DESCRIPTION: 3 credits. This course introduces students to the theoretical foundations and methods for qualitative research in social work. The class is designed to support learners with skills to approach the inquiry process from a critical perspective. Students will be encouraged to consider issues of power, privilege, and oppression and how they matter in research approaches and implementation. Qualitative methods for understanding cultural issues and the empowerment of marginalized populations will be emphasized. This class will cover the assumptions underlying qualitative methods and multiple paradigmatic perspectives. The course will also focus on exemplars of qualitative studies related to exploring race, gender and social justice. Class sessions will address research design, ethical issues in qualitative research, participant recruitment, data collection and preliminary analysis, and strategies to increase trustworthiness and authenticity, as well as researcher subjectivity and reflexivity. Students will gain experience in applying qualitative methods in social work by practicing specific methods of observation and interviewing and by developing a final proposal for a qualitative research project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
At the completion of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the connections between epistemology, research question, qualitative method, and methods for data analysis.
2. Consider the kinds of social work research questions appropriately answered by qualitative research methods.
3. Be knowledgeable about the major methods for collecting empirical material including text, discourse, observation, participant observation, open-ended survey, structured and unstructured interviews, focus groups, audio-taping, and the use of field notes.
4. Demonstrate data collection skills using at least two methods of qualitative data collection.
5. Understand the uses of qualitative research to gain understanding of the experiences of oppressed and marginalized groups.
6. Consider relevant ethical issues in the design and implementation of qualitative research.
7. Prepare a qualitative research design and outline methods for a qualitative study to examine a question of interest.
8. Apply methods of qualitative data collection and preliminary analysis.
9. Understand both manual and computerized strategies of data analysis.
10. Implement strategies to enhance quality and rigor.
ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY
All work submitted in this course must be your own, and it must be produced specifically for this course. (If you wish to incorporate some of your prior work into a course assignment, you must have my prior approval.) All sources used in your work (ideas, quotes, paraphrases, etc.) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Violations of academic honesty will be taken seriously. Consequences may include failure in the course and suspension from your academic program. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the academic honesty and integrity guidelines found in the current JACSW student handbook.

TEXTS.

One of the following exemplars:

Additional required readings on Blackboard site by session.

Instructional Methods
Course activities will include lectures, class discussion, guest speakers and discussion. Assignments are opportunities for skill development and assessment.

Assignments and Grading
There are four graded assignments in this course. A hand-out will be distributed on the first session explaining each of these assignments in more detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Seminar participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Every session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Observation experience and summary paper</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>March 6, HC, in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interview experience and summary paper</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>April 10, HC, in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final research proposal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>April 25, 11p.m., SafeAssignBB</td>
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Seminar participation
Collaborative discussion is the essence of this course seminar and the heart of the learning process. All students are expected to attend each class session and actively participate in all assigned “learning activity” and exercises. Students are expected to have read all materials prior to class and come prepared with “talking points” and questions. If you must miss class for a good reason, please inform me in advance and plan to post a response to the assigned reading on Blackboard. “A” level outcome: no more than one class missed; active participation in class session reflecting engagement with material(s).

Book Review paper and class discussion. One of the best ways to understand qualitative research is to read books that use them. Articles are also useful but page limits prevent a full
explanation of methods. See hand-out for fuller explanation and guidelines. Complete review and discuss book with class members. “A” level outcome: thoughtful and well written completion of review, strong presentation of review with facilitated class discussion.

**Observation experience and summary paper.** Conduct a two to three-hour observation; write detailed field notes and 5 page summary paper (hand-out will be provided). “A” level outcomes: Complete observation and write-up, field notes support summary, mid-range analysis (what you make of it). “A” level outcome: on-time and well written summary w logical flow and solid description (not yet perfect or analytical but clear indication of solid work).

**Interview experience and summary paper.** Conduct an interview with known individual on a phenomenon of interest; provide interview guide, brief transcript and 8 to 10 page summary paper (see Assignments hand-out). “A” level outcomes: Complete all specified elements, well-constructed questions and relevant probes, conduct interview, construct write-up; transcript supports at least one “finding.”

**Final paper: Research proposal** Building from the completed data collection exercises (if possible but not necessary), develop a full research proposal of no more than 25 pages (Out-line provided). “A” level outcomes: Completion of all sections, thoughtful, doable, well-written, solid and pragmatic use of sources.

**Grading criteria**

Grades for the course will be based on the following criteria with specific outcomes specified for each assignment. An “A” is earned when all requirements are met (i.e., addressing the issues and questions thoroughly and with evidence of appropriately comprehensive research well presented and written (logic, format, and style) and organized; with evidence of solid conceptualization, critical analysis and/or interpretation).

A “B” is earned when all requirements of the assignment have been met, including those related to clarity of presentation (logic, writing style, and format) but the depth of conceptualization, writing and presentation lacks focus or is not well supported. Late assignments may also be graded down (Message: TALK to ME if you are running into problems).

**STUDENTS NEEDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES**

1. Go to the UIC Office of Disability Services to obtain confidential verification of the disability and a statement of accommodations recommended by that office.
2. Show the UIC Office of Disability Services accommodation letter to the instructor of the class for which the student requests accommodation before or at start of class.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE** All reading listed is required unless specified.

**Session 1 (1/16) Introduction to qualitative research methods**

*Themes:*

- Overview of the course, process, outcomes
- Foundations and relevance of qualitative research in social work
- Paradigms and definitions


Suggested: Subscribe to Qualitative listserv:  
http://listserv.uga.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=qualrs-l&A=1  
(I find the digest option best for getting good pointers without clogging up my e-mail; what you will quickly see is a wide variety of questions, responses, resources; you will also use this link to leave list)

Learning activity for Session 2—after reading Chapter 3 (Hennink et al. (2011), questions, complete exercises #1 & #2 (p. 59) and be prepared to discuss your work (please understand that there is no perfect questions, the point is that you begin assuming a “qualitative head” to considering how you might discover, explore, etc.).

Session 2 (1/23) Ways of looking at the world: Epistemological Issues  
Themes: Critical ethnography, feminisms, critical theory, critical race theory, cultural studies, and queer theory.


Class-work—Discuss your preliminary qualitative question and your theory scaffolding.

Learning Activity: For session 3: use Google scholar or Academic Premier, locate 1 article using one of the following methodological approaches: ethnography, grounded theory, case study analysis, narrative or phenomenological approach, and constructivist IN YOUR AREA OF INTEREST; bring 1 copy of each citation/abstract to class (I'll make copies to share with everyone in the class). Be ready to say something about what you learned from the article/methodology and consider the ethics of the study.

Session 3 (1/30): Researcher as instrument--ETHICS  
Themes—Reflexivity, Subjectivity, Bias, Trustworthiness  
Research regulations for protection of human subjects in qualitative research

Share and discuss the articles that you found on different study methods.


Hennink et al. Chapter 4-Ethical issues in qualitative research. Spend time on the following site: http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/index.shtml getting familiar with documents.


CLASS-WORK: Critical book Discussions X 2
**Learning Activity**—Complete exercises on p. 106 (including Plan B) on recruitment and be prepared to discuss at next class.

**Session 4 (2/6): Design, Sampling, & Data**  
**Themes:** Recruitment Sampling/Strategies  
**Interacting with (in) the field and negotiating access**  
*Discuss recruitment of participants/respondents (exercise p. 106).*


Hennink et al. Chapter 5-Participant Recruitment


**CLASS-WORK: Critical book Discussions** X 3

**Session 5 (2/13): Data Collection methods**  
**Themes—Observation in qualitative inquiry**

Hennink et al., Chapter 8-Observation


**CLASS-WORK: Critical book Discussions** X 3

**Session 6 (2/20): Data collection methods**  
**Themes—Ethnographies and narrative inquiry**  
**In-depth interviews**


Hennink et al., Chapter 6-In-Depth Interviews

**Recommended**


**Guest Speaker:** Robert Aspholm, Doctoral Candidate, JACSW

**Session 7 (2/27): More on strategies: Participatory and emancipatory inquiry**  
**Themes—Collaborative knowledge production**


**Guest speaker: Jane Hereth, M.S.W., Clinical Research Coordinator, LifeSkills Study, Fenway Institute, Children’s Hospital of Chicago**

**Session 8 (3/6): Methods of data collection**

*Themes*: Observations Field methods

Historical case analysis (i.e. *Tice & Daniels*)


Haight, W., Kayama, M., & Korang-Okrah, R. Ethnography in social work practice and policy. *Qualitative Social Work, 13*(1), 127-143.

**CLASSWORK: Discuss observation process/paper-what worked? What did you learn?**

**Session 9 (3/13): Methods of data collection**

*Themes*—Interviews and Focus groups


Hennink et al. Chapter 6-In-Depth Interviews, and Chapter 7-Focus group Discussions.


**Recommended**


**CLASSWORK—developing interview questions**

**Session 10 (3/20): Data Analysis**

*Themes*—Authority, Representation, Interpretation

Empowerment & Social Justice


3/27-NO CLASS-Enjoy Spring break!

**Session 11 (4/3): Methods of analysis**
*Themes—content analysis, template approaches, interpretive analysis, Semiotic analysis, action-oriented analysis, constructionist*


**CLASS-WORK—Manual Coding Exercise**

**Session 12 (4/10): Methods of Analysis**
*Themes—Coding—Manual and computerized approaches*

Hennink et al. Chapter 9, *Data preparation and developing codes, and* Chapter 10, *Textual data Analysis*


**CLASS-WORK: demonstration of atlas.ti software.**

**Session 13 (4/17): Quality and rigor in qualitative research**


Oktay, J. (2012). *Grounded Theory,* Chapters 5 & 6 (pp. 103-248).

**CLASSWORK: Discuss interview process/paper. What did you learn?**

**Session 14 (4/24): Reporting findings**
*Themes: Rigor, relevance and trustworthiness.*


Hennink et al., Chapter 11, *Writing qualitative research* (268-293).

**CLASS-WORK: Proposal Questions**

**Session 15 (5/1): Mixed Methods and Qualitative evaluation**

Themes: Review and evaluation of the course  
Mixed methods research


**CLASS-WORK: Brief oral presentations of research proposal**