**Course Description**

Through reading scholarly accounts and immersion into one’s own in-depth research project, this course explores a variety of qualitative research approaches, taking into account issues of epistemology (ways of knowing), methodology (ways of examining), and representation (ways of writing and reporting). We will read qualitative exemplars, examine intellectual traditions such as interpretivism, participatory action research, sensemaking, symbolic interactionism, ethnography of speaking, and autoethnography as well as discuss key issues such as ethics, ethnography online, and qualitative quality.

The heart of this course comes in the form in the actual doing and practice of qualitative research methods. Students will carry out their own research project, engaging in 25+ hours of field research in the form of interviewing, participant observation, focus groups and/or virtual ethnography. Through this project, students will collectively enact and reflect upon the central phases of qualitative research such as: planning, negotiating access, observing, interviewing, creating field texts, analyzing field texts, writing, and making a public impact. The goal is that students will emerge from the class with first-hand qualitative research experience, a paper that is conference submission ready, and a significant understanding of qualitative methods that can serve as a basis for comprehensive exams and dissertations.

Because we are covering both the philosophies and practices related to qualitative methods, a significant amount of reading and doing is involved in this course. The Tracy *Qualitative Research Methods* book will cover the nuts-and-bolts of qualitative research/analysis while auxiliary readings will provide further depth as well as exemplars.

The course is designed to facilitate eight specific objectives. Students will:

1. Design and conduct a qualitative research project of one’s own
2. Become adept at participant observation and interviewing and familiar with focus groups, virtual approaches, and creative approaches.
3. Understand the value of and philosophical assumptions related to qualitative research methods
4. Practice giving and receiving authentic critique to peers in a constructive, supportive manner
5. Practice and become comfortable with several ways to analyze qualitative data
6. Write a conference-ready qualitative research paper
7. Read and appreciate exemplar qualitative research studies
8. Lay the groundwork for answering a qualitative comprehensive exam question and writing a thesis/dissertation that incorporates qualitative methods
**Course Resources**


* Electronic articles and scanned chapters available via password-protected ASU Blackboard website
* CritViz Peer Feedback Website – [https://critviz.com/](https://critviz.com/) - Course Enrollment Code - GQBEID8F
* Access to Nvivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Students will be privy to a free 14 day trial or a $75 12-month license) and its tutorials [http://www.qsrinternational.com/default.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/default.aspx)

The following texts are recommended (and should be on your long-term qualitative reading list):

**Grading:** Letter grades are figured as to the following guidelines (out of 500 pts)

| Outstanding – above expectations | Good – above average | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Failing
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<td>A  465 – 484 pts</td>
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**Class requirements (out of 500 pts total)**

Our readings include the “how-to” of qualitative methods, as well as theoretical treatments and exemplars. The reading assignments serve as the basis for class discussion, preparation for assignments, and an effective guide for your own practice.

Your final project includes engaging in 25 or more data collection hours (of participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, etc.). Each field hour is usually accompanied by 3-4 hours of recording, transcription, fact checking, and analysis, equating to about 5 to 8 hours each week associated with working on your own project. The course assignments are specifically designed to help students conduct a significant study and break it up into bite-size pieces.

**Inspiring Semester Research Paper & Presentation (up to 200 pts)**

A ~25-30 page paper based upon your original qualitative research is the course’s culminating assignment. This study involves locating a “site,” immersing yourself in its social action, analyzing the significance of that social action for its participants, and constructing a significant scholarly account of how the phenomena implicates practice and theory.

Papers should open with a rationale, clear purpose, a review of relevant literature, research questions (or other specific issues to be analyzed), and methods. *The heart and most important part of the paper are the findings and analysis of data, as well as the theoretical and practical implications and contributions of the piece.* Please use APA style. Note: Although the final paper quality is often related to the quality of practica, this is not always the case. The paper grade is based on the quality of the final paper as its own product.

During one of the final class periods, you will give an ungraded ~8-minute oral presentation of your key findings. Use this as an opportunity to practice an abbreviated conference-quality presentation.
**Practical Practica and Peer Feedback (up to 200 points – for COMPLETION)**

Like most interpretive arts, qualitative methods come in a variety of flavors and forms, with people responding in different ways to the “art” you create. Furthermore, significant learning of interpretive arts comes in the form of sampling other peoples’ craft and thoughtfully responding to it. Indeed, giving and receiving critique is something that is learned, not “natural.” As such, a primary part of this class is engaging in small “chunks” of a qualitative project, sharing your work publicly with the class, reflecting on the method by which peers are practicing their craft, and engaging in transparent, critical, and constructive feedback to one another. Points for practica and peer feedback are given for COMPLETION. All practica must be completed to earn B+ or higher.

Peer feedback will be facilitated by a custom software called CritViz, [https://critviz.com/](https://critviz.com/), developed by ASU professors David Tinnapple and Loren Olson. Please create a user profile and enroll yourself into our course with this code: GQBEID8F.

Submit practica via CritViz by Sunday 11:59 p.m. Assignments must be turned in on time to be available for other students to review. Please bring a paper or electronic copy to class for reference, and be prepared to share/workshop your ideas from these assignments.

For each practica assignment, you will read and respond to three of your class member’s work via a CritViz “critique” assignment between Sunday 11:59 p.m. and Tuesday 11:59 p.m. Critique assignments will include a varied mix of answering key questions, providing a ranking, and elucidating your (humanly produced and necessarily subjective) criteria for ranking.

1. **Your Experience with Critique:** Read Berkun, S. (2009). #35 – How to give and receive criticism. Retrieved from [http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/](http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/). What are 3 main take-aways from this essay? What has been your experience with peer feedback? What are your hopes or concerns about sharing your in-process work with others? With transparent critique in this class? This critique may include ratings to identify exemplars. What are your hopes or concerns about this process or its consequences, intended or unintended? [please be authentic...in an academic world typified by "sage on the stage" pedagogical models, this process is largely uncharted territory for most people]

2. **Theoretical or Social Issue/Problem and Proposed Data Sources:** In 3-4 pages, describe a social and/or theoretical issue or “problem” you plan to explore in your research site. In doing so, note several sensitizing concepts from past experience or research that align with and will help you focus this research. Close this discussion with one or more research questions that could guide this study.

   As a bricoleur, what types of data could you piece together in order to answer your research questions? Name three potential field sites and/or group of participants for your study, and for each, discuss a) How these data of interest are complementary with your theoretical, practical, or professional interests; b) How your background and experience affects the ability to gain access and meaningfully interact with these contexts or people; and c) Your plan of having access to these data by February 1. See Tracy, chapters one and two, for details.

3. **Map and Narrative Tour:** Complete a detailed map and narrative tour of your site (or a key part of your site). Note key people (or types of people), artifacts, and objects and their relation to each other. Accompany the map with a narrative tour—a mini interpretation of the scene—that explains what the map says about research participants’ values, rules, priorities, ways of being, status, power, etc. Ask the question: What does this tell me, conceptually about this place? (try to see things as “evidence” of certain arguments). Include as many “senses” (sight, sound, smell, taste, feel, mood) as possible.

   Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum. See Tracy, chapter four, for details.
4. **Human Subjects Paperwork:** Become familiar with the university’s human subjects requirements and turn in the application forms (available at [http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/humans](http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/humans)). Complete the training at [http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans](http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans) and print out or otherwise keep record of your certification. Your advisor or faculty member mentor should serve as PI (if he or she cannot, please consult with me). Turn in the forms and follow up regarding their approval. Reference Tracy, chapter five, for more information on human subjects training and certification.

5. **Interview Guide:** Prepare an interview schedule or guide for use with your participants. Identify the a) ideal sample, b) the type (or types) of interviews you are likely to engage in, and c) the stance(s) that you will take. Explain why these approaches are most appropriate for your research. Then, write out the actual queries and probes in the order you foresee, identifying the types of questions (aim for a mix). Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum. See Tracy, chapter seven, for details.

6. **Research Proposal:** Prepare a 10-12-page research proposal including: 1) title, abstract & key words; 2) introduction, purpose and rationale; 3) literature review/conceptual framework (point to current discussions, controversies, gaps and unanswered questions and how your study might address these issues); 4) research questions 5) proposed methodology, protocol and logistics, 6) timeline/budget. You can also hypothesize your findings. See Tracy, chapter five, for details.

7. **Fieldnotes:** Write a set of fieldnotes that represents at least 4 hours of participant observation and reflects tips and guidelines for good field records and observation. Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum. See Tracy, chapter six, for details.

8. **Analysis Nuts and Bolts Practicum:** Choose one or more options from Tracy Exercise 9.1. In your assignment, note your intention of the practice; show how the practice unfolded; provide a statement evaluating the value of engaging in the practice; and note your next step in analysis. Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

9. **Advanced Analysis Practicum:** Choose one or more options from Tracy Exercise 10.1. In your assignment, note your intention of the practice; show how the practice unfolded; provide a statement evaluating the value of engaging in the practice; and note your next step in analysis. Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

10. **Article Format Model --** Choose two articles to read and model articles that exemplify (at least in part) what you hope to accomplish in your own paper. Create article format models (See Exercise 13.1). The course schedule provides options but you are welcome to choose your own.

11. **First Draft** - Turn in full draft of entire paper, including findings, implications, limitations and future directions.

12. **CritViz Feedback** – Please provide your experience with CritVis and recommendations for future use.
**Participation, Attendance, & Discussion Assisting/Posting (up to 100 pts)**
Please complete assigned readings before preparing assignments for the following week so that material can be incorporated into your own practice and you can contribute to class in an informed manner. Participation points are earned through focused attention/attendance for the full class period, thoughtful and informed verbal participation (more does not always = better), listening alertly and taking notes, concentrating on course material rather than distractions, and providing supportive interaction with other class members (fostering collective focus). You may also contribute to the Blackboard discussion board to bolster participation. I will make notes about participation earned every week (up to 5 pts a week for 80 pts).

Students will serve as “discussion assistant” one time. In this role, 1) thoroughly immerse yourself in the week’s readings, 3) post 2-3 related discussion questions to stimulate contemplation and dialogue (post via Blackboard by Sunday 11:59 p.m. before class), 3) prepare a 10-minute synthesis of points you thought were most compelling and present these in a dynamic way, 4) be ready to help facilitate discussion about the readings (depending on class activities, this will range in time). NOTE: This is NOT a major assignment; it’s worth 20 pts, so the expectation is you spend no more than ~2 hours more than a normal day on the day that you’re discussion assistant.

If you must miss a single class (for any reason), you can earn the missed participation points by a) meeting with a peer to discuss the unit and b) emailing the instructor and doctoral assistant with a brief note about this meeting and key points you took away. If there is an extenuating emergency that interferes with your attendance or ability to keep up, please be in communication.

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**Class Policies and Procedures**

**Norms of Civility and Use of Technology in Class:**
To create an oasis of civility in this class, please arrive on time and stay for the entire class period, keep an alert and enthusiastic presence, pay attention to course material rather than other distractions, listen supportively and attentively—speaking one at a time and helping others stay focused. Many of us are irresistibly drawn to our computerized devices. If this is the case for you, disable the temptations—put them away, turn off alerts, etc.

Research suggests that focus, comprehension, recall of ideas, and information processing increase when people hand-write notes and read from physical paper. During class, I encourage you to take notes by hand, and make handwritten notes on readings. For information:
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html,

**Unique Academic Needs:**
Students with academic needs that require special course considerations can be accommodated. Students should document their needs with the University’s Disability Resources Center and see me no later than the second week of class to discuss options.
Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty: Although several graduate papers may overlap in conceptual focus, students’ 609 research projects should be original work devised for this class. If students plan on using material prepared for a different course, please consult with me regarding appropriateness. ASU’s academic integrity and plagiarism policies are applicable to this course. Please see https://provost.asu.edu/index.php?q=academicintegrity. Students are responsible for knowing APA style for citing outside sources.

Absences, Due Dates, Late or Incomplete Work:
Turning in practica on time is essential for the peer review process. Assignments will be marked down up to 10% each day and will not receive points more than two weeks past their due date (and none will be accepted after April 29th). All practica must be completed (even if late) in order to earn B+ or higher in the class.

Incompletes are available to students who: 1) have finished more than half the coursework, 2) experience serious illness or personal emergency, 3) negotiate the incomplete before 4/22.

Advice from past students:
- Negotiate access and begin data collection ASAP. The people who really succeed are those who get access to a site early and begin collecting data as soon as they have access. Some get access but procrastinate about data collection and later discover that the access isn’t what they thought it would be.
- Just start. Don’t wait until you feel comfortable, until you’ve read all the background literature, or until you think you’ve got all of your ducks in a row. That will be too late. Just put one foot in front of the other and go.
- Always have tentative research questions to guide you. Expect that these will change/evolve, but have them and think about them as you are doing participant observation.
- Very few people in the field are going to understand exactly what you’re doing and why. That’s okay, and it’s probably a good thing. Nevertheless, rehearse ahead of time a (strategically ambiguous) answer to the inevitable “What are you doing here?” question.
- Do the reading. Take some notes along the way. Writing = learning.
- Take the practica seriously. If you do, you have a serious head start on your final project.
- If you are frustrated, or need research ideas or inspiration, go see Sarah or the doctoral assistant. I felt lost and after chatting with them about the direction of my project, everything kind of came into focus.
- Always keep an audio recorder with you. When an idea about things you heard, things you saw, things you should look into, things to consider, speak record it before you forget.
- Learning is a fundamentally social process. When we share victories, defeats, and “best practices”, we all learn more, and the process is more satisfying. Don’t pretend that it’s going any better or worse than it is.
- Exhibit a genuine curiosity about how participants see their world. Most people love to talk about themselves—their views and their experiences. They will do so if you make them feel interesting. And almost all of them are.
- Don’t hesitate to document your personal feelings, thoughts, and analysis in field notes—they make great data.
- Be driven by the dilemmas practitioners face. When the dilemmas of your participants are at odds with your research questions, sit up and pay attention.
- Be prepared to be flexible as there are many unforeseen surprises (most of them good ones!) that you’ll encounter while interviewing or observing. One of the most surprising things that happened to me was that what I thought I’d be observing and writing about (my expectations) were not as interesting as what was happening (my observations). That was probably one of the biggest lessons as well as one of the most intriguing aspects of the course. While it was disconcerting that I had to “dump” my original lit review and scramble to find articles about what I was observing, it ended up in a much better project!
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<tr>
<th>Week / Date</th>
<th>Topic / Readings (to have completed) / Assignments Due</th>
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| 1 1/13      | *Entering the Conversation of Qualitative Research That Matters*  
T – Prologue: Is this Book for Me?  
T - #1 Developing Contextual Research that Matters  
T - #2 Entering the Conversation of Qualitative Research  
Due Sunday Before Class - Practicum #1: Your Experience with Peer Critique  
Due Tuesday Before Class– Peer Feedback |
| 2 1/20      | *Theorizing, Designing, & Accessing*  
T – #3 Paradigmatic Reflections and Theoretical Foundations  
T - #4: Fieldwork and Fieldplay: Negotiating Access & Exploring the Scene  
**Creative Approaches to Data Collection**  
Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #2: - Theoretical or Social Issue/Problem and Proposed Data Sources  
Due Tuesday Before Class– Peer Feedback |
| 3 1/27      | *Proposal Writing, IRB & Ethics*  
T - #5 - Proposal Writing: Explaining Your Research to Institutional Review Boards, Instructors, Dissertation Committees and Funding Agencies  
**Virtual and Mediated approaches**  
Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #3 – Map and narrative tour  
Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback |
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<th>Field Roles and Field Focus</th>
<th>Planning the Interview</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td><em>Field Roles and Field Focus</em></td>
<td>T #7: Planning the Interview: Sampling, Recruiting and Questioning</td>
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<td>2/3</td>
<td>T - #6 - Field Roles, Fieldnotes and Field Focus</td>
<td>Sample interview guides – Tracy appendix and BLACKBOARD</td>
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<td>Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback</td>
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| 5    | *Participatory Action Research, Social Justice, Feminist Approaches*  | Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #5 – Interview Guide  |
| 2/10 | (Review) T #3 – Participatory Action Research & Feminist Approaches Sections  | Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback  |
|      |  | Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #6 – Research Proposal  |
|      |  | Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback  |

| 6    | *Fieldnotes*  | Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #7 – Full set of formal fieldnotes  |
| DL 8 | T - Appendix A, fieldnote  |  |

| 7    | *Classic Example of Thick Description*  | Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #8 – Full set of formal fieldnotes  |
| DL 9 | *Eliciting experience through interviews & focus groups*  |  |
| & 10 | T #8: Conducting the Interview: Embodied, Mediated and Focus Group Approaches  |  |
|      | T Appendix B-Focus Group Guide and Appendix C- Interview Transcription Excerpts  |  |

<p>| 8    | <em>Personal Narrative, Performance &amp; Autoethnography</em>  | Recommended Timeline: Collect Data Over Next Three Weeks  |
| &amp; 12 | <em>Introduction to Data Analysis</em>  |  |
|      | T #9 –Data Analysis Basics: A Pragmatic Iterative Approach  |  |</p>
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<td>3/9</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK!</td>
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<td>3/16</td>
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<td>Bring a Data text (transcription or fieldnotes) to class for workshop</td>
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<td>Due Sunday before Class: Practicum #8 – Data Analysis Nuts and Bolts</td>
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<td>Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback</td>
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<td>Reread &amp; bring 20 pages of data (e.g., mix of observations and interviews)—both hard copy and electronic. Activities may include metaphor/drawing analysis or an Nvivo teamwork period, among other things.</td>
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<td>Recommended Timeline – Have all data collected by now and analysis well underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>Writing Part One</td>
<td>Tracy, S. J. (2012). The toxic and mythical combination of a deductive writing logic for inductive qualitative research. <em>Qualitative Communication Research, 1</em>, 109-141.</td>
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<td>Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #9 – Advanced Data Analysis</td>
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<td>Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback</td>
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Writing Part Two

T #13 - Writing Part 2: Drafting, Polishing, and Publishing

Article Format Model—Choose 2 or 3 articles. Options include these or your own choice.


Articles that emerged (or emerged in part) from COM 609:

Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #10 – Article Format Model
Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback

11 of 12
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| **14**<br>4/20 | Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #11 – First Full Draft  
Due Tuesday Before Class: Peer Feedback |
| **15**<br>4/27 | *Going Public*  
T#14 – Qualitative Methodology Matters: Exiting and Communicating Impact  
*Begin Final Paper Presentations*  
Due by Friday 4/29 5 p.m. - Final Semester Paper |
| **16**<br>5/4 (likely) | *Final Paper Presentation*  
Due Sunday Before Class: Practicum #12 – CritVis Experience |