Course Code & Title: LISS004 Introduction to Qualitative Research

Convenor(s): Dr Kinga Kozminska, Birkbeck, University of London

Institution: Queen Mary University of London
Department: LISS DTP

Academic Year: 2017-18
Term: Spring

Number of Sessions: 8
Length of Session(s): 2 hours

Day, Date: Wednesday 17 January 2018
           Wednesday 24 January 2018
           Wednesday 31 January 2018
           Wednesday 7 February 2018
           Wednesday 14 February 2018
           Wednesday 28 February 2018
           Wednesday 7 March 2018
           Wednesday 14 March 2018
Start : End: 1500 : 1700
Room Location: Room 101 Graduate Centre, Queen Mary University of London, E1 4DH

Enrolment Link: [https://goo.gl/c95XvL](https://goo.gl/c95XvL) (You may be prompted to log into SkillsForge)

Course Description:
This course provides PhD students in social sciences with an introduction to some key principles and procedures in qualitative research methodology. It covers a range of methods, starting with an overview and later, moving to data collection and analysis. Through group discussions and analysis of selected ethnographies, case studies, etc., students will learn about fieldwork strategies and challenges they can anticipate and solve in fieldwork settings. Students will also learn how to design and analyse their own research projects.

Course Outline:

1. Qualitative research methods: an overview- 17 January
This session introduces students to qualitative epistemologies in order to identify some of the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and considers briefly how they could be incorporated usefully within one research design. The session will introduce students to the expanding range of research methods available to qualitative researchers and will briefly explain what these are and what types of data they generate. These include ethnographic and case study approaches, interviews, observations, visual methods, online methods, documentary research, and secondary analysis of existing qualitative datasets.

   Texts to read in advance:
London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership
Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

online:
http://csde.washington.edu/~scurran/files/readings/590QM/Week%201/Becker%20Article.pdf


2. Ethnography and participant observation - 24 January
This session will introduce students to two key contributors to social science research, Clifford Geertz and Howard Becker (renowned anthropologist and sociologist respectively). Both of the readings unpick the process of generating data for ethnographic and observational research studies and point to some of the ways in which we can read and critique (as well as conduct) ethnographic and observational work and assess its quality.
This session will also focus on what ethnographic and observational approaches can add to the methodological toolkit and will set out how these approaches serve to provide social science knowledge (Johnstone 2000).

The readings will be discussed alongside some excerpts taken from ethnographies, which will be provided in class.

Texts to read in advance:

3. Qualitative interviews: What’s useful about interview data? – January 31
This session explores the relationship between qualitative interviews and ideological constructions of discourse. We will start with Briggs to better understand the place of interviewing in the process of knowledge production. We will then go on to Wilmott and Young’s (1962) classic study of Family and Kinship in East London in order to examine the potential of qualitative research (primarily interviews) to ask questions about, and to document family, community, ethnic and class relations in an urban working-class context. This session will show how qualitative research offers grounds for critiquing social policy. Paul Thompson’s interview of Michael Young will not only show how Young, the researcher, reflected on the rigour of his research, but it will also reveal what kinds of questions a narrative interviewer might ask and how this raw piece of data would look. In the last part of the session, we will also start to note questions and issues arising in the course so far.
Texts to read in advance:


4. Analysing interview data – February 7
In this session, we will learn how to analyse interview data. We will discuss how to interpret interview data in relation to sociolinguistic patterns and social relations and how to deal with theoretical problems related to interview data. We will undertake small group work in which we will examine extracts from interview data. We will identify themes and sub-themes within these extracts.
We will trace the process of ordering, analysing and interpreting data in one small data set.

Texts to read in advance:


Additional reading:


5. Approaches to discourse data – February 14
Communication involves much more than the content of the words we use, and interviews, for example, entail much more than the reporting of facts and opinions. Most qualitative data consists of language, but how far do our interpretations usually reckon with the way that language works? This session will introduce you to techniques for analysing the subtle ways in which talk affects and expresses attitudes, identities and social relationships.

Text to read in advance:


6. Discourse data analysis – February 28
In this session, students will analyse a video of interaction, applying the approaches discussed in the previous week. The readings provide illustrations of such an analysis and further our understanding of spoken discourse.

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Texts to read in advance:


7. Constructing an argument in ethnographic research - March 7
In this session, we will focus on how to construct an argument in ethnographic research. We will engage with Michael Burawoy’s classic 1998 paper, ‘The extended case method’ (Sociological Theory 16/1: 4-33). This compares the key steps involved in building an empirical argument in ‘positive’ and ‘reflexive science.’ Next, Heller et al. (2017) will help us understand how to write the story of our research.

Texts to read in advance:

  http://www.jstor.org/stable/202212

8. Qualitative methods in students’ own projects – March 14
In this session, we will discuss students’ own projects.

Eligibility:

You must be a PhD student at either King’s College London, Queen Mary University of London, or Imperial College London, using social science methodologies.

Pre course preparation:

Each session requires reading – please see the sessions above for specific guidance on the reading each week.

Number of students:

55