Course Overview

This mini course is designed for students who are interested in exposure to qualitative methods of inquiry. It will introduce students to a wide range of methodologies that fall under the broad descriptive category of “qualitative research” or “qualitative methods of inquiry” and it will offer them an opportunity to practice some basic skills associated with qualitative research design, empirical evidence collection (data collection), empirical evidence analysis (data analysis) and reporting findings. We will discuss the epistemological assumptions associated with qualitative forms of inquiry and the politics of evidence. Students will be exposed to range of methodologies (ethnography, grounded theory, performance studies, narrative, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, action methodologies, etc.) and approaches to analysis (e.g. analytic induction, grounded theory, thematic, interpretative, content or conversational analysis). Students will practice skills associated with qualitative inquiry including: framing research questions, developing interview protocols, collecting empirical evidence (data collection) including interviews, observations and artifacts, analyzing empirical evidence (data analysis) and presenting research findings. Students will also practice reading qualitative articles. This mini course is not meant as a substitute for a complete
course on a particular methodology but rather will serve as a basic introduction to qualitative research projects.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Understand the basic features of qualitative methods of inquiry and how they differ from numerical studies including a basic understanding of epistemology, methodology, and methods.

2. Understand the basic nature of the politics of evidence.

3. Describe several different methodological approaches to qualitative inquiry.


5. Demonstrate basic skills in data collection (artifacts, observations and interviews).

6. Demonstrate basic skills in analyzing empirical evidence (artifacts, observations and interviews).

7. Demonstrate basic skills in designing a “mini” qualitative research project.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

This course is designed to introduce you to a variety of methods of qualitative inquiry and to some basic skills associated with qualitative research methods. As such participation in class activities is the single most important metric for course evaluation purposes. So, come to class and play along! However, there are two basic assignments.

1. **Keep a notebook.** Hand this notebook at the end of class session on June 5. The notebooks will contain all your class materials including: class notes, field notes, handouts, etc. I will provide written feedback on these notebooks. It is your “document” of the class.

2. “**Mini Research Project**”. We will be conducting a “small” research project. Much of the project will be accomplished during class as part of several skills building activities. Instructions are below.
Mini Research Project.

The primary empirical evidence (data) for qualitative research projects is collected through: interviews (e.g. biographical, narrative, informal, formal, focus groups); observations (direct and indirect); and through artifacts/documents (e.g. objects or documents such as newspapers, diaries). We will experiment with each of these forms of evidence (data).

First class

Bring an artifact to class that speaks to you about being a UM Social Work student Research Question and interview protocols. We will construct in class. 
Data collection: Artifact display and Discussion. We will do in class.
Data Analysis: Artifact analysis exercise. We will do in class

Homework Between Classes

Collecting Observational Data Assignment. Please post on C-tools by Wednesday June 4, noon.

Please locate a “space that speaks to you as a UM social work student” . It could be in a public space (school, campus, library, restaurant, etc.) or your private space (home). Spend a good half hour observing the space. (Observe it long enough that you are sitting past your “comfort” zone. You are not writing about what you already “know” about this familiar space; you are studying it carefully for the first time). Take “jotting field notes” in your course notebook. Then, translate your “jottings” into field notes. Your field notes may be typed or handwritten but you should add them to your course notebook. Please divide your field notes into two sections: descriptive representation (what did you see?) and interpretative notes (what meaning do you attach to your observations?). Please post your fields notes (or a photograph of your notes if they are hand-written) on the course c-tools site in the folder labeled “Observation Evidence” which you will find in the Resources
section within a folder labeled “Project Files”. It would be useful if you name your observation memo with your first name.observations (e.g. Karen.observations.doc) no later than **Wednesday June 4th at noon**.

**Read** your classmates observation memos before class on June 5th. Analyzing Observational Data. Do you see any common themes? How might you analyze these documents? Jot these preliminary notes in your course notebook.

**Second Class**

**Interview Data Collection I.** You will interview a classmate. You will both “transcribe the interview” from memory and post in the C-tools “Interview Evidence”.

**Interview Data Collection II.** You will reverse roles and repeat.

**Group “projects”. Design, Analysis, Reporting.** We will break up in small groups. Each group will frame a research question, pick an appropriate sample of data to answer the question, analyze the data, make findings and consider implications. I will act as consultant to each group. Each group will present their findings to the class about what it is like to be a UM social work student.
Day One Schedule - Thursday May 29th

9:10-9:30  Introductions: Course Expectations
9:50 – 10:15  What is qualitative inquiry?
              What are the basic features of design?
10:15-11:00  Epistemological Differences: Methodologies
11:00-11:15  Break
11:15 – 12:15  Introduction to a Variety of Qualitative Methods
12:15- 1:00  LUNCH
1:00- 1:30  Reading Assignment. Making sense of articles.
1:30 – 2:00  Framing a Research Question
2:00-2:30  Assignment: Interview Questions, a qualitative protocol
2:30-3:00  Data: Artifacts Show, don’t tell: What have you brought?
              Data Analysis: Making sense of what you see.
3:00-3:15  Break
3:15-4:15  Data Collection: Narrating, Responding and Fieldnotes
4:15-4:45  Data Analysis: Revisited
4:30-5:00  Homework Observation Assignment: Data Collection

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Observation Assignment
Posting Observations by noon on Wednesday June 4
Read Observation Postings Before Class
Day Two Schedule - Thursday June 5th

9:10-9:15 Checking in and recap of last week
9:15-10:15 Mini lecture on methodologies, revisited
10:15-11:15 Data Collection: Interview One.
Reflection Summary/Data Collection.
11:15-11:00 Break
11:00-noon Data Collection: Interview Two
Reflection Summary/Data Collection
Noon-1:00 Lunch and Interview Posting
1:00-2:00 Introduction to Data Analysis
       (grounded theory, narrative analysis, BNIM, thematic)
2:00-4:00 Pulling together a Qualitative Project
       Applying what you've learned.
4:00–4:45 Reporting to Class
4:45-5:00 Debriefing/evaluation