This course will address qualitative methods and methodologies with an emphasis on fieldwork in the Humanities. We will explore the three foundations of qualitative methods: field observations, interviews and interpretive modes of analysis. Students will learn how to design and conduct a qualitative research project and will be introduced to analytic strategies and evaluative criteria.

Required texts:

Recommended:

This course is designed around getting out into the field and doing research. At the same time, we will tap into the theories and conceptual histories of qualitative research. The goal is to develop an informed position on issues of fieldwork and to hone your strategies for conducting and presenting your research.

Qualitative analysis is addressed to the task of delineating forms, kinds and types of social phenomena; of documenting in loving detail the things that exist (Lofland, 1971, p. 13).

Assignments:

Paper #1: Proposal
Draft a proposal for observational work including issues of access and consent forms. Your proposal should be based on your initial reconnaissance work in a particular field site.

Paper #2 and Oral presentation: Book review
Read a full-length qualitative study and write a 4-page review using Creswell’s nine questions as guides. Present a brief oral review of this book in class (5
In this way, the class will collectively review a variety of studies with the goal of developing a sense for what makes a “good” qualitative study.

Paper #3: Interviews
Conduct field interviews and write up both the interview process and analysis detailing your research choices.

Interview transcript
Transcribe at least one of your interviews verbatim. You should indicate long pauses and nonfluencies but you need not indicate inflections or turns.

Paper #4 and Oral presentation: Qualitative Approaches
Choose one of the approaches listed on the syllabus (weeks 5, 10, 12-14). Read both the required and optional readings and do your own research on this approach. Write a paper describing this approach including basic assumptions and theoretical legacies, advantages and disadvantages, leading proponents and critics, and exemplary studies. Prepare a brief oral presentation in class to supplement the discussion about this approach. Your paper and presentation are due on the date scheduled in the syllabus.

Paper #6: Final paper - a full research proposal
Rewrite your initial proposal, drawing on our readings and your fieldwork to flesh out your plan for a qualitative field-based project. Revisit your informed consent forms and your IRB application and annotate any revisions you make. Include a short “confessional” paper about your experiences as a field researcher. Turn in your fieldwork portfolio and interview transcripts as well.

Fieldwork portfolio
You must document 15 hours in the field and all of your notes for your fieldwork and interview. Keep a portfolio with your in-field notes, written fieldnotes, a field diary, initial coding and analytic notes, interview transcript, and your reflections on your field experiences.