"We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are." - Anais Nin

“Most schools and colleges spend too much time preparing students for careers and not enough preparing them to make social decisions. Most governments release a ton of data on economic trends but not enough on trust and other social conditions. In short, modern societies have developed vast institutions oriented around the things that are easy to count, not around the things that matter most.”

David Brooks

“There is hardly a week that passes when I don’t ask the unanswerable question: what am I now convinced of that will turn out to be ridiculous? And yet one can’t forever stand on the shore; at some point, filled with indecision, skepticism, reservation and doubt, you either jump in or concede that life is forever elsewhere.”  Arthur Miller
SOCW 581 – Winter 2017
Qualitative Research: Methods and Designs

Course Time: Tuesdays, 9:00 – 11:50
Course Location: SSW, Room 038

Instructor: Taryn Lindhorst, PhD, LCSW
Office: 225A
Office Hours: immediately after class or by appointment
Phone/Voicemail: 206-616-2152
Email: tarynlin@uw.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to both de-mystify the research process and to re-enchant it. We will closely examine research texts and processes, looking at the underlying question of how this research came to be before us and what skills in research methods it can teach us. At the same time, we will be exploring methods of re-enchanting research by unleashing our own creativity and passions in pursuit of research that is meaningful and makes a difference in the world.

As members of a profession, our first questions turn to ways of improving the lives of our clients, often through work that focuses on larger social systems and policies. This professional mandate forces us to consider not just the theoretical importance of our research, but its practical effects, both in its crafting and dissemination. These questions compel us to examine research in light of its relationship to issues of social justice and ethics.

The course assumes a basic understanding of philosophy of science issues related to ontology and epistemology. Interpretive research is epistemologically eclectic, so we will analyze examples of research from post-positivist, interpretivist/constructionist and critical perspectives. We will focus on the pragmatic ways in which qualitative/interpretive research informs, complements and contravenes dominant postpositivist (i.e., traditional quantitative) research.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will have acquired the following skills in theory and practice:

Theory Skills
1. Deepen your appreciation for the ways in which intensive, idiographic designs are a part of the scientific tradition.
2. Identify underlying epistemological assumptions of various qualitative designs.
3. Become conversant in basic methods of interpretive inquiry especially case studies, content analysis and discourse analysis.
4. Define characteristics of research purposes and designs appropriate to qualitative methods.

**Social Justice and Ethics**
1. Recognize complex issues of positionality and reflexivity within all research efforts.
2. Become familiar with issues of insider/outsider concerns as they relate to research with vulnerable populations.
3. Reflect on issues of cross-cultural awareness in multiple contexts of research.
4. Identify ethical issues that arise in the research enterprise, especially as these relate to small n, interpretive designs.

**Methodological Skills**
1. Critique and apply frameworks for assessing the quality of qualitative research.
2. Focus on writing skills that connect arguments to evidence.
3. Provide a rationale for the appropriate use of qualitative methods in relation to your own research interests.
4. Become more confident and fluent in talking about your ideas in connection to theoretical, epistemological and methodological concerns.

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**Three Important Things to Know about this Class**

**How We Learn**

Learning is both an individual and a communal activity. To foster an environment conducive to sharing what we know and more importantly what we don’t know, these are some guidelines that I use in my own learning process:

- Regard my views as a perspective onto the world, not the world itself.
- Take responsibility for how I engage with others by pushing myself to share my thoughts if I feel vulnerable and am holding back OR if I am jumping in too quickly to voice my ideas, I try to hold back and let others have a chance.
- Become not just a good listener, but an uncommonly good one by seeking understanding rather than affirmation of my beliefs.
- View my attention as an important (and limited resource). The world is full of distraction, and distraction is poison to deep thought. In service of this ideal, I ask that you leave your phones on DND during class. If you use an electronic device to take notes, give your learning your full attention by using Airplane Mode during class and opening only your note-taking file.
Self-Care

My self-care strategy is simple:

- FIRST PRIORITY: My health and the health of my family.
- SECOND PRIORITY: My family’s needs.
- THIRD PRIORITY: Everything else.

I will approach your needs from this same framework. That said, your presence in this class is essential for your own learning and for the learning of others. I know that emergencies come up, illness happens and sometimes others plan special events that require your presence. I am happy to work with you to accommodate these occurrences, particularly if you let me know in advance.

Flexible Structure

Please be advised that the paper syllabus handed out in the first class will likely be modified as the quarter progresses as we respond to the learning needs of the group. If due dates are changed or readings shifted, the course website will have all of the most up to date information. PLEASE CHECK THERE FIRST IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT DUE DATES OR READINGS!

Evaluation Methods

20%  **Sharing and Responding to Ideas (i.e., Participation in Seminar):** Seminars function through the sharing of insights and questions sparked by the readings and your past experiences. Since you are each being trained to be a teacher and researcher, it is important to learn how to express your ideas verbally and to provide feedback to others about their ideas. I will provide ways to prepare for participation in class and expect each of you to talk about your insights or questions based on the readings, while being mindful of group dynamics. If you miss 20% of the class (i.e., 2 sessions), you will receive no points for participation and will very likely fail the class.

80%  **Final Project:** The goal of this assignment is to 1) learn how to extract and organize information relevant to your research interests; 2) increase your knowledge of qualitative research and its contribution to your field of research, 3) strengthen your writing skills by synthesizing literature for a specific project, and 4) develop important research questions in your field. See Literature Review Resources document for specific resources for each sub-assignment.

1. (5%) **Identification of a research area** through use of affinity mapping exercise. Email me with a brief description of the area of focus for your literature review by January 6. We will negotiate the scope and focus of the literature review in email. **DUE DATE:** January 6 (before week 2)
2. (5%) Creating and organizing a preliminary listing of articles for your review, including at least 10 articles and 1 book that use qualitative methods. You will also need to create a project organizational system in Google Drive based on Chapter 3 of Garrard and share this with me. Please label your Masterfile "<<Paper Trail – [Your First Name]>>" (i.e., Paper Trail – Taryn).
   DUE DATE: January 17 (week 3)

3. (5%) Creation of PRISMA chart detailing the process of scoping your review. See pgs. 22 – 25 and 133-134 in Garrard.
   DUE DATE: January 24 (week 4)

4. (10%) Creation of an annotated bibliography
   The annotated bibliography should provide detailed information about the method and findings of each research report you will use in your literature review, including a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of this piece of research. We will discuss various models for creating the bibliography in class.
   DUE DATE: January 31 (week 5)

5. (5%) Matrix that compares across studies on methods evaluation and themes that you believe are important for understanding this body of literature. See Chapter 5 in Garrard for directions.
   DUE DATE: February 14 (week 7)

6. (15%) Presentation of Research – Create a 15 minute powerpoint presentation that summarizes your research area, the themes you have identified and what these mean for future research in this area. I will give you a separate handout on this.
   DUE DATE: Weeks 7 (February 14), 8 (February 21) and 9 (February 28) – to be determined in class.

7. (35%) Final literature review. Your final paper should be no more than 10 pages of content (i.e., tables and references not counted in this total). At a minimum, your paper should include a compelling introduction to the area of research you are reviewing (why should we care?), and end with the most relevant and important research questions that are suggested by your review.
   DUE DATE: March 10 (week 10)

Grading Criteria: Your grade will be based on your writing skills (organization, clarity, grammar, etc.); your “warranting” your claims, in other words, the provision of evidence to justify your conclusions; and your ability to analyze with a focus on the “internal consistency” (a la Carter & Little, 2007) of the research. Please see course website for UW Graduate School Grading Scale.

Late Assignments, Missed Classes and Incompletes
All assignments are due on the date noted. In fairness to students who turn their work in on time, late assignments will receive a minimum 5% deduction which may increase depending on
the circumstances. You must make PRIOR arrangements with me to turn in an assignment late with minimal penalty. Assignments more than 1 week late will not receive credit unless PRIOR arrangements have been made with the instructor. Incompletes will only be given to students in good standing as of the eighth week.

Course Readings


Additional required readings will be available online.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: January 3

*Situating Social Work and Social Science*

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 1


Supplemental Readings


Session 2: January 10
Big Data or Big Ideas?

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 2

Empirical Example:

Supplemental Readings
Jovanovic, G. (2011). Toward a social history of qualitative research. History of the Human Sciences, 24, 1-

Session 3: January 17
Contrasting Paradigms and Their Views on Rigor

Alvesson & Sköldberg, pp. 300-319.

Empirical Example:

Supplemental Readings


### Session 4: January 24

**Self-As-Research-Instrument: Insider/Outsider Dilemmas**


**Empirical Examples:**


**Supplemental Readings**


Session 5: January 31

Data as Given: Content Analysis and Grounded Theory

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 3


Empirical Examples:


Supplemental Readings


Session 6: February 7

Power and its discontents: Critical Theory Applications

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 5


Empirical Examples:


**Supplemental Readings**


**Session 7: February 14**

*Decoding Language: The Craft of the Story*

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 7


**Empirical Examples:**


**Supplemental Readings**


**Session 8: February 21**

*Everyday World as Problematic*

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 7

**Empirical Examples:**

**Supplemental Readings**

**Session 9: March 10**
*On Reflexive Interpretation*

Alvesson & Sköldberg, Chapter 8

**Session 10: March 17**
*Surviving a Qualitative or Mixed Methods Dissertation*

UW School of Social Work Policies

Academic Accommodations

Services for Students with Disabilities
At the SSW we are committed to ensuring access to classes, course material, and learning opportunities for students with disabilities. If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disability Resources for Students, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924/V, 206-543-8925/TTY. If you have a letter from the office of Disability Resources for Students indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for this class.

Religious Accommodations
Students who expect to miss class or assignments as a consequence of their religious observance will be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete their academic responsibilities. Absence from classes for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for the course work required during the period of absence. It is the responsibility of the student to provide the instructor with advance notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Students who are absent shall be offered an opportunity to make up the work, without penalty, within a reasonable time, as long as the student made prior arrangements. Pre-arranged absences for religious observances will not be counted against class participation.

Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The School of Social Work has developed a policy on Academic Honesty which contains a fuller explanation of plagiarism and suggestions for avoiding it online at: http://depts.washington.edu/sswweb/students/docs/AcademicHonesty.pdf. This policy states that plagiarism occurs under the following circumstances:

1. Using another writer's words without proper citation.
2. Using another writer's ideas without proper citation.
3. Citing the source but reproducing the exact words of a printed source without quotation marks
4. Borrowing the structure of another author's phrases or sentences without crediting the author from whom it came.
5. Borrowing all or part of another student's paper or using someone else's outline to write the paper.
6. Using a paper writing "service" or having a friend write the paper.

The student conduct code of the University of Washington requires students to practice "high standards of academic and professional honesty and integrity." In addition, the School of Social Work's academic standards specify that students may be dismissed for "academic cheating,
lying, or plagiarism." Students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism will be confronted directly by the instructor, who will inform the program director and the assistant dean for student affairs. Instructors will not award credit for work that has been plagiarized. The instructor, director and assistant dean will determine if the student's actions warrant disciplinary action, which may include probation or dismissal.