

STPS 557 Qualitative Research Methods in Science and Technology Studies

Semester: Spring 2015

Date: 09.40-12:30, Tuesday

Location: Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences A Building, Room F104

Instructor: Dr. Arsev U. Aydinoglu, aaydinog@metu.edu.tr, MM Building Room 320

Office hours: By appointment

Registration restrictions: This class is designed for Science and Technology Policies students; however, anyone who is interested in qualitative research can take the class with the consent of the instructor.

Minimum student level: Graduate.

Examination of the paradigmatic underpinnings that drive research in interpretivistic traditions. Integrative study of the role of theory, various theoretical traditions and methods within interpretivistic science and technology studies research. Emphasis on classic and contemporary literature and on conducting primary research across the various fields represented by the Science and Technology Policies Program.

Course Description & Goals

This course is an introduction to qualitative methods of social research. This course addresses both the practical “how to” dimensions of qualitative methodology and method, and the epistemological and theoretical commitments and stances that are tied to these methods. The course will (1) provide students with an introductory understanding of qualitative inquiry in the social sciences; (2) provide an opportunity for students to learn how to conduct and critique research that uses qualitative methodology; (3) understand research ontologies and epistemologies driving qualitative research perspectives that include certain assumptions about humans; (4) provide an opportunity for students to conduct fieldwork and begin using tools for data collection such as interviewing, focus group interviews, field-based observations; (5) analyze qualitative data. At the conclusion of the course you should have an *introductory knowledge* of the use of qualitative methods.

As a result of this course, you should:

- Understand the ontologies and epistemologies driving interpretivistic research perspectives.
- Understand how these paradigmatic assumptions define the role of theory, impact research design, analysis and criteria for research excellence.
- Have a working knowledge of the major theoretical traditions within humanistic paradigm research.
- Know the major humanistic research methods within Science and Technology Policy Studies research.
- Have some familiarity with the available Science and Technology Policy Studies resources.
- Be able to apply the principles discussed in the course by carrying out a research project.

Requirements:

You are expected to check e-mail frequently for communication and information about additional assignments. Your participation in class discussions based on the readings, your observations and experiences, and your intellectual examination of the issues will be driver for this class. You share in the responsibility for making sure that material from all disciplines within the Program and from a variety of perspectives is covered.

Grading

50%--Conference-quality individual research paper (35% final completed paper, 15% presentation): You will write and present a research paper to submit to a conference. The paper should demonstrate:

- Development of short literature reviews examining a contemporary science and technology phenomenon through a humanistic perspective regarding your research topic.
- Development of research plan to answer a humanistic science and technology studies research question.
- Data collection through either four semi-structured interviews or one focus group interview or two two-hour observation
- Analysis of data and development of the understanding of how to answer research questions in ways appropriate to the guiding paradigm.

20%--Field observations and Reflections: You will conduct one observation (preferably related to your research proposal) in a natural setting for two hours. Unless you have a particular research question in which you are interested, the question you need to address is “*What’s going on here?*” (Consider using this observation as a pilot for your proposal and integrating the observation into the proposal). Use the first five minutes to write a somewhat detailed description of the site. Then, pay attention to the people, how they look, how they interact, their behavior, etc. While on site, you will take condensed field notes. (Those taken on the field: reminders to yourself of things seen and heard. If you are writing too much, you won’t be able to observe what is going on around you). Allow yourself the hour immediately after the observation to prepare your expanded field notes. (These are extensive notes. Write all you remember, but try not to make value judgments). When taking notes, I recommend that you divide the page in two columns. On one column write your observations, on the other jot down your thoughts and feelings.

You should turn in: (1) Your condensed field notes; (2) your expanded field notes; (3) a brief account of your observations; did you find an answer to your initial question? If so, what is your answer? If not, what precluded you from answering the question?, etc.; (4) a written reaction to the project including: Reflections on the experience of being an observer (what you learned about being an observer, about yourself, and about your comfort level with this method).

15%--Discussion lead and participation in class discussions: During the semester, each student will lead a discussion topic from the assigned readings. This is not a formal presentation. The objective of the discussion lead assignment is for each student to lead a critical discussion of reading assignments, reviewing the main topic of the paper, methodology analysis, and critique of results. All students are expected to lead at least once and participate in all discussions.

10%-- Epistemological approach paper: Identify two or three core assumptions related to qualitative research. Describe each as precisely as you can and evaluate its validity. Focus more on evaluation than on description. Include in your discussion as many references or illustrations from readings and class sessions as you find relevant. Suggested length: 5 to 7 typewritten pages.

5%--Seminar reflection paper: Throughout the semester you are expected to attend a seminar and write a reflection paper that not only summarizes the lecture but also criticizes the main arguments and the methodology of the study. Suggested length: 2 to 3 typewritten pages.

Style: I prefer APA style (www.apastyle.org) in my academic writings, you are free to use any style you want to. It would be better to adapt a style common in your own discipline.

Required readings:

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd. ed.). California: Sage.

McCracken, G., (1998). *The long interview*. California: Sage.

Patton, M.Q., (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (3rd. ed.). California: Sage.

Recommended readings:

Goffman, E., (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Random House.

Schutz, A., (1967). *Phenomenology of the social world*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T., (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Doubleday Dell.

Blummer, H., (1969) "Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method. California: University of California Press.

Geertz, C., (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

All books can be found in the METU Library System or at the photocopier @ Çarşı. Furthermore, you will be expected to do shorter readings throughout the semester. The pdf versions of the articles will be provided by the instructor.

Student Conduct

Remember that plagiarizing material is considered a serious violation of ethics in the academic world. Any direct quotes (including Web sources) should have proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation). Summaries of ideas and information from other sources should be cited. (The exception is material that is common knowledge.) All work should be original. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in an F for the course, and the student may be referred to the Dean of the Institute of Social Sciences. (Since you are training to be researchers and professors, you will want to make certain that you follow the correct ethical procedures of your chosen field.) In a nutshell, don't be stupid!

Tentative Schedule

| Week | Topic | Readings / Assignments |
|-------------|--|--|
| 1 | Course Introduction, Traditions of Inquiry Phenomenology The Paradigmatic Underpinnings Of Qualitative Research | Gurwitsch – The Life World Gurwitsch – The Common Sense World Guba – The Paradigm Dialogue Patton – 1-130 Corbin & Strauss – 1-44 |
| 2 | Symbolic Interactionism SI or Not? | Blummer – 1-77 Goffman – Presentation of Self in Everyday Life |
| 3 | Methods: Interviewing Discussion guide exercise | McCracken – The Long Interview Patton – 339-429 Corbin & Strauss – 332-347 EPISTEMOLOGY PAPER DUE |
| 4 | Methods: Interviewing Interviewing exercise | McCracken – The Long Interview |
| 5 | Methods: Observation Getting ready for field work | Patton – 259-339 Corbin & Strauss - |
| 6 | Methods: Focus group interviews | Morgan – Focus groups in qualitative research |
| 7 | Qualitative Design Translating Paradigm into Method | Patton – 207-257 & 431-589 Corbin & Strauss – 65-117 Glaser & Strauss – Grounded Theory Oktay – Grounded Theory Haley – Organization as Source |
| 8 | Proposal Workshop | Higgs – Being a Methodological Space Cadet |
| 9 | Case Study | Yin – Case Study Research FIELD OBSERVATION PAPER DUE |
| 10 | Data Analysis In-class coding exercise | Corbin & Strauss – 65-295 Ryan – Data management and analysis methods SEMINAR REFLECTION PAPER DUE |
| 11 | Writing up qualitative research | |
| 12 | Research Presentation | |
| 13 | Research Presentations | FINAL PAPER DUE |