

## Qualitative Methods in Journalism Studies J-381 07865

**Dr. Mary Bock**, BMC 3.384

**Class Meetings:** Fridays, 12-3 BMC 3.378A

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**On Twitter:** professorbock (one word)

**Our FB Group:** Qual Methods F13

**Our Twitter ID:** #J381F13

**Office hours:** Mondays & Fridays, 10-11 & Wednesdays 1-2

**Description:** This course provides an introduction to qualitative methods used by social science researchers, with special attention to the study of issues in journalism. Students will have a chance to briefly engage in methods such as in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and field observation. This course will present cover issues such as theory-building, epistemology and validity with regard to qualitative research.

**By the end of the semester students should be able to:**

1. Describe common qualitative approaches appropriate for the study of journalism and mass communication.
2. Explain the epistemology, ethics, theory and practice of qualitative research.
3. Carry out various qualitative methodological approaches such as in-depth interviews and textual analysis.
4. Present a well-argued justification for the validity of qualitative methods
5. Develop research questions that necessitate qualitative methods
6. Explain the appropriate application of qualitative methods

### **Textbooks:**

Tracy, S.J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Wiley-Blackwell: Hoboken, NJ.

At Coop or e-book: [http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5273182/9781405192026?\\_hdv=6.8](http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5273182/9781405192026?_hdv=6.8)

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.

At Coop or e-book: [http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5273182/9780415396042?\\_hdv=6.8](http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5273182/9780415396042?_hdv=6.8)

(Many) additional required reading materials will be posted online and/or are available as e-resources through the UT library system.

### **Optional but Strongly Recommended:**

Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2005) *The Elements of Style*. New York: Penguin Press.

Consider joining Methodspace at Sage online.

**Learning Management System:** In this class I will be using *Canvas*. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday-Thursday 8am-10pm, Friday 8am-6pm, and Sat-Sun 12pm-5pm.

## Classroom Policies

**Deadlines:** Without advance arrangements to change a deadline for a legitimate reason, **late work is assessed a 50% penalty for up to a week after the deadline. After that week, the grade is zero.**

**Cell phones & Computers:** I love my phone too, but there is great value in our face-to-face interaction. Turn off your cell phone. I'd actually discourage you from using your laptop, too; it's distracting.

**E-Mail policy:** E-mail is the best way to reach me. I check it at least every 24 hours. I will always try to answer e-mails quickly, *but not necessarily immediately*. At the very most a response might take 48 hours (weekends, etc. may slow me down.) During the work week, YOU are expected to check your e-mail every 24 hours.

**Classroom Conduct:** I propose making our classroom a space in which each of us can feel comfortable and accepted.

**Religious Holy Days:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Attendance:** You will do better here and in other aspects of your graduate career if you show up. There is a participation grade for this class, and you cannot participate if you are not here.

**Make-Up Work:** You must make arrangements with me in advance to make up work, and you must provide me with a documented, legitimate excuse to do so. If you are ill, or facing an emergency, you must call me (just as you would a boss at work) to notify me. In the case of a missed exam or presentation, we can re-schedule once you provide me with a document that explains your legitimate excuse.

**Grade Discussions:** I do not discuss grades via e-mail. I post your grades to Canvas and expect you to monitor your grades and make sure my records match yours. If you want to discuss a grade, you may visit during office hours or make an appointment to do so face to face.

**My Office Phone:** I will check for messages on my office phone once a day.

**Food:** We will take a 15 minute break at the halfway point of every class. Because we are in session for such an extended time, yes, feel free to eat. BUT: Be considerate of those around you regarding smells, sauces, and messes. Clean up after yourself and avoid bringing anything that could easily spill and harm someone's computer.

**Grading:** Grades are distributed according to a percentage system. I use plus-minus grading. An assignment list with point distribution is on page 6.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93% & above	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	61-62	61% & below

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS POLICIES AND INFORMATION**

**University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Scholastic Dishonesty:** The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.  
[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

**Special note on plagiarism:** It bears repeating: using material that is not yours without proper attribution is *plagiarism*. For clarification, the library has a module:  
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

**Course Evaluation:** During this course I will be asking you to give me feedback on your learning in informal as well as formal ways. Also, at the end of the semester, there will be a formal survey. These course instructor surveys are required by school policy and reviewed by senior faculty administrators as an important component in annual faculty evaluations. These surveys are strictly confidential, and I have no access to the results until I get a summary after the semester is completed. I also encourage you to take time to write your open-ended feedback in the space provided. These comments are often the most informative.

**Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students:** All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. (I recommend daily during the work-week). A complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564>.

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**Q drop Policy:** The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231: "Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number."

**Documented Disability Statement:** Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).

Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).

Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information:

[http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for\\_cstudents.php](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php)

### **Student Veteran Services:**

If you're a vet – thank you for your service! Here are some UT resources:

Office of the Dean of Students: <http://utstudentveteranservices.org>

Academic Support Resources: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/veterans/academicupport.php>

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

### **Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin:**

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning. You are particularly encouraged to use the Learning Skills Center on campus for help on writing assignments. Also, the PCL reference librarians can assist you with online news retrieval and other information finding tasks.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Oral presentation: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/propose/requirements/communication>

Writing: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/faculty/writing>

<http://www46.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/UTAustin.htm>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Safety issues: <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/terms/>

## Tentative Schedule

<b>Class:</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Read this ahead:</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
1. Aug. 30	Intro to Course & Syllabus	Tracy 1 & 2, Gitlin Critique	
	Qualitative Possibilities		
2. Sept. 6	Connecting Method to Theory	Tracy 3 <b>AND</b> H&A 10 <b>AND</b> UT's IRB	
	Ethics & IRB		
3. Sept. 13	Interviews	Tracy 7, 8 <b>AND</b> H&A 5 <b>AND</b> Ellingson <b>AND</b> Boyland	IRB Certificate <i>Student 1</i>
	Oral History, Auto-ethnography		
4. Sept. 20	Ethnography	Tracy 4 <b>AND</b> H&A 1 & 2 <b>AND</b> Geertz CH1	<i>Q&amp;Q Essay</i> <i>Students 2 &amp; 3</i>
5. Sept. 27	Practical Matters	H&A 3, 4, 6 <b>AND</b> Tracy 5, 6	<i>Student 4</i>
6. Oct. 4	The Newsroom Ethnography	Tuchman, Boczkowski, Carlson, Trujillo, Kitch, Kuypers	Interview Assignment <i>Students 5 &amp; 6</i>
	Textual Analysis		
7. Oct. 11	Interpreting Visuals	Rose CH5 Hariman & Lucaites, CH3 Zelizer CH2	<i>Student 7</i>
8. Oct. 18	Online Ethnography & Ethics	Glaser & Strauss CH5 <b>AND</b> Sveningsson <b>AND</b> NYT article ASA Code of Ethics	Paper Preview <i>Students 8 &amp; 9</i>
	Grounded Theory		
9. Oct. 25	Focus Groups	Edmunds (online) 2, 4, 5 YIN CH 2	<i>Observation</i> <i>Assignment</i> <i>Student 10</i>
	Case Studies		
10. Nov. 1	Mixed Methods	Lutz & Collins <b>AND</b> McCarthy <b>AND</b> Jackson	<i>Students 11 &amp; 12</i>
	Transparency, Reflexivity		
11. Nov. 8	Making Sense of Qualitative Data, Qualitative Analysis Software	Tracy 9, 10 <b>AND</b> H&A 7, 8	Focus Group <i>Student 13</i>
12. Nov. 15	Writing Qualitative Research	Tracy 11 <b>AND</b> H&A 9	<i>Students 14 &amp; 15</i>
13. Nov. 22	Titicut Follies (Bock @NCA)		
14. Dec. 6	Project Presentations		<b><i>Final paper</i></b>

## Assessments

Assignment	Due*	% of Final Grade
Participation & Meetings	meetings due 10/17 & 11/19	5
Practice 1/interviews	10/4	10
Practice 2/observation	10/11	10
Practice 3/focus group	11/8	10
Journal Article Analysis & Presentation	(varies)	10
Methodology Essay	9/20	10
Individual Project Preview	10/18	10
Individual Project Paper	12/6	25
Individual Project Presentation	12/6	10

*\*All written assignments will be submitted online, using Canvas, except for the Journal Article Presentation Handout.*

**Participation & Meetings:** Part of this grade will be based on assessments from your teammates on your group projects. Another part will be based on how prepared you are when you attend each of our class meetings (we only have 14, BTW!). The rest is based on “all or nothing” credit for your private meetings with me. You are required to meet with me twice during the semester, once by Oct 17<sup>th</sup>, again by Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, to discuss how this course can best meet your own graduate goals and how your individual project is progressing.

**Journal Article Presentation:** Each student will make a short (10-15 minutes) presentation in class about a qualitative research article they’ve found useful for their own research. This presentation should focus on the article’s method, how the work was done, how it does (or does not!) meet the standards we’ve discussed in class. The presentation should include a one-page handout with the article’s citation information and the student’s analysis. I encourage students to NOT use Power Point slides for these presentations; let’s focus on each other face to face. *Due dates will vary*; we will divide up the calendar on the first day of class.

**Methodology essay:** During the first three weeks of class you will be reading extensively about the epistemology and validity of qualitative research. We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research in class. Based on the readings and discussion, write a brief essay (3-5 pages) comparing qualitative and quantitative methods, their value to research about journalism, and where your interests and work fit into the larger landscape of communication inquiry. This is due online by *noon, Sept. 20*. We will use these essays for course discussion.

## Group Assignments

The following group assignments are approved by the UT IRB as class projects only; the data collected for these assignments CANNOT be used in conference papers or published research UNLESS you have IRB approval for your own, specific project. By accepting this syllabus you agree to follow these terms and conditions.

### #1: Interview Group Project

Either work alone or pair up with another classmate for this assignment. Conduct two in-person semi-structured interviews. Be sure to prepare and revise a series of open-ended interview questions. You will produce one document that includes the interview transcript, the original list of questions, and a minimum 750-word narrative analysis. This narrative analysis will require you to select and blend particular quotes from the transcript into the essay. Further, you will need to use strong observational skills and show the nature of the interviewees through your writing (describe their behaviors and non-verbal cues, for example).

Please include in a separate section of the document an analysis of the interview process—both the subject's and the interviewer's behavior— and an assessment of the value of the information acquired. Please also reflect upon how your partners in the project may have interpreted or understood answers differently. Well-written, succinct analysis is valued over length. *This analysis is due online Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>*

### #2 Field Observation

Work in groups of two or three. Select a public space where you are part of the local scene. Basically, you do as you typically do as a member of the public (avoid drawing attention to yourself) but in this case you consciously evaluate the interaction(s) that you observe. During a sustained period of at least one hour, make your observations together but keep your observations to yourself for the time. Take field notes.

Question your assumptions. If you write “international student,” or “married couple,” ask how you know this? You are assessing data and coming to a conclusion—state what those bits of evidence are from which you are drawing. Be aware of verbal and nonverbal forms of communication—it is all data.

In your field notes: Describe the setting (a schematic drawing can be helpful). Describe the individuals at the focus of your observation. Describe the activity and/or interaction(s) you observe. Explain why you focused on what you did? Next move to a new space and spend time as a group discussing your observations. How did your observations compare—similar or different? How so? How would each of you interpret what you saw? What did you learn from this discussion? Together students should write/edit a minimum 750-word piece analyzing the assignment. This section of the paper should be based on the group discussion of your observation. Students should also write up separate reflections of their observations based on their field notes. These should be compiled into a single document (clearly mark the author of each section).

Keep in mind that many pages of field observation notes will reduce to only a few sentences of writing, so take down as much detail as you can while you are in the field. Immediately after you leave your field site, go over your pages of observations and add any supplementary observations you might have. Note: Do not include these field notes with your 750---word piece—these notes are for your use only. *This analysis is due online by noon, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>*.

**#3: Focus Group**

This assignment is basically the same as the interview assignment above, only using focus groups. Either work alone or pair up with one to three classmates for this assignment. Conduct a focus group session. Be sure to prepare and revise a series of open-ended questions. You will produce one document that includes the focus group transcript, the original list of questions, and a minimum 750-word narrative analysis. This narrative will require you to select and blend particular quotes from the transcript into the analysis. Further, you will need to use strong observational skills and show the nature of the focus group participants through your writing (show behaviors and non-verbal cues, for example).

Please include in a separate section of the document an analysis of the focus group process – both the subject's and the interviewer's behavior– and an assessment of the value of the information acquired. Please also reflect upon how your partners in the project may have interpreted or understood answers differently. Well-written, succinct analysis is valued over length. ***This analysis is due online November 8<sup>th</sup>.***

**Individual Project**

Each student is expected to complete a qualitative research project or proposal of 25 to 30 pages by the end of the semester. This is an individual project; all work should be your own.

Students are required to submit a 3-5 page preview of this paper, its proposed subject, theoretical construct, research questions method and data-source online by ***noon on Oct. 18.***

All final papers should include: a statement of the research question(s), discussion of the theoretical framework guiding your work, a literature review of some of the most relevant scholarly work related to the topics, a description of the qualitative method used, an analysis of the research findings, and a conclusion.

It is possible that this paper might be more of a proposal than a journal-ready article, depending on the student's choice of method and IRB status.

This paper is due online by ***noon on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>.***