**Qualitative Social Research Laboratory**

## Prof. Cristina Pasqualini; Prof. Fabio Introini

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

### The learning outcomes of the workshop on qualitative social research are as follows:

1. To develop detailed knowledge of the paradigms at the origin of social research, with particular reference to the fundamental epistemological and methodological approaches underpinning the main techniques used in qualitative social research, whilst acquiring concepts and terminology specific to this subject.
2. To enhance the specificity of qualitative - in theoretical terms - methodological and empirical techniques.
3. To learn the requisite skills for designing and implementing all phases of a survey using qualitative social research techniques: drafting a project, defining the research design, sampling, fine-tuning surveying tools, collecting data, processing and interpreting the results, writing up the output.
4. To develop, through undertaking empirical research in small groups, the ability to work in a team.

### The aim of the course is to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement studies using non-standardised tools: interviews - individual and group - and observation.

Intended learning outcomes

*Knowledge and understanding*

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

1. Recognise - on an ontological, epistemological and methodological level - the differences between the main paradigms guiding qualitative and quantitative social research.
2. In terms of qualitative research, recognise the characteristics of the various available qualitative techniques: observation, individual interviews and group interviews.
3. Recognise the various phases and unique features of a qualitative research project.
4. Learn the social and relational dimension of research work in the field.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

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

1. design and implement all phases of a qualitative social research study;
2. select the most appropriate techniques for the research subject in question and the desired objectives;
3. organise and manage the various phases of a study, interacting with the various social actors involved in the process;
4. fine-tune, pre-test and apply the research tools to the sample group in question;
5. write up a research report, based on a study conducted as a group.

***COURSE CONTENT***

### The Qualitative Social Research Workshop is a single course divided into three interconnected and integrated modules. Within a common epistemological framework, each module has specific learning objectives, exploring the main qualitative social research techniques both theoretically and empirically, offering students the opportunity to practice them by co-designing and conducting all stages of a research project: from designing the study and collecting information in the field, to analysing it and presenting it in its final form. The research topic proposed by lecturers, which will draw on all the research activities conducted on the course, will be shared by all students and communicated at the beginning of the academic year. Students will work on it in small groups, including in class, on field work trips and during group feedback sessions in class.

### In more detail:

### Module 1 (semester 1): The foundations of qualitative and ethnographic research (Prof. Cristina Pasqualini)

The first module involves an introductory general part on the epistemological foundations and main underlying differences between qualitative and quantitative social research. With respect to qualitative research, the course will cover the various stages: from planning to implementation. The ethnographic approach is the first to be covered. The course will offer a socio-anthropological perspective, with particular reference to observation techniques.

1. From paradigms to techniques: qualitative and quantitative social research
2. Designing “qualitative” research
3. Sampling
4. Analysing results
5. The research report
6. The ethnographic method in social research, A historical and theoretical framework
7. Techniques of observation: experimentation in the field
8. Our “class” research: research design and group work

### Module 2 (semester 1): Research with non-standardised individual interviews (Prof. Cristina Pasqualini)

Module 2 covers non-standardised individual interviews: semi-structured interviews and non-directive interviews. There will be a particular focus on describing data collection tools, on creating them and using them in the field.

1. Conducting interviews using qualitative interviews. A historical and theoretical framework.
2. Types of individual interview: semi-structured interviews and non-directive interviews (life stories and life histories).
3. Interview outline.
4. Conducting the interviews.
5. Analysing interviews and writing up the results.
6. Our “class” research: research design and group work.

### Module 3 (semester 2): Research with focus groups (Prof. Fabio Introini)

### The third module will address group interviews and focus groups in particular. The course will provide students with basic theoretical and practical knowledge for implementing focus groups in social and market research:

1. Focus groups in social and market research. Historical and theoretical background.
2. Focus groups and research design.
3. When to use focus groups.
4. Interview outline.
5. Conducting the focus group.
6. Recording.
7. Analysing and interpreting the results.
8. Giving feedback.
9. Our “class” research: research design and group work.

***READING LIST***

Students may choose between two syllabus options (A and B). The first (A) is for attending students; the second (B) is for students who are unable to attend.

*Students taking option A* must prepare the following material:

Lecture notes:

R. Bichi, *L’intervista biografica. Una proposta metodologica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2002 (whole text).

G. Gobo, *Descrivere il mondo. Teoria e pratica del metodo etnografico in sociologia*, Carocci, Rome, 2016 (chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

I. Acocella, *Il focus group: teoria e tecnica*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 2008 (whole text).

Details of additional course material will be provided during the course and made available to students on the Blackboard platform, under "*Materiali*".

Writing up a group research report on the topic communicated by the lecturers at the beginning of the course.

*Students taking option B* must prepare the following material:

R. Bichi, *L’intervista biografica. Una proposta metodologica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2002 (whole text).

G. Gobo, *Descrivere il mondo. Teoria e pratica del metodo etnografico in sociologia*, Carocci, Rome, 2016 (students must prepare chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

I. Acocella, *Il focus group: teoria e tecnica*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 2008 (whole text).

P. Bignardi. F. Introini, C. Pasqualini, (a cura di), *Oasi di fraternità. Nuove esperienze di vita comune giovanile,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2021(students must prepare: part I; Nota metodologica).

R. Bichi, P. Bignardi, F.Introini, C. Pasqualini (edited by), *Felicemente italiani. I giovani e l’immigrazione,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2018 (students must prepare: chapters by F. Introini, C. Pasqualini, Nota metodologica)

N. Anderson, *Il vagabondo. Sociologia dell’uomo senza dimora*, Donzelli, Rome, 2011 (whole text).

M. Augè, *Diario di un senza fissa dimora*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2015 (whole text)

*For all students (syllabus A and B)*

Updated syllabus, reading list, instructions and other documents will be shared on Blackboard as the course progresses. Blackboard will also be used to communicate changes in schedule, information on exams, any changes to the syllabus etc. All students are therefore invited to register on the course Blackboard page and check it regularly.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will employ various teaching methods. Both modules will involve frontal lectures by the lecturers and group work, classroom exercises and field research trips so that students can conduct a research project that extends throughout all three modules. The lecturers will also use audio-visual material; where possible, there will be talks from visiting experts.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Syllabus A:

For students taking syllabus A, the overall mark will be based on the arithmetic mean of the results of the two assessment methods: three interim tests on the above indicated reading material (syllabus A) and a research report.

*Written interim tests*:There will be three interim tests. Each one will be marked out of 30 and contribute in equal measure to the overall mark. It will comprise ten closed questions and last 20 minutes. The questions will be marked as follows: 9 questions worth 3/30 marks and one worth 4/30. Test results will be communicated by the lecturers (using student numbers rather than names) on Blackboard under “*Valutazione*”. The interim test will be on the text by Gobo and the materials posted on Blackboard. The second interim test will be on the text by Bichi and on the materials posted on Blackboard. The third interim test will focus on the text by Acocella and on the materials posted on Blackboard. Students who fail one of the written tests can retake it again on the official exam dates. Students can retake a maximum of one written test - either because they achieved less than 18/30, or because they wish to improve their mark. The test date will be communicated by the lecturers at the beginning of the academic year and available on Blackboard under “*Materiali*”. The tests must take place during the periods indicated on the academic calendar of the Faculty of Political and Social Science.

*NB: Students who fail more than one written test* must sit an oral exam on the whole syllabus on one of the official exam dates. The oral exam will be on the texts indicated for syllabus A. More specifically, there will be two questions for each text on the reading list; two questions on the lecture notes and all the materials published on Blackboard (eight questions in total). Each question on the texts will be marked from 0-4 out of 30; the question on the lecture notes will be marked from 0-4 out of 30, and that on the materials from 0-3 out of 30.

*Written group report*:Working with their group, each student must write a final research report (approx. 40,000 characters, spaces included), to be submitted on the date communicated by the lecturers at the beginning of the course. The report will be marked out of 30. The assessment criteria of the paper are as follows: a) ability to use specialist and technical language (10%); b) fullness of the content of each section (40%); c) methodological expertise in using research techniques (40%); d) quality of writing the report (10%).

Syllabus B:

Students taking option B will take an oral exam on the indicated texts and materials for syllabus B.

*The oral exam* will be on the contents of the above mentioned reading list (option syllabus B) and will comprise two groups of 5 questions (for a total of 10 questions): the first one regarding the fundamentals of methodology and techniques of qualitative research (textbooks by Bichi, Gobo, and Acocella) while the second one will be on the four books listed in the reading list for syllabus B. Overall, questions aim to assess students’: a) specific knowledge and notions concerning the various techniques of qualitative social research; b) ability to compare different techniques both in reference to their formal aspects and the criteria of their use; c) knowledge of the research and case studies included in the books from the reading list and their ability to critically analyse the methodological options used; d) ability to develop broad theoretical paths within the epistemological and methodological field of qualitative social research. Therefore, questions may be both broad and specific. Students’ use of appropriate specialist and technical language will also be a fundamental part of the evaluation.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The workshop is based on practical tasks to be completed in class with others. Therefore, attendance is strongly recommended.

For students taking syllabus A: should a legitimate need arise to adjust the frequency of their attendance, they must discuss the matter promptly with lecturers.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.