

ARTS-L0108: Methods of gathering qualitative data, 4 cr. Short syllabus, 12.12.2018

Teacher in charge, Eeva Berglund, eeva.berglund@aalto.fi

Note, Prof Berglund will try to answer emails as best she can, but the best way to catch her will be before and after teaching sessions.

Teaching assistant, Mirko Wittka, mirko.wittka@aalto.fi

7.1. - 24.1. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 9:15 - 12. Väre Q202

Course Content

This intensive doctoral level course gives students in the School of Arts, Design and Architecture an understanding of the main methods of gathering or generating qualitative data and managing it. It will help them think critically but constructively about what 'data' is and how it can be used, and about its relationship to analysis and other forms of intellectual work.

It gives practical experience in designing and carrying out field research related to human behaviour. The course is designed so that students build up a small body of material using the full range of methods introduced on the course. This will later be analysed on the Methods of Analysing Data course, ARTS-L0104, taught by Annamari Vänskä.

Work load

Study time appr. 108 h

-lectures and seminars: 24 h

-reading 24 h

-independent and group work: 60 h

Contact time will consist of lecture and seminar sessions with practical activities. Students must attend 80% of classes unless separately agreed in advance with the teacher. Provide advance notification of absence, and if you miss more than one session, expect to be asked for documentation of legitimate reasons.

Readings will be divided into compulsory and background texts. You should read them **before** they are discussed in class. Readings will be provided on MyCourses unless they are freely available online and/or in the library.

Deliverables and requirements

You will be given a number of exercises to do both independently and in groups, during and outside contact time. At the end of the course, each student submits for assessment a portfolio of the material they have gathered through the course, that will include a short essay explaining its contents. You may use materials relating to your independent research, but their execution and format must comply with the tasks set out on the course.

Since you will be using the data you generate on the Methods of Analysing Qualitative Data -course, make sure you store all your work for retrieval and analysis later!

All students will have to submit assignments for marking as follows:

- 1) a portfolio of examples of gathered data with explanatory essay. Due midnight 26.1.2019 (max 1400 words, 50% of grade, 0-5)
- 2) independent assignment, by midnight 15.1.2019 (pass/fail)
- 3) group assignment (joint work, pass/fail)

There is also a pre-course reading, and a small pre-course exercise. See below.

Upload assignments (those for grading only) onto My Courses. Please make sure to include your name and other details on all submitted work, and please put your surname in the document title.

Evaluation

Generic assessment criteria: 1) evidence of thoughtful and creative use of appropriate methods in practice; 2) evidence of intellectual and creative engagement with, as well as critical reflection on, the relevant method as well as some of the literature about it; 3) quality and clarity in the articulation and communication of what has been learned; 4) systematic and clear presentation, both textual and visual.

Grading

Key criteria on a scale from 0 - 5: a 5 will normally be granted to work that demonstrates excellence in all areas; a 4 will be granted to a work that is excellent if uneven or slightly lacking in some area; a 3 suggests the work is good but the issues are not very developed, or that there are shortcomings in structure, critical insight or presentation; a 2 may contain good contents but is weaker, possibly superficial or mechanical; a 1 is normally granted to a piece of work that shows little effort or understanding of the course content. Submitting work late incurs an automatic penalty of one grade. All submitted work as well as active class participation contribute to the final mark. All coursework including the final assessment will be examined holistically, with assessment criteria applied as appropriate to each exercise.

Equipment

A standard mobile phone with a built-in recorder will be enough, but you may prefer to have a voice recorder and camera as well. More information at <https://takeout.aalto.fi/>

Pre-course reading

Newell, Stephanie et al. 2018. 'Dirty methods as ethical methods? In the field with "The Cultural Politics of Dirt In Africa, 1880 – Present"' In *Routledge Handbook of Interdisciplinary Research Methods*, Celia Lury et al. Eds.

Additional readings

Freeman, Melissa 2014. 'The Hermeneutical Ascetics of Thick Description', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 20(6): 827 – 833. [I really recommend this short and thoughtful piece.]

Walford, Geoffrey (2009) 'The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes', *Ethnography and Education*, 4:2, 117-130.

Doloughan, Fiona J. (2002) 'The language of reflective practice in art and design', *Design Issues*, Vol.18(2): 57-64.

Geertz, Clifford (1973) 'Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books. [Available in libraries and online.]

Feyerabend, Paul (1988) *Against Method*. [Available in various editions in libraries and online.]

Pre-course task "Surveying Life at Home"

Observation exercise to be completed independently before the first meeting. Spend 45 - 60 minutes in one place observing people's behaviour and make notes in whatever medium you feel is most appropriate and comfortable. If you take photographs, make sure you keep detailed information about the place, time and other possible contextual information associated with it.

To help you focus, imagine you are part of a research team engaged with the topic of "Life at Home". The word home can be interpreted as widely or narrowly as you wish, so you could do the exercise in a public or semipublic space like a town square or a shopping mall, for instance, or a shop that sells home decorations.

IMPORTANT! Bring notes of your observations in a form that you can make sense of to the first meeting.

Outline of the course:

Week 1

Mon Observing and documenting

Tue Interviewing 1

Thur Interviewing 2

WEEK 2

Cultural probes and speculative objects by Guy Julier, DoD

Documents and other research participants

Visual methods by Anna Kholina, PhD candidate, DoD

WEEK 3

Ethnography and ethnographies

Speculative and activist research

Focus group discussion

Make sure you store the material you generate on this course in a form that you can retrieve and make sense of later!!