

**Qualitative Research Methods (QRM)**  
**Geography 377**  
**Macalester College**

---

Dan Trudeau	Fall 2019
Office: 104e Carnegie Hall	M/W/F: 3:30 – 4:30 pm
Phone: 651-696-6872	Carnegie 109
Email: <a href="mailto:trudeau@macalester.edu">trudeau@macalester.edu</a>	
Office Hours: M/W 1-2 pm, T/R 9:30-10:30 am, and by appointment	
Maggie/Margaret Jaenicke, Teaching Assistant	
Office hours – in the Idea Lab: T 9:30-11:30am Su 3-5pm	

---

### **Course Description**

Social scientists use qualitative methods to understand the ways in which societal associations operate and how people experience, contribute to, or try to change these associations. Qualitative research methods are thus concerned with analyzing processes and experiences. This course trains students to use qualitative research methods to collect data, analyze it, draw authoritative conclusions, and observe professional research ethics. The course emphasizes how qualitative methods contribute to scientific research and how ethical treatment of research participants affects the practice of qualitative research. Above all, the course focuses on training students to conduct qualitative research that contributes to our understanding of human geographies. Students will develop these skills by engaging in a semester-long student-driven research project. Participation in this project will help you learn how to plan, prepare, and carry out a qualitative research project on a deadline.

In 2019, we will create a set of digital documents for the Geography Department's website that tell the story of what geographers do. Our approach will be to conduct interviews with alums of the department from the past 25 years in order to generate a set of life history narratives. We will then analyze the content of these stories in order to identify themes in the data and pathways that people follow. We will then create a set of documents -- digital stories, infographics, and concept diagrams -- that communicate our findings with a public audience. The documents will be hosted on the department's website.

### **Goals**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Explain how qualitative research contributes to scientific knowledge and enriches understanding of human geographies.
- Use research design, data collection, and analysis skills to conduct qualitative research independently and proficiently.
- Comprehend research ethics and know how to practice them.
- Present the results of qualitative research to a public audience.

## **Format**

We will work on developing our abilities as qualitative researchers primarily through a collaborative action research project. Some of the work on this project will take place in our regular class meetings. These will consist of a mix of in-class activities, discussion, presentation, practicums, and workshops. Your regular attendance, preparation, and full participation are necessary to sustain an optimal environment for learning. I therefore expect you to have completed all assignments, including the required reading, before coming to class.

I also expect you to engage in research activities that will take place outside of our scheduled meeting times. Our research project for the class will have you collecting data (by interviewing subjects, and possibly other tasks) and analyzing it (independently and in groups). I estimate that you will need to spend at least 4 hours outside of class per week on these tasks during the first 10 weeks of the semester. ***It is absolutely essential to the learning experience that you engage in these data collection and analysis activities on a regular basis.*** These out of class activities are thus an important part of our course format and I expect you to treat it as you would any other major course assignment.

## **Readings**

There is one text that you are required to read for this course:

- Hay, Iain, (ed.) 2016. *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford University Press: Oxford. (Hereinafter referred to as "Hay")

The text is available for purchase through the campus bookstore and an older version is also on reserve (2-hour loan period) at the library.

In addition to the required text, we will be reading a number of scholarly journal articles and essays. This format allows us to explore a variety of writing styles, perspectives, and empirical cases. These readings are referenced in the schedule by last name of the author. These are available through our course Moodle page. Let me know if you have any problems accessing this material in a timely manner. Bring a paper or electronic copy of assigned readings to class.

## **Equitable learning environments**

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for students. We as learners and teachers all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community. I acknowledge that academic institutions have evolved within a historical context that privileges certain students over others, and in this classroom, I will do my best to be aware of how these inequities may manifest. I hope you will feel comfortable coming to me to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all.

## **Health and well-being.**

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that sleeping, moving

your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from other resources, including those listed on the Hamre Center for [Health and Wellness](#).

## Policies

Cell phones and Laptops: Cell phone use is not allowed in the classroom. Please silence your phones at the start of class. Should you need to answer a phone call, quietly step out of the classroom. Texting is not allowed either as this is both disruptive and disrespectful to other students and the instructor. Laptop use in the classroom is allowed only for referring to course readings, in-class exercises, or unless you personally discuss the matter with me.

Academic honesty. I expect the work you do in this course will be your own. Furthermore, take care to properly cite any and all of the work on which you draw. Instances of plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade for the class. Furthermore, I will report such instances to the Dean, which may result in suspension or even dismissal from the college.

Being there. The success of the course depends upon how much we can learn from each other. The interactive nature of our meetings therefore requires that you come to class prepared. Plan your schedule so that you can arrive and depart on time.

Changes. As the semester unfolds, there may be reason to make changes to the course. In the event of a change to readings, topics, or the schedule, I will announce the changes in class and over email. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

Deadlines. Deadlines for assignments are firm. There are no incompletes or extensions given for the course, because we have a deadline for presentation and publication of our report! Thus, deadlines are not flexible. Late assignments will be accepted for partial credit only.

Moodle. A fair amount of course information will be disseminated via Moodle. I will post pertinent documents, notices, and announcements on the class Moodle page. If you are looking for a handout, for instance, you will likely find it there.

No extra credit. The number of assignments on which grades in this course are based is non-negotiable.

Recorder. You will need a voice recorder to complete the assignments in the course. There are recorders available for your use from the instructor. Should you borrow one, you will agree to return it, or an equivalent replacement, in a workable condition before the end of the semester. Failure to do so will result in an incomplete grade.

Respect for learning. Respect for your peers and professor are absolutely essential to create and sustain a supportive learning environment free of disruptions and distractions. Please take care to do your part to promote your and other's learning.

Do not hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this class. Open communication is key to successful learning. The sooner you voice your concerns, the more opportunity I will have to respond.

## **Assignments** (1000 points total)

You are expected to participate in all facets of the project, from acquiring information to analyzing data to communicating your findings. You will be graded on the fulfillment of your responsibilities in the course and your performance in the following assignments:

### Interview Reflection (75 points).

As part of your training for conducting interviews, you will interview one of your classmates. You will complete a brief written reflection on your peer's approach to interviewing and what it feels like to be interviewed. We will use your reflection to guide our discussion of how to hone interview skills on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Transcription (100 points). Interview transcription is a fundamental part of interview-based research. You will conduct several interviews for this project and transcribe the resulting conversations. In order to get the hang of transcribing, you must have a complete transcript for one interview transcript ready by October 18<sup>th</sup>. All transcriptions should be completed by October 30<sup>th</sup>.

Preliminary analysis – insights and themes (50 points). You will be assigned to work as part of a group to analyze an aspect of the research project. You will work collaboratively to present preliminary findings to the class on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Participation (100 points). This course is very much a self-directed and cooperative course. You are expected to be able to use your knowledge and skills in qualitative research to achieve the goals of the project. It will be up to each of you to maintain a high level of commitment to the project. If one student fails to meet their responsibilities, the entire project suffers. Most class time will be given to working on the project, so it is in your best interest to be present! A lack of attendance and/or participation will result in a poor participation grade. In addition, there will be several points in the semester when you will be called upon to contribute ideas and suggestions based on review of relevant articles and websites. Your preparation and contribution on these matters are also an important facet of your participation.

Journal (75 points). For this course you are required to keep a journal of your thoughts and reflections over the semester. The purpose of the journal is for you to spend time reflecting on your experiences in the class in general and our collaborative project specifically. The content of the journal will not be graded, but you must meet deadlines in order to receive credit. You will be given prompts for reflection at an appropriate time and it is my hope that through keeping a journal, you will honestly consider the progress of the group project and your individual learning, and explore the challenges and rewards of group projects and collaborative partnerships. The journal entries are due October 4<sup>th</sup>, November 1st, and November 25th.

Final reflection (100 points). After the final product is complete, you will reflect on your experience conducting qualitative research and working collaboratively with others as well as your individual learning within the course. This reflection is due Dec 18<sup>th</sup>.

Final product (450 points). You will contribute to the final product in two ways. You will be responsible for a "primary contribution" (350 points) that focus on communicating a substantive

part of the research findings. Our class will work collaboratively to envision the final product and delineate contributions for each person. Your work will be graded based on the quality and creativity of the composition. The first draft of the primary contribution is due Nov 15<sup>th</sup>. You will also make a “secondary contribution” (100 points) that will focus on select ancillary components of the final product, such as an introduction, description of methods, or conclusion. The first draft of the secondary contribution is due November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Specific responsibilities for your primary and secondary contributions will be determined during the course, likely on November 6th.

Final presentation (50 points). For your contribution to the final presentation, you will be graded on the pertinence, organization and clarity of your contribution as well as how it meshes with the content your peers contribute. We will give the final presentation on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **Grading**

Your final grade will be based on performance in all parts of the course. Letter grades will be assigned according to the following distribution:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Failing</u>
A (1000-930)	B+ (899-880)	C+ (799-780)	D+ (699-680)	NC (< 600)
A- (929-900)	B (879-830)	C (779-730)	D (679-630)	
	B- (829-800)	C- (729-700)	D- (629-600)	

### **Bibliography of Required Readings**

Belmont Report 1979. *Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. The national commission for the protection of human subjects of biomedical and behavioral research.

Cameron, E. 2012. New geographies of story and storytelling. *Progress in Human Geography* 26(5): 573-592.

Davies, J., Singh, C., Tebboth, M., Spear, D., Menash, A., and Ansah, P. 2018. *Conducting Life History Interviews: a how-to guide*. Available: [www.assar.uct.ac.za](http://www.assar.uct.ac.za)

Dodge, M. 2017. Cartography I: mapping deeply, mapping the past. *Progress in Human Geography* 41(1) 89–98

Elwood, S. and Martin, D. 2000. “Placing” interviews: location and scales of power in qualitative research. *The Professional Geographer* 52(4): 649 – 657.

Gallup (2014). Life in college matters for life after college. May 6.

Gallup (2019). Six College experiences linked to student confidence on jobs. January 22.

Hay, Iain, (ed.) 2016. *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Jeong-Hee, Kim (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: the crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

King, N., and Horrocks, C. 2010. *Interviews in qualitative research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Knowles, A., Westerveld, L., Strom, L. 2015. Inductive visualization: a humanistic alternative to GIS. *GeoHumanities* 1(2): 233-265.

La Pelle, N. 2004. Simplifying qualitative data analysis using general purpose software tools. *Field Methods* 16(1): 85 – 108.

Murphy, A. (2018). *Geography: why it matters*. Medford, MA: Polity Press

Trudeau, D., Smith, L., and Barcus. 2018. Coda: Making geography relevant. *Professional Geographer* 70(2): 333-337.

## SCHEDULE

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
1	Sept 4 (W)	Introduction to the class		
	Sept 6 (F)	Qualitative methods	1) Hay Ch 1 2) Knowles	
		<u>Designing Qualitative Research</u>		
2	Sept 9 (M)	Project goals and process	1) Dodge	Join QRM on Slack, access Team Drive
	Sept 11 (W)	Rigor and Qualitative Research Design	1) Hay Ch 6 2) Hay Ch 17	
	Sept 13 (F)	Interviewing techniques	1) Hay Ch 8	Peer Interview & Reflection Assigned Practice using voice recorder
3	Sept 16 (M)	Life History as Method	1) Hay Ch 9 2) Davies et al	
		<u>Preparing to interview</u>		
	Sept 18 (W)	Writing Interview Questions- Themes	1) Murphy 2) Gallup	
	Sept 20 (F)	Writing Interview Questions- Strategy	1) Trudeau et al. 2) Jeong-Hee	
4	Sept 23 (M)	Writing Interview Questions- Finalizing		
		<u>Ethics in Qualitative Research</u>		
	Sept 25 (W)	Interview recruitment & ethics	1) Hay Ch 2	
	Sept 27 (F)	No Class		Begin contacting interviewees!
5	Sept 30 (M)	Ethics and interview recruitment Debrief Interview Reflection	1) Elwood and Martin	Interview Reflection Due
	Oct 2 (W)	The need for ethics in research	Belmont Report	
	Oct 4 (F)	Film: <i>Quiet Rage</i>		Journal reflection #1 due

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
6	Oct 7 (M)	Identifying sound ethical practices	1) Hay Ch 2 2) Hay Ch 3	
	Oct 9 (W)	Research project check-in	1) Hay Ch 15	
	<u>Project management</u>			
7	Oct 11 (F)	Exploring research outputs		Research 3 and summarize 1 Life History example
	<u>Coding Qualitative Data</u>			
	Oct 14 (M)	Coding interview responses Introduction to Atlas.ti	1) Hay Ch 18 2) Hay pp. 302-304	
8	Oct 16(W)	Coding interview responses Strategies for group work	1) Atlas.ti 2) La Pelle (skim)	
	Oct 18 (F)	No class		Interview transcript due
	<u>Project management</u>			
9	Oct 21 (M)	Visual Storytelling – Strategy, technology, platform	1) Cameron 2) <a href="#">Canva.com</a>	
	Oct 23 (W)	Visual Storytelling – sharing examples, envisioning our approach	1) Hay Ch 20	Research and share compelling ways to communicate process and experience
	Oct 25 (F)	No class - Fall Break		
	Oct 28 (M)	Envisioning the final product	1) Project Pericles Prototype	
	<u>Analyzing Qualitative Data</u>			
	Oct 30 (W)	Analyzing Interviews	1) King and Horrocks	All transcriptions completed by this date
	Nov 1 (F)	Analyzing Interviews		Journal Reflection #2 due

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
10	Nov 4 (M)	Analyzing Interviews - Share insights & themes		
	Nov 6 (W)	<u>Project management</u> Planning the final product		
	Nov 8 (F)	Pitching our plan to stakeholders		
11	Nov 11 (M)	Assembling final product		
	Nov 13 (W)	Assembling final product		
	Nov 15 (F)	Assembling final product		Primary contribution
		<u>Communicating our work</u>		
12	Nov 18 (M)	Assembling final product		
	Nov 20 (W)	Rough Draft		
	Nov 22 (F)	Internal Review		Secondary contribution
13	Nov 25 (M)	Revising final product		Journal Reflection #3 due
	Nov 27 (W)	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>		
	Nov 29 (F)	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>		
14	Dec 2 (M)	Revising final product		
	Dec 4 (W)	Present work to Stakeholders		
	Dec 6 (F)	Debriefing stakeholder feedback		
		<u>Wrapping up</u>		
15	Dec 9 (M)	Finalize product		
	Dec 11 (W)	Finalize product		
16	Dec 18 (W)	Final exam period 10:30 am – 12:30 pm		Final reflection due