GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY
Doctoral Program: School of Business
DBA 802:
Qualitative Research & Foundations of Research

SYLLABUS - Draft copy 11-19-11

Spring, 2012

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Course Requirements*:
Research Fieldwork & Paper 40%
  Research data (e.g., interviews, case study data) 10%
  Iterative drafts-5%
  Final draft- 25%
Theory & practice issue - Oral Presentation 10%
Final Examination 15%
Class assignments 15%
Class preparation (possible quizzes) & participation** 20%

*Flexibility: In my view students, especially at this level, can usefully participate in choosing course content and grading design; in addition course design depends on enrollment, student needs and background. Thus this tentative course design is open to change. In particular "Presentation Topics" (see Outline) are open to change and student numbers will affect the session design (see General Format following).

**At the end of the semester, each student will have an opportunity to make a brief oral presentation of what she or he believes they have contributed to the class; your fellow students will assign one-half of your participation/contribution grade.

Texts: listed in approximate order of use
  Robert Yin, Case Study Research: Design & Methods, 4TH (FOURTH) EDITION
  Dahlia Remler,Gregg Van Ryzin, Research Methods in Practice, 2011
  James A. Holstein, Jaber F. Gubrium, The Active Interview, latest edition
  Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, Qualitative Data Analysis, latest edition
  David L. Morgan, Focus Groups as Qualitative Research, latest edition

Optional:
  Gill & Johnson Research Methods for Managers, Sage or Paul Chapman, recent edition
  Diane Vaughan: Uncoupling: Turning Points in Intimate Relationships: this is a very well done piece of qualitative research on a topic (divorce and relationship breakups) which may resonate for some of you. If you read it, read first the last chapter (“Postscript: On Talking to Strangers”) which discusses her methodology.

Additional readings will be assigned or suggested by instructor and class members.

We will also examine/use one or more qualitative analysis software programs (e.g., Atlas.ti);

NOTE Atlas.ti <http://www.atlasti.com/order.html> is available for students at $120 or about 90% discount from $1800.
EVIDENCE

This is a research course.

It is unacceptable (i.e., not doctoral level work suitable for credit) to present conclusions without evidence. This means that, unless the statement is commonly and widely accepted public knowledge (e.g., the United States is located between Canada and Mexico), you must present evidentiary support for your statements.

To do otherwise would be like a defense attorney in a criminal trial proclaiming “My client is innocent.” without EVIDENCE to support the statement (or the prosecuting attorney doing the opposite). Managers (i.e., bad managers) may exhibit such behaviors – coming to conclusions and decisions without demonstrating (or having) support for their conclusions. It should usually be unacceptable for managers (unless the condition is one of uncertainty rather than risk because evidence is unavailable). It IS unacceptable for researchers.

In your final project report you must present at least some of this evidence (e.g., in the form of quotes (from respondents), tables and charts based on the evidence you gather, counting of various kinds of responses, discussions of patterns you found, etc.). If an attorney didn’t do so, she/he would be laughed out of court. If you don’t do so, your research report will not be acceptable for credit.

In addition, any literature sources (including newspapers, web, journal, texts, speeches etc.) must have citations in the bibliography which will allow an interested reader to find the original of the material you cite.

Finally, I hope needless to say, plagiarism (using the work of others without citation) is also unacceptable and will result, at least, in a failing grade.

Hopefully, the above is quite obvious to all of you, but, if not, please pay strong attention to the above points.

Dr. Lee Robbins
General Format:

Plans are to spend the first sessions primarily on case study research and interviewing including completing the Yin text, Ch. 1-5, Ch. 1 & 3 of Remler & Ryzin (+ Morgan for those wishing to do focus group fieldwork) and several optional chapters of Gill and Johnson in order to get off to a prompt start on research projects. **It is VERY IMPORTANT that you do a lot of the semester reading in the first weeks so that you will be ready to start your field projects -- these are dependent on other people’s (i.e., your respondents’ in the situation you are studying) schedules and hence require adequate calendar time.**

The rest of the semester will examine various topics and issues in qualitative research and research in general (see Course Outline for topics).

Most sessions will be divided between a presentation/discussion by the instructor (and sometimes a guest), a presentation/discussion by a student on a topic related to the particular session and presentations by several students on their ongoing research.

Topic research and presentations may be done individually or by a student pair or team; this will be dependent on preferences and on the size of the class.

Similarly the research project may be done individually or by a student pair or team. Research project presentations may be written (rough draft) and oral and will be critiqued, formally or informally, by students and instructor. Students are expected to use the critiques and to improve their later presentations in an iterative process.

Course outcome: fieldwork data and analysis, a **rough draft of a potentially publishable article or a research plan for a potentially publishable article.** While the rough draft is preferable, qualitative research often requires considerable calendar time (e.g., one to three months in my experience) to obtain needed access to organizations and actors; as a result many of you will only be able to do the early stage and planning. Using work already in process and/or field research sites to which you have ready access (e.g., your workplace) can speed the access process.

Students are **required** to present a choice of journal for submission and a cover letter to the Editor of the journal for submission of their article; see the assignment in the next to last session.

**You must start on your project quickly** because of the calendar time problems; any delay or procrastination in the early stages will lead to poor results for your research and poor performance in the course.

*I encourage you to continue your work in the course to the point of submitting and publishing an article -- to aid in your academic or business career, for the discipline of responding to critiques of reviewers and editors and for the personal satisfaction of putting a piece of work out there in the world.*
Course Outline & Reading Assignments:

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

1-Jan. 10, 2012: Introduction to Qualitative Research:
Reading (Read the two Yin chapters in advance of this class, it will spread out the substantial reading assignments in the first two sessions):

Yin:
Ch. 1-Introduction to Case Study and Qualitative Research
Ch. 2-Designing Case Studies

• Student Research Interests & Issues - need for a fast start, developing your topics, importance of fieldwork, obtaining access
(see also Yin, Remler & Ryzin on qualitative research and OPTIONA: Johnson & Gill)

• Course Introduction:
  • Syllabus, Bibliography, Course Design, Session Design, Grading, Presentations, Projects, Examples-see Handouts
  • Overview and discussion of research issues
  • Importance, uncertainty and failings of research (see Handouts)
  • Characteristics of qualitative research & researchers

• The first three assignments: interviewing and project plans – discussion

• A quick useful introduction to interviewing

• Research Design exercise –IF time permits

Reading:
[Handouts]
A) Can RESEARCH be trusted?/Is RESEARCH useful?
1. A. Lawrence Chickering, "Spurring Development", S.F. Chronicle, 8/1/94

B) A CASE STUDY by an investigative journalist – research?:

Initial Assignments:
Assignments: See further detailed discussion of this assignment later in this Syllabus.
Because I am concerned that you read and think about the short handouts attached (as well as Yin), there is an additional assignment as follows:

**Session #1 assignment:** Write and hand in (word processed or typed, please) ONE SENTENCE comments on each question below whose number corresponds to the number of the handout items, (E.g., question #1 should be answered for handout item #1 and so on for the other questions and their corresponding handout item):

1: How was research useful as mentioned in this article?
2: What is a source of research conclusions that are doubtful?
3 and 4 jointly: Can we be certain about global warming?
5: Are the results of science always certain?
6. What’s a source of difficulty in using patient records for medical research conclusions?
7 and 8. How do the interactions between causal factors complicate research?
9. Is this article useful research?

Obviously, a single sentence on each article is not going to explore the issues raised in detail but I do not want to burden you (or myself) too heavily so I am requiring that you keep it short. The total should not be more than a page or two. The primary purpose is to ensure that you do the reading and think a bit about it. I will try to make some time to discuss some of the issues in our first session together.

**Assignment 2) DUE Jan. 17 at Session #2:**

**Plans for conducting 3 interviews:** who, where, when, how, about what?

**NOTE:** to be discussed in class so you can get started promptly on 3-B.

AND: you may want to have started your thinking for Assignment 3-A so you can raise questions about it in class.

**Assignment 3-A) DUE: by Jan. 24** in class at Session #3 (OR send an earlier copy by e-mail)

Conduct 3 interviews & report on interview results and process; try to answer questions such as the following:

- e.g., To what question were you seeking an answer? What results did you find?
- What was your experience with the process? What successes and problems did you encounter? What would you do differently next time or what advice do you have for your colleagues? How did the experience correspond (or not) with the perspective presented in the readings noted following?

**Note: to do this competently you need to read Holstein & Gubrium: Ch. 1-8 and the several pages (62-66) on interviewing in Remler & Ryzin; optional: the appropriate pages in Gill & Johnson**

**Assignment 3-B) DUE: by Jan 24** in class at Session #3 (optional; send an earlier copy by e-mail)


**Note:** to do this remove pilot rolling ball ink?

competently, you must first read Yin. Ch.1 & 2; **optional** Gill & Johnson: Ch. 1-2

Bring 3 copies plus one extra copy of the 1 p. Executive Summary (see assignment in Syllabus)
See more detailed discussion of these and all the assignments later in this Syllabus following the session listings.

Section II: CASE STUDIES (cont.)

Session 2- Jan. 17: Case study research I
– introduction continued; research study design and validity of research results

DUE: Jan.13-Session 2- Plan for conducting 3 interviews; This is (a) practice
see more detailed description in Assignment list

Reading:
Holstein & Gubrium: Ch. 1-8 - a perspective on interviews:
NOTE: read before conducting Assignment 1-B

Remler & Ryzin:
Ch. 1: Research in the Real World

[Handouts] for next session
0) Guide for Adjuncts study

I) Two case study examples:
• Roger Corless: Buddhism in America: Methods & Findings:
  “The Gay Buddhist Fellowship” – an good example of a case of manageable size for DBA 802
• Lee Robbins, "Corporate Ombudsmen: A Shift Towards Participation in a Union Environment" Journal of Health and Human Resource Administration, Winter, 1992-3. Note: this is for your use as an example, feel free to just examine and skim it

II) Even the CIA ...
Latest Reports on Iran and North Korea Show a Newfound Caution Among Analysts; Even the CIA ...; NY Times 3/2/07

III) “Quotation on Hermeneutics” collected by Prof. Les Gottesman, of the former GGU School of Arts & Sciences

IV) and just for Fun:
• The Top Ten Lies Told by Graduate Students, The Harvard Crimson
• The Research Seminar - Quant vs. Qual.
Potential topics:

- Dialogue re course structure and design
- Overview and discussion of research issues:  
  Underlying Paradigms of Research
  Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology (see Handouts)
  Interpretive Paradigms, Grounded Theory
- Formulating the study
- Design Issues
  Single Cases and multiple cases
  Bounding the case(s)
- A quick & useful introduction to interviewing
- Scheduling Student Presentations
Session 3: Jan. 24 – Case Study Research II: Data Collection

Potential topics:

- Investigator skills and their relationship to managerial skills
- The Pilot and Its Importance (in surveys too!)
- Thinking Early about the End (Results)
- Validity: construct, internal, external
- Reliability and replicability
- Sources of "data" (evidence)
- Participant Observation & Action Research
- Keeping Track of the Evidence
- Triangulation

- YOUR initial research plans: further discussion.

- Discussion of your interview processes; what has been learned about the process?

Reading:
Yin:
Ch. 3-Conducting Case Studies: Preparing for Data Collection
Ch. 4-Conducting Case Studies: Collecting the Evidence
Remler & Ryzin:
Ch. 3: Qualitative Research: Remler & Ryzin:
Ch. 4-evidence measurement: p. 93-101, p. 106-113, p. 118-124, p. 132-133

Handouts for this and next Session:
Collected and collated Brief Summaries of Research Plans by the class
(from Assignment #3-B).

Assignment 3-A) DUE: by Jan. 24 at Session # 3 in class (optional; send an earlier copy by e-mail)
Conduct 3 interviews & report on interview results and process; try to answer questions such as the following:
 e.g., To what question were you seeking an answer? What results did you find?
 What was your experience with the process? What successes and problems did you encounter? What would you do differently next time or what advice do you have for your colleagues? How did the experience correspond (or not) with the perspective presented in the readings noted following?
 Note: to do this competently you need to read Holstein & Gubrium: Ch. 1-8, the several pages on in-depth interviewing in Remler & Ryzin and, optional, the appropriate pages in Gill & Johnson

Assignment 3-B) DUE: by Jan. 20 at Session # 3 in class (optional; send an earlier copy by e-mail)
NOTE: It’s important that you read the Yin and Marshall and Rossman material before doing this -- OR do 1st iteration of this assignment, do the Yin and Rossman Reading and use what you have learned as the basis for improved iteration(s) of your 3-B assignment.

Presentations (tentative):

a) Validity & Related Issues in Management Research
   [i.e., How Do we Know What's "True"?]
   e.g., philosophical issues: positivism and other paradigms, research quality and rigor, validity (accuracy and truthfulness?), sensitivity, reliability, generalizability

b) Action Research/Action Science - A Different Approach to Research
   what is it?; arguments pro & con
Session 4: Jan. 31 - Case Study Research III

Handouts:
Collected and collated
Brief Summaries of Research Plans by the class
(from Assignment #3-B).

Potential topics:
- Theory, description and rich description
- Hypotheses and testable implications
- Puzzles = Opportunity
- Pattern comparison and rival hypotheses
- Building a theory through causal links and chronological flows
- Composing the Report: convincing your audience vs minimum necessary qualifications (i.e., be persuasive but don't exaggerate)
- Varieties of report structures: pros and cons

Reading:
Yin: Ch. 5-Analyzing Case Study Evidence

Examples
- David Boje -- an unusual example of postmodern research
  “Stories of the Storytelling Organization: A Postmodern Analysis of Disney as ‘Tamara-Land’” -- note: this is for your use as an example, feel free to just examine and skim it. [handout]
- Tom Peters, "Please Give Me an Example & Other Tips for Great Interviews", San Jose Mercury News, 9/12/94, p. 3D. [Re conducting an effective interview for research OR for management]
- “Retrospective Accounts of Research Factors Associated with Significant and Not-So-significant Research Outcomes” - excerpts by Richard Daft, Ricky Griffin and Valerie Yates in Academy of Management Journal, No. 4
- Shoshona Zuboff, The Making of a Smart Machine—methodology excerpts
- Lee Robbins & Pat Deasy, “Participatory Action Research with Interactive Planning in a Technologically Turbulent Environment” Note: this is for your use as an example, it’s OK to just examine it and skim the material

Possible Presentation:
The Issue of "Proof" in Case Study Research

Due: Assignment #4 in class (optional; send an earlier copy by e-mail):
- Data Collection Plan, report of initial steps for a case study including issues of "access"; timeline OPTIONAL: To do this optimally it will also help to read ahead in Gill & Johnson Ch. 7 & 8.
NOTE: this should include choice of organizational (or other) site and you should have started (or completed!) obtaining access (I.e., deciding where and with whom at least for initial contacts and getting them to agree to let you in)

Session 5: Feb. 7 - The Single Case: "What Happened?"
Conceptual Framework Design (see M&H Ch. 2, A.)
(Other) Potential topics:
  • Displaying and Verifying
  • Description and Theory: Is Description Theory?
  • Patterns, Themes and Logical Chains
  • Alternative Presentation "Orderings" of data
  • Compare and Contrast
  • Chronology, Correlation, Theory and Display
  • Cognitive Mapping: individual & organizational
  • The Usefulness (and danger) of Anecdotes
  (Is one anecdote worth a thousand statistics?)
  • The Researcher as Artist
  OR -- It's Not Useful If You Don't Convince Anybody!

Reading:
Remler & Ryzin: Ch. 7 p. 234-236
Miles & Huberman:
  Ch 1-Introduction
  Ch. 2- Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data
  Ch. 3- Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data: Design Issues

Handouts:
  Sources of Evidence, Sampling Parameters Exercise

Possible Presentation: The connection of "display" and "theory"

Due:
  • **Assignment #5**: Case Study Proposal Iteration: corrections, revision and redesign as needed (consider discussion/critiques of prior proposals #3-B and #4); timeline revision if needed.

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SECTION III: FROM DATA TO "INFORMATION"

Session 6: Feb. 14 - Focus Groups (group “interviewing”)
The session design is to first conduct and then examine the nature of a focus group.
Potential topics:
  • Doing It!
  • When (under what circumstances) to Do It
  • Relationship to Facilitation, Teams and Process consultation
  • Dialogue as Joint Learning

Reading:
  David L. Morgan, Focus Groups as Qualitative Research, Ch. 1-7
Handouts: Ginsburg Notes
Amanda Bennett, "Once a Tool of Retail Marketers, Focus Groups Gan Wider Usage", Wall St. Journal, 6/3/86, p. 34.

Possible Guest Speaker: Steve Nitenson, DBA dissertation student, on dissertation research project AND on the DISSERTATION PROCESS

Possible presentation:
Using individual & group interviews & discussion for data gathering and sense making.

Due: Assignment #6: Sources of Evidence, Sampling Parameters
(see Handout from Session #5- Sources of Evidence, Sampling Parameters Exercise
Continuation of class Conceptual Framework Design (see M&H Ch. 2, A.)

Session 7 Feb. 21 – Putting it together: Analysis, the next vital step

Possible Guest: Dr. Michael Rosenblum on his qualitative study of healthcare in America, The Decline of American Medicine: where have all the doctors gone?

Reading:
Miles & Huberman:
Ch. 4- Early Steps in Analysis

Handouts:
Karl Weick, ASQ 6/96 v41,n2 p301: “Drop Your tools: an allegory for organizational studies”

Due: Assignment #7
• Research Plan progress report; field research results to date, tasks to do- a response to discussions and suggestions: discuss in class

Session 8 Feb. 28– Finding Meaning and Testing Conclusions

Potential topics: (No, we won’t get to all of these! – but see the texts)
• Intuition, Plausibility and next steps
• Brainstorming with others and by yourself
• Normal Science and Transformational Science
• Finding and defining key behaviors, actors, processes, sites
• Content analysis: numbers DO count
• Triangulating; eliminating the sick explanation and supporting the healthy theory
• Metaphor: more than meets the eye
• Partitioning: breaking apart the "big picture"
• Mediating and intervening variables
• Case explanation as a chain of evidence
• Generalizing: clumping together the parts; qualitative "factor analysis"
• Challenging your conclusions: rival hypotheses & patterns, predictions, extreme (outlier) and representative cases as a test, consistency with other research and theories of individual and organizational behavior, action
• Using implications for theory & model testing
• Heisenberg uncertainty: researcher <---> case
• Replication: whose responsibility
• Documentation; leaving a trail for others
• Issues of legitimacy in qualitative (and other) research:
  • Objectivity? -- is it real? what does it mean?
  • Replicability & reliability
  • Validity: what does it mean?
  • Generalizability
  • Usefulness: the "so what" question

Reading: Miles & Huberman:
  Ch. 10-Making Good Sense-Drawing & Verifying Conclusions

Handouts:
  Joan Woodward’s seminal research-Ch. 12 “Towards an Organization Theory from her Industrial Organization: Theory & Practice

Due: -- no assignment due this session

Possible Presentation: Making Research Useful & Meaningful (see Weick references)

Session 9: March 6 - Tabulating and Analyzing Quantitative Data -- Using Text Analysis Software to Aid Qualitative Research

Reading:
  Miles & Huberman:
  Appendix: Choosing Computer Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis
  Ch 5- Exploring and Describing (within-case displays)

*Thomas J. Richards, Lyn Richard
  "Using Computers in Qualitative Research" in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, Handbook of Qualitative Research (1994)

  * The student presenter or Dr. Robbins may substitute more recent articles as there have of course been substantial recent developments. Atlas.ti is a good choice and moderately priced ($99) for students. <www.atlasti.com/>

Handouts: RE qualitative data analysis software

Due: Assignment #9: coding and interpreting an interview (you may use any existing interview for which you have sufficient data or do a new interview for this assignment)
Possible Presentations: Using Software for Qualitative Analysis – presentation and demo (can be done alone or with Dr. Robbins or with a guest)

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**Session 10 – March 13:**
**Responding to the "Why?" Question- Explaining: Wha’ Happened?**

Potential topics:
- Approaches to concepts of causality
- The Two Way Link Between "Fact" and "Theories"; induction & deduction
- Multiple Links: social systems and "Messes"
- From "events" to "variables"
- Levels of analysis
- Respondents as theorists and theory validators
- Prediction as validation

**Readings:**
Miles & Huberman:
Ch. 6- Explaining and Predicting
Ch. 11-Ethical Issues in analysis
Remler & Ryzin: Ch. 14 p. 467-488

Possible Presentations: The Interdependence of "Fact" and "Theory"

**Due:** nothing due this session

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**Section IV: MULTIPLE CASES**

**Session 11 – March 20:** Multiple Cases A - what happened, how did it occur

Potential topics:
- Cases vs. Variables: natural and specific systems
- Building more robust explanations
- The relation of data display, theory building and testing
- Matrix displays of Data
- Contrasts, comparisons, themes
- Simplification & selection for presentation
- Scatter diagrams --> two-axis models

**Reading:**
Miles & Huberman:
Ch. 7-Cross Case: Exploring & Describing

**Presentation:** Theory building from case studies

**Guest:** Steve Nitenson, DBA graduate to discuss their qualitative research based dissertation – or another date

**Due:**
- Assignment #11: Brief research Plan progress report (2-3 pages); field research results to date, tasks to do- a response to discussions and suggestions: discuss in class
  Bring 4 copies for possible discussion in small groups.

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**Session 12– March 27: Multiple Cases B - The "Why" Question -- Explanation, Theory and Models**

Potential topics:
- Multiple causes, multiple effects --> different cases
- Matrix Display for Multivariate Explanation Building
- Using numbers:
  - scaling effects and causal factors
  - checking explanatory predictions, "eyeballing"
  - using "eyeballing" to build theory
- Beyond theory: networks --> causal models
  - temporal factors, respondents theories, coherence with pre-existing research;
  - testing the model against the cases -- does it explain?

**Reading:**
- Miles & Huberman:
  - Ch. 8 Cross-Case displays: Ordering, Explaining
- OPTIONAL: Gill & Johnson:
  - Ch. 8: Issues in ethnographic research

**Presentation:** Alternative formats for the research report

**Due: #12: a) Presentation/Publication Plan:**
- This must include a selection of a journal or conference venue for submission, a brief summary of their submission requirements, a rationale for your choice. DO NOT “cut and paste” their requirements – do a summary in your own words to show that you have absorbed and understood the requirements.

  b) Brief research status report
Section V: PUBLISHING AND CONCLUSIONS

Session 13-April 3 –

Reading:

Miles & Huberman:
  Ch. 13- Concluding Remarks
  Ch. 12-Producing Reports

Remler & Ryzin:
  Ch. 14 –p. 503-515: How to Write & Present Research

Yin:
  Ch. 6-Composing the Case Study 'Report'

Refs.: Edward R. Tufte -- a professor at Yale who publishes with Graphics
Press which puts on his annual seminars. Graphics Press may be contacted
at 800 822 2454, 203 250 7007, or 203 272 9187 - hopefully these phonoe
numbers are still accurate. Address is box 430 Cheshire CT 06410.
He currently has three books on graphic display of quantitative information.

Martha S. Feldman, Strategies for Interpreting Qualitative Data - Sage

Assignments due in class or by e-mail by April 3 at Session #13

a)  - Letter of submission: to go to the editor of the Journal you selected in the last
      assignment. This is to include a draft letter of submission and a tentative draft
      and
      - Abstract for your submission; the Abstract should adhere as much as possible at this
        point to your research project and expected findings.
        (probable length; 3-6 pages)

b)  Research errors made and avoided; plans for the future
    (probable length; 2-4 pages)

Presentation: Sources/(solutions?) of Research & Report Writing ERRORS:

Session 14: April 10: Review, research project status and problems, questions, issues
Interactive Discussion of Projects

DATE MAY RESCHEDULE

Reading: colleague materials & presentations

Due: nothing due this session

Tentative Guest Speaker: Dr. Judy Lee re her qualitative research project on CIO leadership
excellence

Possible Presentation: Quantitative Techniques in Qualitative Research
--Session 15- April 17 - Display, Presentation and Reports: Getting Your Work Accepted

Potential topics: Types of Matrix displays – and which is appropriate, when
  Using Matrices for Description and for Explanation Building
  Alternative Presentation Formats
  Using an editor (it's legitimate AND worth the $s)
  Getting published: writing for managers, writing for academics

Reading:
  Miles & Huberman:
  Ch. 9-Rules of Thumb for Matrix display

Presentations: initial group of students’ Class Presentations of Projects

Presentations, Discussion & Celebration

DATE MAY RESCHEDULE--Session 16: April 24 - Qualitative Research: An Overview

Remaining Class Presentations of Projects

Presentations, Discussion & Celebration

Due: Final Research Report/Plan - Class Presentations of Research Reports

GGU-802; Spring '12:

WHY Assignments?
WHY early intense reading assignments?

Field research is a critical part of this course to prepare you for doing your dissertation and for the use of research (broadly understood) in your management work. Typically research requires substantial calendar time as you wait for responses from prospective or actual respondents, advisors and colleagues.

A second reason for delay is that the research process often requires using new and uncertain skills and making decisions in the face of considerable uncertainty -- both can increase anxiety and lead to procrastination.

In order to serve your needs effectively, we must speed this process along.

Methods to do so include:
  - frontloading the course with reading to prepare you for fieldwork,
  - frontloading early assignment due dates
- using “on-line learning” (E-mail, FAX, phone) assignment processing to decrease turnaround (particularly important in a course which meets biweekly)
- anxiety reduction through low-risk skills practice (e.g., interview practice and discussion of results-in-process with colleagues, friends, fellow students; ), and
- overlapping research activities (e.g., doing interviews early, starting analysis with still incomplete data, writing while still formulating theory and collecting and analyzing data).

The Assignments

#1: Comments on initial handouts:
Because I am concerned that you read and think about the short handouts attached (as well as Yin), there is an assignment as follows:

**Session #1 assignment:** Write and hand in (word processed or typed, please) ONE SENTENCE comments on each question below whose number corresponds to the number of the handout items, (E.g., question #1 should be answered for handout item #1 and so on for the other questions and their corresponding handout item):
1: How was research useful as mentioned in this article?
2: What is a source of research conclusions that are doubtful?
3 and 4 jointly: Can we be certain about global warming?
5: Are the results of science always certain?
6: What’s a source of difficulty in using patient records for medical research conclusions?
7 and 8. How do the interactions between causal factors complicate research?
9. Is this article useful research?

Obviously, a single sentence on each article is not going to explore the issues raised in detail but I do not want to burden you (or myself) too heavily so I am requiring that you keep it short. The total should not be more than a page or two. The primary purpose is to ensure that you do the reading and think a bit about it. I will try to make some time to discuss some of the issues in our first session together.

**Assignment #2 (i.e., for session #2)**

#2) Plan for conducting 3 interviews
**DUE: -Session 2**

This is (a) practice and (b) anxiety reduction. If you actually collect data or gain understanding useful to your research, all the better -- but that is not a requirement here. Your interview work is intended to advance your future interview practice of yourself and your student colleagues.

You may interview colleagues, fellow students, friends, prospective research subjects or anyone else to whom you can obtain prompt access. Read at least Holstein/Gubrium on interviewing prior to conducting the interviews.
In your plan, answer Who you will interview (can be categories rather than specific individuals), What sorts of data/information you are seeking, Why this material is of interest to you and/or others, When and How you will do it. (Yes, it’s the same useful five questions!). Be brief and clear.

A few examples of possible interview topics/subjects:
- ways in which people think I am an effective/less effective manager, – colleagues, friends, subordinates, superiors are all possible respondents
- responses to a proposed or recent organizational change (e.g., a new company policy, computer software, organizational structure, compensation plan); if the change is actual, you may examine either or both perceptions (cognitions) and behavior
- what people like about an organization (of course, it’s possible to do “dislikes” but it has more downside risk and needs more delicate handling)
- how individuals make investment choices.

As you will discover from reading Holstein/Gubrium there are many ways to conduct interviews. I do not intend to dictate the approach(es) you use but do want you to be thoughtful and reflective about the implications of your chosen method(s).

You are to actually conduct three interviews on one topic with a brief write-up of the results by Jan 27 – so plan to do it within this time frame (See Assignment 3-A following)

**Assignment #3-A, #3-B (i.e., for session #3)**

**Assignment 3-A: DUE: Session 3**

This is a follow-up to Assignment 2.

Conduct interviews: Try to answer questions such as the following: e.g., To what question were you seeking an answer? What results did you find? What was your experience with the process? What successes and problems did you encounter? What would you do differently next time or what advice do you have for your colleagues? How did the experience correspond (or not) with the perspective presented in the readings noted below?

**Note:** to do this competently you need to read Holstein & Gubrium: Ch. 1-8 and Report on interview results and process.

Your written results should let the reader know what you have learned (1- terms of substance and 2- about the interviewing/research process), how you learned it, problems you encountered and how you handled these, and what you might modify in future interviewing. Please bring three copies of your report to class as we will probably spend some time discussing them with one or two colleagues.


**Note:** to do this competently, you must first read Yin. Ch.1& 2; Remler & Ryzin Ch. 3; OPTIONAL: Gill & Johnson Ch. 1-2

**DUE: Session 3**

Answer the above five basic questions. The topic should interest you, have some potential significance for business practice, have a reasonable prospect for prompt access to fieldwork data, include a realistic time schedule to get a significant piece of work done during this course, and explain your methodology.

Use as much space to write this up as you require for clarity and reasonable completeness. My guess is that it will take most of you four to eight pages. IN ADDITION: preface the full report with a one-page Executive Summary; the purpose of this is to allow student colleague(s) to quickly access your material.

This is a draft working paper. I am not concerned at this juncture about stylistic elegance, dramatic impact or even technical writing quality. I am concerned about clarity and completeness. Feel free to send me a draft before the due date by E-mail or FAX, and I will do my best to respond within one or two days.

Note: Case studies (see Yin) are a major but not the only approach to qualitative research. If you wish to do another kind of Q-research, let me know, and let’s talk about it. (e.g., focus groups study on a topic, a qualitative interview survey and analysis, action research process)

Please bring three copies of your report to class plus one extra copy of the Executive Summary as we will probably spend some time discussing them with one or two colleagues. I will collect the Executive Summaries and photocopy a set of them for distribution to all your colleagues and myself.

NOTE: assignment numbers listed below correspond to class session numbers

Assignment #4:

Due: Session #4:
This is simply a follow-up to Assignment #3-B.
State 1 to 4 Research Questions
• (see the copy of an e-mail to students at the end of these assignments.)
Write a Data Collection Plan, plan for initial steps for a case study; include issues of how you will obtain "access" to your subject organization(s); “access” is a very important part of most or all social science research projects and particularly important in qualitative.
NOTE: this should include choice of organizational (or other) site and you should have started (or completed!) obtaining access

OPTIONAL: To do this optimally it will help to read ahead in Gill & Johnson Ch. 7 & 8.

Assignment #5:

Assignment due in class at Session #5
• #5: Case Study Proposal Iteration: corrections, revision and redesign as needed; (consider discussion/critiques of prior proposals #2 and #3); timeline revision if needed.

Assignment #6:

Assignment due in class at Session #6
Sources of Evidence, Sampling Parameters: a handout will provide a format for this assignment

Assignment #7:

Assignment due in class at Session #7

• Research Plan progress report; field research results to date, tasks to do- a response to discussions and suggestions; probably discuss in class

Assignment #8:

Nothing due at session #8

Assignment #9: Coding & interpreting an interview

Assignment due in class at Session #9

The intention of this assignment is to provide experience with and examples of analysis and display methods which can then be examined and discussed in class.

1. For an interview (see 2. below):
   A) Write a contact summary sheet and, prior to the interview, create a list of descriptive codes that you think might be appropriate.
      OR
   set up the sheet and codes after the interview and use one of the interviews you have already completed.
   B) Write a (brief) set of pattern codes for your interview.

2. Conduct an interview with another person preferably for your research project OR, if that is truly not possible, on any topic that interests you related to management or business. (e.g., how a person makes decisions on ..., early life experiences that influence managerial style, perceptions about some type of product, principal ecological concerns, what is "risk" and how it is evaluated, or ...).
   A) Conduct the interview and take one to two pages of notes; please type these up so that they can be read by others.
   B) Write any appropriate marginal and reflective remarks on the interview sheet.
   C) Fill in a contact interview sheet.

3. Code the interview data: Using the descriptive codes and pattern codes, code the actual transcript.

4. Interpretation Write a paragraph memo on what you think you have learned about the issue from the interview.

4. What would be the major elements (at this very early stage) of a conceptual framework to explore with further research on the topic? State this in a paragraph or use a diagram.

5. What problems did you encounter? List or describe briefly.
Total length of the above should be about 3-6 double-spaced pages. We will select one or more of these to go over in class and may examine aspects of the others in small groups so please make copies for the other class members and the instructor -- with my apologies for some waste of paper. I suggest you single space to save on paper.

Ref.: Miles & Huberman, Ch. 4

Assignment #10:
Nothing due at session #10

Assignment #11:
Assignment due at Session #11
Brief Research Plan progress report (2-3 pages); field research results to date, tasks to do- a response to discussions and suggestions: bring 4 copies for possible discussion in class in small groups

Assignment #12:
Assignments due in class at Session #12
a) Presentation/Publication Plan:
This must include a selection of a journal or conference venue for submission, a brief summary of their submission requirements, a rationale for your choice. DO NOT “cut and paste” their requirements – do a summary in your own words to show that you have absorbed and understood the requirements.

b) Brief research status report

Assignment #13:
Assignments due by e-mail or in class at Session #13
• Letter of submission: to go to the editor of the Journal you selected in the last assignment. This is to include a draft letter of submission and a tentative draft Abstract for your submission; the Abstract should adhere as much as possible at this point to your research project and expected findings.
  (probable length; 3-6 pages)

• Research errors made and avoided; plans for the future
  (probable length; 2-4 pages)

Assignment #14:
Nothing due

Assignment #15:
Due: Session #15
First set of research report oral presentations to class

Assignment #16:
Remaining oral presentations to class AND Final Research Report (date to be set)

My email to students re Assignment #4:
Dear Students,
Because some of you are having difficulty formulating your projects, I am adding an element to your Assignment #4 (p. 20-syllabus) due this Thursday.

At the start of Assignment #4, state Research Questions for your Project. You should have at least one and not more than four Research Questions. Please label your Research Questions so that I can find them at the start of Assignment #4.

Research Questions must be researchable:
i.e., it must be possible to gather and analyze empirical data about the Research Questions.
For example our purpose might be to decide if a new tax would depress production and employment in the economy of our country or city. But that is about a “what if” in the future. We can not directly gather data on this issue.
What we might do is to use Research questions such as: How have past taxes which appear similar affected production and unemployment in our country or city? or How have similar taxes affected output and unemployment in one or several other cities or countries?

Research Questions are different from Interview Questions:
Research Questions are what you, the Researcher, wish to find out while Interview Questions are what you ask Respondents. The Interview Questions should help you answer the Research Questions but normally they are different.
For example in my study of Corporate Ombudsmen at the McDonnel Douglas plant I wanted to to answer: How does the corporate ombudsmen function operate in a unionized facility? and Do employees perceive it as useful?. In order to answer these Research Questions I devised a method to allow access to clients of the Ombudsman (difficult because of the client confidentiality issue) and used a series of Interview Questions but did not ask the Research Questions questions directly for most respondents.

Research Questions are often different from Purpose:
Purpose is your reason for doing the Research but often it is not directly researchable.
For example, should a new piece of software be adopted by my corporation? This can be the policy question which you wish to answer but it is not possible to directly gather and analyze empirical data about what would happen if the new software was adopted. Research Questions might be about the perceptions of employees about new software or about how employees and customers have
responded in the past when new software was adopted or about the availability of funds for the software and how much it has cost to train people in using similar software. Answering such Research Questions (which often means developing suitable Interview Questions if you decide to include interviews in your data gathering) is intended to help allow you to draw conclusions about the Purpose.

If you have not already read my study and that of Roger Corless on the gay Buddhist Fellowship, I strongly recommend that you read these to help develop an understanding of the nature of a small scale Research Project such as the one you will be doing for our course and of course the very helpful reading in the basic texts about Qualitative Research and Case Studies. Without reading this material, you will find it difficult to develop an achievable project.

Lee
Cell: 415-713-1341
LeeRobbins@post.Harvard.edu

Some Additional Suggested Readings

A) Some sources on qualitative validity etc. OR
How can we know whether the results of research are "true"?

- Classical positivist and statistical criteria
  Abraham Kapaln; The Conduct of Inquiry; p.36-39,198-206

- Ethnographic post-positivist
  Handbook of Qualitative Research p. 481, p. 485-499, 216-7, 381-2, 532-7, 579-80

- Evert Gummesson, Qualitative Methods in Management Research, p. 13-17, 80-81, 159-162

Epistemological philosophy underlying scientific research:
• Karl Popper - Conjectures & Refutations - seminal material on scientific epistemology (what is “truth”)
• John Austin - *Philosophical Essays* - see “Truth” essay

• Irene Latkos - *Mathematics & Epistemology*

• Ludwig Wittgenstein - *On Certainty*

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**B) A variety of other sources**

Ackoff, Russell L. and Emery, Fred. *On Purposeful Systems*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972. *a tour d' force on human behavior as a system of teleological [purposeful] events which moves in its focus from the individual to the organization to society; difficult reading*


Argyris, Chris, Putnam, Robert and Smith, M. C. *Action Science: concepts, methods and skills for research and intervention*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985. *a helpful guide on how to conduct action research by the co-founder of organizational learning and his students*


Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1972. *seminal material on the nature of human systems from a philosophical, biological and anthropological perspective; foundation material for the seminal work of Argyris and Schön on organizational learning; the book is a collection of shorter published articles which can be read independently; see particularly "The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication"*


Churchman, C. West. The Systems Approach and Its Enemies. New York: Basic Books, 1979. [a broad readable perspective on the nature of organizational systems by an eminent philosopher, consultant and teacher of management including extensive material on epistemology]

Cooperider, D. L. and Srivasta, S. "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life." in W. Passmore and R. Woodman (Eds.), Research in Organizational Change and Development (Vol. 1, pp. 129-169). Greenwich, Ct.:JAI, 1987. [discussion of a humanist respondent-centered approach to research; used also as an OD consulting method]

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, S.Y. (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage, 1994. [the best general source of material on the topic with thirty-six articles by leading figures in this and related fields though with relatively little directly on management]

Elden, M. & Chisholm, R. (Eds.). Varieties of Action Research. [Special Issue] Human Relations Journal, 46(2), 1993. [both theory and examples by leading participants in management action research; considers issues of method, ethics and validation].


Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. New York: Aldine, 1967. [seminal book on this important postpositivist approach; grounded theory is more widely accepted in management research than some other qualitative methods]


research, access and evaluation of research quality by a widely experienced
Scandinavian management consultant, academic and researcher]

[a short course for managers on the Japanese culture which also illustrates how easy it is
to get invalid data and draw incorrect conclusions -- as many U. S. firms have discovered
to their sorrow]

nature of university promotion and academic measurement of research quality]

Kaplan, Abraham.  The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology in Behavioral Science.  San
Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.  [seminal text on the fundamental philosophical
underpinnings of social science research]

Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. vii-xi.  [the "politics" of "facts"]

Kuhn, Thomas S.  The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.  2nd ed. Chicago: U. of Chicago
Press, 1970.  [profoundly important and seminal book on uncertainties of science and
how the paradigms of science actually change]

for the results of Henry Mintzberg's qualitative work using observation of 5 CEOs to
overthrow the conventional wisdom of managerial work, e.g., that managers were
reflective thinkers who carefully and systematically processed information in making
decisions]

Sage, 1983; essays examining the major philosophical and practical alternatives in social
science research.

Patton, Michael Q. Qualitative Evaluation & Research Methods.  Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage,
1990; the largest, 90 page, section of this 500 page book is an excellent section on
interviewing, including focus groups, with considerable detailed illustration; his focus is
on practical applied research, directly useful to decision and policy makers, more than on
basic research which deals with the discovery and explication of fundamental "truths".

which the following three may be particularly important]
Herman, Joan L.  Evaluator's Handbook.  [general overview and summary]
Fitz-Gibbons, Carol T. and Morris, Lynn L.  How to Design a Program Evaluation.

Row, 1988.  [focused on business firms and the product of constructivist methods (which
attempt to understand the experience of organizational life from the point of view of
those who live it) including case studies; important because it attempts, with some
success, to strip away the veil of superficial investigation to look at the soft underbelly of
the organizational beast]
Schön, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.* New York: Basic Books, 1983. [a perspective on research as a continuing day-to-day activity of professionals including managers; easily readable, helpful along with *Educating The Reflective Practitioner* for those who are teachers and professors and useful for doing consulting with professionals such as lawyers, architects, doctors and, of course, managers]

Terkel, Studs. *Working: people talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do.* New York: Random House, 1974. [qualitative management related research and its reporting -- as storytelling from the Feminist paradigm, lived experience from the perspective of the respondents]


Van Mannen, J. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography.* Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1988. [ethnography from the dean of ethnographers; an interpretive perspective on field research as "story", or rich description; much discussion of alternative ways of writing your qualitative study report though from an ethnographic/cultural rather than typical management perspective]


Whyte, William F. *Participatory Action Research.* London: Sage, 1991. [a discussion of this methodology by one the century's leading sociologists, author of *Street Corner Society-1943-55*, Whyte has substantial background in management issues particularly w.r.t. worker-run cooperatives]

Yin, Robert K. *Applications of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage, 1993. examples of the use of case studies including attention to its use in management (an MIS study) and the use of case study methods for program evaluation]
COURSE DESCRIPTION
FROM: Dr. Lee Robbins, DBA 802 Qualitative Research instructor
Welcome to the DBA 802A course!

DBA 802A INCLUDES both fundamental research issues (e.g., conceptual framework, design and assumptions of research, selection of appropriate methodology) and specifics of qualitative research (e.g., case study design & analysis, interviewing, coding verbal data, focus groups, action research, program evaluation, how to effectively present data and conclusions). Guests will be invited (e.g., from other qualitative research fields such as anthropology, history or political science). Software recently developed for qualitative analysis will be examined.

QUALITATIVE and QUANTITATIVE methods are complementary. Qualitative research typically uses direct contact by researchers with a real life or "field" situation, uses words rather than numbers and employs multiple means. Quantitative data is often gathered through surveys or reported data without direct contact with those studied. Both need foundation work including surfacing and examining assumptions; understanding ways in which social science can be subjective; and examining the ways we view data. Ethical issues are also pertinent and will be considered.

Often, multiple research methods are desirable due to the complexity of social science situations and an inability to conduct controlled experiments which accurately represent managerial reality. Good studies may include both quantitative and qualitative data (e.g., survey results and interviews with key and representative players), compare reports by "actors" with direct observations (e.g., managers' reports on their activities compared to observed behavior), examine different situations (e.g., high stress vs. low stress) or times (e.g., just before and just after the end of a financial reporting period).

No matter how sophisticated the mathematical techniques, analysis still requires examination of context, potential biases and accuracy of the data. Many of the potential pitfalls are qualitative in nature. Unexamined, their influence can distort managerial decisions, derail research articles submitted for publication, or even require redoing a dissertation.

COURSE STRUCTURE: a seminar where students work together under the instructor's guidance.
First three weeks: lectures, discussion, brief exercises on case methods to prepare for active research.
Remainder of the course: typical sessions will be divided equally between discussions and iterative presentations of student research projects and library research on qualitative research topics. Research presentations will be written (rough draft) and oral and critiqued by students and instructor. Students are expected to respond to critiques in their later iterative presentations.

Course outcome: a rough draft or research plan for a potentially publishable article.
NOTE: the structure is tentative depending on student preferences, background and numbers.