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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Social Science Research Methods and Design for Natural Resource Management

FRST 528/CONS 528
Wednesday 1:30-4:30
Location: FSC 1617

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Office hours: At student request / by appointment

Course Requirements and Purpose

This course is open to graduate students at UBC with an interest in qualitative and mixed-methods research inquiry. It is expected that many students who take this course will have limited (or no) training in qualitative research methods and design. The organization of this course is therefore designed to maximize exposure to, and engagement with multiple forms of qualitative data collection (as well as multiple research designs). This methods “menu” focus will provide students with exposure to a range of commonly used approaches in qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry.

Course Description

FRST 528/CONS 528 is an introductory graduate-level seminar covering social science research methods and research design with a strong emphasis on qualitative approaches (we will also address survey methods in mixed methods designs). We will use an interactive workshop format to engage with conceptual and applied aspects of the course material. Through this format, students will participate actively in discussions relating to the week’s readings, as well as gain applied experience using an array of different (mostly) qualitative research methods and approaches to analysis.

Three themes provide the structure the organization of the course: *foundations*, *applications* and *interpretation and communication* in qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry. The *foundations* theme focusses on theoretical paradigms and perspectives in qualitative inquiry, epistemological considerations about the nature of evidence and validity, ethical considerations and protocols for research involving humans, and principles of qualitative and mixed-methods research design. The *applications* theme focusses on exposure to, and engagement with an array of data collection

methods. Methods include different forms of interviews, participant observation, document analysis and survey design (among others). The *interpretation and communication* theme focusses on qualitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo), and writing qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry for different audiences.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify and describe different philosophical research paradigms in the social sciences
- Critically evaluate diverse perspectives and practices for assessing validity and rigour in different research paradigms
- Describe central ethical concerns inherent to qualitative inquiry and strategies/requirements for ensuring ethical conduct for research involving humans
- Illustrate the key components of a robust qualitative or mixed-methods research design and apply this knowledge to construct a logically coherent preliminary research design
- Describe and evaluate the fit of different forms of data collection as they relate to different research designs
- Design basic protocols for, and carry out an array of social science data collection methods
- Identify, evaluate and apply different approaches to analysing and interpreting qualitative data
- Recognize common dilemmas in analyzing, interpreting and writing qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry, and formulate strategies to address
- Critically evaluate claims in published qualitative research
- Communicate the findings of qualitative inquiry for different audiences

Course Materials

Required: A course package with required readings will be available at the UBC bookstore as well as via Connect.

Recommended: Creswell 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Assessment

Summary

| <i>Description</i> | <i>Marks</i> | <i>Due</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Pre-course online survey | Completion | Sept. 12 |
| TCPS2 tutorial | Completion | Sept. 12 |

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|---|-----|--|
| Seminar leader | 10% | Throughout the term |
| Researcher identity memo | 10% | Sept. 24 th |
| In-depth, open interview and reflective blog | 10% | Oct. 10 th |
| Semi-structured interview and reflective blog | 15% | Oct. 24 th |
| Participant observation and field notes | 10% | Oct. 31 st |
| Coding and analytic memo | 10% | Nov. 14 th |
| Research proposal or paper and presentation | 30% | Friday December 2 nd (written) |
| Participation | 5% | - |

Schedule (short)

Foundations

Applications

Interpretation and Communication

| Week | Topic | Workshop |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Introductory Online Orientation | Online activities + TCPS2 |
| 2 | Research Paradigms, Research Ethics | Ethics in practice |
| 3 | Research Design I Principles | Using models, maps and matrices to design your research |
| 4 | Research Design II Action v. collaborative v. researcher-driven, sampling, case study logic | Interactive graduate student panel: Collaborative and action research |
| 5 | Interviewing: In-depth, open, Semi-structured, Focus groups | Interview schedules / planning for open interview |
| 6 | Structured and Analytic-Deliberative Approaches: Delphi, Survey, Expert elicitation | Influence diagrams in survey design, designing scales |
| 7 | Ethnography: Traditions, variations and new directions | Developing analytical guides |
| 8 | Working with texts | Sampling in document analysis, introduction to coding using topical example |
| 9 | Analysis in Qualitative Inquiry: Theoretical considerations | Interview Coding and Peer review |
| 10 | Analysis in Qualitative Inquiry: Applications | NVivo session |
| 11 | Writing Qualitative and Mixed Methods research | Article critique and roundtable |
| 12 | Proposal Consultations | - |
| 13 | Proposal Presentations and Course Wrap-up | - |

Seminar Structure and Expectations

This course is designed to get you thinking about, working with and reflecting on qualitative and mixed-methods inquiry. Accordingly, each seminar session will include the following: i) a mini-lecture/discussion to clarify key concepts and issues arising from the assigned readings ii) an applied workshop where you will actively engage with a specific task (e.g. writing an interview schedule, coding data) and iii) a round-table discussion to compare outcomes of the workshop and questions and dilemmas arising therein. It is expected that you will come to the seminar having read the required readings and prepared to engage in the discussion.

Course Policies (as per university requirements)

Academic Honesty (from the UBC-Vancouver Academic Calendar)

Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of the University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and responsible members of an academic community. Breach of those expectations or failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

It is the student's obligation to inform himself or herself of the applicable standards for academic honesty. Students must be aware that standards at the University of British Columbia may be different from those in secondary schools or at other institutions. If a student is in any doubt as to the standard of academic honesty in a particular course or assignment, then the student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and in no case should a student submit an assignment if the student is not clear on the relevant standard of academic honesty. Further details here: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0>

Attendance

Regular and active attendance is central to achieving the learning objectives of this course. If you are unable to attend class due to unforeseen events (e.g. ill health or other personal challenges that arise during a term), please let me know within 5 days (and preferably sooner) for the reason of the missed class.* As per university regulation, regular attendance is expected. If you expect to miss more than one class during the term due to conflicting responsibilities, please discuss this with the instructor before the add/drop date. Generally speaking, missing more than 1 class during the term will negatively affect your grade.

Late Assignments

If you experience unforeseen circumstances (e.g. ill health or other personal challenges) and are unable to complete an assignment on time, please contact the instructor within 5 days (preferably earlier) of the missed deadline to request an extension.* A 5% reduction/per day beyond the assignment deadline will apply in the absence of a granted extension.

** All requests for accommodation must be made in writing via email. Thus, even if we have spoken in person, it is the student's responsibility to provide written documentation for the reason of the missed class/late assignment.*