==Qualitative Business Research Methods==

This course introduces to theory and practice of qualitative marketing and consumer research. Students will learn a variety of tools, techniques, and principles needed for the planning and execution of top-quality qualitative research. We will cover issues like formulating the right research question, designing a qualitative study, choosing the right study method, conducting data gathering, doing rigorous data analysis, and producing compelling research reports.

This course is designed especially for students preparing to start their master's thesis projects. You may take the course at any time during your master's studies, but it is encouraged not to start your thesis until you have completed this course.

The responsible professor for the course is **Pelin Geyik**, Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Marketing at Aalto University.

1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will gain…

- Understanding of epistemological and ontological underpinnings of qualitative research
- Ability to formulate research questions by evaluating existing literature and identifying appropriate contexts for qualitative studies
- Experience in qualitative methods of data gathering, including in-depth interviews, ethnography, and netnography
- Experience in analysis of qualitative data, including computer assisted analysis
- Learning to apply evaluating criteria for qualitative research
- Experience in writing excellent qualitative research reports
- Improvements in critical thinking skills and creativity

2. ASSESSMENT AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

The course is evaluated on the grading scale (0-5). Passing the course requires completing assignments and obtaining at least 50 points:

90+	5
80+	4
70+	3
60+	2
50+	1
<50	0

Breakdown of the final grade (100%):

- **Class assignments**   **32,5%**
  - Perusall reading assignments (10 readings)   22,5%
  - 3-2-1 quizzes (2 of them)   10%
    Quizzes will be about:
    - Qualitative Research in Marketing (2nd session)
    - Ethnography & Netnography (7-8th session)

- **Research assignments**   **42,5%**
  - Pitching research context   7.5%
  - Interview Guide   10%
  - Interview and transcript Vol.I   12,5%
  - Interview and transcript Vol.II   12,5%

- **Final research report**   **25%**
  - Final research paper   15%
  - Data analysis   10%

- **In-class participation (bonus points)**   **5%**

3. CLASS READINGS

This course will draw mostly from the following textbook:

> Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). *Qualitative consumer and marketing research*. Sage.

In addition, students are expected to read a collection of articles and book excerpts. The list is preliminary and can be found along the course schedule below.

For each class after the introductory lecture, there will be assigned readings on Perusall.com. Students are expected to read each article and engage in meaningful discussion with other students prior to class. We expect you to familiarize yourself with the articles and apply the relevant theories in your group and individual assignments.

Please register to the course by a) creating an account on www.perusall.com, and b) registering into the course with the code **GEYIK-HWTJP.**

Your Perusall score depends on:
- Contributing thoughtful questions and comments to the class discussion, spread throughout the entire reading
- Starting the reading early
- Breaking the reading into chunks (instead of trying to do it all at once)
- Reading all the way to the end of the assigned reading
- Posing thoughtful questions and comments that elicit responses from classmates
- Answering questions from others
- Upvoting thoughtful questions and helpful answers

4. APPROXIMATE COURSE WORKLOAD

Here is an expected breakdown of the hourly course workload, based on instructor estimates.

Readings*	30
Class contact hours and tutoring	24
Planning the research (context, research question, interview guide).	24
Planning, conducting, and transcribing interview	15
3-2-1 Quizzes	10
Analysis of data	30
Working on final deliverables	30
TOTAL HOURS	**160**

evaluated at 3 hours per reading

5. ETHICAL RULES

Please refer to Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity:

https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof

6. COURSE POLICIES

Course delivery policies

All course deliverables are submitted via MyCourses. All deadlines are firm and depending on how late the students submitted their work, this can incur a point penalty. Submissions that are later than 24 hours will not be graded at all. Submissions will be submitted to TurnitIn evaluation for plagiarism checks.

Group work policies

If problems arise in group work, concerned students are advised to contact course instructors as problems arise. Waiting until the course is over to bring concerns forward is inadvisable, as it complicates the instructors' ability to reconsider grades.

Zoom classroom policies

The contact sessions are a mixture of lectures, discussions, and exercises. For each of the contact sessions you are expected to have read the assigned readings. To ensure a pleasant Zoom environment:

- Please mute your microphone when not speaking.
- Please be active! Ask questions, give your opinions. All ideas are welcome in the classroom and are open to debated. If you want to comment or ask a question, please use the raise hand feature. (You may also use the chat)
- Please do not take screenshots, cell phone pictures, or otherwise record the meeting, your classmates, or your instructor without express permission to do so.
- Please remember to express your ideas in a way that is respectful to others.

Communication policies

All official course communication will take place through the **News** forum on MyCourses. Anything posted in that forum will be forwarded to your Aalto email, so please make sure you check it periodically.

Please use the **Discussion** forum if you have any questions or feedback regarding course topics, lectures, materials, assignments etc., as someone else is likely to have the same question. If you want to share relevant articles or news stories, you can do so in the Discussion section, too.

Please only use **email** if the matter is very personal or very urgent (ie. you are missing a class because you are home sick). We will not be answering any inquiries regarding anything that can be easily found in the syllabus via personal email.
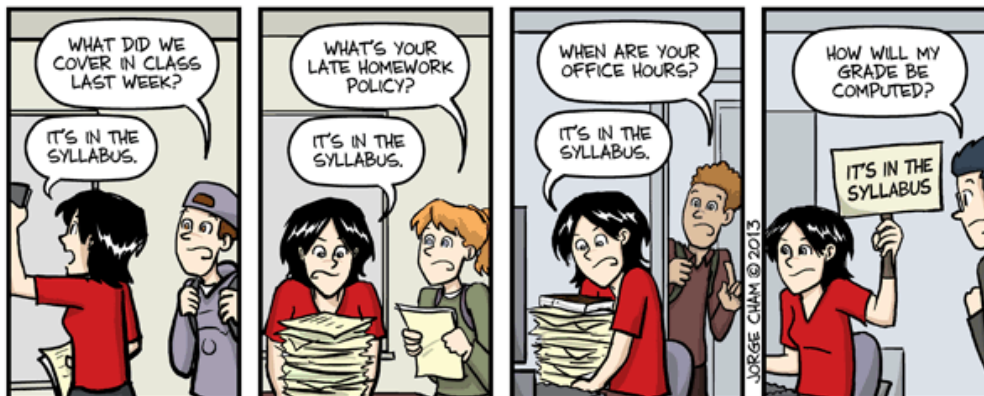
IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS
This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.
WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

7. CURRENT SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Course Introduction and Practicalities

Qualitative Research in Marketing

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Introduction: What is qualitative research? *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 1-15). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Gummesson, E. (2005). Qualitative research in marketing: Road-map for a wilderness of complexityand unpredictability. European journal of marketing.

Planning a Qualitative Research Project

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Getting started: how to begin a qualitative research project. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 16 - 30). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Arnould, E. J., Price, L., & Moisio, R. (2006). Making contexts matter: Selecting research contexts for theoretical insights. Chapter in Belk, Russell W. "Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing", 106-125.

Doing Interviews

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Depth interviews. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 31 - 56). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Arsel, Z. (2017). Asking questions with reflexive focus: A tutorial on designing and conducting interviews. Journal of Consumer Research, 44(4), 939-948.

Wednesday 21 September

Qualitative Data Analysis 1/2

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Approaches to data analysis, interpretation and theory building for scholarly research. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 138 - 158). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. Journal of consumer research, 21(3), 491-503.

Friday 23 September

Qualitative Data Analysis 2/2

Class readings:

- Gibson, W., & Brown, A. (2009). Working with qualitative data. Sage. Chapter: "Identifying themes, codes and hypotheses"

Wednesday 28 September

Ethnographic methods

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Ethnography and observational methods. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 57 - 91). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Spradley, J. P. (1980). Participant observation. Waveland Press. Chapter: "Making descriptive Observations"

Qualitative Research in Digital Spaces

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Online observation and netnography. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 92 - 119). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Caliandro, A. (2018). Digital methods for ethnography: Analytical concepts for ethnographers exploring social media environments. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *47*(5), 551-578.

Tools and Theorization

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Data collection aids. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 120 - 138). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Belk, R., & Sobh, R. (2019). No assemblage required: On pursuing original consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, 19(4), 489-507.

Qualitative Research and Consulting

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Analysis, theory, and presentation for managers. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 159 - 182). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Madsbjerg, C., & Rasmussen, M. B. (2014). An anthropologist walks into a bar. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(3), 80-90.

Presenting Research Results

Class readings:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Presenting, disseminating, and sharing. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 183 - 200). Sage.

Optional reading:

- Gopaldas, A. (2016). A front-to-back guide to writing a qualitative research article. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19(1), 115-121.

Final Session: Poster Presentation Day

Optional reading:

- Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Final thoughts. *Qualitative consumer and marketing research* (pp 201 - 210). Sage.
- Epp, A. M., & Otnes, C. C. (2021). High-Quality Qualitative Research: Getting into Gear.

8. ASSIGNMENTS

To best appreciate and understand qualitative research, one must experience it firsthand. All of them are compulsory for the completion of the course. The actual assignments are elaborated in full in Appendix 1. Here you will find a summary of all deliverables and their due dates.

All deliverables due by midnight (e.g. 12.09 means you can submit your assignment till 12.09 at 23.59).

	Assignment starts	Deadline
3-2-1 quizzes (2 of them)		
Qualitative Research in Marketing (2nd session)	09.09	12.09
Ethnography & Netnography (7-8th session)	30.09	03.10
Pitching research context & question	14.09	17.09
Interview guide	16.09	19.09
In-depth interview & Transcript Vol.I	20.09	28.09
In-depth interview & Transcript Vol.II	30.09	8.10
Final research report (research paper & data analysis)	14.10	28.10

All assignments are submitted via MyCourses.

Appendix 1: Assignments and Deliverables

This section explains the deliverables in the order that student will have to complete them.

1. Pitching Research Context

This assignment connects to class #3, Planning a Qualitative Research Project, and is to be completed after the lecture. The goal of the assignment is to have students choose a particular topic for their research and argue why it would make for a good study. Note that whatever you pick in this assignment will not "bind" you forever, as you are expected to work on your research framing throughout the course. To summarize, this assignment is ultimately about matching **Research Context with Theoretical Interest.** You may emphasize either one of these two, but for completing this assignment, you must find a match between the two! See especially the reading "*Making Context Matter*" to understand how you can argue for either a theory-driven or context-driven project.

Your proposal should be no more than two pages, preferably one, (12 point font, 1,5 line spacing, 1" margins) and should include:

1. **Brief description of context:**
    1. Explain your context and why you choose to work on it. Also discuss why it is important.
    2. Who are these consumers? (Like "Knitting enthusiasts" or "Rock climbers" or "refugees in Finland")
    3. The novelty or peculiarity of this context (particularly if you want to claim that this context might illuminate something understudied, you might want to contrast it to prior "known" consumer populations)

2. **Brief description of theoretical interest**
    1. Identify some key articles in marketing or consumer research in the given area or 'stream', discern potential research gaps and then select one for your study.
        1. **Tip:** A good way to find research gaps is to look at the "Future Research" sections of recent articles
    2. What kind of theories from consumer research do you currently think (remember, these always change as projects evolve!) might help illuminate this context
        1. Identity theory? Community theory? Relationship theory? Taste theory?
        2. Don't just name the theory! Explain why you think this is a good match with the context and what you expect to find!

3. **Offer a preliminary research question**
    1. It is taken for granted that your research question will change during the course, but please offer some sort of guiding question going in!
        1. "How do knitting enthusiasts construct their identities?"
        2. "How do refugee communities in Finland consume?"
        3. "How do rock climbers express and evaluate taste?"

This assignment is **7,5%** of the final grade. Note that you may be asked to revise this work if it is not satisfactory, as choosing the right context is essential moving forward.

2. Interview Guide

Prepare **a semi-structured** personal interview guide **on your research topic.** The interview guide is to be completed after lecture #4, which focuses on depth interview. We will provide a preliminary template for you to continue filling.

The interview guide must include

1. Preliminary "ground tour" questions relating to relevant informant background information (family background, "life story")
2. Questions relating to overall consumption practices or lifestyles
3. Questions relating to the context and theoretical interest (the majority of the questions)

Your grade will depend on how well the questions are crafted to match with research aims and how well the questions match with theorization on good interviewing, which will be covered in class. Keep in mind that the length of the interview should be **30 to 60 minutes**, so your interview guide should be max 2 pages, one page is usually enough. (12 bullet point font, 1.5-spacing). The assignment is **10%** is overall grade.

3. Interview & Transcript Vol.I & Vol.II

Now it's time to practice! You need to record your interview and transcribe it. Remember, the recorded interview should be 30 to 60 minutes in length. Transcription would normally take you 2-4 times longer than the actual interview. But we have a great solution for that, so don't worry!

Tips for transcription:
You can auto-transcribe your interview. I don't expect you to submit a perfect transcript. However, you'd still need to work on it a little bit as auto transcription doesn't function perfectly. So, you're still expected to go over the whole transcript to correct words, add pauses and expressions etc.

Auto transcription feature works in Finnish too, but you'll still need to translate the interview in English. Feel free to conduct the interview in English.

- Go to: https://www.office.com/?auth=2&home=1
- Click on New Word Document –> New Blank Document
- Click on the microphone icon which says Dictate or Transcribe
- Click on Transcribe
- Choose the language
- Add your audio file (it will take 1-2 minutes to upload)
- Voila!

In the transcript, please include the following:
1. A brief introduction of who this person is (you can give them a pseudonym if the topic requires it) and why they were selected for interview
2. Where the interview was conducted and how long it lasted

3. Your brief reflections on how the interview went
   - Were you happy with how you interviewed? What was difficult?
   - Did something happen that might have affected the interview?
   - What would you do differently or how would you change the interview guide?
4. The actual interview transcript itself
   - Everything must be transcribed verbatim
   - Include pauses ("…") or other relevant expressions [laughs], [sighs], [pointing at her shirt], [angrily waving hand]

You are expected to manage the interview like a well-trained qualitative researcher. Like in the previous assignment, your grade will depend on how well your interview matches with theorization on good interviewing, which will be covered in class.

Your first interview and transcript will make 12,5% of your overall grade.
Your second interview and transcript will make 12,5% of your overall grade.

4. Final paper (Research report & Data analysis)

You should consider your final deliverable a "mini academic paper". Even though you will be working with a very limited data than a thesis, let alone an academic article, the goal is to mimic the process. Please use the following guide for your final paper. It should consist 4 main sections. See the reading from Gopaldas (2015), related to lecture 11.

In addition to your mini academic paper, you're also expected to submit your Atlas.ti file where you coded your data. I recommend you to start doing the analysis after lecture #6 Qualitative Data Analysis 2/2, so you can benefit from Open Zoom Session that I'll give where you can come and show me how you coded your data.

This assignment overall will make 25% of your grade. (Research report 15%, Data analysis 10%).

The frontend

You can change the order if you like, but qualitative research articles are in general written in this order.

- **Title of your paper:** The title should encapsulate what the paper is about, and possibly introduce your novel theoretical concept, if you have one
- **Introduction:** Begin your article with a brief description of domain, field or phenomenon that you're investigating. Explain also why it is important to study.
- **Literature review:** Conduct a literature review on the phenomenon.
- **Theoretical problem:** By elaborating on literature review, explain what literature overlooks and what the gaps are. ("Here's what we know; here's what we don't know")
- **Research question:** Restate the theoretical problem as a research question, so your research focus becomes very clear to your readers.
- **Research motivation:** Explain why your research is important in terms of theoretical and practical reasons.

- **(If applicable) Theoretical perspective:** Explain your perspective that you use to examine your theoretical problem. Why did you choose this lens for analysis?

Context and methods

This section is very important for this assignment and course overall! Here please describe in detail how your research project unfolded and how you interpreted your data.

- **Research context:** Describe context or real-world setting of your research and how your theoretical problem contains within this context.
    - Bring some historical perspective or contemporary market relevance!
    - Restate why this context is ideal for your particular theoretical interest
- **Data collection:** Explain how and why you collected your data. Be true to the chronology of how things unfolded! Remember to state how your informant was selected, who they are, how they were interviewed, the average length of interviews and transcripts. Evaluate the representativeness of the sample vis-à-vis the context! (Are these people similar or do you have heterogeneity here, like with gender or contextual involvement?)
- **Data analysis:** As you'll be working with a very limited data, you won't be able to go further from so-called "first-order coding" or "open-coding", which would be explained in class #5. Although you won't be able to develop themes (as in you'd expected to do so in your masters thesis), you can mimic the process. You're expected to show you learned how to code and craft interesting insights from your data. So, write up how you analyzed data and explain how your data analysis have potential moved from early analysis to theme building and theorization. Write your findings. Write up where you see potential in this research.
    - What themes can emerge?
    - How could be boundary conditions?
    - How your choice of informant might have affected your results?
- **You're also expected to submit your Atlas.ti file where you coded your data**. What I expect to see:
    - Go through the interview and code everything using Atlas.ti!
    - Assign labels on sentences, words, or even whole paragraphs and make observations on the data
    - Please make sure to add explanations of your codes, when necessary
- **Tip:** Absorbing your data before starting to code is important. This will enable you to better interpret and code your data. So read through the transcript before coding it!
- You will be graded on how attentive and thorough you worked on coding.
    - Be attentive to detail and go for quantity of codes, without compromising quality, of course.
    - Applying just a few codes and slapping them onto entire paragraphs will not be enough.
    - A large number of codes will give you more opportunities to develop themes later when/if you continue working on this research for your master's thesis.

The findings

Theorizing: Introduce your themes and state your theoretical claims. The themes should be robust and clearly supported by quotes from interviews that are sufficiently unpacked and

interpreted. The themes should be robust. Finally, elaborate on how your assumptions, data and interpretations justify your claim.

The backend

Theoretical contributions: Summarize how your insights developed or contributed to the theory while answering your research question.

- How do your findings relate to prior studies?
- Do they align with, extend, or contradict findings from prior studies?
- What is the novelty of your findings, and your theorization?

Practical implications: Think about potential stakeholders (marketers, policy makers etc.) who could take action depending on your results and write up your recommendations for them.

Limitations & opportunities: Describe alternative research contexts, informant samples or theoretical perspectives that can be considered for further research.

Conclusion: Summarize the key takeaways from your research.

5. 3-2-1 Quizzes

3-2-1 quiz is a reflective tool, a bit like a learning diary, where you're expected to write about

- 3 things you learned,
- 2 questions you have,
- 1 piece of feedback to me.

Your 3-2-1 quizzes should be no more than two pages, preferably one, (12 point font, 1,5 line spacing, 1" margins)

Throughout the course, you'll be writing 3 quizzes.

1. **First 3-2-1 Quiz:** This will be connected to lecture #2 Qualitative Research in Marketing
2. **Second 3-2-1 Quiz:** This will be connected to lecture #7 Ethnography and #8 Netnography

Each quiz will make **5%** of your overall grade.

6. Poster Day

On our last session, you'll get to present the work you've been doing to your classmates and get useful feedback from me and them for your final research paper. The class will be divided in two groups. One group will stand in front of their poster while others and me will be visiting. Later, the first group will start visiting while the second group will be presenting.

You can design your poster however you like! Prepare it on Word or Powerpoint, just make sure that people can read it when they get close to your "poster."

Here are some useful tips on how to design a poster.

- I recommend designing your poster in PowerPoint.
- Create your poster. Posters should contain: research paper title; author's name, about 500-1000 words of text, arranged into clearly labeled sections (Literature review/introduction, context & research question, methodology, findings, theoretical and practical implications), relevant images, figures, and/or graphs; references.

- More design guidance is available here: https://libguides.tru.ca/academicposters/home