TU-L0031: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

3 ECTS OFFERED IN SPRING 2024
DETAILS OF THE SYLLABUS MAY CHANGE. FOR THE LATEST VERSION PLEASE REFER TO THE WEBSITE.

TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

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ABOUT THE COURSE

Welcome to Qualitative Research Methods! The module described in this syllabus is 3 ECTS.

TU-L0031 provides an overview of qualitative research methods commonly used in management research. Different approaches include case studies, action research, and ethnography. We will look at the steps involved in planning a research project, data collection and analysis, and reporting (i.e., writing up) in a way that is expected for publication in top management journals.

TU-L0031 is an interactive class with learning based predominantly on class discussions and activities. Students are expected to properly prepare for each class, attend class, and actively participate in daily activities and discussions.

Teaching period

This course is offered in a condensed format in Otaniemi in the TUAS building (Maarintie 8, Espoo) in the AS3 Saab Space - 1021-1022, over two weeks. The days and times are:

- Mon 13.5, 9-13
- Mon 20.5, 9-13
- Wed 15.5, 9-13
- Wed 22.5, 9-13
- Fri 17.5, 9-13
- Mon 27.5, 9-13

Status of the course:

This is a compulsory course for IEM students and an optional course for the Doctoral Program in Science. It is also open to other Aalto University doctoral students (i.e., from Aalto BIZ) and students from other universities as long as the size of the class permits.

Level of the course: Doctoral level

Prerequisite: TU-L0000 Research Methods in Industrial Engineering and Management

Language of instruction: English

Registration: The course is offered for doctoral students. To enroll see instructions on the course website. The course will be organized if at least four students have enrolled.

Grading Scale: 1-5 for the 3 ECTS module; class participation is 30% and pre-class assignments 70%
Workload: Class participation: 6 classes x 4 hours per class = 24 hours. Pre-class work (2-3 tasks per class): 6 classes x 9.5 hours per class = 57 hours

Learning outcomes
By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand what qualitative research is
- Understand when to use it
- Understand how to design research
- Understand how to formulate research questions
- Understand how to collect qualitative data
- Understand how to analyze qualitative data
- Understand how to report qualitative research

OPTIONAL ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS MODULE (3 ECTS):

Students can take an optional ECTS advanced qualitative research methods module. It can be organized on the request of students during fall 2024/winter 2025. The model can be organized around selected more in-depth qualitative research methods based on students' interests and initiative to set up such a module. For the optional advanced module, I will act as a mentor (for groups of 3-4 students) as students work on coding, analyzing, and summarizing their own qualitative data.

GENERAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TEXTBOOKS:

There are a number of excellent textbooks that provide an overview of qualitative methods. I encourage you to review the table of contents and sample chapters of the textbooks in the following list and select the one which appeals to you most for your own reference library:


SAGE researchmethods, which is available for free through Aalto University, is also a great resource for learning more about qualitative research methodologies. Although none of the textbooks above are included on the site, there are numerous other resources including domain-specific handbooks of qualitative research and the little blue book series, which is an excellent series dedicated to exploring the nuances of qualitative research.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

I use the standard Aalto University 1-5 grading scale. I will strive to provide you with feedback on your initial assignments quickly so you will be able to incorporate that feedback as you move forward.

GRADING POLICY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>In-class participation</th>
<th>Grade Weight</th>
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| Pre-class assignment (3 tasks per class x 6 classes) | 1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | 30%          |

ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>How?</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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| Day 1:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 12.5 @22:00 |
| Day 2:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 14.5 @22:00 |
| Day 3:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 16.5 @22:00 |
| Day 4:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 19.5 @22:00 |
| Day 5:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 21.5 @22:00 |
| Day 6:  
1. One-page reflection notes on the article of the day  
2. Slides summary of one article of your choice  
3. One-page reflection notes on empirical article of the day | Return MyCourses Assignments              | 26.5 @22:00 |

INSTRUCTION FOR PARTICIPATION

Participation is a large part of TU-L0031 as much of the value of this seminar derives from collective discussions that involve everyone. As such, you will be asked to read several articles prior to each class and then actively share your insights through class discussion. We will also engage in hands-on activities designed to introduce
you to the highlighted methodologies in practice. The overall goal for our short time together is for you to improve your ability to contribute to discussions in a meaningful and professionally appropriate way.¹

### INSTRUCTION FOR PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

#### PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENT 1 – MAKE NOTES ON THE REQUIRED READING (ONE ARTICLE)

Each day includes one required reading to provide us with a shared introduction to a particular methodology being discussed that day. As you read this article, I encourage you to take notes with a particular focus on:

1. what you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the method in general,
2. any aspects of the methodology that you want to delve into more deeply, and
3. any questions that come to mind as you are reading.

#### PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENT 2 – SLIDE SUMMARY OF ONE CHOSEN ARTICLE

Each class will include a handful of articles from which you may choose the reading that is of most interest to you personally. Building off our common base of understanding from the Activity One Required Reading, these articles are meant to foster a diversity of knowledge in our classroom discussion. After reading the article, please prepare a 2 slide summary (PowerPoint or PDF).

**Slide 1**: A summary of the article (e.g. main topic, suggestions, recommendations and/or conclusions)

**Slide 2**: Your opinion (e.g. key learnings, opinions, what you found most interesting, and/or what YOU perceive as strengths and weaknesses) Hint: Be sure to clearly distinguish your thoughts from the those of the author(s).

**Note**: Different information will be more or less relevant depending on the article you chose. Please decide what is most valuable for your summary as in one to two slides you will not be able to include all of the examples provided in the brackets. Please be prepared to present your summary slide(s) to the group in class.

To help easily identify which slides summarize which article please save your slide in the following format: 1stAuthorLastNameYear (e.g. Aastrup2008.pptx). Thanks.

#### PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENT 3 – CRITIQUE OF METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE (ONE EMPIRICAL ARTICLE)

Having been introduced to the focal methodology in activities one and two, activity three provides you with the opportunity to read and review an article that uses the focal methodology and has been published in a top journal. After reading the article, please answer the following questions.

1. Why (or why not) is the qualitative method used appropriate for answering the authors’ research question(s)? (Hint: If the authors explicitly state their rationale don’t just rely on their thinking – apply what you have learned about the methodology to your own explanation)

¹ Group discussion is a skill and like all skills requires practice. In our first class we will spend some time discussing our opinions on what behaviours facilitate good discussions with the goal of developing classroom norms. You may find the following article to be useful in thinking about what you value in discussion and what you would like to improve during our time together: Hollander, J.A. (2002). “Learning to discuss: Strategies for improving the quality of a class discussion.” Teaching Sociology, 30(3), 317-327.
2) What assumptions (explicitly or implicitly stated) did the authors have going into the analysis?

3) What makes the qualitative analysis powerful (i.e. what insights were the authors able to make because of the methodology they used)?

4) What are the challenges or limitations of their approach? (Hint: most papers include a boilerplate of limitations, I challenge you to go beyond the authors’ own stated limitations and to tell me what you think are the limitations given the method employed)

5) How could this analysis be improved? Be specific and practical (i.e. do not make suggestions that you could not realistically envision yourself implementing).

**Note:** Question one is meant to be more abstract and answer the question about general types of studies (e.g. process questions lend themselves to method x because of reason y), whereas the remaining questions are specific to the analysis in the article (e.g. because the authors watched the exchange between the doctor and nurse for the duration of the entire surgery they were able to not only capture the oral conversation, but the body language that undermined the respectful tone of the conversation).

Please write your single-spaced response using 12-point Times New Roman or similar font and use 2.5 cm margins. Thanks.
ASSIGNMENTS FOR EACH CLASS

MON 12.5, 9-13: SESSION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:

ARTICLES FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:
Note: Select one reading from either group below.

GENERAL


RIGOR


ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:
No pre-class assignment for this session

EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL)


WED 15.5, 9-13: SESSION 2 – INTERVIEWS AND INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:
Note: Select one reading from the list below.

GENERAL


ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:

EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL)

FRI 17.5, 9-13: SESSION 3 – CASE STUDY, ACTION RESEARCH, MIXED METHOD

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:  

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:  
**Note**: Select one reading from either group below.

CASE STUDY APPROACHES


ACTIONS RESEARCH


MIXED METHODS DESIGN AND APPROACHES


ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:


EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL):


**MON 20.5, 9-13: SESSION 4: QUALITATIVE DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS**

**ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:**

**ARTICLES FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:**
*Note:* Select one reading from either group below and complete pre-class activity two for your chosen article.

**QUALITATIVE CODING, GROUNDED ANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

**ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:**

**EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL)**
WED 22.5, 9-13: SESSION 5 – ETHNOGRAPHY AND PROCESS STUDIES

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:

ARTICLES FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:
Note: Select one reading from either group below and complete pre-class activity two for your chosen article.

ARCHIVAL DATA


PROCESS ANALYSIS


ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:

EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL)

MON 27.5, 9-13: SESSION 6 – YOUR PRESENTATIONS

ARTICLE FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 1:

ARTICLES FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 2:
Note: Select one reading from either group below and complete pre-class activity two for your chosen article.

THE PROCESSES OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

WRITING UP THE ARTICLE


ARTICLES FOR PRE-ASSIGNMENT 3:
No pre-class assignment 3 for this session

EXTRA READINGS (OPTIONAL)
