“Methodology can only bring us reflective understanding of the means which have demonstrated their value in practice by raising them to the level of explicit consciousness; it is no more the precondition of fruitful intellectual work than the knowledge of anatomy is the precondition of “correct” walking.”

-Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*

“The only people who end up actually believing and, goddess forbid, acting on the ideological doctrines of disembodied scientific objectivity – enshrined in elementary textbooks and technoscience booster literature – are nonscientists, including a few very trusting philosophers.”

-Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*

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**Course Description:**

In a world of alternative facts, big data, and even artificial intelligence for voice mimicry, how do human geographers (and fellow social scientists) produce data and draw meaningful conclusions about the world? This course is a graduate-level introduction to qualitative research methods in the social sciences. We will both assess the written work of others and engage in our own research design, learning how to formulate questions, identify indicators, choose appropriate methods, and analyze data.

**Learning Goals:**

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand systematic practices for designing and assessing the validity of intensive qualitative research
2. Be able to empathetically critique the research designs of others
3. Have designed, conducted, analyzed, and written up a pilot piece of qualitative research

**A Note on Theory:**

This course assumes some basic familiarity with geographical (and cognate social science) approaches to epistemology. Because our primary goal is to acquaint you with the “how” and “why” of particular methods for generating and analyzing qualitative data, we will not spend much deal of time rehearsing debates about positivism, constructivism, the post-structural turn, and so forth. Regardless of your own epistemological approach(es), an appreciation for these ongoing debates about how and why we generate knowledge is critical in order to engage with the work of all of your colleagues.

**A Note on Assignments:**

Students in this course come with a variety of backgrounds, needs, and motivations. I want this class to be as useful as possible for you, within the broad confines of the learning goals described above. The onus is on you to let me know if:

- there are topics you want to cover that aren’t currently planned
- some assignments could be reconceptualized to better contribute to your research progress

This does not mean that I will allow an endless variety of custom modifications of assignments. However, if there is a specific need/interest of a subset of students, modifications are possible.

**Assessment:**
Participation (55%)
Reading prep sheets and discussion prompts (25%)
Project portfolio (60%)

- **Participation:** Includes showing up on time, with the assigned readings completed, and copies of the readings for the day in hand/on device, and actively engaging in class discussion/activities. It also includes presenting your draft portfolio elements intermittently.

- **Reading prep sheets:** The format of a methods seminar requires that students engage in the deep reading of assigned texts. Reading groups are designed to encourage reading and ongoing group debates in a twice-weekly seminar where reading response papers would become burdensome. Students will be assigned to a reading group of 5-6 people. Beginning in week 3, each student will come to class with his or her completed physical copy of the reading prep sheet according to his or her assigned role.

- **Discussion prompts:** For some class meetings, the texts or the format planned do not lend themselves to the reading group format. On these days, you will either be assigned a specific reading assignment task (noted with * in the schedule), or post a substantive (100-150 word) discussion comment, question, or critique to the whole class Canvas Discussion board by 9 pm the day before each class (noted with a “d” in the schedule). We will use discussion questions to get a sense of which topics are most interesting and confounding for you. Prompts are graded “complete”/”needs improvement”/”not submitted”.

- **Project portfolio:**
Over the quarter, you will complete a series of assignments to guide you in developing a research project, for which you will actually do research, analysis, and write up the results. Further details will be finalized following our discussion in Week 1.
Tentative elements:
- Part 1: Problem framing
- Part 2: Research question/hypothesis
- Part 3: Observation or documents plan
- Part 4: Interview sampling and script
- Part 5: Focus group sampling and script
- Part 6: Pilot report and data transcripts
- Part 7: Analysis

**COURSE MATERIALS:**
Readings will be drawn from a variety of books and academic journals. Those not available for you to download directly through the UO libraries or directly access on the web will be posted on Canvas, except for the following which you should purchase:


**Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software:**
In Weeks 8-9 we will work on analysis of data, including transcribing and coding. I will introduce you to free and excellent transcription software, but qualitative coding software has a price tag.
There are 5 machines in the Kariel lab with copies of Atlas.ti that can be used for this purpose.

*Those who will continue doing qualitative work are strongly encouraged to purchase their own student license* for a qualitative data analysis software (MaxQDA is your instructor’s personal choice, but Atlas.ti and Nvivo are also good standard options that will work well). I will provide some orientation to these tools and choices as the quarter progresses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes/Assignment due dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>Introductions: Making this course work for you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 April</td>
<td>The value and logic of qualitative approaches</td>
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<td>II.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Survey the field: reviewing successful NSF proposal methods sections</td>
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<td>12 April</td>
<td>How to: Secondary data sources, primary data management</td>
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<td>III.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>17 April</td>
<td>A glimpse into a dissertation: From question to method to data to write-up (Guest: Leslie McLees)</td>
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<td>19 April</td>
<td>A glimpse into a proposal and the art of proposal writing</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 1 due</td>
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<td>IV.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>4.1 Linking questions and hypotheses to cases</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>26 April</td>
<td>4.2 Samples, operationalization and indicators</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 2 due</td>
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<td>V.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>Making sense of documents and archives</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 May</td>
<td>The continuum of observation</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>(Proposed 4 May)</td>
<td>Ethics and IRB</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>10 May</td>
<td>Organizational and event ethnography</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 3 due</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Interviewing Part 1</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>17 May</td>
<td>Interviewing Part 2</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 4 due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>VI.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Data reduction and coding</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 5 due</td>
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<td>29 May</td>
<td>Coding workshop and interpretation</td>
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<td>31 May</td>
<td>Writing Ethnography (Guest: Prof. Hannah Appel, UCLA)</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 6 due</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>Visual analysis</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>7 June</td>
<td>The ethics of writing</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Monday, June 11</td>
<td>Final presentations 12:30</td>
<td>Portfolio Part 7 due</td>
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d: discussion prompt due on Canvas discussion board; RP: Normal reading prep sheets due in class
*: Specific reading tasks will be given, normal reading prep sheets not due

**TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE:**
**INTRODUCTION:**

1.1 Introductions and course organization

1.2 The value and logic of qualitative approaches


**TECHNICAL INTERLUDE:**

2.1 Surveying the state of methods in human geography: Reviewing successful NSF proposal methods sections (Student-led, Prof. Johnson at AAG)

- Self-directed reading assignment: Locate 2 NSF proposals

2.2 How to: primary data management and secondary data sources (tentative)

- Reading TBA

**THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES: PROBLEMS, METHODS, AND EVIDENCE**

3.1 From question to method to data to write-up: A glimpse into a dissertation


3.2 A glimpse into a proposal and the art of proposal writing

- Also peruse the “Nuts and bolts”, “Style”, and “Examples” pages on the IIS Dissertation Proposal website: https://iis.berkeley.edu/node/304

**OPERATIONALIZING THE PROBLEM: CASES & INDICATORS**

4.1 Linking questions and hypotheses to cases


4.2 Samples, operationalization, and indicators


**COLLECTING AND GENERATING EVIDENCE**
5.1 Making sense of documents and archives
- Further TBA
- Weisser, Florian. 2014. “Practices, politics, performativities: Documents in the international negotiations on climate change” Political Geography 40

5.2 The continuum of observation
- Luker, Salsa Dancing, Ch 10 Field and other methods

{Proposed 5.3 Fri May 4}: Ethics, Human Subjects and Institutional Review Boards

6.1 Ethnography

6.2 Organizational and event ethnography

7.1 Tactics: Interviewing
- Paul Cloke et al., 2004, Excerpts : “The practices of talking to people”, “Preparing for an Interview” and “Conducting an Interview”, from Chapter 5 of Practicing Human Geography, London: SAGE. Pages 126-130, 152-159.

7.2 Tactics: Interviewing Part 2: Strategies and debates in interviewing experts

8.1 Focus Groups
- Secor, Anna. 2002 The veil and urban space in Istanbul: Women’s dress, mobility and Islamic knowledge Gender Place and Culture 9:1, 5-22
- Colucci 2008 “Focus Groups Can be Fun”: The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. Qualitative Health Research 17(10): 1422-1433.
  + McIntyre 2003 Through the eyes of women: photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place. Gender Place and Culture 10(1): 47-66.

8.2 Data reduction and coding
- Luker, Kristen, Salsa Dancing, Chapter 10
9.1 Coding and interpretation

9.2 Writing ethnography

10.1 Visual methods and analysis
- More TBA

10.2. Writing and ethics
- Myers, Garth (2010) “Representing the Other: negotiating the Personal and the Political” in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography DeLyser et al., eds. New York: SAGE.