

# 21E00011 Doing Qualitative Research (6 ECTS)

## SYLLABUS

Version (Spring 2018)

Instructor's contact information	Course information
Name: Saija Katila E-mail: Saija.katila@aalto.fi Office: E 3.17	Status of the course: Advanced Academic Year, Period: 2017, I Location: Language of Instruction: English Course Website Teaching Assistants: Inês Peixoto and Olli Rappe

### 1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will demonstrate knowledge of:

- The basic epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research.
- A range of qualitative methodologies (ethnography, action research, case study etc.).
- A range of qualitative methods of data collection (interview, field notes etc.) and analysis (thematic analysis, narrative analysis etc.).
- The practical challenges of undertaking fieldwork.

Students will develop the following skills:

- The ability to design qualitative research and make an informed choice about the appropriate use of qualitative research methodologies and methods.
- The competence to collect qualitative data 'in the field'.
- The aptitude to analyze qualitative data manually.
- The capacity to critically reflect on both the content and process of a research project and to identify potential ethical issues.
- The proficiency to discuss and write about qualitative research in a clear and concise manner.

## 2. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- In order to pass the course the participants are required to contribute actively to the variety of learning activities. Attendance and active participation in **5/8** lectures.
- Readings (Come to class prepared i.e. read the chapters that are assigned to each class)
- Assignments and evaluation
  - Assignment 1 – 3, 20 % of course work.
  - Evaluation: pass/failed. No possibility to redo.
  - Note: All the assignments have to be done in time even if you do not attend class.
- Final Paper 100 % of course grade
- In order to pass the course, the student will have to gain a 'pass' from all assignments. All late submissions are failed.

## 3. CONTENT AND TIMETABLE

Time	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Mon 25.2.	Introduction to qualitative research & Types of research questions	Required readings: Course book chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Research Philosophy), and 3 (Research design and process)
Wed 27.2.	Qualitative research materials	Required readings: Course book chapters 4 (Focus and Frame), 5 (Access and Relationships), 7 (Qualitative Research Materials) and 8 (Electronic Research)  <b>Turn in assignment 1 by 9.00 in MyCourses and bring a copy to class.</b>
Mon 4.3.	Ethnography and Action Research	Required readings: Course book chapters 10 (Ethnographic Research) and 13 (Action Research)
Wed 6.3.	Narrative Analysis and Discourse Analysis	Required readings: Course book chapters 14 (Narrative Research) and 15 (Discourse analysis)
Mon 11.3.	Case study research  Workshop: Designing case study	Required readings: Course book chapter 9 (Case Study Research)

	Signing in for tutoring in the end of the class (no e-mail signing)	
Wed 13.3.	Conducting interviews  Signing in for tutoring in the end of the class (no e-mail signing)	Required readings: Course book chapters 7 (Qualitative Research Materials) 12 (Focus Group Research)
Mon 18.3.	Analyzing qualitative data  Workshop: Data analysis	
Wed 20.3.	Workshop: Improving interview guides  Writing and assessing qualitative research	Required readings: Course book chapters 18 (Writing Process) and 19 (Qualitative Research Evaluation)  Turn in Assignment 2 by 9.00 in MyCourses and bring a copy to class.
Mon 25.3.	Individual Tutoring (Voluntary)	Possibility to discuss about your final paper with the teacher. Please reserve a time.
Wed 27.3.	Individual Tutoring (Voluntary)	Possibility to discuss about your final paper with the teacher. Please reserve a time.
Wed 3.4.		Turn in Assignment 3 by 9.00 in MyCourses.
FRI 12.4.	Final paper	Turn in the final paper in Turnitin return box in MyCourses by 18.00.

#### 4. ASSIGNMENTS

##### Assignment 1 – Introduction to your research (400 words)

- 1) Explicate the title of your research (If you are not yet working on your thesis pick an imaginary topic that interests you and work on it throughout the course). Write a short introduction to the topic by elaborating why the topic is important (to you, society and research). Explicate the research literature you will be drawing upon in your research. Write down your research question and remember to make it focused and contextualized. Consider the type(s) of data you need to address your research question and how you could acquire it.

## Assignment 2 – Interview guide

Make a prompt interview guide to your planned/imaginary research. Start by telling 1) what is your research question(s)? (If you are not doing an interview research find a topic of your interest and formulate a research question) and 2) what kind of interviews you are going to make (structured, semi-structured, open, narrative, focus group) and why? Then 3) make a prompt interview guide to your planned/imaginary research – keep the questions qualitative & make sure that you cover the main themes of your thesis (if you know what they are). It is important that the interview guide reflects the type of research you are doing (processual, narrative etc.).

Remember this is not a survey, so keep your questions qualitative. Also pay attention to the clarity and language of your questions i.e. do not use language that is too theoretical and/or not familiar to your interviewees. Please, read lecture slides and course readings before you start making the guide.

## Assignment 3 – Interview (1100-1200 words)

Make an interview based on your interview guide. Record the interview and make a word-for-word transcription from the beginning of the interview (800 words). Start by stating 1) what is your research question, 2) what kind of interview you conducted (structured, semi-structured, unstructured, narrative or else), 3) who did you interview and 4) when, and 5) **Also reflect on your feelings after the interview and evaluate how well your interview guide functioned in terms of questions and interaction and what needs to be developed further** (300-400 words).

## Technical instructions for the assignments 1-3

- Times New Roman 12 cpi; all margins 2,5; spacing 1.
- No cover page. On top of each paper write your name and student number & the number of the assignment and word count.
- Make references according APA or Harvard referencing system <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

## Final paper (3000-4000 words in English, or 2000-3000 in Finnish) excluding references

Write a methodology chapter of your ongoing / upcoming / imaginary thesis. The text should not be a general introduction to a certain method. Instead, focus on how the methodological choices made can assist you in answering your research question. Start by

- Restating your research question(s) and why is it important to study it?
- Describe the general qualitative tradition you will follow in your research design (ethnography, narrative research, discourse analysis etc.), what is specific about it, and articulate why it will be good approach for your study.
- Describe the research context (External: country, industry, size, competitive, etc.; Internal: organizational culture, position of the unit studies within the organization etc.)

- Sample: Specifically describe the number and nature of participants / texts / videos you intend to collect and why. For example number of interviewees of particular age, gender, and occupational background; how they were chosen and how you gained access to the organizations / interviewees / material.
- Describe your data collection methods: what kind of data you will collect (type of interviews, documents, observations etc.), and how you will collect it (e.g. who you interview, why them, how long / how many times/, how the interviews are transcribed etc.).
- Provide a brief description of what kind of analysis method(s) you will use and why, and an overview of your analysis steps and results / analysis plan.
- Last evaluate using evaluation criteria for qualitative research and discuss ethical concerns where appropriate.
- Base the essay on appropriate methodological literature and use proper references. In addition to the course book you need additional references connected to the chosen methodology.
- Your writing style can be reflective and personal. Demonstrate that you have made informed choices.
- Add the list of references.
- NOTE: this assignment may be the draft of your thesis methodology chapter but the text needs to be edited for the final thesis.

#### Technical instructions

- Times New Roman 12 cpi; all margins 2,5; spacing 1,5
- Cover page with the title describing your research and method & your name, student number & word count.
- Make references according APA referencing system [http://library.uws.edu.au/uws\\_library/sites/default/files/cite\\_APA.pdf](http://library.uws.edu.au/uws_library/sites/default/files/cite_APA.pdf)

#### Evaluation Criteria

- 1) Question
  - Did the paper address a clear research question?
- 2) Design
  - What was the study design and was this appropriate to the research question?
  - Was the approach sufficiently explicated and applied for the study at hand?
  - In particular, was a qualitative approach suitable and was an appropriate design used?
- 3) Context
  - What was the context of the study?
  - Was the context of the study adequately described so that the findings can be related to other settings?
- 4) Sampling
  - Did the study include sufficient cases / settings / interviews / observations / texts so that conceptual generalizations (not statistical) could be made?
- 5) Data collection
  - Was the data collection plan/process systematic, thorough, auditable and appropriate to the research question?

- 6) Data analysis (plan/process)
  - Were data analyzed systematically and rigorously?
- 7) Reflexivity
  - Were the authors' decisions, positions and roles clearly explained and the resulting biases considered?
- 8) Ethics
  - How were ethical considerations dealt with in different parts of the research process?

**Contact info:** [saija.katila@aalto.fi](mailto:saija.katila@aalto.fi)

## 5. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof>

<https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=3772443>