

## **SOPP 5657 – STRATEGIES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Syllabus**

<b>Course Title:</b>	Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis
<b>Instructor:</b>	Kata Orosz
<b>ECTS:</b>	4
<b>Term:</b>	Winter 2022
<b>Module:</b>	None (Elective)
<b>Relation to other courses:</b>	None

#### **Background and Overall Aim of the Course**

Collecting data about people's views and experiences by way of interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and participant observation is a common and important task required of policy researchers, analysts, and even of public administrators not working in expressly research-oriented positions. This course aims to provide students with the practical skills needed to adeptly collect and analyze data for smaller scale qualitative and mixed methods research projects, such as the ones they might conduct in the context of their applied policy labs, theses, or internships. The content of this course builds on, and complements, the content covered in the mandatory DPP courses Quantitative Methods for Public Policy and Qualitative Methods for Public Policy.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

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

- Design and implement an effective plan for identifying and recruiting study participants for smaller scale applied or policy research projects;
- Design effective interview protocols and online questionnaires;
- Collect high quality data on people's views and experiences with the help of semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and online questionnaires; and
- Adeptly analyze such data and report key findings.

#### **Learning Activities and Teaching Methods**

This course centers topics and issues that commonly arise in the context of smaller scale qualitative and mixed methods research projects. Topics and issues addressed in the course include: How to sample individuals or groups to interview for a qualitative study? How to recruit study participants for an online survey? How to word questions in a questionnaire to increase the response rate and mitigate the potential for bias? What questions to ask, and not to ask, in an expert interview? How to facilitate a focus group? What information can be gleaned from field observation and participant observation? Should interviews be recorded and transcribed – and if so, how? How can the writing of memos facilitate the analysis of qualitative data?

A collection of required and recommended readings, in-class discussion activities, a total of nine brief written homework assignments, and a final written assignment are designed to help students develop their own answers to these and similar questions. This course features an experiential learning approach: a comparatively light load of readings combined with a comparatively heavy load of ‘doing things’ (e.g., writing a recruitment script, running a focus group interview) and then reflecting on them.

### **Assessment**

Students enrolled in this course will be expected to attend class and actively participate in in-class activities; submit a total of nine brief homework assignments; and submit a final written assignment. The final written assignment is an interview protocol or questionnaire developed by the student, complete with an explanation of methodological choices the student took in developing the interview protocol or questionnaire.

The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

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| - Class participation                                    | 10% |
| - Homework assignments (Weeks 3 through 11)              | 45% |
| - Final assignment (interview protocol or questionnaire) | 45% |

### **Student hours and consultations by appointment**

Students are welcome to pose questions about the course material, assignments, and other academic matters during the instructor’s weekly student hours. The student hours in the Winter 2022 term will be held on **XXXX**, in Room **B406**.

The instructor is also available for consultation by appointment. Students should request appointments for consultation by emailing the instructor at [OroszK@ceu.edu](mailto:OroszK@ceu.edu) at least 24 hours in advance of the requested meeting.

**Responsibilities of the instructor**

- Come to class on time, prepared;
- Create a safe and inspiring learning environment for students;
- Communicate course-related expectations to students clearly and in a timely manner;
- Use consistent and clearly stated evaluation criteria to grade student assignments;
- Submit assignment grades within two weeks of the assignment deadline;
- Provide reasonably detailed, written feedback to students on their assignments;
- Respond to student emails within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays;
- Be available for student consultations during weekly student hours and by appointment;
- Be responsive to student feedback.

## COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND READINGS

### Week 1: Introduction and course overview

The first session of the course will be devoted to introductions and the discussion of students' areas of interest in specific research projects (e.g., thesis research, research related to the applied policy lab). The instructor will describe the learning outcomes, session topics, and course assessment in detail.

#### Recommended reading:

- Creswell, J. W. (2009). Mixed methods procedures. In: Author, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (pp. 202-224). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

### Week 2: Research questions and why they matter for data collection

In this class, we will discuss and practice strategies for narrowing down a general interest in an issue into a specific set of researchable questions. We will also practice how to match the research questions with appropriate strategies for data collection.

#### Required readings:

- DeCuir-Gunby, J. and Schutz, P. A. (2018). Asking appropriate research questions. In: Authors, *Developing a mixed methods proposal: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/base/download/BookChapter/developing-a-mixed-methods-proposal/i760.xml>
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Research questions: What do you want to understand? In: Author, *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (pp. 73-86). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

### Week 3: Questionnaires – When to use them and how

In this class, we will discuss strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in research, and best practices in collecting data via online surveys.

#### Required readings:

- Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). Questionnaire. In; *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/Reference//encyclopedia-of-survey-research-methods/n424.xml>

- Rowley, J. (2014) Designing and using research questionnaires. *Management Research Review*, 37(3). p. 308-330.

#### Additional resources:

- Questionnaire design tip sheet: <https://psr.ig.harvard.edu/book/questionnaire-design-tip-sheet>
- Statistics Sweden (2004). *Design your questions right*. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/7330775/7339614/DESIGN/7991980c-efc1-4b8e-87b8-b09aac449c19>

### **Week 4: Purposeful sampling of study participants**

In this class, we will discuss the strategy of purposefully sampling study participants and how it is different from the logic of probability sampling employed in quantitative studies. We will reflect on the benefits and limitations of a purposeful sampling strategy.

#### Required readings:

- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Site and participant selection. In: Author, *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (pp. 96-100). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., and Sinagub, J. (2013). Selection of participants. In Authors: *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*, Chapter 5. Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/base/download/BookChapter/focus-group-interviews-in-education-and-psychology/n5.xml>

### **Week 5: Recruitment of study participants**

In this class, we will continue the discussion of sampling, with a focus on how to recruit study participants from the targeted samples. We will discuss how to identify and contact gatekeepers and reflect on the pros and cons of different recruitment strategies.

#### Required readings:

- Collins, D. and Gray, M. (2015). Sampling and recruitment. In: Collins, D. (Ed). *Cognitive interviewing practice*, Chapter 4. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/cognitive-interviewing-practice/n4.xml?fromsearch=true>
- Mertens Oishi, S. (2003). How to administer an interview in person. In: Author, *How to conduct in-person interviews for surveys*. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/how-to-conduct-in-person-interviews-for-surveys/n5.xml>

## **Week 6: Data collection through field work and participant observation**

In this class, we will consider a frequently ignored strategy for data collection in smaller scale studies: that of participant and non-participant observation. In addition to considering best practices in conducting field work and participant observation, we will also identify those stages of a mixed methods research project where data collection via this approach might be particularly fruitful.

### Required reading:

- Greg Guest, G., Namey, E. E., and Mitchell. M. L. (2017). Participant observation. In: Authors, *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*, Chapter 3. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/collecting-qualitative-data/i409.xml?fromsearch=true>

## **Week 7: Semi-structured interviews**

In this class, we will discuss strategies for collecting qualitative data, with a focus on a data collection method common in smaller scale research projects: semi-structured interviews. Students will practice drafting, piloting, and revising interview protocols.

### Required readings:

- Hall, E. (2019). *Research questions are not interview questions*. Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/mule-design/research-questions-are-not-interview-questions-7f90602eb533>
- Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(T&L Art, 6), 1-10.
- Leech, B. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semistructured interviews. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 35(4), 665-668.

### Additional resource:

- *Top ten tips for a successful interview* (video). <https://methods.sagepub.com/video/top-ten-tips-for-a-successful-interview?seq=1&fromsearch=true>

## **Week 8: Focus group interviews**

In this class, we will discuss strategies for collecting qualitative data by means of focus group interviews. We will consider how this format is different from the one-on-one interview setting, with a focus on types of questions that should and should not be asked in a focus group setting. We will also consider how to select participants for focus groups and how to facilitate a focus group interview.

**Required readings:**

- Ivanoff, S. D. and Hultberg, J. (2006). Understanding the multiple realities of everyday life: Basic assumptions in focus-group methodology. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 13, 125-132.
- Morgan, D. L. (2019). Asking questions in focus groups. In: Author, *Basic and advanced focus groups*, Chapter 6. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/basic-and-advanced-focus-groups/i647.xml>

**Week 9: Memoing & transcribing interviews**

In this class, we will consider the strategy of writing research memos as a form of data collection as well as a first step in data analysis. We will identify stages of a research project where memoing might be particularly fruitful. We will also discuss when data collected via interviewing techniques should and should not be recorded, and how interview recordings can be processed for analysis.

**Required readings:**

- Birks, M., Chapman, Y., and Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research: Probing data and processes. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13(1), 68-75.
- Groenewald, M. (2012). Memos and memoing. In: Given, M. (Ed.) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/sage-encyc-qualitative-research-methods/n260.xml?fromsearch=true>

**Week 10: Coding & reporting findings from qualitative data**

In this class, we will consider different approaches to coding textual data, and practice coding such data with the help of pre-developed codebooks. We will also consider how codebooks can facilitate analysis and look at best practices for reporting findings from qualitative data.

**Required readings:**

- DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., Marshall, P. L., and McCulloch, A. W. (2011). Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. *Field Methods* 23(2), 136-155.
- Sandelowski, M. (1998). Writing a good read: Strategies for re-presenting qualitative data. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 21, 375–382.

Additional resource:

- Vanderbilt University (n.d.). *Moving from description to analysis*. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-wp0/wp-content/uploads/sites/164/2019/03/28042450/Moving-from-Description-to-Analysis.pdf>

**Week 11: Reporting findings from online questionnaires**

In this class, we will consider the choices one must make about displaying quantitative data, and the ramifications these choices have for communicating research results. Students will practice visually displaying findings from quantitative data collected with the help of an online questionnaire.

Required readings:

- Boslaugh, S. (2008). Graphical presentation of data. In Author (Ed). *Encyclopedia of epidemiology*. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/encyc-of-epidemiology/n183.xml?fromsearch=true>
- Sue, V. M. and Griffin, M. T. (2016). Choosing data displays. In: Authors, *Data visualization & presentation with Microsoft Office*, Chapter 1. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/data-visualization-and-presentation-with-microsoft-office/i527.xml>

Additional resource:

- Kennedy, H. and Allen, W. (2017). Data visualization as an emerging tool for online research. In: Fielding, N. G., et al. (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of online research methods*, Chapter 18. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-sage-handbook-of-online-research-methods-second-edition/i2321.xml?fromsearch=true>

**Week 12: Pros and cons of common data collection strategies**

In the concluding class, we will compare the benefits and drawbacks of common data collection strategies and consider which strategies the students might adopt in their own research projects (e.g., thesis research).

Required reading:

- Adams, A. and Cox, A. L. (2008). Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. In: Cairns, P. and Cox, A. L. (Eds.) *Research methods for human computer interaction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 17–34.