

San José State University
Department of Geography and Global Studies, College of Social Sciences
Geog. 240, Graduate Qualitative Research Methods, 47729-01, Fall 2017

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Kathrine Richardson, Associate Professor
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Office Hours:	Thursdays 1-3
Class Days/Times	WSQ 111, 6 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.

Course Catalogue Description

This course focuses on rigorous analysis of methods used by social scientists in assessing notions of human and physical geography. Application of determined qualitative techniques will include field methods that cover semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participatory action research, oral histories, textual analysis, and social surveys. We will also go over study development and evaluation. This will include discussion of individual student research proposals over the course of the term. This course is a graduate seminar that satisfies the SJSU Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

Course Description

Methods for conducting qualitative research are exceptionally varied, ranging from semi-structured interviews, surveys, participatory action research, textual analysis, oral histories to descriptive analyses of complex social interactions. The methods used depend on the questions they are designed to answer.

The goal of this course is to meet you wherever you are in the development of your research proposal. If you have not yet developed a topic, objectives or hypotheses, the class will serve to expose you to a rich variety of methods used to achieve research objectives, and it will move you forward in the clarification of your thesis topic.

If you have chosen a thesis topic and developed clear research questions and/or hypotheses, you will benefit greatly from the focus on feasible research methods needed to answer the questions you wish to study. The development of your methods section is where you really find out whether you have clearly developed and feasible research objectives. This is also your opportunity to convince your committee that you can do what you are setting out to do. Because Geography is a broad discipline, we will cover a wide range of qualitative techniques. Each student, however, is expected to become familiar with the full range of qualitative research strategies.

Course Learning Goals and Outcomes (CLO)

This seminar and writing course is designed to help you meet the following goals and outcomes:

CLO 1. The student will be able to understand and evaluate various research methods that may address the student's thesis question(s) and be able to peer review and critique various methodological approaches found in scholarly articles.

This will be achieved through student researching and analyzing published studies dedicated to methodologies as part of the journal article review mini assignment. Students will also enhance and sharpen their learning of possible appropriate methodologies through the weekly in-class exercise of class participation and discussion.

CLO 2. The student will be able to select and develop a valid research design appropriate for her/his research topic.

This will be achieved through students researching and developing an appropriate study design for their research project through a series of related written assignments. Students will periodically submit these draft written assignments to their advisor and course instructor for feedback and grade. Students will also seek feedback/ideas from class colleagues as part of individual class presentations. Based on advisor, instructor, and class colleague feedback, students will develop and submit a final written study design.

CLO 3. The student will be able to formulate and tailor the appropriate qualitative method to procure and analyze his/her data.

This will be achieved through students researching and developing an appropriate qualitative method(s) for their research project through a series of related written assignments. Students will periodically submit these draft written assignments to their advisor and course instructor for feedback and grade. Students will also seek feedback/ideas from class colleagues as part of an individual class presentation. Based on advisor, instructor, and class colleague feedback, students will develop and submit a final written methods section.

CLO 4. The student will be able to review and assess a range of methods used in the research field, and assess the strengths and limitations of her/his chosen methods.

This will be achieved through student researching and analyzing published studies dedicated to methodologies as part of the journal article review mini-assignment. Students will also enhance and sharpen their learning of a range of methodologies through the weekly in-class exercise of class participation, discussion, and having dialogue/exchanging ideas regarding other class colleagues' journal article reviews. Students will also develop a deepened understanding of various methodologies through the development and finalizing of their written methods assignments and "Final Reflections" during their individual final class presentation.

Required Texts

Hay, I. (editor) (2016) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. (Fourth Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0199010905. The text is available in softcopy at the SJSU Spartan Bookstore on the campus. You can also find new and used softcopies of the text on Amazon.com.

Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T. and S. French, (2016), *Key Methods in Geography*, (Third Edition) Sage: London/Thousand Oaks, Ca. ISBN 978-1-4462-9860-2. The text is available in softcopy at the SJSU Spartan Bookstore on the campus. You can also find new and used softcopies of the text on Amazon.com.

*I will also distribute readings in-class and via Canvas throughout the term.

Suggested Texts:

Emily Stier Adler and Roger Clark, (2015) *How it's done: an invitation to social research*, (Fifth Edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning. ISBN # 978-0-495-81329-3. You can find new and used softcopies of the text on Amazon.com. (This is an excellent introductory text to qualitative research.)

CREDIT HOURS

At SJSU, students are expected to spend at least two hours outside of class for every one hour of in-person class time. Because this is a three-unit course, you can expect to spend a minimum of **6 hours per week** completing class-related assignments in addition to the in-person class meetings. In addition to class attendance, participation, and general class preparation, some assignments may require work beyond the minimum 6 hours of work outside the classroom per week. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to perform well in this class.

Course Web Page via Canvas and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, will be uploaded through our class website on Canvas. Thus, you will shortly find all course resources on the Geog. 240 Canvas webpage using your 9-digit SJSU ID and password. Please check the website frequently for updated materials and communication. I will also send out emails directly to you via mysjsu. The “Re:” will read, “From the desk of Kathrine Richardson”. Please read this email as soon as you receive it since it will most likely contain important/updated information or additional instructions regarding an assignment and so on. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU. More detail about this will be available during the first day of class.

Assessment of Work: Regarding participation, you will be required to attend and participate in all class sessions as a presenter, a discussant, and/or a full member of a graduate seminar. You will also be required to present your final research proposal during the last two weeks of the term. It should be noted that the bulk of the course will include developing all the varied pieces that make up the overall study design and methods section for your thesis proposal. Many of these assignments will be shared with peers. You are expected to be in regular (at least every two weeks) contact with your thesis chair, as well as to appraise him/her of your progress and to solicit feedback. Several assignments will require initials (or an email sent to me *by your thesis/project chair*) when it is turned in. The final methods section must be reviewed and signed by your thesis chair when you turn it in on the day of our class final.

1. **Class Participation/Discussion/Peer Discussion – [20%] (CLOs 1 & 4)** This course is based on student interaction. You should expect to attend all class meetings. Your classmates and I value your insightful comments and perspectives. I will frequently lead the discussion, but all students are expected to read and participate. As well, I will assign in-class write-ups/questions to be reading for, and you must bring your responses to class as part of your participation points.
2. **Development of Appropriate Study Design and Methods – [50%] (CLOs 2, 3, & 4)** This is the main bulk of the work for the course. Thus, you will have a series of “mini-assignments” that relate to the specific components of a research study and its methodologies over the term. Each student will maintain frequent contact with his/her thesis chair, as well to apprise him/her of your progress, and to solicit feedback and input on the development of these assignments.
3. **Final Presentation – [10%] (CLOs 2, 3, & 4)** You will present a Powerpoint-facilitated explanation of your study proposal and pay particular attention to your selected methods followed by a question/critique period during the latter portion of the course.
4. **Final Study Design and Methods Section – [20%] (CLOs 2, 3, & 4)** This is the final version of your research study and methods (study design) that you have developed over the term. This version must be a polished draft which has incorporated the comments and suggestions of your instructor, your peers, and your thesis chair. The final submission of the study design will be 3,000 words or longer, exclusive of front and back materials, figures, tables, and/or appendices. All written work should be referenced and formatted according to APA style. It must be signed by your thesis chair before you submit the final study design during the final exam period. It is due during the final exam.

Grading Policy

Overall graded course requirements total 100 points. There is no “curve” for this course. Pluses and minuses are given. You receive the grade you earn through your own work and the effort you put into the class. Course grades will be determined using the following point values:

Weighting of assignments/evaluative elements:

Class Participation/Discussion	(20% in total)
Personal History Write-up	5%
Development of Appropriate Study Design & Methods	(50% in total)
Components:	
Objectives (Hypotheses/Researchable Question)	5%
Research Design	15%
Literature Review & Bibliography	15%
Data Collection & Analytic Methods	15%
Final Presentation	10%
Final study design section – <i>must be signed off by thesis/project chair</i>	20%

Grade Scale

Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade
95-100	A	77-79	C+
90-94	A-	74-76	C
87-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-86	B	60-69	D
80-83	B-	<60	F

Classroom Protocol

As your professor, I make a concerted effort to be prepared for class, and I expect that we conduct ourselves in a responsible and professional manner. While I know that emergencies can arise, I expect the same from you – that you arrive on time, read the materials, and are ready to participate in the day's activities. I encourage you to take notes either in writing or on a computer, but ask that you not multitask, surf the web or use cell phones while in class so that your full attention is devoted to our in-class activities and discussion. While missing a class should not adversely impact your grade, missing a few could have a negative impact, as there will be intermittent in-class assignments and activities in which you will be expected to participate. Finally, please address your instructor as Dr. Richardson.

Library Liaison:

The SJSU Library Liaison for Geography is Mr. Nyle Monday. If you have questions, you can contact him at nyle.monday@sjsu.edu or (408) 808-2041.

University Policies**Geography 240 Schedule of Seminar Topics and Readings**

(The schedule is subject to change with fair notice via announcement made in class, through your mySJSU email & Canvas.)

WK	Date	Seminar Topic	Readings	Notes
1	8/23	Course Introduction Overview and Importance of Qualitative Research Methods	Preface and Introduction of class Ch. 1 of Hay/Ch. 1 of Clifford	Students introduce their thesis research topics *Assignment 1 Distributed, Personal History Write-up
2	8/30	Ethics in Research	Ch. 2-3 of Hay/Ch. 3 & 6 of Clifford	Process of IRB submittal and review successful examples
3	9/6	Writing a Compelling Research Proposal	Ch. 5 of Hay/Ch. 1 of Clifford	Discuss writing a compelling research proposal *Assignment 1 due in class. *Assignment 2 Distributed, Hypothesis/Researchable Question & Research Design Proposals
4	9/13	Basic Principles on	Chapter 6 in	Discuss research design and rigor

		Research Design and and in class workshop on Hypothesis/Researchable Question and Research Design and Study Systems	Hay	Work on your Hypothesis/Researchable Question and Research Design Proposals
5	9/20	Conducting a successful literature review.	Chapter 4 of Clifford et al.	MLK Library session on conducting an effective literature review *Assignment #3 Distributed. Literature Review.
6	9/27	Interviewing and Oral Histories as appropriate methods	Chapters 8 and 9 in Hay Chapter 9 of Clifford et al.	Interviewing Workshop *Assignment #2 due in class.
7	10/4	The Case Study as an appropriate methodology	Chapter 7 of Hay Chapter 33 of Clifford et al.	
8	10/11	Textual/Discourse Analysis as an appropriate methodology	Ch. 13 & 14 of Hay Ch. 14 & 15 of Clifford et al.	In class workshop on Discourse Analysis watch and interpret Eve and the Fire Horse film *Assignment # 3 due in class. *Assignment #4 Distributed: Data Collection and Analytical Methods
9	10/18	In class workshop on methodology proposal		Work on your methodology proposal
10	10/25	Questionnaires as an appropriate methodology	Chapter 12 of Hay Ch. 8 of Clifford et al.	Developing and Distributing Survey Instruments Workshop
11	11/1	The Focus Group and PAR as appropriate methodologies	Chapter 10 & 17 of Hay Chapter 9 of Clifford et al.	Focus Group Workshop
12	11/8	No Class		Dr. Richardson @ NARSC conference in Vancouver, Canada

13	11/15	Interpreting and Communicating Research	Chapter 19-20 of Hay Chapter 5 of Clifford et al.	Writing and Communicating Research for Academe and the Public Workshop *Assignment # 4 due in class.
14	11/22	No Class		Thanksgiving Eve
15	11/29	Student Presentations		
16	12/6	Student Presentations		
	12/13	Final Class Reflections WSQ 111 6-8 p.m.		Final Study Design and Methods (signed off by your thesis chair) are due in class.

Select Bibliography

Clifford, Nicholas, Shaun French, and Gill Valentine, eds. *Key Methods in Geography*. 2d ed. London: SAGE, 2010.

Cloke, Paul, Ian Cook, Phillip Crang, Mark Goodwin, Joe Painter, and Chris Philo, eds. *Practicing Human Geography*. London: SAGE, 2004.

DeLyser, Dydia, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aiken, Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Human Geography*. London: SAGE, 2010.

Flowerdew, Robin, and David Martin, eds. *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2005.

Gomez, Basil, and J. P. Jones III, eds. *Research Methods in Geography: A Critical Introduction*. New York: John Wiley, 2010.

Pryke, Michael, Gillian Rose, and Sarah Whatmore, eds. *Using Social Theory: Thinking Through Research*. London: SAGE, 2003.

Shurmer-Smith, Pamela, ed. *Doing Cultural Geography*. London: SAGE, 2002.