



# London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership

## Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

<b>Course Code &amp; Title</b>	LISS004D Qualitative Methods – Distance Learners				
<b>Convenor(s)</b>	Dr. Jessie Speer, jlspeer@syr.edu				
<b>Institution</b>	King's College London	<b>Department</b>	Geography		
<b>Academic Year</b>	2018-19	<b>Term</b>	Summer		
<b>Number of sessions</b>	8	<b>Research Platform</b>	Core Methods Training	<b>Length of Session(s)</b>	One-hour webinar Must have watched two-hour lecture capture
<b>Day, Date</b>		<b>Start : End</b>		<b>Room Location</b>	
1. Tuesday 7 May 2019 2. Tuesday 14 May 2019 3. Tuesday 21 May 2019 4. Tuesday 28 May 2019 5. Tuesday 4 June 2019 6. Tuesday 11 June 2019 7. Tuesday 18 June 2019 8. Tuesday 25 June 2019		1000 - 1100		Online only	
<a href="https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/2220095793817841675">https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/2220095793817841675</a>					
<b>Enrolment Links:</b>	<a href="https://goo.gl/QRyDx7">https://goo.gl/QRyDx7</a> You may be prompted to log into SkillsForge Details on when courses open for booking can be found here: <a href="https://liss-dtp.ac.uk/our-training-programme/">https://liss-dtp.ac.uk/our-training-programme/</a>				

This version of the course will be delivered via a weekly webinar. Students who sign up should watch the recording from the previous week, complete the weekly assignments, then participate in the weekly webinar on the following Tuesday. The webinar will deal only with the topics covered by the preceding week's lecture.

**Course Description:** This course introduces PhD students to key principles and procedures in qualitative research methodology. It covers a range of methods, with a special focus on data collection and analysis, as well as hands-on methods practice to help further students' own research projects. The readings for this course will give students practical guidance on how to use qualitative methodologies from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Examples of qualitative social science research and writing will also be provided and discussed in class. As the class is highly interactive and participatory, students will be expected to discuss their own research and methods, engage with the readings, and undertake short assignments aimed at improving their methodological skills. Assignments should be completed before the following week's class, and students should come to class prepared to discuss their work.

**Eligibility:** This course is largely restricted to students from small departments that do not offer their own in-house qualitative methods training. Please email [liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk) before signing up if this course has not been recommended to you by your department or supervisor.

**Pre-course Preparation:** Answer the “five questions” identified in the readings for week one, and identify your potential data sources.

**Number of Students:** 25

## Course Outline

### I. The fundamentals of qualitative research

#### 1. Introductions and overview,

This session introduces students to the overall aims and requirements of the course and provides an opportunity for students to discuss their own research questions, methods, and desired outcomes for the course. The session will introduce students to a range of approaches to qualitative methodology, and the basic question of how and why to choose a research method. Come prepared to answer Mason’s “five questions” outlined in chapter one, and to identify your potential data sources as outlined in chapter three.

**Required readings:** Mason, J. (2002). Chapter 1, “Finding a focus and knowing where you stand” and Chapter 3, “Data sources, methods, and approaches” in *Qualitative researching*.

**Assignment:** After completing the readings for next week, write a short statement identifying what kind of knowledge you are interested in producing, and any ethical barriers you will have to address in your research.

#### 2. Knowledge and ethics,

This session introduces students to foundational questions about the nature of knowledge production and the ethics of conducting social scientific research. Subjects covered include reflexivity, social justice research, different ways of knowing, including positivist, humanist, realist, and interpretivist, and a discussion of research ethics and methodological rigour. We will also engage in-class discussion of topics not covered in the readings, including standpoint epistemology, embodied knowledge, collective knowledge, the difference between theory and empirics, and the problem of speaking for others.

**Required readings:** Rossman, G. B., and Rallis, S. F. (2003). Chapter 2, “The researcher as learner” and Chapter 3, “The researcher as competent and ethical” in *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*.

**Assignment:** After completing the readings for next week, conduct an ethnographic observation of a place or phenomenon of your choosing. This can include online spaces, public events, or intimate sites. Observe and take notes for one hour and write a short reflection afterwards about the experience.

## II. Data collection

### 3. Ethnography

This session introduces students to the practical aspects of conducting ethnography, with a focus on observation and notetaking, and the nature of ethnographic knowledge. Excerpts taken from classic ethnographies will be provided in class, along with an in-class discussion of topics not covered in the readings, including participatory action research, embodied ethnography, and visual and digital methods.

**Required readings:** Emerson, R., Fretz, R., and Shaw, L. (1995). Chapter 1, “Fieldnotes in ethnographic research” and Chapter 2, “In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes” in *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*.

**Assignment:** After completing the readings for next week, develop an interview plan and a list of questions. Students who have already received approval from their university’s ethics committee have the option to conduct an interview, which can take place in person, over the phone, or via Skype.

### 4. Interviews

This session covers the basics of interview design, including defining the sample, recruiting participants, structured and semi-structured interviews, designing research questions and scripts, building rapport, audio and video recording, and the importance of listening. Excerpts taken from classic interview-based studies will be provided in class, along with an in-class discussion of topics not covered in the readings, including online methods, focus groups, qualitative survey research, and mixed methods.

**Required readings:** King, N., Horrocks, C., and Brooks, J. (2018). Chapter 4, “Designing an interview study” and Chapter 5, “Carrying out qualitative interviews” in *Interviews in qualitative research*.

**Assignment:** After completing the readings for next week, identify any archival materials you might use for your research, specifically listing archives and/or databases you will consult and why, and what kinds of materials you will be looking for in each.

### 5. Archives

This session covers the basics of archival research, including the nature of public archives, official documents, media sources, historiography, primary and secondary sources, the reliability of source material, and oral history. Excerpts taken from classic archive-based studies will be provided in class, along with an in-class discussion of topics not covered in the readings, including the social history of the archive as an institution, non-traditional archives, and electronic records.

**Required readings:** Berg, B. (2001). Chapter 8, “Unobstrusive measures in research” and Chapter 9, “Historiography and oral traditions” in *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*.

**Assignment:** After completing the readings for next time, conduct a content analysis of some material you have collected for your own research. This can include either the field notes you developed in week two or

the interview from week three (if you conducted one). Identify any overarching themes in the text/s and what they might reveal about the object of your research.

### **III. Data analysis**

#### **6. Content analysis**

This session covers the basics of content analysis, including developing a framework for analysis, involving research participants, indexing, sorting, and using software in coding, and assessing the reliability of data. In class, we will undertake small group work in which we examine extracts from interview data, identifying themes and sub-themes related to one substantive research area. We will also discuss topics not covered in the reading, such as narrative analysis and grounded theory.

**Required readings:** Bazeley, P. (2013). Chapter 4, “Read, reflect, and connect: Initial explorations of data” and Chapter 5, “Codes and coding, principles and practice” in *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*.

**Assignment:** Choose an original text—perhaps a text you have already collected for your own research project, such as a news item, government document, or digital source—and conduct a discourse analysis of the material, analysing what the language reveals about the object of your study.

#### **7. Discourse analysis**

This session covers the basics of content analysis, including distinct approaches to the concept of discourse, how discourse shapes the construction of ideology, power, and social relationships, the role of the analyst, critical discourse analysis, and intertextuality. In class, we will undertake small group work in which we critically examine a text to identify what it might reveal about its larger discursive field and about society. We will also cover topics not included in the readings, including the reading “against the grain,” subaltern theory, and non-representational theory.

**Required readings:** Jørgensen, M. W., and Phillips, L. J. (2002). Chapter 1, “The field of discourse analysis” and Chapter 3, “Critical discourse analysis” in *Discourse analysis as theory and method*.

**Assignment:** After you have read for next week, choose a favourite piece of qualitative social science writing and reflect on its writing style. How is it organised? Does it use metaphor, anecdote, or other creative techniques? How do the authors approach the literature review and theoretical argumentation? Write your own creative anecdote based on your research.

#### **8. Writing as method**

This session covers the basics of qualitative social science writing, including writing as an act of interpretation and knowledge production, writing and reflexivity, writing strategies, and narrative forms. In class, we will discuss students’ unique writing habits and share our own written work. We will also cover topics not included in the readings, including the challenges of co-writing, developing a literature review, and writing theory.

**Required readings:** Anzul, M., Downing, M., Ely, M., and Vinz, R. (2003). Chapter 2, “What is there about writing?” and excerpt on anecdote from Chapter 3, “Creating forms: Informing understanding” in *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*.