Prerequisite: Satisfactory completion of HS403b: Qualitative Research or permission of the instructor.

Course Description (from the Bulletin): Provides students with hands-on experience in qualitative research, with an emphasis on data analysis and presentation. A series of exercises reviews the process of research from design through presentation of findings. Using a large qualitative data set, class members explore data collection, preparation, and analysis strategies. Readings and discussion link qualitative analysis to crucial research design and validity issues. Each student completes a data analysis project and presents work in progress.

Additional Description: This advanced course builds on the introduction to the epistemology and practice of qualitative research provided by HS403b and assumes that each of you already has some experience conducting this type of research. It is designed so that you do qualitative analysis in tandem and sometimes together as homework and in-class exercises while also conducting qualitative research and analysis independently for your final project.

The final project should advance your skills in qualitative data collection and/or analysis. What is most appropriate depends on your own training needs and dissertation interests. You might, for example, use the final project as an opportunity to practice some dimension of qualitative research, with the focus of your write-up more on what you learned about research and yourself as a researcher than on substantive findings. You might analyze:

1. **Data you collected (under IRB oversight):** Typically I serve as the principal investigator on your IRB application. Some of you already have IRB clearance for your project; others will need to write an application to the Brandeis Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (BCPHS, the University’s IRB). Please see me individually as soon as possible if you are planning to write an IRB application. It is your responsibility to ensure that I have a copy of your application to the BCPHS, the BCPHS’s approval, any requests from the BCPHS for additional information or changes to the original materials submitted and your response to any such requests. It is also your responsibility that these same documents are deposited in the Heller PhD Program’s IRB file (maintained by Cheryl Sweeney) or equivalent repository in your home department.

2. **Data in the public domain (e.g., a data set or documents):** No permissions are necessary for use of publicly available documents. For use of a publicly available data set based on research with human subjects, IRB clearance for use of existing data is required if you have hopes of publishing your work.

3. **Data collected by another researcher (also under IRB oversight):** You must have written permission from the researcher(s) whose data you will be using and must ensure that I have documentation of that permission. Moreover, you must provide me with documentation of IRB approval for the project in which the data to be analyzed were collected. In addition, if you are hoping to publish based on these data, you will need to submit an existing data application to the Brandeis IRB.

Alternatively, your qualitative analysis might take the form of a literature review. Possible topics include reviewing works about and/or based on one or more types of qualitative data collection or analysis you are considering using in your dissertation project or publications based on qualitative or mixed methods research concerning a policy-relevant topic of key interest to you. You might use the final project to draft a qualitative or a mixed methods dissertation.
proposal. No doubt there are other possibilities not listed here. Whatever final project you choose, I must approve it in advance. (See p. 3 of this syllabus).

The course presupposes that each student has had some training on research ethics. If you have not already completed the CITI online training, you should do so (https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp). This training is required by the BCPHS of any student working in any capacity on any IRB-approved project at Brandeis.

As fits the Program’s “multidisciplinary approach” (http://heller.brandeis.edu/phd/description/index.html), readings are drawn from a variety of disciplines (e.g., anthropology, education, ethics, nursing, philosophy, public health, public policy, social work, sociology). Readings were chosen and research exercises were designed to train each of you to conduct your own qualitative research from study design through write-up and dissemination and to assess others’ reports and publications based on qualitative research. In the short-term, the course is aimed at preparing you to collect and analyze qualitative data for your dissertation. In the longer term, the course is designed to provide you with skills for conducting and using qualitative research in your career as an educator, researcher, practitioner or policymaker in the broad fields of health and social policy, whether nationally or internationally.

Topics addressed include study design, the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research, data collection, note taking, data storage, data analysis (identifying themes, developing codebooks, coding, writing analytical memos and analyzing coded data), the writing process and the written product. As in HS403b, we will pay attention throughout the semester to the relationship between theory and research practice and to ethical issues in research. Readings include both explanations of how to do qualitative research and examples of research done qualitatively. Emphasis is on the analysis of information collected using qualitative methods, whether interviews, focus groups, participant observation, document review or a combination thereof. This is not a course in the use of computer-assisted qualitative software, but you are encouraged to engage with such software (e.g., Atlas.ti, NVivo, MAXQDA, HyperRESEARCH, Dedoose), bring questions to the group and share knowledge.

The organization of the course reflects that of qualitative research, in which elements interlock and often overlap. We will tack back and forth among study design, data collection, analysis and write-up and among discussions of readings, hands-on exercises and reflections on your individual projects, with each ultimately informing the others and enriching our understanding of and experience in qualitative research.

Within and across class sessions, we will engage in three key activities: (1) critical discussion of issues in assigned readings, (2) research exercises, which involve both in-class exercises and homework, and (3) your projects. You are each encouraged to share dilemmas and learnings that arise in your projects in an ongoing way. Bring ethical dilemmas to my attention as soon as possible.

You can help make classroom discussions, research exercises and written assignments as useful as possible to your own interests and career plans by drawing on your previous research experiences and on your ongoing work for your final project. In various homework assignments and in-class exercises, we will use responses from a federally funded health services research study. In others, we will use transcripts of interviews from a qualitative evaluation. As these data and the codebook are not in the public domain, each of you must sign an agreement about their use (see Statement on Use of Data and Codebooks below).

**Academic Integrity:** In accordance with Section 4 of the University’s Rights and Responsibilities student code, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student’s own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions (see Section 21). A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty in a course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work.” (See http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/index.html for more information and to access a pdf of the Rights and Responsibilities student code.) If you have any questions about the instructions for any assignment in this course, ask me.

**Statement on Use of Data and Codebook:** During the first class, each of you must sign a pledge agreeing not to share, photocopy or retain copies of data or the codebook that are used in homework assignments and exercises.
Accommodation: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please see me as soon as possible.

Readings: You are expected to read all the assigned readings in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. **On this syllabus, assigned readings are listed under the date on which they will be discussed.** Additional reading is also required for your final paper (see Requirements). The assigned book by Howard Becker should be on reserve in the Brandeis Library by the semester’s start. It was assigned in past years, so you might be able to get a copy on loan from a second- or third-year student. Alternatively, you can buy a copy on the Internet. The qualitative monograph must be obtained independently by each of you after it has been selected by all of us collectively. Assigned readings other than the required books are available on LATTE, with the exception of one available online as an e-book from the Library and those from books assigned in HS403b. If you do not have access to the latter, let me know.

Note that in this course, as in all graduate training, you are expected to read beyond the syllabus to expand your knowledge of issues addressed in the course and to build your understanding of and expertise in epistemology, concepts and analytical approaches, study design, data collection methods and substantive issues relevant to your paper topic, dissertation plans and career aspirations.

Required books:


A qualitative monograph to be chosen by us.

You are expected to read assigned materials thoroughly and thoughtfully in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. Evidence of critical reading, relevant comparison across readings and cumulative learning from readings and classroom discussions should be apparent in class participation and written work.

There are three assessed/graded elements, described below, each worth a percentage of the final course assessment/grade (due dates are given in the Course Outline):

1. **Class participation (40%):** This element includes attendance, engagement and participation in classroom discussions of assigned readings and in-class exercises. As part of class participation, you will be called upon periodically to discuss your progress on your final project. Your presentation of your final paper will also count towards participation.

2. **Written Homework (40%):** The 8 homework assignments, including due dates, are indicated in the Course Outline below. Five of these include written work.

3. **Project and final paper (20%):** You must write a final paper on your approved project. The form that paper takes will depend on what you do as a final project. Early in the semester, each of you must meet with me at least once about your project and final paper. You are, of course, welcome to meet with me other times as you plan and complete your project and paper. A sign-up sheet for the required meeting will be circulated during the third class session on February 2nd. As your project develops, we will discuss what the final paper should entail.

   No specific organizational format for the final paper is required. You should tailor the written presentation to suit the data and analytical argument. An overview of the methods and the gist of the analysis must be presented orally in in the final class session.

   Published sources must be used in the paper. References should include both books and articles. Although any number of online sources can be cited, a paper that cites only online sources will not be accepted. Note that articles from print journals accessed electronically are not considered online sources. An online source is one available only on the Web.

   In the final paper, any standard style is acceptable for citations and references. For example, you can follow the style guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). What style you choose is not important; what is important is consistent use of your chosen standard style.

   The final paper itself is due on May 3rd by 5PM to me by email at kammerer@brandeis.edu.
**Hard Copy Requirement:** Except when stipulated otherwise, as above for the final paper, written work will only be accepted in hard copy. The final paper must be typewritten with 1-inch margins, double-spacing, 12-point font and numbered pages. Right justification is not acceptable, as it makes the text difficult to read (at least to my aging eyes).

**Exercise Binder:** You will each be given a 3-ring binder to hold materials for homework assignments and in-class research exercises. Materials (hole-punched) from a federally funded study and a qualitative evaluation will be handed out for various homework assignments and exercises. These materials are to be stored in the binder. At the end of the semester, in accordance with the Statement on Use of Data and Codebook, you must return the binder, complete with all the handouts, to me. I will not submit your grade until it is returned.

**Assessment:** Content, contribution to the ongoing discussion, responsiveness to the thoughts of others and evidence of cumulative learning (quality) will count more in the assessment/grade for participation than frequency (quantity).

The in-class exercises, which are counted as part of participation, are a chance for all of us to gain experience in various elements of data analysis, so the doing is what counts towards credit. Don’t be afraid of making mistakes! Be courageous, curious and creative and we’ll all learn more.

The homework assignments are intended as experiential learning. For this reason and to encourage you to be brave, they each count for a relatively small percentage of the course assessment/grade. Please note that not completing the homework assignments, including the written work associated with them, on time will detrimentally affect your ability to participate fruitfully in classroom discussions and in in-class exercises.

Assessment of/grade for the final paper will be based on content as well as effectiveness of communication. Spelling, grammar, organization and clarity of expression are all elements in the effectiveness of communication.

**Learning Objectives:** A student who completes this course will be able to:

1. Exhibit understanding of the ethical obligations of investigators working with human subjects, in particular in qualitative research.
2. Identify themes in qualitative data.
3. Analyze and write-up qualitative findings, including harnessing theoretical concepts and approaches to the analysis.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with various approaches to qualitative research.
5. Articulate the epistemological underpinnings of her/his own approach to qualitative research.
6. Discuss the role of theory in study design and data analysis.
7. Assess qualitative research study designs and findings.

**Course Outline:** This is subject to revision. Given the advanced nature of this course and its focus on exploring students’ interests within the field of qualitative research, I ask you to contribute in an ongoing fashion to choosing readings and topics to consider in classroom discussions. Together we will choose the qualitative monograph to be discussed in Class 6.

_A reminder: On this syllabus, assigned readings are listed under the date on which they are to be discussed._

Class 1, January 19: ENGAGING RESEARCH (Also Signing Agreements)

No Assigned Readings

**Discussion Topics:**

- Overview of the course: organization, requirements, responsibilities, mechanics, etc.
- Final paper projects, including IRB status if relevant, and how projects relate to dissertation and career plans.
- Ways to tailor the course to students’ interests and needs.
• Statement on use of data and the codebook. Each of you must sign an agreement about the use of the data and codebook that will be introduced for various homework assignments and in-class exercises.

Class 2, January 26: EXAMINING EPISTEMOLOGIES AND EMBRACING ETHICS (Considering Control, Consent, Confidentiality and Care of Others and of Self)

Readings (to be discussed today):
2. "The Belmont Report." (Skim: Assigned in HS403b.)
6. If you haven’t already done so, read the ethical guidelines of the discipline or professional group with which you identify most closely. If you have time, skim the guidelines of another discipline or organization of interest to you. Some disciplinary and professional organizations’ principles are posted on LATTE (American Anthropological Association, American Evaluation Association, UK Social Policy Association and UNESCO); others are available through the links below.

American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Section 8 Research and Publication (excluding 8.09)
American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (follow link at right to full Code of Ethics in pdf format)
http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm
National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, Section 5.02 Evaluation and Research
http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp
Society for Applied Anthropology Statement of Ethical and Professional Responsibilities
http://www.sfaa.net/about/ethics/

In-class Exercises: Starting the Data Analysis Process
• Distribution of practice data #1.
• Discussion of how to begin identifying meaning in the data (or how to approach the homework).

Homework 1/Written Work 1: Developing Themes (a.k.a. Codes) (Due by email February 1st and in hard copy February 2nd)
⇒ Identify the themes in practice data #1. Pay attention to how you label each theme and also how themes are differentiated from one another. After you have identified themes in the data, consider whether other themes are relevant. If so, figure out how these relate to the themes you’ve identified and incorporate them as you see fit. Organize your themes thoughtfully/self-consciously. At the end, include a brief explanation of the process of developing themes (if you include both emergent and a priori themes, discuss why, how and linkages), your choice of labels, what distinguishes one theme from others and your chosen organization. Email your set of themes, including your explication, to kammerer@brandeis.edu by 8PM on Monday, February 1st and bring a hard copy to class on February 2nd.

Homework 2: Preparing to Choose a Qualitative Monograph
⇒ Consider the list of possibilities handed out in class, add one or more of your own if you have options you’d like us to consider and be prepared to participate in a discussion to choose one to be read by Class 6.
Class 3, February 2: DESIGNING STUDIES AND CHOOSING METHODS
Due:
⇒ Homework 1/Written Work 1 (set of themes and explication; already emailed, but turn in hard copy at the end of class)
⇒ Homework 2 (reflections on possible qualitative monographs)

Readings (to be discussed today):

In-class Exercises: Developing Codes/Themes and Selecting Qualitative Monograph
• Discuss identifying themes and starting the data analysis process.
• Reach consensus on qualitative monograph to be read by Class 6.

HANDED OUT: Sign-up sheet for one-on-one meetings to discuss research projects and final papers.

Homework 3: Selecting and Reading a Literature Review Article (pdf due by email 5PM Sunday, February 7th)
⇒ Locate a worthwhile literature review relevant to your own interests, whether concerning theory, methods or topical focus. Email a pdf to me as soon as you can but no later than 5PM on February 7th, so I can post it on LATTE. You are welcome to read one another’s chosen articles, but are responsible only for your own. In preparation for class, read your chosen article carefully, critically assessing its methodology as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the review, and be prepared to discuss these issues.

Homework 4/Written Work 2: Synthesizing Themes (Due by email 8PM Monday, February 8th and in hard copy February 9th)
⇒ Study all the sets of themes, which will be posted on LATTE, and develop a synthetic set. Organize your set, email it to kammerer@brandeis.edu by 8PM on Monday, February 8th and bring a hard copy to class on February 9th.

Class 4, February 9: REVIEWING LITERATURE AS Qualitative RESEARCH
Due:
⇒ Homework 3 (chosen literature review; pdf already emailed, be prepared to discuss in class)
⇒ Homework 4/Written Work 2 (already emailed; turn in hard copy at the end of class)

Readings (to be discussed today):
1. Literature review article selected by each of you.

**In-class Exercises:** Reviewing Reviews, Synthesizing Themes and Reaching Consensus on Codes

- Discuss literature review articles.
- Describe the process of developing a synthetic set of themes.
- Reach consensus on set of themes (codes). After class I will post the consensus codebook on LATTE.

**Homework 5:** Coding (Due February 23rd)

⇒ Using the consensus list of themes (a.k.a. codebook) developed in class (posted on LATTE), code a designated portion of practice data #1. The coding process entails both identifying/applying themes and segmenting, that is, determining the boundaries of the units to which a particular code or multiple codes apply. Remember that segments/units can be as short as a word or as long as a document and can overlap.

REMINDER: Begin reading our chosen qualitative monograph.

**NO CLASS February 16 (HAPPY BREAK!)

Class 5, February 23: CONCEPTUALIZING AND THEORIZING

Due:

⇒ Homework 5 (coding: bring hard copy to class for use in in-class exercise but do not hand in)

**Readings (to be discussed today):**


**In-class Exercises:** Coding and Reaching Consensus on Coding

- Discuss the coding process.
- Consider how selected responses were coded, paying attention to both the assignment of themes and segmentation.
- Reach consensus on a portion of the coding.
- Discuss consensus process.
• Compare the codebook developed by the class and that used in the federal study (handed out in class).

**Homework 6/Written Work 3: Writing a review of a qualitative monograph (Due March 1st)**

⇒ Write a brief critical review (2-4 pages) of our chosen monograph addressing study design and methods, ethical issues, literature review/contextualization of study in existing literature, use of analytical concepts and theory, use of qualitative data to advance the analytical argument, overall organization, quality of the writing and any other dimensions of the book you consider worth discussing and then make and support recommendations for how the study might have been improved.

**Class 6, March 1: ASSESSING A QUALITATIVE MONOGRAPH**

**Due:**

⇒ Homework 6/Written Work 3 (written review of monograph; turn in hard copy at the end of class)

**Readings:**

1. Qualitative monograph.

**In-class Exercise:** Preparing for Memoing

- Distribution of practice data #2.
- Discuss the nature of the data.
- Discuss the process of developing an analytical memo.

**Homework 7/Written Work 4: Writing a memo (Due March 8th)**

⇒ After reviewing practice data #2, write a memo about the interviews with a focus on the data (content, themes, stories told) and a second memo—or new section of a single memo, if that works better for you—with a focus on the interviewing methods and interview dynamics.

**Class 7, March 8: COLLECTING DATA**

**Due:**

⇒ Homework 7/Written Work 4 (memo)

**Readings (to be discussed today):**


**In-class Exercises:** Reflecting on Interviewing and Memoing

- Discuss practice data #2 in terms of both content and interviewing methods.
- Discuss memoing as a research practice.

**Class 8, March 15: OBSERVING AND NOTE-TAKING**

**Readings (to be discussed today):**

Class 9, March 22: TRANSCRIBING, CODING, CONSIDERING NARRATIVE AND MEMOING
Readings (to be discussed today):
3. Kathy Charmaz on memoing in *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd Ed. (Skim: Assigned in HS403b.)

Homework 8/Written Work 5: Writing a memo on concepts and theory (Due March 29th)
⇒ Use this second homework in memoing as an opportunity to examine the concepts and theories that inform how you view the policy-relevant issues of interest to you generally and, more specifically, with reference to your project for this course. Write a short memo (3 or so pages) on your current thoughts about the theoretical perspectives and concepts you find most fruitful and important. What analytical lenses do you use to understand social issues of interest to you and to inform related policies? Why? How do these lenses shape your questions, choice of methods and analysis in your current project? If you wrote a theory memo in HS403b, include an auto-ethnographic reflection on how and why your theoretical/analytical frame has changed since you wrote that previous memo.

Class 10, March 29: INTERPRETING (or Staying Afloat While Swimming in Your Data)
Due:
⇒ Homework 8/Written Work 5 (theoretical memo; turn in after discussion)

Readings (to be discussed today):

In-class Exercises: Reflecting on Theory in Research
• Discuss theoretical memos and the place of theory in your projects and final papers.

Class 11, April 5: CREATING CREDIBILITY, SHAPING POLICY
Readings (to be discussed today):


**Class 12, April 12: TELLING THE STORY (or Getting the Words and the Word Out)**

**Reading (to be discussed today):**


**In-class Exercises:** Preparing for Presentations

- Set up schedule of oral presentations for the next class and articulate the rationale for the order of presentations.
- Discuss the time allotment and format for the presentations.
- Discuss finalizing final papers.

**Class 13, April 19: PRESENTING PROJECTS**

**NO CLASS April 26 (HAPPY BREAK!)**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE: May 3, by 5PM, electronically (kammerer@brandeis.edu)**