the project; describe why it is important, pioneering, or groundbreaking; its uniqueness; its relevance to the Institute's mandate; the specific tasks to be completed; and the methods to be used, as well as a brief autobiographical statement."

2. Project Description: This section entails submitting four required essays. **Each essay must be 9,000 characters (including spaces) or less.** See essay instructions below:

1. Subject and Significance: What is the basic problem, issue, or question that the dissertation seeks to address? Why is it important that this project be done? What substantive results do you expect will be derived from this project? How original is it in view of existing literature or projects that you or others have carried out? (Cite in your narrative the relevant literature to your topic and situate your project within the broader field to which you hope to contribute.)

2. Methods and Design: What is the main thesis of your dissertation, and what are the hypotheses you are testing or assuming in your research? What evidence (documents, interviews, archives, or other sources) will you gather to examine your theories, hypotheses, and assumptions? How will you analyze this evidence and use it to confirm or disconfirm

your claims? Does the dissertation include field work? If so, briefly explain.

3. **Mandate Fulfillment:** How does your proposal help fulfill the mandate of the United States Institute of Peace? You must explain fully how your project addresses the mandate, not just assert that it does. Explain the policy relevance or other practical implications of the project for international peace, security, and conflict resolution. (Candidates may wish to consult the USIP Web site to get more information about the Institute's goals, programs, and activities.)

4. **Work Plan:** Provide a timetable indicating the schedule of completion for tasks or steps involved in the project. Indicate which portions of the project are already finished, and which portions remain to be completed. Please be as realistic as possible, taking into account the work that can be completed during the course of the fellowship. The Institute expects fellows to complete work described in the timetable or as agreed in subsequent consultation with the program staff.

Note that I am NOT requiring you submit your draft to USIP. However, at the conclusion of this assignment you will have a draft of a brief grant proposal you can work on for a submission to USIP, Fulbright, SSRC, NSF, etc. The brevity of the sections is also an excellent opportunity for you to FOCUS your thinking about a dissertation in a way that is sometimes difficult to do in a longer format.

Class Facilitation

Each week, one student will be responsible for collaboratively facilitating one hour of class time. You may wish to lead a (more or less “traditional”) classroom discussion on a particular theme raised in the week’s readings, or engage us in an activity that provides us insight into or familiarity with a particular method of research. I encourage you to use this time creatively, but please check in with me by email before the class to let me know what you are planning.

Final Portfolio:

A final portfolio will be due at the conclusion of the semester, by 5 p.m. on **Thursday, May 9**. This portfolio should include the following:

2. Your slides from your class 10-minute Powerpoint presentation on your proposed research project, emphasizing your research question(s), conceptual framework, and methodological approach and why you chose it. (This presentation will also be presented publicly during our last class meeting.)
3. A draft dissertation proposal of 15-20 pages. The proposal should include the following sections: 1) a 250 word project abstract; 2) A project description, including the research question and its significance in relation to scholarly literature. 3) Research design, including the qualitative methods to be used and how they will help you to answer your research question. (You may draw on your text for assignment #4.)
4. A 4-5 page reflection that, drawing on course readings, discusses the methodological approaches you find compelling and why, and lays out a feasible plan for gaining greater knowledge of and competence in this methodology and its associated techniques.

Course Policies:

Late assignments or “incomplete” grades will be given only in cases of personal or family crisis. You MUST discuss the possibility of such arrangements with me beforehand rather than waiting until an assignment is due. Failure to turn in an assignment on time without prior discussion will result in a failing grade for that particular assignment.

Given the importance of your active, thoughtful participation to the success of the class and your own S-CAR career, attendance at all course meetings is expected. If you must miss a class, please let me know beforehand by email. Missing more than one or two classes over the course of the semester will inevitably result in a lowered “participation” grade.

All students should familiarize themselves with GMU’s Honor Code and the university guidelines for the proper use and citation of sources. It is much better to ask prior to turning in an assignment, rather than waiting for a faculty member to notice something that should have been cited. I take the issue of plagiarism very seriously. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred for evaluation to GMU’s Honor Committee, which may recommend penalties of expulsion from the university for serious violations.

Readings will be posted on Blackboard. I will also be setting up a class Ning site on the S-CAR network (network.scar.gmu.edu) where announcements and discussions will be posted, so please make sure you are registered on the site. I will also be communicating with you outside of class by email. Please make sure your GMU email account is activated and that you check it regularly. Should you have questions, concerns or ideas you would like to discuss, feel free to make an appointment to meet in my office, or to communicate via email. We can also arrange phone conversations as needed to accommodate our respective schedules.

Course Materials:

The following texts have been ordered through the Arlington Campus Bookstore:

Kristin Luker 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. New York: Sage Publications.

Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa Malkki 2007. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1993. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jeremy Weinstein, 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Carolyn Nordstrom, 2004. *Shadows of War; Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in*

the Twenty-first Century. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Becker, Howard. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article (Second Edition)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Anne Lamott, 1995. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Random House.

All other course readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Monday, January 28: Introduction to the Course

Aims of the course and overview of assignments. Introductions. How do we understand “research” and “methodology” within the CAR field?

Week 2: Monday, February 4: Framing Research

Luker, Kristin 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-5.

[Make sure to also do Luker’s “exercises” at the end of each chapter, 3 of which you will hand in next week.]

Week 3: Monday, February 11: Framing Research Questions

Luker, *Salsa Dancing*, Chapters 6-end (including a skim of the appendices so you know where to look for more resources later).

Week 4: Monday, February 18: Data Collection Techniques: Focus Groups/Interviewing

Knodel, John. “The Design and Analysis of Focus Group Studies in Social Science Research.” In David Morgan, ed., *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*. Pp. 35-50.

Hollander, Jocelyn 2004. “The Social Contexts of Focus Groups.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 33(5):602-637.

Selections from Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, eds., 2002. *Handbook of Interview Research*. Sage Publications: Carol Warren, “Qualitative Interviewing” (83-101); John Johnson, “In-depth Interviewing” (103-119); Aileen Shaw, “Interviewing Elites” (299-316); Anne Ryen, “Cross-Cultural Interviewing” (335-54); Charles Briggs, “Interviewing, Power/Knowledge, and Social Inequality” (911-921).

James A. Holstein & Jaber F. Gubrium. 2003. “Active Interviewing” and “From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society.” In *Postmodern Interviewing*. New York: Sage Publications.

Week 5: Monday, February 25: Methodological Approaches: Discourse Analysis

Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. New York: Sage Publications.

Robben, Antonius. 1996. "Ethnographic Seduction, Transference, and Resistance in Dialogues about Terror and Violence in Argentina." *Ethos* 24(1):71-106.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language." In the *Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*. L. Burke and T. Crowley, eds. 2000. Psychology Press.

Gal, Susan. 2001. "Language, Gender and Power: An Anthropological Review." In *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. Alessandro Duranti, ed. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Week 6: Monday, March 4: Methodological Approaches: Ethnography, Interpretation, Case Studies, Grounded Theory, Oral History

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16-1 (March): 4-33.

Flyvbjerg, Brent 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2):219-245.

Geertz, Clifford 1973. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Portelli, Alessandro 1998. "What Makes Oral History Different?" In *The Oral History Reader*. R. Perks and A. Thomson, eds. Psychology Press.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson, Lyn H. Lofland, 2005. "Starting Where You Are" and "Evaluating Data Sites." In *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Wadsworth Publishing.

Flick, Uwe 2009. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications. Pages: 177-195, 306-318, 428-442.

*** SPRING BREAK 3/11-3/17 ***

Week 7: Monday, March 18: Data Collection Techniques: Participant Observation

Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa H. Malkki 2007. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Emerson et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter on "Participating, Observing, and Jotting."

Week 8: Monday, March 25: Toward a CAR Ethics

Readings: (Note that there is a substantial amount of reading for this week, plus an assignment that will take you some time to complete – please plan your reading strategy ahead of time.)

Comparative Codes of Ethics:

American Anthropological Association, “Code of Ethics.”

<http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/ethics/>

African Studies Association, “Guidelines of the African Studies Association for Members’ Ethical Conduct in Research and Other Professional Undertakings in Africa”

http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~callasa/asa_guidelines2005.html

American Bar Association, “Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators”

http://www.abanet.org/dispute/documents/model_standards_conduct_april2007.pdf

Hippocratic Oath: “classical” and “modern” versions

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/hippocratic-oath-today.html>

(Please feel free to also look up the “code of ethics” for your previous/affiliated discipline and bring this into our discussion and your reflections.)

Ethics in Critical Perspective:

Bourgois, Philippe. 1991. “Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography: Lessons from Fieldwork in Central America.” In F. Harrison, ed., *Decolonizing Anthropology*. Pp. 110-126.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2000. “Ire in Ireland.” *Ethnography* 1(1):117-140.

Gusterson, Hugh, 2010. “War, Journalism and Professional Ethics.” *Global Studies Review* Vol 6. No. 1. Available online at: <http://www.globality-gmu.net/archives/2026>

Assignment 3 (“Ethics”) Due In Class:

Week 9: Monday, April 1: Case Study: Ethnographic Approaches

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1993. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 10: Monday, April 8: Case Study: Comparative Case Studies

Jeremy Weinstein, 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Collier, David and James Mahoney 1996. “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research.” *World Politics* 49:59-91.

Hall, Peter 2003. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research." In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Week 11: Monday, April 15: Case Study: Qualitative Research in a Globalizing World

Carolyn Nordstrom, 2004. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power and International Profiteering in the Twenty-first Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2003. "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction," *Ethnography* 4:147-1381

Week 12: Monday, April 22: Power, Collaboration, and Eclecticism

Lassiter, Luke. 2005. "Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 46(1):83-97.

Schensul, Jean, Marlene Berg and Ken Williamson. 2008. "Challenging Hegemonies: Advancing Collaboration in Community-Based Participatory Action Research." *Collaborative Anthropologies* 1:102-137.

Leslie Dwyer and Degung Santikarma, "On the Hazards of Collaboration." Draft document.

Susan Hirsch, 2002. "Feminist Participatory Research on Legal Consciousness." In J. Starr and M. Goodale, eds., *Practicing Ethnography in Law: New Dialogues, Enduring Methods*. New York: Palgrave.

Behar, Ruth 2003. "Ethnography and the Book that was Lost." *Ethnography* 4(1):15-39.

Week 13: Monday, April 29: Telling/Writing/Disseminating

Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, 1997. "The Appeal of Experience, the Dismay of Images; Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times." From *Social Suffering*, eds. A. Kleinman, V. Das and M. Lock. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Becker, Howard. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article (Second Edition)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (read through the sections that are of interest to you).

Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. (read this all at some point before you start your dissertation, but for now just make sure you've read her chapter on "shitty first drafts").

Week 14: Monday, May 6: Final Meeting and Reflection

NO READINGS

For this final class period, each student will present a 10 minute powerpoint describing their major research project (e.g. dissertation), including research question(s) and proposed methodological approach.

FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE THURSDAY, MAY 9 BY 5 P.M. by email. Please keep a copy in case of transmittal problems.