

Applied Qualitative Research Methods (3 credits)

Fall 2020 (8/25/20 – 12/8/20)

Tuesday afternoons

Syllabus update: 7.06.2020

ADAPTATIONS FOR FALL 2020 DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK.

Class will be held online and will include:

- ✓ Pre-recorded lectures/slides to review before class meetings.
- ✓ [Synchronous] Zoom meeting Tuesdays 1:00-2:30. Attendance expected.
- ✓ Discussion board based on readings and assignments.

Notes:

1. Qualitative methods has always been a highly interactive class that weaves in discussions from the literature and from students' own research experiences. Building a learning community is a core component. We will try to maintain that interactive feel. We will use the Zoom meeting time for discussion and interactive activities.
2. Discussion boards will be oriented around question-and-answer and discussion of the readings. Participation on the discussion boards is part of the assessment and your final grade for the class.
3. Virtual office hours will be held immediately after class 2:30-3:00 or by appointment.
4. As the class is newly adapted to online, we will evaluate 'how things are going' partway through the class and may need to make adjustments to content delivery to improve student experiences and learning.

Please note that I am currently reworking the assignments and the rest of the syllabus per the move to online class delivery. Thank you for your patience in this evolving setting.

INSTRUCTOR: Aimee James, PhD, MPH, Professor, Division of Public Health Sciences
(aimeejames@wustl.edu)

OFFICE: Taylor Avenue Building, 2nd Floor, South Suite 210S [Likely working remotely in Fall 2020]

OFFICE HOURS : Immediately after class 2:30-3:00, or by appointment.

INTENDED AUDIENCE: Students interested in learning qualitative and mixed methods research. Having qualitative research experience or a planned qualitative research project is not required.

TEXT BOOK: Tolley, Ulin, et al. Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research. Published Wiley. (2nd Edition).

Optional supplemental text: Bernard, R. Research Methods in Anthropology. This is a nice comprehensive text and is a good resource.

OTHER REQUIRED READINGS: Each week, we will use relevant articles to discuss how methods and ideas are used in practice. Readings will be distributed about one week in advance of class in Canvas. You may also be asked to find a relevant article and come prepared to present it. **For fall 2020, articles will be integrated into the Discussion boards.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES: This is an introductory course. You will learn applications of qualitative methods to clinical and health related research, focusing on practical skills while laying the foundation for understanding why we do what we do in qualitative research. We will explore some common qualitative research methods, learning the “how” of qualitative research. The course addresses descriptive research, methods to develop or refine survey measures, formative and impact evaluation, implementation science, and mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative together). The culminating project is qualitative research proposal, with activities and assignments through the semester building up to this. You may integrate the activities with your research interests but a pre-identified project is not required. At the end of the course, you will be prepared to propose and conduct a qualitative research study.

Updated for Fall 2020: Our Zoom meetings will include hands-on/interactive learning portion to reinforce lessons and work through common challenges encountered in qualitative research. Coming to class prepared and engaged is critical to maximizing your learning experience. Reviewing any slides, readings, or pre-recordings before the class will help us use that “live” time more effectively.

Course Objectives:

1. Determine methods for collecting and analyzing qualitative data with scientific rigor;
2. Recognize ethical and IRB related concerns in qualitative research and how to address them;
3. Describe elements of quality and validity in qualitative research, and how to contribute to and critically evaluate the research literature;

COMPETENCIES:

1. Select and utilize appropriate research methodology to answer qualitative and mixed method research questions
2. Conduct and analyze qualitative research in a sensitive, ethical, and effective manner, with rigor and transparency.
3. Effectively and appropriately interpret and disseminate research findings to communities and colleagues.
4. Attend to ethical concerns and well-being of research participants at each stage of the research process.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on:

- Homework assignments (40%)
- In-class participation and exercises (20%)
- Two Article Critiques (10% total)
- Research Proposal (20%) and Presentation (10%)

*Assignments are described in depth below.

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100; A: 93-96; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Class attendance on the Live Zooms is required. As a courtesy to other students, you are expected to arrive on time on the Zoom call. Missing more than two classes may result in a lowered grade.

Whenever possible you are expected to notify the instructor if you will be out, for reasons of planning class activities. If you miss two consecutive classes without any notice to the instructor, she may contact the program directors.

Specific to this class: Getting the most out of this class means being present. Respect your classmates and instructor and arrive on time.

POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS [as of 7.06.20 will be revised]

Late assignments will result in a deduction of one grade point (A+ down to A) for each day late (including weekends) unless prior approval is obtained from the instructor or a compelling situation prevents prior approval (i.e. documented health issues or family emergencies).

Specific to this class: Class starts promptly at 1pm. Assignments are due at the start of class. If you are not present, you must email the assignment by 1:00pm on the day it is due; assignments past that time are considered late. One grade point or the equivalent, is deducted for each 24 hour day it is late. It is understandable that clinical or personal emergencies may arise unexpectedly. The expectation that assignments are turned in on time is across the board (no exceptions) and you should plan ahead by having assignments done early.

ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES [as of 7.06.20 will be revised]

THE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS MAY CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS AND THE CLASS OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. For example, depending on the class size, we may need to add additional days for project presentations.

The schedule below has not yet been updated for 2020:

Class #	Topic	Deliverables due or notes:
1. (8/26)	<p>Introduction to Qualitative Research</p> <p>Designing a Qualitative Study</p> <p><i>In this session we will review class expectations. We will then cover the types and forms of qualitative research, differences between quantitative and qualitative research, underlying philosophies of qualitative approaches and how we develop qualitative research questions. What methods are available to you? What factors need to be considered in designing and conducting a qualitative study?</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al, Chapter 1 (i.e., your textbook)</p>	
2. (9/3)	<p>Ethics in Qualitative Research:</p> <p><i>This interactive class will address IRB issues in conducting qualitative research, and will include a more broad discussion of ethical challenges in qualitative research. Particular attention will be paid to working with under-served or vulnerable populations in our work.</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al., Chapter 2</p>	
3. (9/10)	<p>Planning your study: Sampling and Sample Size:</p> <p><i>We'll discuss how to choose a population, develop a sampling scheme, and different strategies for actually getting the sample you want/need.</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al., Chapter 3</p>	DUE: Problem Statement /Research Question
4. (9/17)	<p>Methods I: Interviews and Observation</p> <p><i>Interviews are one of the most commonly applied qualitative method, but there are a range of types of interviews and several decisions that must be made when conducting interview research. This class will also address interviewer selection and training, and the characteristics of a good interview/interviewer.</i></p>	

Reading: Tolley et al., Chapter 4

5. (9/24)

Methods II: Focus Groups:

Most people probably have heard about focus groups, but may be stumped when it comes to how to actually do it. We'll address when focus groups are a good choice and the multitude of factors that go into planning – and conducting – a focus group study.

Reading: TBA

DUE: Article Critique 1

6. (10/1)

Strategy Session: What are your Measures? Asking Good Questions

The questions we use for participants in qualitative work are often very different from what we would put on a survey (Even though the principles are similar). We will split this class into two parts: asking good qualitative questions and also using qualitative methods like cognitive interviewing to develop survey items.

Reading: Tolley et al., Appendix 4

7. (10/8)

Methods III : Field Notes and Data Management and Supervision

Qualitative research is complex and collects a wealth of data. How do you capture the things that happen that aren't on an audiotape? How do you keep all those parts organized and not get lost in the mound of data?

Reading: Tolley et al., Chapter 5, Appendix 3 & 5

DUE: Interview Skills Packet

8. (10/15)

Analysis I: Creating and Coding Transcripts:

Moving from an audio-recording to actually pulling out information is the key challenge in qualitative analysis. We will discuss issues in transcription (there's more than you think) and introduce the concepts of coding and codebooks – the 'meat' of qualitative analysis.

Reading: Tolley et al., Chapter 6,

9. (10/22)

Analysis II: Rigor and Quality in Qualitative Research; Evaluating Qualitative Research

Reliability, validity, and rigor all apply to qualitative research, but we talk about them slightly differently from how we do in quantitative work. We will explore how to ensure rigor in our qualitative work, and how to critically evaluate quality in the published literature.

Reading: TBA

10. (10/29)	<p>Special Topic: Patient Centered Research and Engaging Stakeholders: How can we learn from Qualitative Methods?</p> <p><i>Increasingly, funders such as PCORI and the FDA call for stakeholders to be engaged in research. We'll talk about how applying qualitative strategies and principles can help us achieve this goal.</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al., Chapter 7, Appendix 10, 11, 12</p>	DUE Article Critique 2
11. (11/5)	<p>Analysis III: Presenting and Writing Up Qualitative Research: Choosing Quotes, (Revisit Coding)</p> <p><i>One of the hardest parts is bringing a bunch of pieces of coded text into a meaningful presentation of our research findings and their implications. We will re-visit coding, discuss how to move from codes to findings, and explore different ways of presenting findings. A critical piece of this is how we identify the quotes we present in a paper or presentation to support our findings.</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al., Chapter 8, Appendix 7,8,9</p>	
12. (11/12)	<p>Special Topic: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods</p> <p><i>There are a number of ways in which qualitative research can support or be supported by quantitative methods. This is more than just using two methods, we will discuss how to conduct "mixed methods" research where one method informs – or is informed by – the other approach. This often produces a better understanding of the issue under study.</i></p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Tolley et al., Case study 1,3,4</p>	DUE Analysis Skills Packet
13. (11/19)	Class Presentations of your research Proposals	ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
14. (11/26)	<p>Special Topics (Class Choice)</p> <p>Software to Support Qualitative Research (and Revisit Analysis)</p> <p><i>What are your options and why is it useful? Can software analyze your data at the push of a button?</i></p>	
15. (12/3)	Special Topics (Class Choice or Review of Previous Topics)	
16. (12/10)	Class Wrap-Up/Debrief	DUE: Research Proposal

ASSIGNMENTS and DELIVERABLES

Assignments allow student to apply the knowledge and skills. Assignments and brief descriptions are listed below; additional details will be provided separately. All assignments, point distributions, and due dates may be changed at the discretion of the Professor.

- It may help you to focus your assignments on a topic of interest to you, so that each assignment corresponds to the others and builds toward your eventual research proposal but this is not required. If you are struggling for a topic, you can talk with the Instructor.

Homework (Total 40 points)

- **Problem Statement Worksheet and Specification of Research Question (10 points).**
 - **Problem Statement.** Please follow the instructions on your handout; some of the exercise is provided for you to work on by yourself, the rest should be turn in.
 - **Research Question Development.** For this assignment you will take a clinical or public health topic, specify a research question, and develop interview/focus group questions that you might use.
- **Interviewing Skills Packet (20 points)**
 - **Interview guide and Interviewer Instructions.** You will develop an interview guide with introductory consent paragraph, key questions and probes, and a closing/wrap-up question.
 - **Practice interview and Transcript** You will conduct **TWO** brief practice interviews using your guide and audio record them. You will transcribe your audio recorded interviews on your own (no software).
- **Analysis Skills Packet (10 points)**
 - **Practice Coding Exercise.** Based on your text, you will identify a few (3-5) codes and develop a codebook for these. Based on your codebook (3a), code several pages of text and identify 1 or 2 themes that are in the data. You will be instructed on how to obtain text to “code” for this assignment. Many students choose to use their practice interview, if there is enough data there.

In-class activities and participation (20 points).

Successful learning in this class will only come from active participation in the class discussions and exercises. Active participation means engaging in the activity or discussion – both in terms of speaking your perspective and listening to and respecting other student’s opinions. As a rule of thumb, you get a point for each class where you are present and engaged.

Article Critiques (5 points each, 10 points total):

- **Article Critique 1:** Review a Qualitative Article and assess the methods. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research method described by the authors, including whether it fits the research question and whether the sample is appropriate. If appropriate, bring along questions about statements in the text that are unclear or that you have questions about. Expected length = 2-3 pages

- **Article Critique 2:** Using the knowledge gained throughout the semester, critically evaluate and discuss a qualitative article of your choice. Focus on the analysis, results, and conclusions. Overall, how well did the investigators/authors “do”? Can you identify strengths of the study/approach? Are there things you would have suggested/asked as a reviewer? Are there things you might have done differently if you were the investigator? Expected length 2-3 pages.

Research Proposal & Presentation (20 points written, 10 points oral; 30 points total)

This is the culminating project of the class. Students will be expected to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the class into a cohesive qualitative research proposal. This includes a research proposal and a class presentation; written proposals will be due at the end of the semester. Proposals vary in length but are generally 8 to 10 pages in length. Further instruction will be provided. Presentations are in mid-November and are your chance to present your idea and work through any method issues with the instructor and your classmates. Attendance at the presentations is required.

A note on the originality of written work: This class is designed to be helpful to you in your development as a scientist. As such, many enrollees who enter with a research study already in mind find it helpful to orient their assignments to that topic – a grant or grant proposal, dissertation topic, or something like that. It is not acceptable to use someone else’s written materials for assignments. For example, if you are working on your mentor’s or supervisor’s research study, you cannot use their background and significance for an assignment – the words must be your own. You also may not use an interview guide that was co-developed for someone’s project. What you can do is take a piece of that topic and make it your own – is there a related tangent that you are interested in? Write about that. If you use someone else’s work for your assignment, you will receive a 0.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Drop Dates:

You may drop for any reason during the course of the semester. However, you may only receive a partial or no tuition reimbursement depending upon how far into the semester you drop the course. See the [MPHS Student Handbook](#). Late withdrawals will appear on your transcript as a withdrawal.

MPHS Academic Policy Guidelines:

Guidelines regarding MPHS course registration and enrollment, grades, tuition obligation, and academic leave are consolidated in the [MPHS Student Handbook](#). Please review this document.

MPHS Guidelines for Academic and Non-Academic Transgressions:

By registering for this course you have agreed to the terms of the **MPHS Academic Integrity Policy, outlined below and in more detail in the [MPHS Student Handbook](#)**. Please review this policy before submitting your first graded assignment.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism Policy:

- Academic dishonesty is a serious offense that may lead to probation, suspension, or dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism (the use of someone else's ideas, statements, or approaches without proper citation). Academic dishonesty also includes copying information from another student, submitting work from a previous class for a new grade without prior approval from your instructor, cheating on exams, etc. You are responsible for reviewing [WashU's academic integrity resources](#) to become aware of all the actions that constitute academic dishonesty.
- All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Registrar for investigation and potential disciplinary action. In addition, the instructor will make an independent decision about the student's grade on any assignment in question. The MPHS process regarding academic dishonesty is described in the [MPHS Student Handbook](#)

DISABILITY RESOURCES

It is the goal of Washington University to assist students with disabilities in removing the barriers their disabilities may pose and provide support in facing the challenge of pursuing an education at Washington University.

Washington University recognizes and accepts its professional, legal and moral responsibility to avoid discrimination in the acceptance and education of qualified students with disabilities and to provide reasonable accommodations to such students consistent with the principles embodied in the law. These guidelines apply to students seeking admittance as well as to those who become disabled while they are enrolled.

Washington University makes every effort to insure that all qualified applicants and students can participate in and take full advantage of all programs and opportunities offered within the university. Washington University encourages and gives full consideration to all applicants for

admission. Washington University does not discriminate in access to its programs and activities on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion, color or national origin.

To learn more about services provided to students with disabilities, initiate the process of formal documentation and/or to arrange for accommodations, please review the [Disability Resources](#) for the Med School at the start of the course.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See: shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth.

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCES

You can also speak confidentially and learn about available resources by contacting [Dr. Gladys Smith, PhD](#), Sexual Violence Prevention Therapist and Licensed Psychologist at the Medical Campus, (314) 362-2404. Additionally, you can report incidents to the Office of Student Affairs or by contacting WUSM Protective Services 314-362-4357 or your local law enforcement agency.

BIAS RESOURCES

The University has a process through which students and staff who have experienced or witnessed bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. For details see: diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/brss/.

Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

The DEI Training Team designs, facilitates and leads diversity education programming for faculty, staff and students on a wide range of topics including: creating a climate of respect, the value of diversity and the role of biases in our day-to-day lives.

diversity.med.wustl.edu/training/

The Office of Diversity Programs promotes diversity among and prepares medical students to lead in a global society. A priority for the Office of Diversity Programs is to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures and identities.

mdiversity.wustl.edu/

The Diversity and Inclusion Student Council promotes an inclusive campus environment for all School of Medicine students.

sites.wustl.edu/disc/

The Office for International Students and Scholars embraces the university's mission of welcoming promising students from around the world.

wumma.wustl.edu/