

**San José State University**  
**College of Social Science, Department of Urban and Regional Planning**  
**47845, Qualitative Methods in Geographical Research, Fall, 2019**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor:	Kerry Rohrmeier, PhD
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Office Hours:	Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm, and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Wednesday 3:00-5:45pm
Classroom:	WSQ113

**Course Format**

This is a studio-style course with weekly class meetings spent working on real-world redevelopment project. A considerable portion of student work is to be done independently or in small groups, so it is imperative that students are familiar with course expectations and assigned responsibilities. This course meets in person but also makes effective use of the [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas since all materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found there.

**Course Description**

Development of skills required for geographical research and writing. Library research, oral presentations, variety of writing assignments dealing with diverse geographic problems. (3 units)

Qualitative research methods will be taught in a studio format so that students have an opportunity to engage the material collaboratively. Prologis along with the Port of Redwood City is seeking feasibility analysis for redevelopment of an underutilized site.

**Learning Outcomes and Course Goals**

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- CLO 1 *Define and use basic geographic tools and techniques.*  
Students will demonstrate understanding through weekly written assignments and the term studio project. These exercises involve writing, public policy research, GPS data point collection, GIS, and cartographic skills.
- CLO 2 *Demonstrate understanding of, and ability to, analyze and critique human and environment interactions.*

The course studio project will incorporate various social science qualitative methods to analyze the human environment connections of urban space to land use, demographics, and socioeconomics.

- CLO 3 *Demonstrate professional communication skills.*

Students will present the summary report to the client and industry professionals.

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbook

A traditional textbook is not required for this class. All readings are provided on Canvas.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities.

- Active participation in this course is mandatory and is especially important for once weekly courses (CLO1).
- There are 12 assignments which range from compiling sources, reviewing public policies, creating a GIS and mapping, writing surveys, interviewing design professional, and crafting a topic research report (CLO1 and 2). All of these assignments lead up to the final.
- The midterm exam is a written essay demonstrating your understanding of the knowledge gap between geographic theory and practice including a discussion of how this divide pertains to our term research project (CLO1 and CLO2).
- As a class will conduct a comprehensive feasibility study (CLO3). The project aims to address the socioeconomic issues of underutilized urban spaces by researching development potential, and examining appropriate placemaking techniques that encourage multimodality, inclusion, and vibrancy. The ultimate goal will be for the public-private partnership ‘client’ to one day use this baseline research as a tool for redevelopment. Various qualitative research methods will be covered and applied throughout the term such as observation, landscape analysis, mock surveys, interviews, GPS/GIS mapping, and spatial analysis will be required of this project (CLO1).

## Final Evaluation

The class will prepare a comprehensive report to be presented to the client and industry professionals (CLO3).

## Grading Information

Grades are determined on a points-based scale and include +/- grades. All students have the right, within a reasonable timeframe, to know their academic scores, to review their graded work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades. In keeping with this policy, and to help ensure that grading is responsive, all assignments are due as stated on the Course Schedule and Canvas. **Late work is not accepted in this course.** Please save all your work until after you have checked your final course grade. Then if you have questions about your final grade, you can bring in past work, and if necessary, corrections can be made.

	Points Possible
In-class Participation	100
12 Assignments	500

Midterm Exam	100
Final Report	200
Final Presentation	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000</b>

SCALE:

A plus = $\geq 98\%$	A = 94-97%	A minus = 90-93%
B plus = 87-89%	B = 84-86%	B minus = 80-83%
C plus = 77-79%	C = 74-76%	C minus = 70-73%
D plus = 67-69%	D = 60-66%	D minus = 51-59%
		F = $\leq 50\%$

**Classroom Protocol**

- All readings and preparatory assignments must be completed prior to our weekly in-class exercises for our weekly meetings to be effective.
- This course involves working in pairs and groups frequently, so civility and courteousness are always expected. While we may not agree with other perspectives or approaches stated, respect is mandatory.
- For group assignments it is expected that all members contribute equitably to any assignment.

**University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>.

# GEOG135 / Qualitative Methods in Geographical Research, Fall 2019, Course Schedule

This subject to change with fair notice, please check Canvas regularly for course announcements.

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/21 Online	<p>GETTING STARTED</p> <p>Review the syllabus to know what is expected of you this term.</p> <p>Read: Nietschmann, Bernard. (2001). Nietschmann syllabus: A vision of the field. <i>The Geographical Review</i> 91(1/2) 175-184.</p> <p><b>Assignment 1:</b> Drive to, walk by, and just stop to observe our project study site. Think about this existing place deeply and imagine what the future could hold! Craft your own unique vision statement, plus three more specific goals for this place moving forward. <b>Due 8/27</b></p>
2	8/28 In Person	<p>GEARING UP</p> <p>Read: Katz, Cindi. (1994). Playing the field: Questions of fieldwork in geography. <i>Professional Geographer</i> 46(1) 67-72.</p> <p>In class we will get familiar with the geospatial lab and software available. We will have an internal project overview presentation and discuss initial site observations. Then we will brainstorm and outlines how to get our class research study complete this term using basic project management organization.</p> <p><b>Assignment 2:</b> Briefly explain your understanding of and experience with working on a consulting-style project. Do you see value in learning methods through an applied pre-professional study opportunity? Take a survey to help me match topics to your research interest(s). Create a list of project-related questions to help you tackle next steps. <b>Due 9/3</b></p>
3	9/4 In Person	<p>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH THEORY</p> <p>Social science research issues of power, access, identity, and storytelling</p> <p>Read: Campbell, Lisa M., et al. (2008) Gatekeepers and keymasters: Dynamic relationships of access in geographical fieldwork. <i>The Geographical Review</i> 98(1): 97-121.</p> <p>In class: We will create a list of stakeholders (partners, agencies, advocacy groups, or public interests) who might be involved in redevelopment at this location. Then look up the stakeholders websites for plans and policies that support or oppose redevelopment at this site. We will compile a library on the course Canvas site where you can access this information all term.</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		<p><b>Assignment 3:</b> Conduct your own content analysis by reviewing these plans and policies. Some might be pro-redevelopment while others are anti-development. Which policies do you agree with? Why? Now think about reflexivity and evaluating issues of positionality and the bias you might encounter or bring to your role. <b>Due 9/10</b></p>
4	9/11 In Person	<p><b>KICK OFF – MEET THE CLIENT</b> You have been thinking about research few weeks. Now, you can learn why this is important and have an opportunity to ask detailed questions of those who intend to actually use your research.</p> <p><b>Assignment 4</b> – Tell me what you learned from our guest speaker. What do you intend to do to create a research report that you are proud of, and can confidently present at our final? If you were to hypothesize one recommendation for this site based on your initial background studies and in meeting with the client what would it be? <b>Due 9/17</b></p>
5	9/18 Online	<p><b>PLANNING YOUR RESEARCH</b> Advancing research from topics to questions</p> <p>Read <a href="#">Pages 35-48</a>: Booth et al. (1995). <i>The Craft of Research</i>. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.</p> <p><b>Assignment 5A &amp; 5B:</b> Create two printed [in color] survey instruments for use in class on <b>9/25</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #5A Create a minimum of Shortform Survey with 10 questions. The goal of this assignment is to create a survey that is objective.</li> <li>• #5B Create a Visual Preference Survey</li> </ul>
6	9/25 In Person	<p><b>RESEARCH METHODS</b> Using visual evidence to document cultural landscapes and ethnography: the participant observer as an insider.</p> <p>Read: Rose, Gillian. (2014). On the relation between “visual research methods’ and contemporary visual culture. <i>The Sociological Review</i> 62(1) 24-46.</p> <p>Read ‘Participant Observation: <a href="#">University of Oregon Methods Wiki</a></p> <p><b>You will present Assignments 6 and 7 in class on 10/2:</b> Visit the site again but at a very different time than before. If you previously went there on a weekday then go on a weekend, if you went there during the day then go at night or in the early morning. The key is to view how the space and place changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #6 Upload your finest field photos (specifically those which contrast between high use and low usage) and include associated metadata and captions.</li> <li>• #7 Journaling is an excellent way to document field research. Participant observation embeds the research in his/her subject and thus having ‘lived this’ he or she must keep extensive records. Reflect on your time in the field and submit your observations – detail matters!</li> </ul>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	10/2 In Person	<p>Interviews and discourse analysis</p> <p>Read ‘Semi-structured interviews’: <a href="#">University of Oregon Methods Wiki</a></p> <p><b>Assignment 8</b> has two parts:  #8A Create three questions you might ask in an interview with a key stakeholder regarding this project? One of the best ways to prepare for conducting this interview is to rehearse your interview with a classmate. Tell me how the classmate interviewee responded to your interview? Were all the questions clear? Did the answers offer detailed narratives and useful content which deepens your understanding? <b>Due 10/8</b></p> <p># 8B Select the question that proved most fruitful for use <b>in class on 10/9</b></p>
8	10/9 In Person	<p>INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL VISIT</p> <p>Unusual interviewees – friendship as a method; managing the corporate interview</p> <p>Read: Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. (2003) Friendship as method. <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> 9: 729-749.</p> <p>Read: Schoenberger, E. (1991). The corporate interview as a research method in economic geography. <i>Professional Geographer</i> 43(2) 180-189.</p> <p>You will interview an industry professional familiar with the project</p> <p><b>Assignment 9:</b> What did you learn from interviewing our guest? Thinking back if you had the opportunity to ask a follow up question what would it be? Why? Find examples of ‘good’ design ideas discussed which have been used elsewhere (place preference on examples that are local, regional, state, and then farther away). In learning about how these beneficial features can implemented do you think they make for applicable case studies for this project? <b>Due 10/15</b></p>
9	10/16 In Person	<p>Examining Surveys and Focus Groups</p> <p>Read ‘Focus Groups’: <a href="#">University of Oregon Methods Wiki</a></p> <p>Read <a href="#">36-47</a> Questionnaires: Lindsay, James M. (1997). <i>Techniques in Human Geography</i>. Routledge, London.</p> <p>Students will participate in a Mock Focus Group during class for participation points.</p>
10	10/23 In Person	<p><b>Midterm Exam:</b> You must clearly defend in a 750-word written essay the challenges that exist between theoretical study and field research as it pertains to place, and why both are important to effective geographic research.</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	10/30 In Person	<p><b>CHALLENGES</b> Research in conflict areas, addressing topics of opposition, and/or the challenges of research abroad</p> <p>Read: Dowler, Lorraine. (2001). The four square laundry: Participant observation in a war zone. <i>The Geographical Review</i>. 91(1/2) 414-422.</p> <p>Read <a href="#">Ch 12</a>: Turner, Sarah (2013). The silenced research assistant speaks her mind. <i>Red Stamps and Gold Stars: Fieldwork Dilemmas in Upland Socialist Asia</i>. UBC Press, Vancouver.</p> <p>As geographers we use maps to communicate scientific information about place. We will start class by dividing up research topics based on your interest area and begin a two-week mapping and spatial analysis study of the project site.</p> <p><b>Assignment 10 (Parts A &amp; B) to be presented in class on 11/13</b> #10A Even though we are able to travel to and have been to this site already, the challenge is to create maps using existing free data (such as Google Earth, Planet, USGS, Open Street Map, the City of Redwood City, ESRI, and the American Community Survey (census)) to describe EXISTING CONDITIONS in terms of <i>physical/geological environment, biological, transportation, demographics, socioeconomics, housing/jobs, climate, land uses past/present/future, cultural resources, public services, hydrology/water resources, and utilities/infrastructure.</i></p>
12	11/6 In Person	<p><b>DATA ANALYSIS</b></p> <p>Read <a href="#">26-29</a> Evaluating Data: Lindsay, James M. (1997). <i>Techniques in Human Geography</i>. Routledge, London.</p> <p>In class we will establish cartographic standards so that all maps are visually consistent, and students will continue working on their mapping assignments during class.</p> <p>#10B Expand on the existing condition basemaps you have created by adding in original data based upon your policy and stakeholder research, and from field visits. Use the Trackit app to collect new GPS data on your smartphone or borrow the department handheld GPS units. Create FINDINGS MAPS clearly identifying areas where constraints or issues exist? What spatial relationships were found? What is the proximity (and distance) of these issues to the redevelopment site? What does the map audience need to know?</p>
13	11/13 In Person	<p>The importance of mixed methods</p> <p>Read: Philip, L.J. (1998). Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research in geography – an impossible mixture? <i>Environment and Planning A</i> 30(2) 261-276.</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		<p>In class you will present your maps to the instructor and classmates for critique. Remaining class time will be spent revising these maps based on feedback.</p> <p><b>Assignment 11:</b> Submit the presented existing conditions and findings maps along with your final drafts in pdf format. <b>Due 11/15</b></p> <p>Upon completion of your cartographic work you will begin putting your research experience into words. Your topic research report will have the following sections: 1) purpose of study, 2) review of background literature, 3) list of policies that support the project and a list policies that challenge redevelopment at this location, 4) pertinent case studies and examples, 5) research methodology for your topic, 6) results, 7) a discussion of your findings followed by a bulleted list of actionable recommendations, and 8) a bibliography of all sources used in your topic report. This should be at least 8 single spaced pages having 1” margins on all sides in times new roman, 12-point font – the page minimum does not include figures (such as maps) nor bibliography entries. <b>Due 11/22</b></p>
14	11/20 In Person	<p><b>WRITING</b></p> <p>Read <a href="#">Part VI-End</a>: Geertz, Clifford. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i>. Basic Books, New York.</p> <p>Read <a href="#">Intro</a>: Barnes, Trevor and James Duncan. (1992) Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape. Routledge, London.</p> <p>You may use class time to continue writing and ask the instructor for technical writing suggestions.</p>
15	11/27 Online	<p><b>EDITING</b></p> <p><b>Assignment 12:</b> I will provide edits to your report on 11/27 and you will make final revisions by the <b>12/1 Due</b> date.</p>
16	12/4	<p><b>PRESENTATION &amp; PRACTICE</b></p> <p>I will compile the topic reports into a comprehensive research study and bring it to class on 12/4. Students will perform an editorial review of the printed, compiled report and use remaining class time to refine their presentation slides and practice presenting their findings for participation points.</p>
Final	12/17 12:15-2:30pm	<p>Students will present the research study findings and deliver the research study report to the client and industry professionals.</p>