



## GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

### Introduction to Qualitative Research and Design Methods

CS 6455 | CS 4690 | INTA 8803 NK

Fall 2016

Mondays 3pm-6pm

Mason 3133

#### INSTRUCTOR

**Neha Kumar**

Assistant Professor

Sam Nunn School of International Affairs &

School of Interactive Computing

[neha.kumar@gatech.edu](mailto:neha.kumar@gatech.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9-10 or by appointment (3405 Klaus)

#### TEACHING ASSISTANT

**Rui Zhou**

PhD Student

Human-Centered Computing

[r.zhou@gatech.edu](mailto:r.zhou@gatech.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays 2-3 or by appointment (3405 Klaus)

#### ABOUT THE COURSE

This course introduces students to core concepts and methods involved in qualitative research and design thinking. Through a diverse set of hands-on learning activities, readings, field experiences, class lectures, and discussions, students will explore the processes and products of qualitative inquiry and design thinking. Essential questions for the course include: What is the nature of qualitative research and how can we, as consumers and doers of it, assess its value? How might we approach design with an emphasis on understanding and observation, both lessons in qualitative research?

#### TEXTBOOKS

We will primarily draw on these texts, in addition to readings that you will be provided.

- Charmaz, Kathy. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. University of Chicago Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press.
- Olson, J. S., & Kellogg, W. A. (2014). *Ways of Knowing in HCI*. Springer, New York.

*Class Participation* is mandatory. You should come to each class, and on time. If for some reason you must miss class or a portion of a class, please notify both the instructor and TA at least 24 hours before class and make arrangements to get course materials from a class colleague. You are allowed to miss one class during the semester, no questions asked about reasons. You will lose 25% of your class participation grade for every other class that you miss. Remember that most of your learning takes place *in* class.

*Readings* must be done for they provide background and context for in-class activities and course assignments. You are required to read assigned texts carefully and come to class prepared with questions, reflections, and comments. Not being disciplined about the readings will leave you at a considerable disadvantage through the course. Please make sure you take a look at the reading list before deciding to stay in the course. Weekly reflections (approx. 300 words) of **one** reading of your choice from the weekly readings will be required. These must be shared by 3pm Sundays (24 hours in advance of our class). Failure to post will cost 25% of your class participation grade per lapse.

*Activities* will take place regularly, and you will be expected to contribute to them. These will include informal exercises, discussions, peer workshops, group time for assignments, among others, and will count towards your class participation grade. In addition, each group will most likely need to schedule meetings outside of class hours as well. Please keep this in mind before forming groups.

*Big assignments* are designed to help you reflect on the process of conducting qualitative research and to enrich your 'real-world' understanding of issues and topics covered in class. You will write up three big assignments during the term based on practice field experiences.

#### *Part 1: The Observation Process (10.3.16)*

Students will divide into groups (of 2-3) of their choice and presumably with those who have common research interests. Each group will choose a site and time to conduct an observation connected to a particular research question (or set of questions). Each student will write up a report consisting of field notes and reflections on the process of observation. Students may wish to focus on similarities/differences encountered in the group observation, the complexities of examining a particular phenomenon, and/or the connections between the field experience and the topics we cover in class readings and discussions.

#### *Part 2: The Interview Process (10.31.16)*

Students will work with the same group and research topic/site identified as for the observation experience. Together, students will write interview questions and select someone at the research site to interview two times during the quarter. During the interviews, students will have a chance both to ask questions and to take notes on the interview process. For this assignment, students will transcribe a short selection from one of

the interviews (approximately 10-15 minutes of recording) and will write a brief description of the topics discussed. In the second part of the assignment, they will relate these experiences to issues covered in class, in the readings.

### *Part 3: Qualitative Product and Process Paper (12.12.16)*

This final paper asks students to reflect on what they have learned about the nature of the qualitative research. One section of the paper will be devoted to a mini-qualitative “product” where students will analyze the data they have collected from their field experiences and will write a brief report describing their findings and tentative interpretations. This part of the paper will be done collectively with other group members. The second half of the paper will be devoted to a reflection on the process of doing qualitative research. Each student will be expected to comment on the issues encountered and the complexity of the research process, in addition to paying some attention to topics of contextual interpretation, subjectivity, ethics, the analysis process, trustworthiness, and rigor.

*Small assignments* are supplementary, independent, and well, relatively small assignments designed to introduce you to diverse challenges that doing qualitative research and using design methods bring. You will complete three small assignments during the term.

### *Qualitative Research Critique (9.5.16)*

You will be required to write a brief (approximately 2 page, standard margins, 12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing) critique of an article that relies primarily on qualitative research methods. The assignment is intended to familiarize you with products of qualitative inquiry and to help you learn to identify and assess common components, strengths, and weaknesses. Guidelines for this paper will be distributed in class. You will be assessed for your selection of the paper, your reading and review of the paper’s strengths and weaknesses, and for connecting back to class readings. Please note that this grade will *not* contribute to your overall grade for the class. However, the exercise is *not optional*. It is meant to be an exercise for you to get feedback from the teaching team on your work so that you know what to repeat and what to work on for your next assignments.

### *Presentation on Ways of Knowing in HCI*

In each class, 2-3 students will present on a *way of knowing* in HCI, selecting from the book based on discussion with the instructor and TA. You will have *exactly* 15 minutes to present and to answer questions on a chapter of the book, and will be encouraged to find innovative ways of doing this presentation with a focus on interactivity and “making it personal” - to the presenters and the audience.

### *Sustainability Design Jam (11.18.16)*

You will put together a Design Jam that will last 3 hours, intended to familiarize students with the idea of sustainability, drawing on the definitions of the Sustainable Development Goals as

derived from the UN. The class will divide into three teams - the planners, the observers, and the interviewers. The first set will be responsible for designing and facilitating the event, the second will observe the participants in action, and the third will do a set of interviews after the event to determine what went well and what could have been done better. Students will be required to submit a combined process report at the end.

*Grading policies* are non-negotiable. You may take this course for a letter grade or opt for the Pass/Not Pass option. In order to get an A, you must demonstrate excellent understanding of subject material and contribute to a stimulating classroom environment. You should expect to earn a B if you complete all of the requirements for the assignments reasonably well, and demonstrate some aptitude (but not mastery) of learning outcomes. You should expect a C if you do not complete requirements for the assignments. Only work submitted by the dates specified will be considered for grading. Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

30% Class Participation (20%) + In-Class Exercises (10%)

40% Observation (10%) + Interviews (10%) + Product (20%)

30% Qualitative Research Critique (0%) + Ways of Knowing (10%) + Design Jam (20%)

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Part 1: Understanding Qualitative Research**

#### **Week 1: August 22**

##### *Introduction to Qualitative Research*

Students will get to know each other, learn about the course, and do some reflection for a bit on their own epistemological inclinations. The first lecture will introduce qualitative inquiry.

No readings.

#### **Week 2: August 29**

##### *The Nature of Qualitative Research*

Students will learn what qualitative research is about and discuss how it stands against quantitative research.

##### Readings:

- Spindler, G., & Spindler, L. (1987). Teaching and learning how to do the ethnography of education. *Interpretive ethnography of education: At home and abroad*, 17-33.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). Understanding complexity: A gift of qualitative inquiry. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 19(4), 416-424.
- Becker, H. S. (1996). The epistemology of qualitative research. *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry*, 53-71.

- Geertz, C. (1994). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. *Readings in the philosophy of social science*, 213-231.
- Peshkin, A. (1993). The goodness of qualitative research. *Educational researcher*, 22(2), 23-29.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. Chap 1.

### **Week 3: September 12**

#### *Crafting a Research Plan*

Students will learn how to put together a research plan - how to craft research questions, design a study, and make decisions regarding methods, among other things.

#### Readings:

- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press. Chap 3.
- Bauer, M. W., & Gaskell, G. (Eds.). (2000). *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook for social research*. Sage. Chap 2.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage. Chap 5.

### **Week 4: September 19**

#### *The Practicalities of Fieldwork*

Students learn what fieldwork entails and how to deal with its challenges. We will have a panel of students share stories about their fieldwork.

#### Readings:

- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology*, 95-117.
- Burrell, J. (2009). The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research. *Field Methods*, 21(2), 181-199.
- Thorne, B. (1980). "You still takin' notes?" Fieldwork and problems of informed consent. *Social Problems*, 27(3), 284-297.

### **Week 5: September 26**

#### *Ethics*

Students learn about ethics and why they need careful consideration when doing human subjects research.

#### Readings:

- Altork, K. (1998). You Never Know When You Might Want to Be a Redhead in Belize. In K. demurs (Ed.) *Inside Stories: Qualitative Research Reflections*. Yahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 111-125.

- Lincoln, Y. (2000). Narrative Authority vs. Perjured Testimony: Courage, Vulnerability and Truth. *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13(2), 131-138.
- Page, R., Samson, Y., and Crockett, M. (1998). Reporting Ethnography to informants. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68 (3), 299-333.
- Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten lies of ethnography moral dilemmas of field research. *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, 22(3), 267-294.

## Part 2: Doing Qualitative Research

### Week 6: October 3

#### Participation and Observation

Students learn about observation and how to do it well.

#### Readings:

- Taylor, s., & Bogdan, R. (1998). Participant Observation, In the Field. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. (Third Edition). New York: John Wiley & Sons. 45-86.
- Becker, H., & Geer, B. (1957). Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison. *Human organization*, 16(3), 28-32.
- Tacchi, J. A., Slater, D., & Hearn, G. N. (2003). *Ethnographic action research: A user's handbook*.

### Week 7: October 17

#### Interviews

Students learn about interviews - how to do them and what to make of them.

#### Readings:

- Glesne, C. (2006). Making words fly: Developing understanding through interviewing. *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*, 3.
- Pawson, R. (1996). Theorizing the interview. *British Journal of Sociology*, 295-314.
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual review of sociology*, 129-152.
- Matthews, M., Gay, G., & Doherty, G. (2014, April). Taking part: role-play in the design of therapeutic systems. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (643-652). ACM.
- Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance through interviews and dialogues. *Qualitative inquiry*, 12(3), 480-500.

### Week 8: October 24

#### Subjectivity

Students learn to examine their own subjectivity, reflecting on how their presence in the field makes a difference.

Readings:

- Peshkin, A. (1991). "Appendix: In Search of Subjectivity - One's Own," *The Color of Strangers, The Color of Friends*. Chicago: University of Chicago. pp 285-295.
- Peshkin, A. (2000). The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research. *Educational Researcher* 29(9), pp 5-9.
- Rode, J. A. (2011, May). Reflexivity in digital anthropology. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 123-132). ACM.

### Part 3: Processing Qualitative Research

#### **Week 9: October 31**

##### *Making Sense of Data*

Students learn about analyzing data. They will be given a chunk of data to experiment with coding on, before tackling their own in the following week.

Readings:

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage. Chaps 3-4.
- Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D. (1998). *Studying Children in Context: Theories, Method, and Ethics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. pp 158 - 191 and 201 - 206.
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press. Chap 4.

#### **Week 10: November 7**

##### *More Methods*

Students learn about other qualitative approaches to data collection and discuss where these methods might take us. Students will work in groups to make sense of their own data, based on what they learned last week.

Readings:

- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual studies*, 17(1), 13-26.
- Young, L., & Barrett, H. (2001). Adapting visual methods: action research with Kampala street children. *Area*, 33(2), 141-152.
- Gaver, B., Dunne, T., & Pacenti, E. (1999). Design: cultural probes. *Interactions*, 6(1), 21-29.
- Blomberg, J., & Burrell, M. (2009). An ethnographic approach to design. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 71-94.
- Kuniavsky, M. (2003). Chapter 8: Contextual Inquiry, Task Analysis, Card Sorting. *Observing the User Experience: A practitioner's guide to user research*, 160-181.

#### **Week 11: November 14**

##### *Validity and Rigor*

Students examine the notion of validity with regards to qualitative research.

Readings:

- Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard educational review*, 62(3), 279-301.
- Johnson, R. (1997). Examining the Validity Structure of Qualitative Research. *Education*, 118, 282-292.
- Wolcott, H. (1990). On Seeking - and Rejecting - Validity in Qualitative Research. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.) *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: The Continuing Debate*. New York: Teachers College. 121-152.

**Week 12: November 24 18**

*Sustainability Design Jam*

Students put together a Design Jam for a cross-campus audience on the topic of Sustainability. Note that this class will be held on Friday, not our usual time on Monday, and last 3 hours. Students with time conflicts will be expected to assist their team in preparation, even if they cannot be at the event. More details to be provided in due course of time.

No readings.

**Week 13: November 28**

*Forms of Representation*

We will talk about forms of representation of qualitative research in this session. Students are required to bring drafts of final reports so they can engage in peer feedback during class.

Readings:

- Merriam, S. (1988). Writing the Case Study Report. *Case Study Research in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 185-206.
- Eisner, E. (1997). The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation. *Educational Researcher* 26(6), 4-10.
- Clifford, J. (1983). On ethnographic authority. *Representations*, (2), 118-146.
- Becker, H. (1986). *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chapter 2: Persona and Authority. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by Bird*. "Shitty First Drafts" pp. 21-27. NY: Random House.

**Week 14: December 5**

*Final Jeopardy!*

This session will begin with discussing the readings - final products of qualitative research - and end with a review of the course. Students will be rewarded for remembering what they studied through the semester.



#### Readings:

- Cohen, D. (1990). A Revolution in One Classroom: The Case of Mrs. Outlier. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 12(3), 311-329.
- McDermott, R. (1993). Acquisition of a Child by a Learning Disability. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.) *Understanding Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University. 269-305.
- Traweek, S. (2009). *Beamtimes and lifetimes: The world of high energy physicists*. Harvard University Press. Chap 3.
- Rosenbloom, W. (2004). Experiences of Discrimination among African-American, Asian American, and Latino Adolescents in an Urban High School. *Youth and Society* 35(4), 420-451.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONOR CODE**

While students are encouraged to work together and collaborate, they should clearly differentiate their work from that of others, including peers and bibliographical sources. Complete and accurate representation of all direct quotations and paraphrased material is required. Plagiarizing will be addressed in accordance with the Georgia Tech Honor Code (<http://honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>).

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

The Georgia Institute of Technology is committed to providing both physical accessibility and access to information resources and technologies to individuals with disabilities. Please see this website for further information - <http://www.gatech.edu/accessibility>.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This syllabus draws on previous syllabi from qualitative research courses taught at Stanford University and UC Berkeley by experts including Jennifer Wolf, Jenna Burrell, and Ingrid Seyer-Ochi. The design exercises draw on materials from the d.school at Stanford University.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

1. Group discussions should be on Slack. Please join the team for our class - qualmethods. We will also distribute a set of guidelines to structure Slack activity for those unfamiliar with the communication tool.
2. Laptops are not allowed in class. No, not even for notes.
3. Be professional. Imagine that you're in a workplace, following standard workplace rules. That means, do speak up and participate, but also give others a fair chance to do so. Do not be late. Every time you are late, there is a cost to your learning but also to others'.
4. If you are concerned about how you will be evaluated, ask *as early as possible*.
5. There may be minor changes to the syllabus and they will be announced in class as well as on Slack. Please make sure to update yourself or ask a friend.

WEEK	TOPIC	IN	OUT
1	Introductions		Qual Research Critique
2	The Nature of Qualitative Research		
3	Crafting a Research Plan	Qual Research Critique	
4	Practicalities of Fieldwork		Observation
5	Ethics		
6	Participation and Observation	Observation	
7	Interviews		Interviews
8	Subjectivity		
9	Making Sense of Data	Interviews	
10	More Methods		
11	Validity and Rigor		Final Product
12	Sustainability Design Jam		
13	Forms of Representation		
14	Final Jeopardy!	Final Product	