

# QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS (SL-GEOG 186/GSWs196/ANTH196)



Dr. Meghan Cope  
Old Mill 211  
[mcope@uvm.edu](mailto:mcope@uvm.edu)  
<http://blog.uvm.edu/mcope-childhoods/>

Spring 2019  
Lafayette 308  
MWF 12:00-12:50 pm  
Twitter: [@geomeg](https://twitter.com/geomeg)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 am or by appointment

How do geographers and other social scientists make sense of the social world? How can we answer questions about how people construct meaningful places, experience social/spatial differences, resist oppression, or simply make everyday life tolerable? What is in the 'toolkit' of qualitative research on social and spatial issues?

The broad goals of the course are for you to:

1. Learn how to do an **array of qualitative research techniques**, as well as the relative strengths and weaknesses of these techniques, their appropriate applications, ways to combine them in mixed-methods research, and how to analyze and represent qualitative data. (These skills will serve you well in future endeavors in academia, non-profits, corporations, or community development!)
2. Think critically not only about specific methods but also about larger issues of **the production of knowledge**, epistemologies (how we know what we know), and socially constructed "truths".
3. Critically evaluate the role of the researcher, **power and positionality** in the research process, and questions of whether participatory research can truly shift us out of 'expert-subject' relations.

The course consists of a range of readings, hands-on activities to practice methods, discussions, lectures, guest speakers, and a service-learning term project that will put students' new skills to work.

**Most (though not all – see schedule) weeks will run in a standard format:**

*Mondays:* lecture based on assigned readings (all readings must be completed for Mondays and a comment/question posted on the Blackboard Discussion Board by 9:00 am Mon.)

*Wednesdays:* hands-on experience, field excursion, or other activity *practicing* qualitative methods

*Fridays:* reflection and discussion of the week's material and experiences

Required Text (available at the UVM Bookstore or online booksellers):

Hay, Iain. 2016. *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Don Mills, ON, Canada: Oxford University Press. *This appears as QRMHG in the readings schedule. Please purchase/rent it as soon as possible so that you don't lose ground.*

Additional Readings: All additional required readings (marked with \* on the schedule) are available as PDFs on our Blackboard website. Please print these and bring them to class every day of the week they're assigned. They are referenced by the author(s) and publication date in the readings schedule, but full bibliographic info is included (or discernable) in the PDFs on Blackboard.

## Assessment

This is a hands-on course that requires your full attention and engagement. Therefore, participation is valued heavily. It is also a critically reflective course, so the written work involves thoughtful critique as well. The term project involves both individual and teamwork. More details to be distributed soon.

Attendance & Class participation	15%
Monday postings (by 9:00 am on Blackboard)	15%
Short Papers (3 @ 10%)	30%
Homework & Small Assignments	5%
Term Project	25%
<u>Final Reflection/Evaluation Paper</u>	<u>10%</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

### Grade Scale

A	94.0-100	C	74.0-76.9
A-	90.0-93.9	C-	70.0-73.9
B+	87.0-89.9	D+	67.0-69.9
B	84.0-86.9	D	64.0-66.9
B-	80.0-83.9	D-	60.0-63.9
C+	77.0-79.9	F	<60

## Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to enhance your understanding of research practice and processes:

1. identify the research questions and methods used in scholarly publications;
2. understand and be able to cite appropriate scholarly literature about research methods;
3. build familiarity with a wide range of methods (mainly but not only qualitative) and how they complement or contradict each other, when/where different methods are appropriate, etc.;
4. understand the necessary connections between the empirical evidence and the theoretical framework / research question;
5. identify ethical practices, especially for working with marginalized/oppressed populations;
6. become qualified to work with 'human subjects' through an on-line tutorial;
7. work in a group to identify research questions, methods, and practices to be used in a real-world exercise;
8. construct and perform a research project;
9. reflect critically on your role, the completed exercise, the subjects' contributions, and the research practice;
10. collect, preserve, and analyze your data using rigorous techniques;
11. construct convincing representations of your work;
12. synthesize the empirical insights to connect to scholarly literature and policy.

## A few policies

- Respect each others' views; work toward a climate of critical engagement and full participation
- I do not accept late papers or assignments except in the most dire situations (which need to be documented, usually through your Dean's office's Student Services department). The exception to this is a few assignments which are explicitly stated to have "flexible deadlines" – more info later.
- I expect all work turned in for this class to be your original words and ideas, with others' words and ideas properly cited and referenced. I will provide information on when and how to cite other sources. See the Academic Integrity statement for UVM: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>
- Common courtesies: I expect students to be present and *engaged* in class, and strongly recommend you do the assigned readings promptly. Please try to avoid unnecessary disturbances during lectures and discussions. For the most part, the class will be discussion- or activity-based and therefore *screen-free* (any exceptions need to be discussed with me in person).
- ACCESS: Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to deliver their letters to me as soon as possible and then to set up an appointment with me to discuss accommodations. I can best be reached by e-mail or during my office hours. I will make every reasonable effort to insure your full participation in this course.
- All classroom policies, including athletic and religious schedule accommodations, follow UVM policy, which can be viewed at <http://www.uvm.edu/csces>.