

SPPH 581H 921 Course Syllabus – Qualitative Research for Public Health Practice

Credits: 3 **Fall Term Class**

Requirement:

This is an introductory course designed for student in the Master of Public Health Stream.

Information and Location:

Sept. 7 – Dec 7, 2022. Wednesday 2:00 – 5:00 PM. Location SPPH 143

Course Instructor Information:

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Course Overview:

The use of qualitative research methods in public health is increasingly common. Whether conducted alone or in conjunction with quantitative research methods (mixed methods), qualitative research can help us understand the why, what and how of issues related to health. In particular, qualitative research can help us explore the underlying behaviors, attitudes, beliefs and practices that determine health outcomes; identify the social, programmatic, and structural impediments to use of existing services; and shed light on how to design new interventions so they align with the socioeconomic realities of their intended beneficiaries.

This introductory course is designed for Masters in Public Health (MPH) students relatively new to the field of qualitative research. The overall aim is to provide students with the understanding and skills necessary to conduct an objective appraisal of published qualitative literature and assess its relevance and application to their field of practice. The course will provide students with an overview of what constitutes qualitative research, the common philosophical assumptions and paradigms underpinning this research, the essential elements of a study design, the common methods of data collection and analysis, ethical considerations during qualitative research, and what makes a good piece of qualitative research.

Note: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Some of the course content may vary from year to year to take advantage of unique learning opportunities that may arise in a given term or to accommodate unforeseeable circumstances.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the basic characteristics of a qualitative research approach.
2. Compare and contrast qualitative with quantitative research.
3. Discuss the different philosophical assumptions, paradigms and methodological approaches presented in this course, and how they guide qualitative research.
4. Explain the relationship between the study purpose, research questions, and decisions about study design.
5. Present on the essential elements of a well-planned qualitative study design.
6. Discuss ethical considerations for qualitative research.
7. Discuss the use of the semi-structured interview method for collecting qualitative data, including planning, design of topic guides, mechanics and logistics.
8. Deliberate on approaches that can ensure rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the course material through a variety of evaluative measures, including class discussions, quizzes, course assignments and oral presentations.

Course Structure

Learning about qualitative research is like riding a bike, it requires 'doing' in order to fully appreciate and learn the essentials. This course, therefore, uses a blended learning approach. This means students will learn using a combination of strategies: student-led in-class (small and large group) discussions facilitated by the course instructor, guest lecturers, student presentations; pre-assigned readings and videos; and assignments. Given the course takes a hands-on approach, the course will require a considerable investment of time, with intensive reading and regular group work and discussions. Students are expected to fully participate in all components to successfully complete the course.

It is expected that students will (1) be well-informed with the Course Syllabus, (2) be well-informed with course schedule and deadlines delineated in the Course Outline, (3) have viewed and read the assigned recorded lecture videos and Pre-Readings prior to class, and (4) come prepared to participate in and facilitate group discussions.

The 'Guiding Questions' provided in the Course Outline are intended to help students move from the factual to the analytic as they complete their assigned readings. The Guiding Questions are intended to stimulate students to do their own thinking and synthesis, not simply regurgitate the ideas and themes presented in the text.

Time will be set aside at the end of class for students to ask questions about the course material. Given the majority of students are (or will be in the future) from the health sector, they will be encouraged to share and speak about their own experiences and challenges with health research.

Communication

Canvas Discussion Board.

- Questions regarding course assignments. Students should channel all their questions regarding course logistics and assignments through the respective discussion boards created for this purpose. This will allow all students to benefit from the discussions.
- The Canvas Discussion room also provides an opportunity for students to discuss issues discussed in class. Students may create a discussion thread to chat among themselves; this will be student initiated and student driven. This will not be supervised by the instructor or TA.

Emailing instructor and TA.

- Use the outlook email feature for submitting your assignments, and for private communication with the course instructor and TA. The instructor's email is included in the course syllabus, the TA's email will be provided at the start of the course. Please avoid using the Canvas email feature to allow for timely communication. Emails are typically answered within 24-48 hours (except holidays and weekends)

Communication to the entire class.

- The instructor or TA will post a new announcement from time to time for important course updates. This will appear in the 'Announcements section. ***It is very important that students check their email and Announcements on Canvas frequently to avoid missing important information about the course.***

Office Hours: By appointment only. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor or TA via course mail whenever help is required. Please email the course instructor or TA directly to schedule an appointment. Attempts will be made to return student's communication within 24 to 48 hours. Should the instructor or TA be away and offline for an extended period (i.e., for more than a few days) the class will be notified in advance. We will also be available (schedule permitted) immediately following a class.

Readings and Resources

Required.

- Recorded video lectures. These can be found in Canvas
- Select qualitative papers (refer to the Course Outline)

Required Readings from the Following Texts: (refer to the Course Outline).

- Braun V & Clarke V. (2013) Successful Qualitative Research; A Practical Guide for Beginners. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE. *Students will benefit from purchasing this text.*
- Creswell JW, et al. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. 4th ed. Sage.
- All required, recommended and optional readings are either provided on Canvas or can be accessed through the UBC library. Required readings are aligned with the content covered in the recorded lectures, and are intended to further improve understanding of the materials covered.

**** Please take note: this course involves a substantial reading list. Students are expected to manage their time well in order to complete the readings and recorded lectures prior to class, and to come prepared for class discussions.**

Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated through a combination of written assignments, group presentations, and class participation, according to the following criteria:

1. Class Participation & Preparedness	25%
2. Quizzes (4-5).	25%
3. Critical Appraisal. (Written)	25%
4. Journal Club. (Discussion & Presentation)	25%

Refer to the Course Outline for specific due dates.

Course Assignment Overview (Refer to the respective assignment rubric for details)

• Online Quizzes (Individual Assignment)

There will be four to five (open-book, open-laptop) quizzes over the term to test comprehension of the pre-class readings, class discussions and wrap-up lecture. The quizzes will include 20-30 multiple-choice questions, each quiz will be worth the same percentage and, collectively, contribute to a total mark of 25%. The quizzes will be administered on Canvas and a set amount of time will be allocated to complete each quiz. The quizzes will become available via Canvas by 7:00PM on DAY 1 of the Quiz Week and remain open till 10:00 PM on the LAST day of the Quiz Week; refer to the Course Outline for exact dates. Students may complete the online quizzes at any point before the assigned due date. **NO EXTENSIONS OR "DO-OVERS" WILL GRANTED FOR THESE ONLINE QUIZZES.** For multiple-choice questions with one response, the question will be marked as correct or incorrect. For a question with multiple-answers, partial credit will be awarded for each correct answer, and equivalent points subtracted for incorrect answer selected.

Please note, the one-week access is to allow students extra time to complete the Quiz than is needed. This will help accommodate students who require special consideration under Access & Diversity.

• Journal Club Discussion and Presentation (Group Assignment)

A journal club is a gathering of researchers to discuss a scientific paper found in a research journal. Students will work in small groups to facilitate a journal club session in class. This assignment is designed to enable students to learn about quality and rigor in qualitative research by facilitating a journal club discussion to review and critique their chosen paper. Overall, this assignment has three interrelated goals: (1) to give students the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of the course material; (2) to provide students with the opportunity to "learn" by "doing", and (3) to provide students with the opportunity to teach their peers. This assignment is worth 25% of the final grade. Refer to the Journal Club Rubric for more details.

- **Critical appraisal of a qualitative research paper (Take-Home Written Group Exam)**

In order to make a decision about implementing evidence into practice, public health practitioners need to be able to critically appraise research. For this assignment, students will apply the knowledge and skills acquired in this course to evaluate a published peer-reviewed qualitative study pertaining to public health. Students will work in small groups to critically appraise an assigned published journal article, using the Critical Appraisal form and guideline provided for this assignment. The assignment is worth 25% of the final grade. Refer to the Critical Appraisal Assignment Rubric for details.

- **Class Participation**

Students will be assigned a mark of up to 25% for their willingness to participate in class discussion, the degree to which their participation enhances learning, and the effort they put into their group presentations. This includes attendance (since this is a prerequisite to be fully engaged), listening to others without interrupting, treating peers and lecturers with respect even when they disagree, and contributing to classroom discussions and learning in a constructive and objective fashion.

For in-class discussions, students are expected to have read the Pre-Readings, come prepared with 1-2 discussion points on each of the Guiding Questions, and actively participate in the in-class small and large group discussions/exercises/presentations. While the instructor is responsible for the learning experience and environment, **as graduate-level students, each student is expected to take responsible for his/her own learning** by actively participating in the range of activities offered in the course. The course instructor will assess the student's participation over the full term. Refer to the Class Participation Rubric for details.

Personal Skills

To enable achievement of the course competencies, students will need to:

1. Develop communication, feedback and conflict-resolution skills in order to work effectively and respectfully with peers and colleagues.
2. Demonstrate professional behavior in all interactions.
3. Reflect on personal skills, abilities and capacities, identify areas in need of improvement and access necessary resources to achieve this.
4. Cultivate personal methods for lifelong learning and skills maintenance, such as time management and organizational skills. Additional information and guidelines on time management and organizational skills can be found in the student handbook from the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (www.ctlt.ubc.ca).

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Record or taking pictures of any class lectures or slides is NOT PERMITTED without prior permission from the course instructor. The classroom should provide an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students are expected to arrive on time to class and remain throughout the scheduled class time. The use of cellphones is prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified.

LAPTOP ETIQUETTE: Students may use their laptop in class if they are viewing handouts or taking lecture notes on lecture. Please do not use laptops for any other kind of work unrelated to this class, emailing, social media, internet surfing, computer games, or other uses unrelated to the course. These practices are distracting and disruptive and are disrespectful to the course instructor, guest lecturers, and other students.

Missed Classes, Make-up Work, or Late Work:

Students are expected to attend all classes. Missing a lecture, arriving late or leaving early without extenuating reasons will affect the class participation grade (refer to Class Participation Grade Rubric). Students are to inform the instructor by email prior to class if there are extenuating circumstances. In case of unexpectedly absence, students need to follow-up with the instructor immediately by email. Those with a valid medical reason may be required to complete additional assignments to fulfill the course objectives and requirements. If a lecture is missed, it is the student's responsibility to obtain lecture notes, handouts, other materials or instructions from the course website or a classmate.

Assignments must be submitted no later than the specified due date and time. All assignments must be uploaded on Canvas (**and to the instructor and TA using the outlook email feature**) by the due date. Students will be informed in class regarding the submission of a hardcopy. No late assignments will be accepted for grading. Exceptions will only be made for students with a serious illness or incapacity ([UBC's Academic Concession Policy](#)). Extra time has been built into all assignments to accommodate students with special needs; however, such students should still self-identify and register their needs with Access & Diversity (see below).

Grading (from the *UBC Department of Educational Studies, Graduate Course Grading Policy*):

90 - 100%	= A+	68 - 71%	= B-
85 - 89%	= A	67 - 64%	= C+
80 - 84%	= A-	63 - 60%	= C
76 - 79%	= B+	59 - 55%	= C-
72 - 75%	= B		

Although a C+, C, or C- grade may be given in a graduate course, the Faculty of Graduate Studies considers 68% as a minimum passing grade for Masters and PhD students.

Plagiarism & Copying Others Work

Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism, copying others work and collaborating on work that is intended to be completed independently. The Quizzes must reflect individual work. These are is a form of academic misconduct and subject to academic penalty. Please review the Plagiarism and Student Discipline sections of the UBC Calendar, available at <http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/policies.htm>, and <http://www.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,54,0,0>. Record or taking pictures of any class lectures or slides is NOT PERMITTED without prior permission from the course instructor.

Student support

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>)