Qualitative Research Practicum Course Series
Key information for CBOs

SOURCE (http://SOURCE.jhu.edu, SOURCE@jhu.edu) has once again teamed up with faculty members who teach a Qualitative Research Course series at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). The qualitative research course series is designed to introduce students to qualitative research theory and methods (such as in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and participant observation) and qualitative data analysis. There is an optional practicum component in which students form teams of 4-6 students and conduct qualitative research projects in partnership with local community-based organizations (CBOs). Organizations provide research questions which can be best answered through exploratory, qualitative methods. Students then develop a research plan to address these questions, conduct the research and analyze the findings to present back to the organization. Students begin working on the project in late October and finish in mid-May (the JHSPH 2nd, 3rd, and 4th terms). Due to COVID-19, we expect that most work on the project will be performed virtually.

Participating CBOs will be expected to:

- Identify research questions that will be helpful for the CBO and that can be addressed using qualitative methods (please see the Appendix, “what is qualitative research”, below for more information and online resources for further reading about qualitative methods).

- Meet with students (virtually) to develop a research plan that meets the needs of both the CBO and the learning objectives for the course. The course requires all projects to include at least 2 one-on-one, in-depth interviews per student plus one or more additional methods of data collection such as focus groups, participant observation, etc. Due to COVID-19, interviews and focus groups are expected to be conducted virtually.

- Facilitate access to interviewees as appropriate (many CBOs will want students to interview clients, staff, etc.). This may require the CBO to also incentivize participation with interviews, focus groups, etc.

- Communicate regularly with students during the course of the three terms to ensure smooth flow of activities and to ensure that organization needs are met. Ideally, hold at least one meeting per term with student groups to reflect on the project.
• Complete student group evaluation at the end of each term.

• Complete SOURCE service-learning course evaluation at the end of the course.

**Students will be expected to:**

• Outline a set of objectives to discuss with the CBO at the start of the project.

• Communicate clearly with the CBO (e.g. delineate what help they need from the CBO to facilitate meeting with interviewees, etc.).

• Provide a report or give a presentation to the CBO to disseminate the results.

**The CBO will receive:**

Report of findings in the form of a written report and brief PowerPoint presentation, or another format that is agreed to by both the students and the CBO.

**Course Timeline and Data Collection Assignments:**

The course timeline is fast-paced and requires a relatively short turn-around time in between interviews and other data collection assignments. *Please make note of these dates and course assignment deadlines. Students will need to complete data collection several days before the assignment deadlines to have time to transcribe audio recordings.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wed, Oct. 28, 2020</td>
<td>First day of class</td>
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| **Wed, Nov. 4, 2020** | Virtual meetings with CBO partners! 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
*To be held virtually via Zoom – Please save the date/time and plan to attend to meet your group of students.* |
| Mon, Dec. 14, 2020 | Assignment 1 due: Package of project materials                                      |
| Mon, Feb. 15, 2020 | Assignment 2 due: First in-depth interview                                         |
| Mon, Mar. 1, 2021  | Assignment 3 due: Second in-depth interview                                        |
| Mon, Mar. 15, 2021 | Assignment 4 due: Focus group or observation                                       |
| Mon, April 19, 2021| Assignment 5 due: Additional data collection (method of team’s choice)             |
| Fri, May 7, 2021   | Last day of class: In-class presentations of project results                        |
| Fri, May 14, 2021  | Final assignment due: Write-up of project results                                  |
Note that there are 4 data collection assignments for the class. The first two require each student in the team to conduct an in-depth interview. These two interviews can be with the same participant or with two different participants. The fourth assignment requires students as a group to conduct either a focus group or observation. The final assignment can be a method of the team’s choice – either additional in-depth interviews, another focus group, or more observation. Thus, as an example, a team of 5 students would be expected to generate, in total, 10 interviews and 2 focus groups, or 15 interviews and 1 set of observations.

Key Contacts:

Should you have any questions or concerns throughout the course, please contact ALL of us. We are happy to provide assistance. Do not hesitate to be in touch.

Dr. Pamela Surkan (Course Instructor) – psurkan@jhu.edu
Dr. Haneefa Saleem (Course Instructor) – haneefa.saleem@jhu.edu
Dr. Caitlin Kennedy (Course Instructor) – caitlinkennedy@jhu.edu,
Mindi Levin (SOURCE Director) – mlevin@jhu.edu

**Project proposal submissions are due by Wed, October 8, 2020**

To propose a project, complete the short online form here. The form collects contact information, and a description of your desired project and deliverables.

**Questions?** Please contact Mindi Levin, SOURCE Founder and Director, at mlevin@jhu.edu or by cell phone 443-801-3038.

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!**

Dr. Pamela Surkan and Dr. Haneefa Saleem (Course Instructors) and Mindi Levin (SOURCE Director) will be available to talk with CBOs about their proposals on **Monday, October 12th between 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**. Please save the time on your calendar, and we will schedule a time for you to discuss your proposal with both the faculty members and SOURCE (typically 30-minute phone calls).
Appendix: What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research is an approach to inquiry that seeks to answer the questions “why” or “how” through the analysis of unstructured information – things like interview transcripts, observation of daily life, focus group discussions, life stories or historical documents. Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people’s attitudes, behaviors, perspectives, motivations, cultures, or experiences. It is interpretive, in that the researcher seeks to make sense of the information collected and interpret it in context. Questions are generally open-ended – without pre-determined responses – and seek to gain a deeper understanding of the topic from the perspective of participants.

Qualitative research can be seen in contrast to quantitative research, which uses statistics or numbers, typically gathered through surveys or other structured methods, to answer questions of “how much” or “what is the statistical relationship between x and y.” Questions are generally closed-ended, using pre-determined answer choices to quantify and classify information.

There are many different approaches to qualitative research, and many methods used by qualitative researchers. Further reading can be found at these websites:

- [http://www.qualres.org/HomeWhat-3513.html](http://www.qualres.org/HomeWhat-3513.html)
- [http://www.health.utah.edu/qrn/what.html](http://www.health.utah.edu/qrn/what.html)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualitative_research](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualitative_research)
- [http://www.uncp.edu/home/marson/qualitative_research.html](http://www.uncp.edu/home/marson/qualitative_research.html)