

## **SGO4010: Qualitative methods (Spring 2014)**

*Course convenor: David Jordhus-Lier*

### **Course description**

The course will present a variety of common and cutting-edge qualitative research methods in human geography. It aims to give you the skills to design your research in a way that is analytically powerful and practically feasible. The course aims to increase your understanding of the choices involved in conducting qualitative research, including the assessment of what methods are suited to deal with different research questions.

### **Learning outcomes**

Through the lecture series, you will be acquainted with the most important qualitative research methods, including interviews, focus groups and ethnography. The techniques will be critically assessed and their potential and limitation will be discussed. In addition to introducing you to the different methods, the lectures will focus on how different methods suit different designs and research questions, and how they can be mixed and triangulated. You will also learn how to analyse qualitative data, and how to consider their limitations in empirical and theoretical generalisation.

Through the seminar series, you will be given the chance to reflect on your own choices, and to get feedback from students and facilitators on your research design. You will also participate in practical exercises and role play where you will be able to gain experiences which will challenge your theoretical knowledge of qualitative methods, and make you better prepared for a fieldwork setting.

### **Knowledge**

You should have obtained:

- An understanding of qualitative research methodologies and its possibilities
- An understanding of how different methods and techniques can be used to generate different types of qualitative data, and learn about their ethical dilemmas and strategic limitations
- An insight into strategies for qualitative data interpretation and analysis, their possibilities and limitations

### **Skills**

The course will prepare you for selecting the appropriate methods for your research, and for how to conduct interviews and other qualitative data collection techniques.

You should be able to:

- Design a qualitative study which identifies the appropriate methods for your research questions

- Design an interview guide which translate your research questions into a suitable set of interview guides
- Analyse qualitative data in a rigorous manner, with or without software aids
- Reflect on and assess the ethical dilemmas of qualitative data collection and analysis
- Discuss findings from case studies and other intensive research strategies in a broader empirical and theoretical perspective

### **Competences**

The course provides the students with an awareness of the advantages and limitations of qualitative research. They will attain an ability to adapt qualitative research techniques to specific research objectives and contexts.

You should have gained:

- Sufficient knowledge to select a suitable method and research techniques relevant for your master thesis
- An ability to critically assess a broad range of qualitative research methods in theory and in practice
- An understanding of ethical aspects in all the different stages of the qualitative research process

### **Admission**

Students who are admitted to study programmes at UiO must each semester register which courses and exams they wish to sign up for [in StudentWeb](#).

**International applicants**, if you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about [admission requirements and procedures for international applicants](#).

The examination in this course is not available for external candidates. Only students admitted to the course may sit for the examination.

This course is a part of the Master's programmes in Human Geography and Development Geography.

Students in other master programs may apply to be accepted as guest students. Please note that the following special restrictions apply:

- applicant must be admitted to a master program.
- this course will be taken as a part of their Master's degree. A confirmation from the students student adviser must be attached to the application.
- there are available places in this course.

Applications must be sent the department by January 14th.

### **Formal prerequisite knowledge**

Bachelor's degree

### **Overlapping courses**

10 credits overlap with [SGO4910 - Kvalitativ metode \(discontinued\)](#) and 10 credits overlap with SGO302.

### **Teaching**

The teaching for this course is organized as a combination of eight lectures and six seminars. The lectures will present theoretical discussions of qualitative methodologies and data collection techniques, supplemented by examples from recently conducted and ongoing research projects by members of staff.

Seminars will be devoted to student activities, and you will be an active contributor through conducting exercises and writing papers ahead of seminars. During the seminars, you will be expected to present your own exercises and participate actively in role play and discussions. Unless you have completed a minimum of two seminar exercises, and these are approved by the teacher, you will not be eligible for written examination.

[Application for change of seminar group](#)

### **Access to teaching**

A student who has completed compulsory instruction and coursework and has had these approved, is not entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework. A student who has been admitted to a course, but who has not completed compulsory instruction and coursework or had these approved, is entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework, depending on available capacity.

### **Examination**

The Faculty of Social Sciences is responsible for the examination. The examination will be held at the University of Oslo, Blindern, or other suitable locations in Oslo.

The assessment of this course is a 6 hour written examination.

[Previous exam texts](#)

### **Examination support material**

No examination support material is allowed.

### **Language of examination**

The exam will be given in English. The students can choose whether they will answer the exam questions in English, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish.

### **Grading scale**

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Examination results are available in StudentWeb no later than three weeks after the date of the examination, provided no other information is given on the web page for the current semester.

### **Explanations and appeals**

[Explanations & appeals at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography](#)

### **Resit an examination**

You can usually resit an exam, but the conditions depend on whether you had a valid reason for absence from the regular exam. Read more about [resitting an exam](#).

### **Withdrawal from an examination**

A student may sit this exam up to 3 times. If a student wishes to withdraw from the exam, s/he must do so in StudentWeb at least two weeks [prior to the first day of the exam](#). Failure to do so will be counted as one of the three opportunities to sit the exam.

### **Special examination arrangements**

If you wish to use a dictionary during the exam, the dictionary has to be checked. Please hand it in to the exam advisor 3 work days prior to exam.

Application forms for special examination arrangements on school-exams should be sent to The Faculty of Social Science. Applications for special examination arrangements on other exams should be sent to the Department which organizes the course.

### **Evaluation**

Feedback from our students is essential to us in our efforts to ensure and further improve the high quality of our programmes and courses. All courses are subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students on a particular course to participate in a more comprehensive, periodic evaluation of this course.

## **Lectures**

- 1. Introduction: research strategy and method selection (DJL)**  
Hay (2010) Chapters 1, 4, 5; Davis & Baulch (2010)
- 2. Interview studies: design and implementation (PGR)**  
Cloke et al. (2004); Patton (2002) Chapter 7
- 3. Elite interviews and corporate research (HMK)**  
Schoenberger (1991); Markusen (1994); Smith (2006)
- 4. Focus groups (DJL)**  
Hay (2010) Chapter 8; Goss & Leinbach (1996)
- 5. Ethnography (ESe)**  
Emerson & Shaw (2011); Hammersley & Atkinson (2007); Watson & Till (2010)
- 6. Discourse analysis (AS)**  
Jørgensen & Phillips (2002)
- 7. Qualitative analysis (AS)**  
Bailey et al (1999); Saldaña (2009) Chapters 1, 2
- 8. Relevance, subjectivity and ethics (DJL)**  
Cloke et al. (2004) Chapter 11; Grossman (2011); Staeheli & Mitchell (2005); Pain (2003)

## **Seminars**

- 1. Research design (DJL)**
- 2. Interview techniques (AS)**
- 3. Approaches to fieldwork (ESe)**  
  
Sæther (2006)
- 4. Observation in research (AS)**
- 5. Coding of qualitative data (AS)**
- 6. Ethical dilemmas (DJL)**