

# 21E00011 Doing Qualitative Research (6 ECTS)

## SYLLABUS

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 2020-21, Period: IV <b>Location: Fully online</b> Language of Instruction: English Course Website: MyCourses Teaching Assistant: Olli Rappe E-mail: olli.rappe@aalto.fi

### 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) **and lecture recordings**.
- 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. Acknowledging the possibility of unexpected network problems, traffic jams, power outages, computer failures etc. a 2 hour grace period is granted. Assignments submitted within this 2 hour period will be graded for full credit. All late submissions beyond the grace period are failed.
- **NOTE:** None of the completed assignments nor attendance can be transferred from one course to the next in case you drop out of fail the course. Make sure you finish the course at one go.

## 3. CONTENT AND TIMETABLE

Time	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Mon 28.2. 9.15-10.45	Introduction to the course and qualitative research & Types of research questions	Required readings: Course book chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Research Philosophy), and 3 (Research design and process)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Wed 2.3. 9.15-10.45	Qualitative research materials	Required readings: Course book chapters 4 (Focus and Frame), 5 (Access and Relationships), 7 (Qualitative Research Materials) and 8 (Electronic Research)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.  <b>Turn in assignment 1 by 7.00 in MyCourses and be prepared to share your RQs with student colleagues in class.</b>

Mon 7.3. 9.15-10.45	Ethnography and Action Research	Required readings: Course book chapters 10 (Ethnographic Research) and 13 (Action Research)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Wed 9.3. 9.15-10.45	Narrative Analysis and Discourse Analysis	Required readings: Course book chapters 14 (Narrative Research) and 15 (Discourse analysis)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Mon 14.3. 9.15-11.45	Case study research  Workshop: Designing case study  Signing in for tutoring meetings.	Required readings: Course book chapter 9 (Case Study Research)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Wed 16.3. 9.15-10.45	Conducting interviews  Signing in for tutoring meetings.	Required readings: Course book chapters 7 (Qualitative Research Materials) 12 (Focus Group Research)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Mon 21.3. 9.15-11.45	Analyzing qualitative data  Workshop: Data analysis	Download and read the data set for the analysis before the lecture.  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.
Wed 23.3. 9.15-10.45	Workshop: Improving interview guides  Writing and assessing qualitative research	Required readings: Course book chapters 18 (Writing Process) and 19 (Qualitative Research Evaluation)  Watch the lecture videos in MyCourses prior to class.  Turn in Assignment 2 by 7.00 in MyCourses and be prepared to share your interview guide with student colleagues in class.
Mon 28.3.	Individual Tutoring (Voluntary)  zoom	Possibility to discuss about your final paper with the teacher. Please reserve a time. 15 minutes/student
Wed 30.3.	Individual Tutoring (Voluntary)  zoom	Possibility to discuss about your final paper with the teacher. Please reserve a time. 15 minutes/student

Wed 6.4.		Turn in Assignment 3 by 7.00 in MyCourses.
WED 13.4.	Final paper	Turn in the final paper in Turnitin return box in MyCourses by 19.00.

#### 4. ASSIGNMENTS

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

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. Please make sure that you support all your arguments and literature choices with references. 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 (3000-3500 words in English, or 2000-2500 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 with

- an introduction that ends with your research question(s) and argue this study needs to done? Position your study i.e. how is the study connected the research literature you will discuss with? **Use references also when positioning your study!** (1-1,5 page max)
- Describe why you have chosen a qualitative approach, what is specific about it; what is you ontological and epistemological starting points (make sure they fit with you RQs and literature)
- What is the general qualitative tradition you will follow in your research design (ethnography, narrative research, discourse analysis, an interview study without any specific tradition etc.). Then argue what is specific about your approach and articulate why it will be a 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.)
- Describe your data collection methods: what kind of data you will collect (type of interviews, documents, observations etc.), argue for you choices. Clearly separate primary and secondary data and explicate for which purposes are they used.
- 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; why they were chosen and how you gained access to the organization / interviewees / material.
- How did the interviews/data collection proceed (reflect on the data collection process if you have already done it; if not, skip this section)
- 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 you study using the evaluation criteria for qualitative research and discuss ethical concerns where appropriate.
- Base the essay on appropriate methodological literature and use academic references = NO slides or youtube videos!. In addition to the course book you need additional references connected to the chosen methodology and methods.
- Please use headings to structure your paper and make sure that you proceed in a logical order. Order of presentation is critical for clarity of the paper and thus has major impact in grading. 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/Harvard 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) Length
  - Follow the length requirements. **Papers that fail to meet the minimum length are directly failed.**
- 2) Question
  - Does the paper address a clear research question?
- 3) Design
  - What is the study design and is it appropriate in answering the research question?
  - Is the chosen approach sufficiently explicated and adjusted for the study at hand?
- 4) Context
  - Is the context of the study adequately described so that the findings can be related to other settings?
- 5) Data collection methods
  - Are the chosen methods suitable for the study at hand, are they clearly explained and argued for?
- 6) Sampling and data collection
  - Does the study include sufficient cases / settings / interviews / observations / texts so that conceptual generalizations (not statistical) could be done?
  - Is the data collection plan/process systematic, thorough, auditable and appropriate to the research question?
- 7) Data analysis (plan/process)
  - Is the chosen analysis strategy suitable for the study at hand; Is it sufficiently explicated?
- 8) Reflexivity
  - Are the authors' decisions, positions and roles clearly explained and the resulting biases considered?
- 9) Evaluation and Ethics
  - How is the research process evaluated and how are ethical considerations dealt with in different parts of the research process? Is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) reflected upon?
- 10) Writing
  - Is the text argumentative or merely referencing literature without reference to the study at hand?
  - the paper well-structured, does the text proceed logically within and across paragraphs and sections, are paragraphs well transitioned?
  - Are claims supported by references, are concepts defined using references?
  - Are references made according to academic practice?
  - NOTE: **papers that fail to reference methodology sources or fail to follow ethical academic referencing practices are directly failed.**

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## 5. ETHICAL RULES

<https://www.aalto.fi/en/services/personal-data-and-research-ethics>  
Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof>

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