



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**PHD-GP 5905-001**

**Doctoral Research Seminar:  
Qualitative Research Methods, Spring 2024**

**NOTE: The readings in this syllabus are a work-in-progress. As we work together, it may turn out that other readings are required.**

### **Instructor Information**

- Erica Foldy
- [egf1@nyu.edu](mailto:egf1@nyu.edu)
- Office Hours: By appointment. Just email me **with some times that work for you.**

### **Course Information**

- Meeting Time: Thursdays, 2:45 to 4:45pm
- Location: Class Location: 40 W. 4th St. (Tisch Hall), Room LC1
- Prerequisites: Doctoral Research Seminar; Research Methods (or equivalent); or approved by instructor

### **Course Description**

This course offers a hands-on opportunity for doctoral and advanced masters students to experience the practice of qualitative research in organizational, policy and other social sciences. In addition to doing weekly readings and preparing for class discussion, students will work in teams to design, implement and report on a mock research project. The course will require a considerable investment of time, with intensive reading and writing, recurrent team discussions based on assignments, and individual fieldwork.

### **Learning Objectives**

Having appreciated the complexities and opportunities associated with doing rigorous and credible qualitative research, at the end of the course, students will:

1. Recognize the uniqueness and distinctiveness of qualitative research;
2. Distinguish philosophical assumptions -- from interpretive to positivist -- as well as different approaches of qualitative inquiry -- ethnography, case study, narrative inquiry, etc. -- and appreciate their benefits and limitations;
3. Understand issues associated with theory, design, methodology, and reporting of qualitative research;
4. Acquire skills in managing design, data collection, analysis and writing up of qualitative research, via exercises and field experience;
5. Become acquainted with published research articles modeling theoretical, methodological, and empirical decisions in qualitative research.

**Required texts [All available at NYU Bookstore or at on-line booksellers, often much less expensively.]**

- Rubin, Ashley T. 2021. *Rocking Qualitative Social Science: An Irreverent Guide to Rigorous Research*. Stanford University Press. [Electronic version available from Bobst.]
- Weiss, R. S. 1994. *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. The Free Press. [Electronic version available from Bobst, though can't download for more than 7 days.]
- Booth, W. C. et al. *The Craft of Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. University of Chicago Press. [Electronic version available from Bobst.]
- All other readings available through the course Brightspace site.

**Recommended texts:**

- Basic qualitative textbooks:
  - Maxwell, Joseph. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013.
  - Saldaña Johnny. 2016. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, Sage
  - Creswell, John W. and Cheryl Poth. 2018. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 4th ed. Sage.
  - Miles, M., M Huberman & J. Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2019.
- If interested in Participatory Research and Inquiry:
  - Burns, D., J. Howard & S.M. Ospina (Eds). 2021. *The SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry*, Volumes 1 and 2.

**Course Requirements**

First, students are required to complete a set of **readings** for each class and be **prepared for discussion**. Second, students will work in teams of 3 to 4 on a **mock research project** chosen from topics of interest to participants. Third, students will be asked to **connect the course readings to their own projects** as well as to broader questions related to qualitative research.

More specifically, students should expect to **meet at least weekly** with their project teams, outside of class time. They also are responsible for **fieldwork** outside of class time. They should attend to scheduling fieldwork early on to ensure that **each student does a minimum of two interviews and two field observations** to be used for class exercises and assignments.

In addition to a **series of team assignments** related to the mock project, students will also complete **individual memos**. The assignments are opportunities to practice skills of design, collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. The experience doing these will ground class discussions.

Please see the **table of graded assignments (last page of this syllabus)** for due dates for all assignments as well as guidelines for team progress. Details for all

assignments will be provided.

**No late assignments will be accepted for grading, unless agreed upon in advance. This course moves very quickly, with assignments due virtually every week. If a student or team falls behind, it will be very difficult to catch up.**

Regarding generative AI (like ChatGPT, Bard, etc.): I recommend you do all your own work, since you are learning to be a professional researcher. However, if you wish, you can use generative AI to begin identifying relevant research for your project. However, you should also do your own searches to supplement what it found, to ensure there are not important articles that it missed. Note also that the programs are known to hallucinate, including making up references that do not actually exist. You can also use generative AI to create an initial summary of each individual article or book or book chapter. However, you must do the work of synthesizing across the research that you found and applying the research to your specific research project.

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS	COURSE OBJECTIVE
Individual memos (5 x 4pts each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sampling</li> <li>● Identity</li> <li>● Experience of interviewing</li> <li>● Experience of observation</li> <li>● Experience of coding/analysis</li> </ul>	20	1, 3, 4, 5
Team research proposal (and earlier research designs)	35	1,2, 3, 4, 5
Team coding scheme	05	3, 4
Team portfolio	12.5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Individual portfolio	12.5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Individual participation	12	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Team participation*	(up to) 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
TOTAL	97-100	
*Based on descriptions of team member roles and contributions. If everyone contributes equally, everyone will receive 3 additional points.		

### Participation and Attendance

This class is a seminar – that means it is based on class discussion, not lectures. Therefore, I hope this class will be informal, talkative, humorous and happy. I encourage you to think out loud and try out ideas. We will all be learning from each other which requires: attending each class, arriving on time, doing the readings, paying attention to the discussion, and contributing thoughtfully. This is a small class, so **students are expected to contribute at least several times in each class.**

Students are also expected to participate fully and equally in the team project.

Missing more than one session will have a negative impact on your participation grade. **Missing more than three sessions is grounds for course failure.** Please let me know when planned or unexpected issues arise that require being absent from class.

## **SPRING 2023: COURSE OVERVIEW**

### **I. INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

1. Introduction: The nature of qualitative research – January 25
2. Assumptions, frameworks and approaches – February 1
3. Choosing topics, exploring questions – February 8

### **II. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

4. Designing the study: questions, concepts, frameworks – February 15
5. Bounding the territory: cases, sites, sampling – February 22
6. Preparing for the field: ethics, relationships, reflexivity – February 29

### **III. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**

7. The art and craft of interviewing – March 7
8. The art and craft of observation – March 14

## **SPRING BREAK**

### **IV. DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

9. The politics of interpretation – March 28
10. Data Analysis (1): Traditional techniques – April 4
11. Data Analysis (2): Non-traditional approaches – April 11

### **V. MAKING SENSE: FINDING MEANING, WRITING AND SHARING INSIGHTS**

12. Drawing and verifying conclusions: Rigor, validity, standards of quality – April 18
13. Developing a credible story: Theorizing and constructing arguments – April 25
14. Synthesis: The experience of conducting qualitative research -- May 2

## **WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **WEEK 1 (JANUARY 25) INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

**Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapters 1 and 2
- Watkins-Hayes, C. 2013. Dynamics of Support Seeking: The Social and Economic Utility of Institutional Ties for HIV Positive Women. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 647: 83-101.
- Desmond, M. 2016. *Evicted: About this project*, pp. 315-336.

### **Individual Assignment**

Interview a classmate and be prepared to introduce them to the rest of the class. Details provided on Brightspace. (Therefore, this assignment must be completed **before** our first class.)

## **WEEK 2 (FEBRUARY 1) ASSUMPTIONS, FRAMEWORKS AND APPROACHES**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Creswell, J. & Poth, C. N. 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. Chapters 2, 4 and 5.
- Lin, A. 1998. Bridging Positivist and Interpretivist approaches to Qualitative Methods. *Policy Studies Journal*, Spring, 26(1): 162-180.
- Barg, F. K. et al. 2006. A Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding Loneliness and Depression in Older Adults. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*. 61B (6): S329–S339

## **WEEK 3 (FEBRUARY 8) CHOOSING TOPICS, EXPLORING QUESTIONS**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapters 3 and 4
- Patillo, M. 2021. Black advantage vision: Flipping the script. *Issues in Race and Society*, Spring 2021: 5-39

### **Team Assignments:**

- Meet outside of class and discuss more in depth the mock project you would like to conduct. No need to be concerned yet about a specific approach to inquiry. Discuss and get a general agreement on your topic and your tentative research question and why it's important. Be prepared to share in class.
- Spend some time getting to know each other before jumping into the work.

Hint: In order to cover the entire research process in the course of a semester, we have to move quickly. Therefore, it will be much easier if you choose a topic with which at least one of you has some familiarity with the literature, rather than one where you would have to start from scratch. Also, it will speed things up if you already have access to a particular organization or community or type of participant.

## **WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 15) DESIGNING THE STUDY: QUESTIONS, CONCEPTS, AND FRAMEWORKS**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, ch 5.
- Miles, MB, Huberman, AM and Saldana. 2020. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, pp 13-20.

- Zilber, T. E. & Meyer, R. E. 2022. Positioning and Fit in Designing and Executing Qualitative Research. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 58(3) 377–392
- Rosen, E. 2014. Rigging the rules of the game: How landlords geographically sort low-income renters. *City & Community* 13 (4).

**Team Assignment:**

Research Design v1: Annotated references, revised research questions, 3-5 concepts, theoretical framework (or diagram of relationships)

**WEEK 5 (FEBRUARY 22) BOUNDING THE TERRITORY: CASES, SITES, AND SAMPLING**

**Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapters, 6 and 7
- Lin, Ann C. (2000). *Reform in the Making: The Implementation of Social Policy in Prison*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press. Bundle of short readings, including book review and methods section.
- Maxwell, J. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013, pp. 24-38 (but just read the material on the identity memos and the identity exercise: see examples 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4; see also Exercise 2.1). Note: this is for an assignment that will be due the following week.

**Individual Assignment: Memo 1: Sampling strategy in an empirical paper**

Take either Watkins-Hayes, Barg et al. or Rosen and write a 1-page single-spaced memo about their sampling strategy. Draw on key concepts and decision points in Rubin, chapters 6 and 7.

**WEEK 6 (FEBRUARY 29) PREPARING FOR THE FIELD: ETHICS, RELATIONSHIPS, REFLEXIVITY**

**Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapter 8.
- Miles, M., M Huberman & J. Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2019, pp. 49-60 (Ethical issues in analysis)
- NYU University Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects. Language for consent forms.
- Foldy, E. G. 2005. Claiming a voice on race. *Action Research* 3 (1): 33-54.
- Pitti, A. 2022. More Than “Crumbs”: Emotional Entanglements and Situated Ethical Strategies in Qualitative Research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1-18.
- Maxwell, J. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013, pp. 117-120 (exercise 5.2).
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**Team assignment**

Research design v2: additional annotated readings, revised research question(s), revised theoretical framework, sampling strategy, email to set up interviews, and Questions & Methods Matrix (Maxwell, pp 117-120)

**Individual assignment: Memo 2: Identity memo**

Write an “identity memo” similar to the examples in Maxwell from the previous week, but make sure to reference social identities (race, gender, class, LGBTQ status, etc). 1-2 pages

single-spaced.

## **WEEK 7 (MARCH 7) THE ART AND CRAFT OF INTERVIEWING**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Weiss, R. S. 1994. Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies. The Free Press. Chapter 3: Preparation for Interviewing and Chapter 4: Interviewing.
- Rivera, L. 2012. Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6) 999 –1022.
- Zhang, T. & Okazawa, R. 2022. Managing neutrality, rapport, and antiracism in qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research*.
- Pratt, M.G. Lepisto, D. A. & Dane, E. 2019. The Hidden Side of Trust: Supporting and Sustaining Leaps of Faith among Firefighters. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 64:2 – on-line methods appendix.

Guest speaker: Salo Coslovsky, Associate Professor, NYU Wagner

## **WEEK 8 (MARCH 14) THE ART AND CRAFT OF OBSERVATION**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Schwartzman, HB. 1993. *Ethnography in Organizations*, ch 5: Fieldwork Roles and Fieldwork Processes, pp 47-72.
- Fletcher, J. K. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power and Relational Practice at Work*, chapter 3. The MIT Press.
- Nelson, J. 2019. How Organizational Minorities Form and Use Social Ties: Evidence from Teachers in Majority-White and Majority-Black Schools. *American Journal of Sociology* 125 (2): 382-430.

### **Team Assignment**

Research design v3: Full research proposal, including interview protocol, observation protocol, statement to subjects, and updates of questions, sampling, theoretical framework, matrix. Also, application of Zilber and Meyer framework to your topic.

Guest speaker: Anik Zingariello, NYU Data Services

## **MARCH 21 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

## **WEEK 9 (MARCH 28) THE POLITICS OF INTERPRETATION**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Josselson, R. 2004. The hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion. *Narrative Inquiry*. 14(1), 1–28.
- Foldy, E.G. & Buckley, T. R. Color minimization: The theory and practice of addressing race and ethnicity at work. In K. M. Thomas, V. C. Plaut & N. M. Tran (eds.) *Diversity Ideologies in Organizations*. Taylor-Francis Publishers.

### **Individual assignment**

If not doing observation as part of your project, find one event/space/meeting, etc. to observe. Come to class ready to discuss.

Guest speaker: Jennifer Nelson, Asst. Professor, U of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

## **WEEK 10 (APRIL 4) DATA ANALYSIS (1): TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapter 9
- Locke, K. et al. 2020. Coding Practices and Iterativity: Beyond Templates for Analyzing Qualitative Data. *Organizational Research Methods* 25(2) 262–284.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J. 2020. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, pp. 88-91 (on analytic memos).
- Margolis, J. D. & Molinsky, A. 2008. Navigating the bind of necessary evils: Psychological engagement and the production of interpersonally sensitive behavior. *Academy of Management Journal* 51 (5): 847-872 (just the methods section).

### **Individual assignment: Memo 3: Experience of interviewing**

Write a 1-page, single spaced memo on your experience of conducting interviews.

## **WEEK 11 (APRIL 11) DATA ANALYSIS (2): NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACHES**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Rosiek, J. L. & Heffernan, J. 2014. Can't Code What the Community Can't See: A Case of the Erasure of Heteronormative Harassment. *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol. 20(6) 726–733.

### **Team assignment**

Coding scheme: table of concepts, codes, definitions/descriptions and notes on how to distinguish from other concepts.

### **Individual assignment: Memo 4: Experience of observation**

Write a 1-page, single-spaced memo on your experience of observation (either as part of your research project or independent).

## **WEEK 12 (APRIL 18) DRAWING AND VERIFYING CONCLUSIONS: RIGOR, VALIDITY, AND STANDARDS OF QUALITY**

### **Reading assignment:**

- Rubin, chapters 10 and 11
- Booth, Part III. Pp. 107-172
- Nowell, B. and K. Albrecht. (2019) A Reviewer's Guide to Qualitative Rigor. *Journal of Public Administration Research And Theory*, 348–363.
- Kellogg, K.C. 2009. Operating room: Relational Spaces and Microinstitutional Change in Surgery. *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (3): 657-711

### **Individual assignment: Memo 5: Experience of coding**

Write a 1-page, single-spaced memo on the experience of coding or analyzing your data.

## **WEEK 13 (APRIL 25) DEVELOPING A CREDIBLE STORY: THEORIZING AND CONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS**

### **Reading assignment:**



- Rockman, K.W. & Vough, H. C. 2023. Using Quotes to Present Claims: Practices for the Writing Stages of Qualitative Research. Organizational Research Methods.

## WEEK 14 (MAY 2) SYNTHESIS: THE EXPERIENCE OF CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

### Reading assignment:

- Rubin, chapter 12

### MAY 10

#### Team assignment

- Final report
- Appendices

#### Individual assignments

- Write-up of findings in one area
- One page on “what I learned about qualitative research”
- Team member roles & contributions

## ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner’s Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Other Wagner Policies

[Academic Policies and Procedures](#)

[Academic Code](#)

[Grading](#)

[Incomplete Grades](#)

### Explanation of Letter Grades Points and Criteria:

A 4.0 points    A- 3.7 points    B+ 3.3 points    B 3.0 points    B- 2.7 points    C+ 2.3 points  
 C 2.0 points    C- 1.7 points    F 0.0 points

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some

weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but the student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.

- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”
- (C±) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.
- (F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\)](#) website and click the Get Started button. You can also call or email (212-998-4980 or <[mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)>). Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

### NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

NYU’s [Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

### TABLE OF TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL GRADED ASSIGNMENTS and TEAM PROGRESS GUIDELINES

(Details for all assignments to be provided. It is possible team deadlines may vary slightly depending on team progress. Items starting with arrow are team progress guidelines, not assignments to be handed in.)

WEEK	TEAM ASSIGNMENTS (and progress checkpoints)	INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS (other than doing reading and preparing to discuss)
Jan 25: Introduction		Interview teammate (not graded)
Feb 1: Assumptions and approaches		Come to class with idea for research project (not graded)

Feb 8: Topics and questions	Topic, Research question, why important (not graded) <input type="checkbox"/> Include time in your mtg to get to know each other, before jumping into work	
Feb 15: Design	Research design v1: Annotated references, revised research question, 3-5 concepts, theoretical framework (diagram of relationships)	
Feb 22: Sites, cases, sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifying sites, getting access	Memo 1 on sampling strategy in an empirical paper
Feb 29: Preparing for the field	<input type="checkbox"/> Research design v2: additional annotated readings, revised research question(s), revised theoretical framework, sampling strategy, email to set up interviews, and Questions & Methods Matrix (Maxwell, pp 117-120). <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying sites, getting access <input type="checkbox"/> Explore data analysis software. If you wish, make appt w Data Services.	Memo 2 on identity
March 7: Interviewing	<input type="checkbox"/> Start scheduling interviews	
March 14: Observation	Research design v3: Research design v3: Full research proposal, including interview protocol, observation protocol, statement to subjects, and updates of questions, sampling, theoretical framework, matrix. Also, application of Zilber and Meyer framework to your topic.	
March 21 SPRING BREAK	<input type="checkbox"/> Start your fieldwork	
March 28: Politics of interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwork (and preliminary analysis)	If not doing observation as part of project, find one event/space/meeting, etc. to observe.
April 4: Analysis 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwork (and preliminary analysis)	Memo 3: Experience of interviewing.
April 11: Analysis 2	Coding scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Start formal analysis	Memo 4: Experience of observation (either as part of project or independent)
April 18: Rigor and validity	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue analysis	Memo 5 on experience of coding/analysis. Include one analytic memo.
April 25: Developing the story	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue analysis	

May 2: Synthesis		
May 10: final materials due	<b>Team Portfolio</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final report</li> <li>• Appendices</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Portfolio</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write-up of findings in one area</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One page on “what I learned about qualitative research”</li> <li>• Team member roles &amp; contributions</li> </ul>