

ENST 5030 FA semester  
Environmental Studies: Qualitative Methods

Environmental studies deal with complex challenges involving humans and the environment. Qualitative methods are generally applied to research involving humans, and aim to understand things that cannot be assigned a number. For example, qualitative methods can be used to explain processes, explore perceptions and answer questions like why and how. Qualitative research is also often used in mixed methods approaches to studying humans and the environment. They may be used before the quantitative research phase in a larger project to ascertain the key topics and range of probable answers that help in the design of quantitative research instruments. Qualitative methods may also be used after quantitative data is collected and analyzed to help explain the quantitative data. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative data are useful in studying environmental issues, and researchers need to be aware of methods used in both. The course will also touch on some of the major theories that researchers are using in environmental studies in order to support students in their thesis work.

### Learning Outcomes

#### Content

- Be able to identify various qualitative research methods and assess their suitability for different research questions and research populations
- Understand key issues in research ethics, obtain Canadian research ethics certification (TCPS2) for research involving humans
- Gain experience in using inductive and deductive qualitative data collection methods
- Collect, analyze and discuss qualitative data
- Become familiar with some of the current popular theories in qualitative environmental research

#### Professional Development

- Become an apprentice researcher developing critical thinking in examining the work of others, conducting independent research, generating arguments using data, and presenting arguments in writing and oral presentations
- Develop some proficiency in observational skills and interview skills
- Determine if qualitative methods will be useful for your thesis, and if so, make progress on designing a research instrument for your data collection

### Evaluation

Assignment	Value
TCPS2 Ethics Certificate	Must pass to continue course
Homework (submit up to 5 times, 3 highest marks count)	10%
Assignment 1 Observational Study	10%
Assignment 2 Cultural Views of the Environment Seminar	10%
Assignment 3 Seminar/Discussion Leader	10%
Assignment 4 Conducting Interviews	20%
Assignment 5 Analysis and Report of Interviews	30%
Class Participation	10%

## Referencing

For any referencing for the course, please use Chicago Style. Interviews also need to be referenced, but please use the assigned number for the interview, rather than the participant's name. This maintains confidentiality for the participants.

## Hints for Presentation Visuals:

- Do not leave a slide up for more than 2 minutes
- Do not read from the slide, the text should be a summary and include terms, definitions etc. to enhance the audience's understanding of what you say
- Include relevant pictures and design
- Don't be afraid to ask the audience some questions during the presentation, or ask them to raise their hands etc. participation keeps the audience focused

## Ethics Certification

All research involving human subjects is governed by a set of ethics. In Canada the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research involving humans is used (TCPS2).

Review the presentation entitled "TCPS2...what does it mean for you" under internal resources on the LU research ethics and integrity website: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/research-and-innovation/ethics/human-subjects/resources>.

Then follow the link to the Federal Government's TCPS2 tutorials (<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/>) and complete the tutorial. Download the certificate and submit a copy to the professor: [mdowsley@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:mdowsley@lakeheadu.ca), with your name in the subject line. Keep a copy for yourself for future use as well.

## Homework Assignments

**10%**

A total of 2-3 pages (double spaced, 11 pt font) should be prepared for submission. 5 submissions can be made over the term. Only the 3 highest marks will be recorded as part of the final grade.

For each homework assignment, students should be answer the following question for the package of readings (including those assigned by peers for cultural seminars and methods seminars)

1. What is something you found interesting? Expand on it by doing further reading (2-3 more papers).

For example, perhaps you found a particular type of research method interesting. So you would then look in qualitative methods text books in the library or look in some qualitative methods journals for more discussion of that method. You would write a short paragraph about why you found the topic interesting in the original paper, and then explore it in more detail in the next page and a half to two pages, referencing the additional material you found. Explore means to discuss what the method is, how it has been used and what sorts of strengths or weaknesses it has. NOTE: you cannot do the method that you focus on for your seminar. AND the homework doesn't have to be a research method – for ex. it could be a theory discussed in one of the papers

\*Submit your homework assignment at the start of class (hard copy) for the day the reading is assigned. (ie. Before the seminar on that topic). Also keep a copy yourself to use in the class discussion.

## Assignment 1 Observational Study

**10%**

Goals: Practise observation and inductive reasoning; assess your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher

In groups of 2-3 conduct a fieldtrip to practise participant observation. Select a site and pose some questions you hope to learn about from your study. Go to the site and observe carefully using all your senses for about 1 hour. Take notes about your observations and your participation (if any), including your feelings and thoughts. In some sites it might be acceptable to do this during your observations, in others you might need to wait until the end of the event or observation period. DO NOT TALK TO OTHER GROUP MEMBERS. Bring your notes to class to discuss with your group.

As a group, discuss what was observed from an inductive perspective (ex. What were people doing here? How were they doing it? What were differences based on age, gender, occupation?), and compare your observations. Present to the class some inductive analysis of the site and some reflection on your individual learning and experiences about the method.

Marking scheme: (10%)

- 2% peer evaluation of your behaviour on the fieldtrip – did you try to fit in by participating and acting appropriately? If you encountered difficulties, did you try to overcome them? Did you really pay attention to things?
- 5% participation in your group's discussion and in the presentation to the class
- 3% self-reflection – are you clearly examining your own behaviours and comparing them to best practises throughout this assignment? Submit a 1-page discussion of your behaviour/experience compared to your teammates and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses in the next class

## **Assignment 2 Cultural Views of the Environment Seminar**

**10%**

Goal: practise public speaking, creating professional presentations, discussion leadership

Each student must teach the class about how a particular culture interacts with the natural environment. This will broaden our understandings as a class regarding human-environment relationship and allow us to consider how different cultures might see and understand human-environment issues. We will cover the Inuit and Anishinaabe cultures in class. Each student must choose a different culture, so please sign up as soon as you choose one.

Two weeks before your presentation, please provide the class with a reading that concerns that culture and an environmental issue (it can be one of the examples you discuss).

Each student will have 40 minutes to present the information to the class. Please use power point or other visuals. Include a map showing the traditional area of your culture and provide some general information about the culture. Explain how they perceive the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Then provide the class with 2-3 examples of how this cultural view has interacted with some modern environmental issues. Include references on your slides. Provide a slide at the end with a list of all the references you used (at least 3 academic + any web sites etc.). Submit your slides electronically for grading.

Class: read the assigned paper and be prepared to discuss with the presenter: what is different about how this culture views and interacts with the environment compared to others that you are familiar with? In what ways might the cultural views hamper or enhance environmental sustainability?

## **Assignment 3 Seminar**

**10%**

Goals: Present a qualitative research method, practise public speaking, leadership and guiding a discussion WITHOUT visuals

Each student will select a qualitative research method of interest and present two readings to the class. Two weeks before your seminar, provide to the professor/post on the website 1 reading as a pdf or link, along with a few homework questions to guide the reading. This reading will be assigned to the class and the seminar leader will lead a discussion of it. The leader will also share the contents of the second reading with the class to supplement the discussion. Be sure to explain your papers to the class, include in the discussion both how the data is collected and how it was analyzed using the technique you choose.

(An introductory reading or two is already assigned in the syllabus and the discussion for it will be led by the professor)  
NO VISUALS ALLOWED.

**Assignment 4 Interviews****20%**

Goals: Practise interview skills; Practise deductive qualitative research design

As a class, read and discuss how cognitive development (Self-authorship) occurs in young adults and how these developmental stages link to undergraduate experiences. As a class, gather data from undergrads in order to test a scheme your class will develop from the literature on undergraduate cognitive development (background readings provided). With different partners (to promote consistency across our team), conduct interviews with undergraduates, transcribe and upload your data (10%). Provide a transcript to each participant and check for changes with them via email. Produce a debriefing letter to the research participants as a group explaining the study and the initial results. Peer evaluation 10%.

**Assignment 5 Qualitative Data Analysis, Writing and Presentation****30%**

Goals: Practise research analysis; Write a qualitative paper of publishable quality

Using the class data set, examine it and organize it, then analyze it according to a specific area of interest to you. Use the academic literature to frame your paper theoretically with between 5 and 7 references beyond those assigned in class (10%). Write your paper (12-15 pages) (15%). Formally present your paper to the class (5%).

Date	What's Due?	Readings and Homework	Class Activities
1. Sept 10		Dods 2004	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overview of course</li> <li>2. Introduction to qualitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Inductive vs deductive reasoning</li> <li>• Observational research</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Homework discussion</li> <li>4. Lecture on Inuit cultural views of environment</li> <li>5. Observation assignment</li> </ol>
2. Sept 17	<p><b>Ethics certificate (TCPS II)</b></p> <p>Bring hard copy of your observation assignment notes</p> <p>Seminar leaders: _</p> <p>Cult. Seminar: _</p>	<p><b>Method: Participant Observation</b></p> <p>Agar</p> <p>Seminar papers</p> <p><b>Cultural Seminar reading For Assignments 4 &amp; 5</b></p> <p>Baxter Magolda et al. 2012 Decreasing Authority Dependence during the first year of college</p> <p>Hodge et al. 2009 Engaged Learning: Enabling Self-Authorship and Effective Practise</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss observation assignment</li> <li>2. Seminars on Participant Observation</li> <li>3. Cultural Seminar</li> <li>4. Self-authorship and introduction to Assignments 4 and 5</li> </ol>
3. Sept 24	<p><b>Assignment 1</b> Submit 1 page discussion or your experiences, strengths and weaknesses in the observation exercise</p>	<p><b>Seminar: Interviewing For Discussion:</b> Winchester 1996 Ethics of Interviewing</p> <p><b>Cultural Seminar reading For Assignments 4 &amp; 5</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultural Seminar</li> <li>2. Seminars on Interviewing</li> <li>3. Discuss readings for assignments 4 and 5</li> <li>4. Examine data from past years</li> <li>5. Discuss class research plan</li> </ol>

	Seminar Leaders: _____ _____ Cult. Seminar: —	Baxter Magolda and King 2007 Interview Strategies for Assessing Self-Authorship Turner 2010: Qualitative Interview Design Appleton 1995: Analyzing Interview Data	
4. Oct 1	Seminar Leaders: _____ _____ Cult. Seminar: _____ _____	<b>Seminar: Focus Groups</b> Morgan 1997a; b, <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b> Observation Skills: Watch The Misstassini Cree on the NFB website. How is the economy organized? How does each age group participate? What are the living conditions? How do culture/nature interact?	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Discuss film and compare our notes 3. Seminar on Focus Group 4. Finalize Interview plan
Oct 8-12	Reading week		
5. Oct 15	<b>Conduct interviews with undergrads</b>		
6. Oct 22	Seminar Leaders: _____ _____ Cult. Seminar: _____ _____	<b>Seminar: Mixed Methods:</b> Denscombe 2008, Johnson 2007 <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b> Qualitative Data analysis Burnard et al. 2008 (and review Appleton 1995!)	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Seminar of mixed methods 3. Review how interviews are going, solve problems 4. Discuss qualitative data analysis
7. Oct 29	Before next class, upload all interview transcripts  Seminar Leaders: _ Cult. Seminars: _____ _____	<b>Seminar: Indigenous Research Approaches:</b> Koster et al. 2012, Wilson 2001 <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b>  Qualitative Thesis proposal: Bunce 2015 (consider how the project is qualitative, what methods will be used? How will the results be analyzed?	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Seminar on Indigenous research 3. Dr. Lana Ray will discuss her work on Indigenous storytelling
8. Nov 5	Insure all interviews have been uploaded to shared site Seminar Leaders: ____  Cult. Seminars: _____ _____	<b>Ethnography</b> Sakakibara 2007  <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b>	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Seminar on Ethnography 3. Discuss assignment 5

9. Nov 12	Seminar Leaders: _____  _____	<b>Seminar: Oral Traditions</b> Scott 2003  <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b>	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Seminar on Oral Traditions  3. Develop debriefing sheet for undergrads  4. Complete peer evaluations for assignment 4
10. Nov 19	Seminar Leaders: _____  _____	<b>Seminar: Case Study</b> Xiao and Smith 2006,  <b>Cultural Seminar reading</b>	1. Cultural Seminars (2) 2. Seminar on Oral Traditions  Complete debriefing sheet and ensure each participant will be contacted
11. Nov 26	Seminar Leaders: _____  _____	<b>Seminar: Complexity</b> Stroink 2013; Berkes 2009  Self-reflection: Baxter Magolda 1998 Graduate School intellectual development	1. Seminar on complexity theory 2. Discussion of how students develop during graduate school. How can we promote your development? Has the way you think changed in the last couple of years? In this semester? What is the nature of knowledge?
12. Dec 3	<b>Assignment 5</b>		1. Presentations 10 min. each