Professor Jennifer Dodge
Office hours by appointment
E-mail: jed234@nyu.edu

Course Description:

This course provides a hands-on opportunity for doctoral students to experience the practice of qualitative research. We will address the nature of qualitative research in the administrative and policy sciences, with ample opportunities to discuss and put into practice choices for designing, implementing and reporting findings of a “mock” project. Teams of students will craft the projects in class, with Professor Dodge’s guidance, and within specified guidelines. The course will require a considerable investment of time, with intensive reading and writing, recurrent team discussions based on assignments, and individual field work (with journal writing before, during and after site visits).

Note: Students must be enrolled in, or having previously taken, the course: Doctoral Research Seminar: Research Methods. If you have taken an equivalent course, you might be able to enroll in this course with professor approval.

Course objectives:

By appreciating the complexities and opportunities associated with doing rigorous and credible qualitative research, at the end of the course, you will:

- Recognize similarities and differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research in the management and policy fields.
- Distinguish traditions of qualitative inquiry—ethnography, case study, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, action research, etc—and their advantages and limitations for research in public service.
- Discuss competently selected problems and issues associated with theory, design, implementation and reporting of qualitative research in public service (while concentrating primarily on interview projects embedded within a given tradition).
- Advance skills in managing selected design, data collection, analysis and writing strategies of qualitative research, via exercises and some field experience.
- Be acquainted with literature that models theoretical, methodological and empirical work in qualitative inquiry.

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1 Professor Sonia Opsina has developed this syllabus over many years of teaching qualitative research methods at the Wagner School. The syllabus retains most of its original content, although Professor Dodge has adapted it to fit her teaching and scholarly preferences.
**Reading**

Students should be prepared to dedicate significant amounts of time doing the readings and exercises associated with them each week. You can also consult the list of references at the end of this syllabus to build a good qualitative research library.

**Required texts:**


- **BE SURE TO GET THE 3\textsuperscript{RD EDITION}.


- **BE SURE TO GET THE 2\textsuperscript{RD EDITION}.


- **BE SURE TO GET THE 2\textsuperscript{RD EDITION}.

**Course packet/blackboard** - Please find additional required readings from selected sources in the Schedule of Classes below. Some of these materials are available on blackboard, and others are available in a packet from the Unique Copy Center (252 Greene Street).

**Suggested text:** These books are highly recommended if you plan to do qualitative research in the future. They will be on reserve, and we will read excerpts from them throughout the course.


- **ON RESERVE AT BOBST LIBRARY


- **ON RESERVE AT BOBST LIBRARY

**Blackboard and E-mail**

You must activate your NYU net account to access Blackboard and e-mail for this course. Activated your net account at [http://start.nyu.edu](http://start.nyu.edu) and access it at [https://home.nyu.edu/](https://home.nyu.edu/)

**Writing Resources**

NYU/Wagner provides a free writing consultant and a writing workshop (not free) for assistance with written work. For info go to: [http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/current/services/writing.php](http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/current/services/writing.php)

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

Members of NYU Wagner are expected to adhere to high standards of intellectual and academic integrity. You can view our Academic Code at: [http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/](http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/).
Course requirements:

Students will apply readings and written assignments to a “mock research project” chosen within a constrained set of options, from topics proposed by course participants. Pairs of students will work on each project, to ensure ample room for discussion and collective reflection – inside and outside of the classroom – and to make decisions and implement the project. Class time will be spent reviewing challenges and issues as the projects advance, and connecting these to the readings.

You will be responsible for doing some fieldwork outside of class. You should create a schedule to enter the field to ensure that you do a minimum of two interviews and a few field observations as prescribed by class schedule, so that we can use these for class exercises. You will keep individual journals with field notes and personal reflections of the mock project as it develops over time, writing analytical memos as needed.

Students will be expected to complete a series of 12 short assignments and 3 long assignments throughout the course. The assignments are devised as opportunities to practice skills of design, collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting. Your experience with them will ground class discussions. (Each of the assignments is listed under the “Assignment and Research Project Schedule” and described in more detail under the “Schedule of Classes” below.)

Even though pairs of students will implement the mock project, each student will present a final report (a long assignment) at the end of the semester based on the work for the mock project, including journaling and analytical memos that students will develop throughout the course. It will include some group products but also some independent writing from each student.

Grading

No late assignments will be accepted for grading, unless agreed upon in advance with the professor.

Overview: Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements:

62.5% team work
37.5% individual work:

Details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 short assignments (2.5 points each)</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 long assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Research proposal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>2. Researcher identity memo</td>
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<td>3. Final report</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Theoretical argument</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Findings report</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reflective report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
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## Research Project and Assignment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Research Project (steps in parenthesis are assignments)</th>
<th>Assignments (see specific instructions under “Schedule of Classes” below)</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Begin thinking about topics of interest</td>
<td>Short assignment 1 (individual): 15 minute observation with field notes (prior to class)</td>
<td>Sept 10 (in class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Start journaling and continue throughout the semester.</em></td>
<td>Prepare to participate actively in class discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Form teams (in class)</td>
<td>Short assignment 2 (individual): Reflection on your preferred qualitative method(s)</td>
<td>Sept 17 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meet with your team member to chose a topic (Draft research topic)</td>
<td>Short assignment 3 (team): Draft research topic</td>
<td>Sept 24 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Begin literature review (Draft question and frame work)</td>
<td>Short assignment 4 (team): Draft question and flow diagram of framework</td>
<td>Oct 1 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Continue literature review (Rewrite question and framework) (Develop unit of analysis and sampling frame)</td>
<td>Short assignment 5 (team): Reframe question and flow diagram; specify unit of analysis; design sampling frame</td>
<td>Oct 8 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Start getting ready to enter the field (make contacts, learn about site.) (Draft interview protocol) (Create data planning matrix)</td>
<td>Long assignment 1 (individual): Researcher identity memo</td>
<td>Oct 13 (email Prof. prior to class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Start drafting interview protocol</td>
<td>Short assignment 6 (team): Reframe question and flow diagram; create data planning matrix</td>
<td>Oct 15 (in class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Start drafting research proposal</td>
<td>Long assignment 2 (team): Research proposal</td>
<td>Oct 20 (prior to class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Draft interview protocol) (Submit research proposal)</td>
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<td>Oct 22 (in class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin gathering documents about your site/case</td>
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<td>Oct 25 (put copy in Prof. inbox)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short assignment 7 (individual): Human subjects tutorial</td>
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<td>Short assignment 8 (team): Draft interview protocol</td>
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<td>Long assignment 2 (team): Research proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>(No assignment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Short assignment 9 (team): Situate your research within an epistemological and theoretical perspective</td>
<td>Nov 5 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Data collection (Develop coding scheme) Data analysis Begin writing analytical memos</td>
<td>Short assignment 10 (team): Develop coding scheme, apply it, and revise it</td>
<td>Nov 12 (in class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Data analysis (Create matrix or network) Continue writing analytical memos</td>
<td>Short assignment 11 (team): Create an explanatory effects matrix or causal network</td>
<td>Nov 19 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Short assignment 12 (team): Standards of quality memo</td>
<td>Dec 3 (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Work on final report</td>
<td>(No assignment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Work on final report</td>
<td>Long assignment 3 (team and individual): Final Report</td>
<td>Dec 20 (put copy in Prof. inbox)</td>
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</table>
PART I. THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Week 1: Introduction

Objectives:
- Gain an understanding of the qualitative research process and the nature of qualitative data
- Develop mutual expectations for the course
- Conduct an inventory of participant experiences with qualitative research

Reading assignment:
- Booth et al: Preface, Prologue, Ch 1 and 2 (all of section one)
- Patton: Chapters 1 and 2 [on reserve]

Short Assignment 1 (Individual):  

Due September 10 (in class)

Please complete the following exercise before coming to class: Go to a restaurant or coffee shop of your choice and purchase something to eat. For 15 minutes (please time yourself), do a systematic observation of what is going on. You should take notes during this observation. Consider the following questions: What is going on? How is it going on? What does the researcher feel about this observation?

After leaving the site, sit down in a quiet place, read your notes, complete them and write a few questions that come to mind about “being in the field.” Please bring to class the notes and questions to share with the group.

Attention: You should begin thinking about potential topics for your research projects. It is a good time to begin using your journal to jot down some ideas.

Recommendations for doing the readings:

We will not focus on the readings page by page, but use them, in combination with your notes from the observation assignment, to have a broader discussion about the nature of qualitative research, and to frame the course.
Please skim the first chapters in the Booth reading so that you are introduced to the logic of the book. This is very quick reading, we will not dwell on it too much, and if you must make a choice, this is what you should skip. But I do hope you have a chance to read, as it offers a great basic introduction of the authors’ approach to the craft of doing research and it sets the tone for what will come in the following weeks (latter chapters around framing questions and clarifying the rationale of your mock projects will be very relevant and harder to digest). Do not underestimate the power of these ideas just because they are easy to read and make sense. These authors offer a great, down to earth, realistic, introduction to what it means to become part of a research community.

The Patton chapters offer an excellent and thorough introduction to the nature of qualitative research design, methods and data, and it also positions some of the key issues that will appear recurrently throughout the semester. It is a lot to read, so pace yourself and allow time between chapters to process the ideas.

As you are doing the reading, make a list of about 5 to 10 key ideas that surprise you, and/or challenge your assumptions about rigorous social science research. Be specific about the idea, how it challenges you, what it raises for you about the nature of qualitative research, and what reading generated your reaction. If nothing surprises you, make a list of issues that intrigue you about the nature of qualitative research and that might be worth deepening. Be prepared to discuss these in class.

Optional readings: The McNabb reading provides an overview of research topics in public administration and nonprofit management. If you are new to the field, these are helpful overviews. I am still searching for a good and brief overview of public policy. In lieu of that, the Schmidt reading gives you a taste for one approach to interpretive policy analysis (there are many!), and is useful for students who are more familiar with traditional approaches to policy analysis and want to begin to understand how one might examine public policy interpretively.
Objectives:
• Gain an understanding of the different qualitative research traditions and their differences
• Become familiar with concepts from the philosophy of science and about research design
• Discuss mock project and form teams

Reading assignment:
  • Chapters 22, p. 275-286 only
  • Chapters 23-27; (skip the exercises in each chapter)
• Creswell: Chapters 2 - 3

Short Assignment 2 (individual): *Due September 17 (in class)*
In bullet form, indicate which two approaches from McNabb’s book that appealed to you most and why; note the consistency or lack thereof between the different elements of the approach (while the not the same across chapters, some of the elements include design, data collection, data analysis, reporting, examples of how the method has been used, etc.). How might you use one or both of these approaches? Restrict your comments to one page.

Recommendations for doing the readings:
These reading introduce an additional wrinkle in the idea of doing qualitative research: there are many approaches to doing it! McNabb presents several qualitative traditions worth differentiating: case study, grounded theory, ethnography, action research and empowerment/feminist models. I suggest that you give a quick read to chapters 22 to 27 and then choose the two approaches from chapters 23-27 that intrigue you the most and read them more carefully.

Notice that McNabb’s choices are his own, had someone else written the book, the approaches would vary somewhat. (Creswell and Patton both have different typologies.) We will draw on both the McNabb and Creswell’s typologies throughout the course. They are somewhat different but we will create a unified typology in class drawing on the two approaches. The point, at this stage, is to familiarize yourself with the different ways of doing qualitative research. Concentrate on grasping the broad differences and similarities among these traditions and their potential for an applied research project.

Creswell chapter 2 introduces some important, but challenging ideas from the philosophy of science that underpin the knowledge production process in qualitative research. Do not panic; just go with the flow. We will return to these ideas in depth in part III of the course, so there is no need to master that material for now. It is, however, important that you become aware of the basic notions in the philosophy of science. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research design process. It is not very complete, so we will read more thorough material from Maxwell next week.
Week 3: Choosing Topics and Exploring Questions  

Objectives:
• Deepen understanding of research design concepts
• Practice developing research topic

Reading assignment:
• Maxwell, Chapters 1 and 2 (all), Chapter 3 (only p. 33-37), and Ch 4 (all)
• Optional: Ely et al. 1991. Chapter 3: “Doing”. In Ely et al (ed). Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles. New York: The Falmer Press, pp. 41-105. (Recommended if you have no experience doing qualitative research. If you cannot read the entire piece, focus on pgs. 69-80 on logs.) [distributed in class]

Short Assignment 3 (team):  Due September 24 (in class)

Meet in your team prior to class to discuss a potential research topic for the mock project. Guide your discussion using the instructions for Creswell’s exercise 1 on page 52. Together as a team, write a two-page memo about your proposed research project. Do not worry if you are not completely sure, for now make a first attempt. It will change over time! Do this work BEFORE Week 3 is over, otherwise you will be overloaded with the next assignment in week 4.

*Hint: in the context of this course, to ensure efficiency in your learning process, choose a topic in which at least one of you (and even better, both) have some familiarity with the literature, rather than one where you would have to start from scratch.*

Recommendations for doing the readings:

Maxwell’s Ch 1 provides a description of research design that is helpful for thinking about the problems and issues of qualitative research. Chapters 2-4 give a good overview of design issues for a qualitative research project (defining goals, conceptual frameworks and questions). We will return to these in future classes. For now, read for the “gestalt” rather than the details. **SKIM** the examples in white boxes, **SKIP** the exercises in gray boxes. We may revisit some later.

The general concept of research design presented here will be different from concepts you may have encountered previously. The discussion is clearly oriented to the specific features of qualitative research. Again, don’t try to grasp every thing. We will return to many of the details raised in these chapters during the semester. The goal is distinguish qualitative design and get a sense of the “big picture.” What is the difference between what you have learned about research design and methods in general, and what is suggested for qualitative research? Try to identify a few key distinctions and new ideas that intrigue you and take notes for class discussion.

The Dodge reading offers an example of an article that draws on a qualitative design. We will revisit this project throughout the class as an exemplar of qualitative inquiry.
Part II. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Week 4: Designing the Study: Frameworks, Questions, Problems, Goals  October 1

Objectives:
- Practice framing sound research questions and developing theoretical frameworks

Reading assignment:
- Maxwell: read Chapter 3 (all) and re-read chapter 4
- Booth et al: Part 2 – Prologue, Ch 3 and 4
- Creswell: Chapter 6
- **Recommended:** Booth et al: Ch 5 and 6 (for issues associated with literature review) [CP]

Short Assignment 4 (team):  
Due October 1 (in class)

As a team, write and bring to class a tentative research question and a tentative flow diagram (graph) of your conceptual framework. Frame the question using the format proposed by Booth et al on pages 48 and 61 (48 gives you the basic structure, 61 a further elaboration of the same format for academic applied research projects). For the flow diagram specify the critical elements of a preliminary conceptual framework to address the question, as proposed by Maxwell in Ch 3. Attach a short list of references that provide insights into your proposed question (i.e. start reading about the topic).

Attention: You should begin doing a literature review to clarify your topic and understand the state of knowledge about it. Focus on top tier journals and look for high quality articles that address your topic using qualitative (and quantitative) methods. *(For lists of journals see pg. 28 below and the field descriptions for the various concentrations for doctoral study on NYU/Wagner’s website at [http://wagner.nyu.edu/doctoral/fields/].)*

Recommendations for doing the readings:

The readings are geared toward helping you think about your assignment, so make sure you read them early and then go back to them as needed when you are doing the team work. They offer advice about how to frame a good question that is grounded theoretically, and how to use the literature in the process. Maxwell provides the gestalt readings for this class as well as details for the flow diagram. Booth et al provide further details to develop your research question and justification. Creswell is the least relevant, but interesting in that it offers concrete examples of
the differences in framing issues for each of the five approaches he discusses. This chapter should be a quick read, and if you need to prioritize, it can be left for later reading.

Read Chapter 3 in Maxwell to get a sense of the various sources for a conceptual framework. Re-read chapter 4 before you read Booth et al. to get an overview of the connection between a conceptual framework and a research question. Do this before you go into the step-by-step reading required to complete the exercises.

The logic proposed in Booth et al is incredibly helpful to move through the complicated process of formulating a good question and motivating it. You will have to think about the ideas proposed here more than once, so start reading early, as this is the base for the assignment. Make sure you leave time to do and re-do the exercise several times before you settle on the final version. Check Quick Tip on pages 66-67 ref. managing your anxiety!

The recommended reading from Strauss and Corbin is a quick read and offers an opportunity to think about how you will use the literature on the topic you chose, to answer your question in a way that is relevant to the larger conversation. It offers reinforces the importance of engage the literature as early as you can, even when you are trying to derive theory from the data!
# Week 5: Bounding the Territory: Cases, Sites, Sampling and Other Issues  October 8

**Objectives:**
- Developing an understanding of the different conceptual meanings of “the case”
- Practice “bounding” the research study: making decisions about case and site selection, units of analysis, and sampling

**Reading assignment:**
- Miles & Huberman: Ch 2, sections C and D (pages 25-34) [on reserve]

**Short Assignment 5 (Team): Due October 8 (in class)**

Re-frame your research question and flow diagram based on your early incursions into your literature review to ground your project. Further clarify your unit of analysis and, using the new question, construct a matrix specifying tentatively your sampling frame (see Marshal and Rossman. pp. 75-76). Please turn in the new question, flow diagram and sampling frame.

**Attention:** The team should devote time to deepen the literature review on your topic and to start building an annotated bibliography indicating how the readings contribute to the project.

**Recommendations for doing the readings:**

We will structure the class to cover theoretical issues associated with the notion of “a case,” then use this as a foundation for practical applications and design choices.

M&H introduce you to the idea of the case. It is very slow reading because each page is packed with details and examples, so make sure you leave sufficient time to digest. Read carefully the rationale and brief descriptions for each sections B and C. Then decide how deep to go into the examples and tips, depending on how much help you need to think about your own project.

The Ragin reading defines the notion of “the case” as it is understood and used in quantitative and qualitative traditions. The discussion is not just academic or theoretical, but is useful for making decisions about the selection of sites and cases, and units of analysis. Concentrate on clarifying the different ways in which the work “cases” is used in the social sciences. M&H will provide a detailed description of issues associated with sampling, which is complemented in the brief excerpt with an example from Marshall and Rossman.
Week 6: Preparing for the Field: Methods, Relationships, Fieldwork  

Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of data collection instruments and techniques (the mechanics of fieldwork, interviewing and questionnaires, tools and equipment, field notes, etc).
- Develop an understanding of the relational dimensions of qualitative data collection

Reading assignment:

- Maxwell, Chapter 5
- Creswell, Ch 7
- Miles & Huberman: Ch 2, only section E [on reserve]:
- Emerson – see box next page [CP]
- **Recommended** – see box next page [CP]

Long Assignment 1 (individual):  
Due Wednesday, October 13.

Researcher identity memo - see instructions and example on pages 27-31 in Maxwell. Limit your writing to 3 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins).

Short Assignment 6 (team):  
Due October 15 (in class)

You should have a next version of your research question and new conceptual framework. Create a data planning matrix as illustrated on page 100-101 in Maxwell (see instructions and rationale on pages 102-103).

**Attention:** By this time you must be getting ready to enter the field and to make contacts, develop relationships, and learn all you can about the context of your site and case. By week 7 you should be in the field accessing data by way of observations, interviews and if possible, formal documents. Start drafting the interview protocol. The data planning matrix will be helpful.

**Attention:** Interview protocols and human subjects tutorials are due next week and the research proposal is due the following Monday. If you can, you may want to get a jump-start on this work.

Recommendations for doing the readings:

Maxwell Ch 5, and Creswell in Ch 7 offer excellent overviews of key issues that you should anticipate as you put together your proposal, from building relationships to thinking about how to collect the data, passing once again through reflections about site selection and sampling that we have already discussed. These readings summarize some of the practical issues you should be considering, including what types of methods to choose. Read Maxwell first and then Creswell to add the angle of the differences among approaches.

M&H point to the important issue of instrumentation and the decisions you must consider as you chose your approach to qualitative inquiry.
Getting ahead of yourself: Getting an early overview of what you will be doing when you enter the field will help you better prepare for it. It will also help you view the work of the next weeks in a more realistic light. Because doing qualitative research is an iterative process, but teaching qualitative research can only happen by introducing the topics in a linear fashion, going back and forth in considering some topics may be a helpful learning device. In that spirit, consider doing the following readings which will be helpful for entering the field later.

Required:


You will be asked to do observations, interviews and if possible, document analysis. Here are three good overviews of these tools, from the 2000 Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd edition):

Week 7: The Ethics and Politics of Qualitative Research

Objectives:
• Develop tools for engaging in ethical research practice
• Develop understanding of internal review boards (at NYU: “human subjects committee”)

Reading assignment:

Short Assignment 7 (individual):  
Due October 20 (prior to class)

Go to the web page of NYU’s Review Committee on Research with Human Subjects at http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/tutorial/, and take the test required for all principal investigators of federally funded research. DO NOT SEND THE TEST TO THE COMMITTEE. Just check your score and review the items you missed. Hand in short write up (a paragraph) about what surprised you. Be prepared to discuss in class.

Short Assignment 8 (team):  
Due October 22 (in class)

First draft of interview protocol. We will discuss instructions in the previous class.

Long Assignment 2 (team):  
Due October 25 (copy to Prof.)

Research Proposal - As you work on your proposal Maxwell: Ch 6, 7 and the Appendix are helpful. Ch 6 discusses validity. We will return to quality issues later, but it is helpful to anticipate this discussion so you can consider these issues in your proposal. Ch 7 and the Appendix address writing proposals and provide an example. For format, follow these chapters. We will discuss detailed instructions in class. Limit your writing to 15 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins), plus appendixes and bibliography.

Attention: You should begin to gather documents about your site(s) and case(s). It is a good time to remember that you should be journaling, especially about ethical issues and entering the field.

Recommendations for doing the readings:
G&G provides an excellent framework for research ethics in practice, while McNabb focuses on the nitty gritty details of ethical practice, from data collection to reporting. The Schnarch article presents a critical perspective of political issues in research from a Native American perspective. Skim this reading to sensitize yourself to the perspective of an “over-researched” population.
Part III. INTERLUDE: THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

The next two classes represent a parenthesis from the discussion of the knots and bolts of doing qualitative research. We will engage in a conversation introduced by Creswell in week 2.

### Week 8 Multiple Modes of Inquiry: Linking Paradigms and Theoretical Perspectives

**NOTE:** I will be traveling during our usual class time on October 29. I would like to reschedule class on Thursday October 28 at the same time. We will discuss this during week 1.

**Objectives:**
- Develop an understanding of the philosophical debates about scientific inquiry
- Develop an understanding of the philosophical assumptions behind different approaches to research and the implications for research design and implementation

**Reading assignment:**
  - Hawkesworth, M. Contending Conceptions of Science and Politics: Methodology and the Constitution of the Political. Chapter 2, pp. 27-49. [CP]

**Attention:** YOU WILL NEED FIELDNOTES AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS BY WEEK 10 when we will do an exercise in coding. This means you must plan to start your observations and interviews now! (You can continue doing them for the next 3 weeks.) As we move forward we will leave 30 minutes of class time to trouble shoot and discuss your data collection experiences.

**Recommendations for doing the reading:**

The goal of these readings is to get an overview of the main issues in the development of the philosophy of the social sciences in contrast to the philosophy of the natural sciences, and the implications these distinctions have for doing social research. In Crotty’s Chapters 1 and 2 you will get a sense of why we are engaging in a philosophical discussion and a good description of the development of the dominant version of science that we have inherited. In Yanow and
Hawkesworth, this will be contrasted with another version of science with very different implications for research. Use these chapters to help you think about: competing philosophies of science; the problem of meaning and the social sciences; the problem of objectivity and objective knowledge; the issue of induction versus deduction as modes of inquiry; the relationship between paradigms, theory and methods. Hawkesworth’s final section illustrates the various theoretical ways in which positivist political science has defined “politics.” It is interesting and helpful, but not of central focus, so you can skim it.

The goal for reading Guba and Lincoln is to see an application of the broader issues in the specific context of qualitative research. You will be able to link the landscape constructed in the previous readings to the described approaches to qualitative research, and to deepen the distinction between epistemological, ontological and methodological issues in research.

For Ospina and Dodge, concentrate on pages 143 to 150, skim the rest, as is less pertinent. Focus on the idea of “fit” as we go down in the abstraction ladder to think of the path from paradigm to theory to method to research choices. The story told there illustrates the relevance and implementation of walking down this ladder in a practical research project. The focus here is on the relationship between paradigms and theories and methodology, and the practical implications for design and implementation of a study.

Be prepared to discuss in class how these ideas affect the way you think of your project.

This is probably the most abstract and philosophical reading you will ever do at Wagner. Hold tight and do not panic. There will be ample time to process during the next class.

If you want to learn more about the philosophical and theoretical roots of interpretivism, Crotty’s chapters 3 to 9 describe branches like constructionism, hermeneutics, critical inquiry, feminism and postmodernism. And Pushkala offers another helpful overview of these traditions.
Objectives:

- Practice making logical connections between paradigms, theories, methods and practice
- Apply philosophy of science concepts to the problem of the split between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, and between philosophical paradigms

Reading assignment:


Recommended reading: These readings offer great practical illustrations of the conversation!


Short Assignment 9 (team):

Write a one-page memo that situates your research project within an epistemological, theoretical, and methodological tradition. Discuss issues of “fit” between these elements in your project. If you have borrowed from multiple traditions, discuss specifically issues of fit within a hybrid approach and why you believe your choices are justified.

Attention: You should continue to do data collection this week. Continue journaling.
Recommendations for doing the reading:

Read the articles as follows, in the order they are listed: first King et al and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea offer perspectives of qualitative research at the two sides of the epistemological spectrum. Consider their differences in terms of applying standard definitions of scientific inference from quantitative research to qualitative research. Be prepared to discuss in class.

Then, Ragin and Tarrow offer a post-positivist perspective that is still critical of King et al. but focuses the discussion exclusively at the methods level. Focus on the slight differences between their arguments and those of both King et al (on one side) and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (on the other) with respect to the nature of qualitative research as social science research. What is the source of these differences? Which one do you feel more comfortable with and why? How are these different from what Lincoln and Guba and Ospina and Dodge (last week) propose?

Finally, Shah and Ospina et al bring into the discussion the notion of bridging paradigms. The focus here is on epistemological, not just methodological differences, for research practices. How do these authors address the issue of incommensurable paradigms?

What do you learn from this week’s readings about the possibility of mixing methods and doing triangulation across not only methods but paradigms? What issues must be kept in mind when mixing methods traditionally associated with different paradigms?

Think about the practical implications of the readings for the decisions you have made and will continue to make in your project. How do they affect what you wrote in your researcher identity memo?
Part IV. IN THE FIELD & BEYOND: ACCESSING & INTERPRETING DATA

Week 10: Data Collection and Analysis 1

Objectives

- Understand and practice the early steps of analysis: documentation; codes and coding; exploring and describing; the role of memos, analytic texts and visual displays

Reading assignment:

- Miles & Huberman: Ch 4, sections B, C, and D; and Ch 10, section D (skim) [on reserve]
- Patton: Chapter 8, ONLY pages 431-466. [on reserve]
- **Recommended**: Booth et al: Ch 15 (excellent, though basic, overview of the use of visual displays, mostly focusing on numbers and statistics)

Short Assignment 10 (team): **Due November 12 (in class)**

Develop a tentative coding scheme of your project and, use your interview transcripts to apply and refine it. Write a memo of what you learned from doing this exercise. Include the original coding scheme in an appendix with brief definitions of the original definitions and your reiterations produced by the analysis. Be prepared to discuss how your coding evolved.

**Attention**: The readings from weeks 10 through 13 seem deceptively short. We will read a lot from M&H, which is dense and requires considerable time to be processed. Please make sure you leave sufficient time to do these readings.

**Attention**: You should try to complete your data collection this week as we move into data analysis. You should also begin to write analytical memos based on your analysis that you will be able to draw on later to write your final report.

Recommendations for doing the reading:

McNabb provides an overview of key issues to consider when doing qualitative analysis and provides an overview of several distinct approaches. However, this reading will not teach you HOW to do the analysis.

Patton offers an overview of issues, tools and techniques to keep in mind as you start to do analysis. Pages 442-446 describe the use of computer software packets, and 447 to 452 focus on case study, so skim only, and then concentrate on end of 452 to 466. These will be very helpful to complement the detailed instructions from M&H.

Sections B and C in Chapter 4 of M&H describe the rationale and mechanics of coding. (Some people do not use coding, but we will focus on it since it is one of the most common approaches...
to qualitative data analysis. Read these sections carefully (they take time, so start early!) and use them to engage in analysis with your data! Do not start this assignment the night before class, or you will not have time to do it right. Section D in Chapter 10 warns you about the importance of documentation and gives you some practical tools to use. We will discuss this in class and if you need to make choices, just scan this one. (If we have agreed earlier in the class that your project requires a different type of analysis, we will work together to accommodate that approach.)
Objectives:
- Develop an understanding of causal analysis and explanation

Reading assignment:
- Patton, MQ. (2005). Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Chapter 8, ONLY pages 466-481. [on reserve]
- M&H: Ch 6 (introduction and section A, then see instructions for group assignment before reading sections B through E; Ch 9 (skim). [on reserve]

Short Assignment 11 (team):
Due November 19 (in class)
Create an explanatory effects matrix or a causal network with an accompanying analytical memo that makes a claim inferred from your data. Bring enough copies of the matrix to class to distribute to your classmates. Be prepared to discuss how Lin’s article and Patton’s insights helped inform your analysis.

Recommendations for doing the reading:

While old, Lin’s article is a jewel and very helpful in addressing the issue of causality in qualitative research, arguing for an emphasis of *illuminating mechanisms* as the key contribution of interpretive inquiry to causal explanations.

Patton continues to offer excellent gestalt insights about how analysis must focus on meaning and interpretation and describes several interesting techniques. M&H provide very detailed descriptions of tools that can help to do causal analysis and reporting. You will find here explanations on how to do your assignment. This is slow reading, start early!

November 26: No class for Thanksgiving break.
Part V. MAKING SENSE: FINDING MEANING, WRITING AND SHARING INSIGHTS

Week 12: Drawing and Verifying Conclusions and Quality Standards December 3

Objectives:
- Developing an understanding of quality criteria and qualitative research
- Practice applying these criteria to evaluate good qualitative research

Reading assignment:
- Creswell: Ch 10
- Maxwell: Ch 6

Short Assignment 12 (team): Due December 3 (in class)

Write a bulleted memo identifying the key standards that guarantee good quality of your inquiry and explain why you chose those and how you have tried to attain them. Restrict your writing to one page or less. Be prepared to discuss.

Attention: Continue to do data analysis and analytical memo writing. You might want to begin thinking about the organization of your final report.

Recommendations for doing the reading:

As you read Creswell and Maxwell, think about where do their comments about quality and soundness locate them within the paradigm spectrum. These chapters illustrate well the way issues of quality and soundness are often depicted in qualitative research.

Schwartz-Shea offers a much deeper and very complete discussion of how standards have evolved over time in interpretive inquiry, from very rigid standards that replicated positivist criteria to much more appropriate ones to the nature of this type of inquiry. Finally, for Dodge et al concentrate on the second half on quality standards. The focus is on narrative inquiry, but we are making an important general point for qualitative research. How does it compare to the others?
Objectives:
• Understand the challenges of writing and reporting research findings
• Learn to identify common approaches to writing in public policy, public administration, and public management

Reading assignment:
• Creswell, chap 9 (pgs 177-182 only)
• **Recommended** Booth et al: Part 3 – Prologue, and Chapters 7 through 11 *(This reading requires concentration. The good news it that it is helpful not just for this class but in general, for any scholarly writing.)*

**Attention:** You should be working on your final report!!!

**Recommendations for doing the reading:**

Creswell’s chapter offers a discussion of important issues that arise in writing up research findings. McNabb provides a “nuts and bolts” overview of a typical format for research articles in public administration, public policy and public management.

Once you have read Creswell, read Ospina and Saz-Carranza’s empirical article, and try to identify the issues about reflectivity and representation, audience, encoding and quotes that Creswell raises. Think about how these descriptions and example may help you (or not) in reporting on your own project. Be prepared to discuss in class.
Note: We will meet in the evening at a local establishment (to be determined) to draw final conclusions, discuss remaining issues and celebrate the end of the semester.

No reading assignment.

Long Assignment 3 (team and individual): Due December 20 (copy to Prof.)

Final Report – instructions for the final report will be distributed in class early in the semester.
Selected Qualitative Research References

Selected Books and book chapters:

Atkinson, Paul, Coffey, Amanda, and Delamont, Sara. 2003. “How Do You Know Your Informant is Telling the Truth?” In Key Themes in Qualitative Research: Continuities and Change. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 119-140. 21


Also available in three softcover independent volumes:
• The Landscape of Qualitative Research, 2n ed, 2003
• Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry, 2nd ed, 2003
• Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials, 2nd ed, 2003


**Selected Journals:**

Most contemporary journals in the various disciplines will include articles based on qualitative research. The following focus on qualitative work exclusively or routinely, and are of particular interest for us:

- Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
- Journal of Phenomenological Psychology
- Qualitative Health Research
- Qualitative Inquiry
- Qualitative Sociology
- Studies in Symbolic Interaction
- American Anthropologist
- Ethnography

**Selected Volumes from the SAGE Applied Social Research Methods Series and Qualitative Research Methods Series, Newbury Park, Sage:**

Yin, R. 2003, 3d edition *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Vol 5


**And additional list of interesting Journal articles (courtesy of Schwartz-sea syllabus)**


