Qualitative Methods in Human Geography and Social Science – Critical and Reflective Practices (7,5 ETCS)

Spring Semester 2025

Arranging universities

Uppsala University, Örebro university and Dalarna University

Course convenors and lecturers

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Course description and content

The purpose with this course is to introduce and discuss theories and practices of qualitative methods in Human Geography and Social Science. It will provide both theoretical conceptualizations and hands on practical experience concerning the use and understanding of different qualitative methods and their implication for knowledge creation and advancement of research.

The course covers on the one hand a broad overview of methods to familiarize the participants with the variety and complexity of qualitative methods and on the other the course gives opportunities to reflect on and practice specific methods and discuss benefits and challenges of particular methodological choices. The course aims to include discussions of diverse theories and practices of qualitative methods including, but not limited to, queer methods, feminist methods and non-representational methods. Through the course the PhD-students will develop knowledge about the different steps in the research process; from selection of study field to a particular case; to selection of participants, conversations or visualization; through to collection of empirical material and finally coding interpretation, analysis and presentation.

The course will be organized through lectures and reading of literature followed by own assignments and workshops where different methods are discussed. The literature is a mix of classics in the field and new papers. Topics for the lectures and workshops will cover both different types of methods, such as different forms of interviewing, observing, and participating

as well as ways of analyzing text, visual material and discourses. General issues such as methodological choices, reflexivity, research ethics, embodiments and emotions in qualitative research will also be discussed. A special focus throughout the course will be the spatial dimensions of qualitative research, the researcher in the "field", understanding the role of places and mobilities and developing context sensitive interpretations of empirical material. The examination will consist of active participation in the meetings and sessions and an individually written paper.

The course will take place during two separate meetings. In the course program, lectures will be mixed with seminar discussions, work-shops and paper sessions.

Learning outcomes
After this course, participants will:

- have acquired in-depth knowledge of how the choice of qualitative research methods relates to scientific, philosophical and ethical grounds.
- get in-depth knowledge of a variety of qualitative methods and materials linked to analysing practices (e.g. discourse analysis, narrative analysis)
- be able to critically reflect upon central aspects of collecting, organising, analysing, and presenting qualitative data in relation to human geography.
- be well oriented in hands-on practice and application of qualitative methods.
- be able to discuss rigour, trustworthiness, credibility and validity in relation to qualitative research.

Schedule (preliminary)

Meeting 1: March 3-5th 2025

Örebro university campus

Theme

a. Ethics, positionality, and embodiment when entering "the field" – what does it mean to be a qualitative researcher and what are the ethical reflections and considerations to be made throughout the research process?
b. How to plan and design a qualitative study? From selection of case to organizing fieldwork and collection of material.

Sessions

- Introduction to the course: Themes, lectures, seminars and workshops
- Instructions for assignments and paper
- Overview of qualitative methods in Human Geography – (lecture)
- Guest lecture (topic TBA)
- Choice of method, study field and study design – (lecture)
- Ethics, embodiment and being insider/outsider in "the field" (lecture)
- Emotions, affect and messiness in qualitative research (lecture and practice in work-shop format)
- Workshop – choosing method, study field and designing a study
- Seminar on participation in "the field" – embodiment and insider/outsider relations
- Presentation of preliminary topic for paper. Individual short presentations by PhD students

Program

Day 1
13.00-13.30 Welcome to Örebro and Course introduction
13.30-14.00 Presentation of participants
14.00-14.30 Fika
14.30-15.30 Lecture: What is qualitative method? Susanna Heldt Cassel and Susanne Stenbacka
15.30-16.00 Discussion and Q&A
16.00-17.00 Methods exercise outdoors with Natasha Webster (reading the city)

19.00 Dinner

Day 2
9-9.30 Presentation of exercise results and reflections
9.30-10.30 Lecture: Ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation – feminist and collective work-practices. Susanna Heldt Cassel and Maria Thulemark
10.30-10.45 Fika
10.45-12.00 Discussions and reflections
12.00-13.00 Lunch
13-14.30 Literature seminar 1 – Embodiment and emotion in/of fieldwork
14.30-15.00 Fika
15.00-16.00 Key-note lecture
16.15-17.00 Post seminar: Q&A with keynote speaker

19.00 Dinner

Day 3
9.00-10.00 Lecture: Interviewing: Joint reflections of multiform interviews in a mixed method research study. Sara Forsberg and Natasha Webster
10-10.15 Fika
10.15-11.30 Workshop: Preliminary paper ideas – reflections and feedback
11.30-12.00 Summary and good bye!

Meeting 2: April 7-9th 2025

Uppsala University, Ekonomikum

Theme

c. Data analysis, interpretation, presentation and data management – rigour, transparency and ethics
d. Working together and practicing geographical analysis

Sessions

- Course paper step II: peer review of drafts. Before this second meeting, participants are asked to send in a draft of 1000 words. PhD students will discuss a first draft of their course paper and receive feedback from their peers.
  Submit 3 days in advance, read 4-5 other papers and comment.
- Lecture and research panel on analysis of data, transparency in qualitative research

- Lecture on how to practice data organising and analysis including power relations related to data management. This is followed by a panel discussion based on the course participants' questions.
- Visualisation and presentation of findings. Two researchers present their work including a discussion.
- Exercise: Practising geographical analysis: "Examining and (re)presenting the city" is a group exercise in which the participants are encouraged to experiment and use a combination of approaches to collect data and communicate their findings
- Working together seminar. What are the challenges involved when working together with researchers using quantitative methods?

Program

Day 1
13.00-13.15 Welcome to Uppsala
13.15-15.00 Draft paper presentation and paper opposition/discussions in groups – read 3-4 paper drafts in advance and prepare comments.
15.00-15.30 Fika
15.30-17.00- Guest lecture, host Sara Forsberg, followed by discussion.

Day 2
9.00-12.00 Analysis-workshop: group work including coding, analysing and presenting findings from transcripts/documents.
12.00-13-00 Lunch
13.00-15.00 Literature seminar 2: Presentation of qualitative findings - styles and formats
15.00-15.30 Fika
15.30-17.00 Researcher's panel discussion on working with qualitative methods

Day 3
9.00-10.00 Lecture: The thesis project, conducting and completing reserach for a doctoral thesis.
10.00-10.30 Fika and discussion
10.30-11.30 Walking wrap up reflection – walk and talk around Uppsala Dome and Castle
11.30-12.00 Evaluation and good bye!

Writing of individual paper

1. Meeting one: Participants present themselves and the purpose/theme of their course paper. (only a few minutes each)
2. Meeting two: Participants hand in a first draft of 1000 words and review each other's drafts, in groups of three or four.
3. Participants send in a final version within one month after meeting two. Feedback from teachers on-line.

Invited guest lecturers
International guests doing research in Human Geography and other disciplines with relevance for the course will also be invited.

Submission of final papers
May 20th 2025, to Susanna Heldt Cassel susanna.cassel@oru.se

Other information
The costs incurred for participating doctoral students from Swedish geography departments which are part of national program are paid by the respective department. If places are available, the course is also open for students in other departments and disciplines.

Applications should be sent via e-mail to Susanna Heldt Cassel by 15 December 2024 (susanna.cassel@oru.se).
In the e-mail, please state your contact details, the department where you are employed/and or enrolled in a PhD program, date when you began your doctoral studies and proposed time for your thesis defense (approx. term), name of your supervisor and a brief description of your thesis topic.

Literature (preliminary)

Billo, E., & Hiemstra, N. (2013). Mediating messiness: expanding ideas of flexibility, reflexivity, and embodiment in fieldwork. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *20*(3), 313–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2012.674929

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McMorran, C. (2012), Practising workplace geographies: embodied labour as method in human geography. *Area*, 44: 489-495. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2012.01101.x

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Peake, L. (2017). Feminist methodologies. *The AAG International Encyclopaedia of Geography, edited by Doug Richardson, Noel Castree, Michael F. Goodchild, Audrey Kobayashi, Weidong Liu, and Richard A. Marston, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd*, 2331-2340.

Radcliffe, S. A. (2022). *Decolonizing geography: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons. (specifically chapter 6).

Riaño, Y. (2016). Minga biographic workshops with highly skilled migrant women: enhancing spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(3), 267-279. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115614884

Rose, G. (2022). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials.* Sage.

Spinney, J. (2015). Close encounters? Mobile methods,(post) phenomenology and affect. *Cultural geographies*, *22*(2), 231-246.

Vannini, P. (2015). *Non-representational methodologies*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Wilcock, A. (2024). Shifting consciousness: Challenges to ontological assumptions in feminist research*, Emotion, Space and Society*, Volume 50, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2024.101004

Wilson, H. F., & Darling, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Research ethics for human geography: A handbook for students*. Sage.