Geography 610, Geographic Qualitative Methods  
Spring 2018 ★ Tuesday 9:30 – 12:15 ★ Eggers Hall 155

**Professor:** Natalie Koch (pronounced “cook”)  
**Office:** Eggers Hall 144B  
**Contact:** nkoch@maxwell.syr.edu  
**Office Hours:** TBD

Course Catalog Description
This course provides an overview of qualitative methods in human geography. It examines the relationship between methodology, epistemology, and politics, compares different qualitative methods, and gives students hands-on experience with a range of methodological tools.

**Prerequisite / Co-requisite:** None  
**Credits:** 3 credits/semester

Overview
This course is an introduction to qualitative research methodologies as they have been developed in the field of geography. In contextualizing qualitative methods in the first half of the semester, course readings draw strongly from poststructuralism and feminist theory to highlight questions of power and positionality in the practice of conducting qualitative fieldwork, as well as questions of knowledge, discourse, truth, and representation. In the second half of the semester, a variety of methodological approaches will be considered, but foregrounding (1) discourse analysis and visual methodologies; (2) ethnography and participant observation; (3) interviews and focus groups; and (4) historical and archival research. Time is also dedicated to “special topics,” chosen by small groups, and might cover such issues as online and digital methods; mobile methodologies; participatory research; or working with vulnerable populations. While the seminar aims to address some of the logistical/practical questions of various research methodologies, it will center foremost on the theoretical, ethical, and political issues they raise.

Learning Outcomes
Students in this course will:
✓ Gain familiarity with major themes and topics in qualitative research in geography;  
✓ Improve abilities in engaging in discussions about key concepts in qualitative research methods;  
✓ Improve abilities in conducting and presenting their own analysis and evaluation of qualitative research;  
✓ Improve written and oral communication skills;  
✓ Improve collaboration skills through group work and peer editing;  
✓ Articulate the relevance of key geographic research methods to individual research interests.

Course Materials
There are no required books for this seminar. All readings will be available electronically as PDFs via Blackboard: [https://blackboard.syr.edu](https://blackboard.syr.edu)

Grading and Requirements
Course grades will be broken down on the basis of performance in the following required activities and projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Reading notecards &amp; discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>Group presentations (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>Final essay assignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grades. A (93-100), A- (92-90), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (59-below).

Participation and preparation for seminar discussions (30%). Participation is calculated on the basis of attendance and participation in class discussions. Grades are primarily evaluated on the quality of contributions, but all are expected to actively engage in group discussions.

Reading notecards and discussion questions (10%). Every week (except for the first and last meetings), students will be required to bring notecards about the day’s assigned readings to class, where they will be checked for completion. A notecard template is available on Blackboard, but the essential components include an evaluation of the reading’s keywords, central thesis, methodological approach, and 1-2 discussion questions. Students are also encouraged to complete the card with quotes or excerpts from the reading, which they found insightful, problematic, or otherwise noteworthy. The goal of this exercise is, foremost, to practice managing references within large bodies of academic literature, which can be applied for research, writing, and exams in the future. The second goal is to encourage critical reflection on the week’s readings by way of writing questions, which will serve as the basis of group discussion in the seminar.

Group presentations (30%). Students will prepare two group presentations over the course of the semester. The first will be a 25-minute presentation, followed by leading seminar discussion, based on an assigned topic in Weeks 7-10 (Groups 1-4). The second will be a shorter presentation based on the group’s “special topics” choice, with two groups presenting in Weeks 11-12 (Groups A-D). The topic and groups will be selected at the beginning of the semester, but it is expected that the composition of the two groups will vary based on interest (i.e. Groups 1-4 will not be the same as Groups A-D). More details will be provided on a separate assignment sheet.

Final essay assignment (30%). Students will have two final essay options: prepare a methods article for (1) Area or (2) Geography Compass. In both cases, students will be required to critically engage with the course readings, and to demonstrate a mastery of key themes and debates about qualitative research methods. However, the two journals have different orientations: Area publishes articles that introduce a novel insight based on one’s own research, while Geography Compass publishes review articles, which synthesize the existing literature. This assignment is thus designed to account for the fact that students in this course will be at different stages in their research processes. Everyone is encouraged to pick the option that is most appropriate for their own experience and materials. Papers should follow all the conventions of the chosen journal, including adhering to the strict word limits of each (5000 words including references for Area and 5000 words excluding references for Geography Compass).

First drafts are due on Wednesday, April 25 at 11:59 PM. Students will be assigned to a 3-4-person peer review group. Members will be expected to read the paper drafts of all others in the group ahead of a final workshopping session on May 1. Final drafts will be due the following week, on May 10 at 11:59 PM via Blackboard. Additional details are provided on a separate assignment sheet.

Late policy. All late paper assignments will be marked down 10 percentage points per day late.

Academic Integrity
Syracuse University’s academic integrity policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same
written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of academic integrity policy. SU students are required to read an online summary of the university’s academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/ All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Academic Integrity Office (aio@syr.edu; 315-443-5412). Students who are found to be in violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to the appropriate academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to probation, suspension, or expulsion), to be determined by a University hearing panel.

Turnitin.com. A key element of this code is that SU students will not plagiarize (using the words and thoughts of others as your own). As part of the effort to control plagiarism and to ensure that submitted works from students are fully their own, it is the instructor’s intent to submit the student papers to TurnItIn.com and to recommend a grade of F in the course to any student in violation of the SU Academic Integrity Policy. Note that you cannot submit the same paper or part of a paper for two different classes (current or earlier) without the express permission of both instructors. If you have any questions about this procedure or about any matter regarding proper citation and the Academic Integrity Policy, please speak with me in advance of submission.

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline, including exclusion from the class. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy is especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with the politically-sensitive subject matter of this class. Diversity of opinion is welcomed. CELL PHONES AND LAPTOPS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED: any time I observe cell phone or computer use in class, you will automatically receive a zero for the day’s attendance grade. If you need an exception to this policy, see me immediately.

Add/drop policy
It is the policy of the Geography Department that students must first obtain the signature of the instructor and then the signature of the Department Chair, if they wish to drop or withdraw from this course.

Communication
Syracuse University has established email as a primary vehicle for official communication with students, faculty, and staff. You are responsible for checking your email regularly for any course updates. Please note that it is my policy NOT to respond to any email inquiries regarding grades. If you have any concerns about a grade, visit me during office hours or schedule an appointment. Please utilize your classmates as a resource if you have questions about logistics or have missed class. Otherwise, I will endeavor to answer your questions and concerns via email in a timely fashion, but please do not expect a response after 5 PM or on the weekends.

Extracurricular Activity Accommodations
If you are an athlete or are involved in other significant extracurricular activities, please discuss this with me early in the semester so that we may make any necessary accommodations.

Disability Accommodations
Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create learning environments that are useable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming.
If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, I invite any student to meet with me to discuss additional strategies beyond accommodations that may be helpful to your success. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498, TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. For more information, see: [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/faculty-staff/contact-us/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/faculty-staff/contact-us/)

**Faith Tradition Observances**

Syracuse University does not set aside days for any religious holiday. Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s). Please remind students in class of their obligations to do so. Students will have access to an online notification form through MySlice for two weeks beginning on the first day of class. SU’s policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students should have an opportunity to make any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibility formatted classes. Student deadlines are posted in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/ My Religious Observances/Add a Notification. I ask you to include this information, as well as your expectations for how and when academic requirements will be made up, in your syllabus. I also ask you to remind students during the first week of classes about the notification deadline. Instructors may access a list of their students who have submitted a notification in the MySlice Faculty Center. Note that the religious observances icon will not appear unless a student in that class has submitted a notification. For more information, see: [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm)

**Use of Student Work**

This course may use course participation and documents created by students for educational purposes. In compliance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at Syracuse University may be used for educational purposes. It is understood that registration for and continued enrollment in a course where such use of student works is announced constitutes permission by the student. After the course has been completed, any further use of student works will meet one of the following conditions: (1) the work will be rendered anonymous through the removal of all personal identification of the work’s creator/originator(s); or (2) the creator/originator(s)’ written permission will be secured.

---

**COURSE READINGS & SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Contextualizing qualitative methods


Power/knowledge & discourse


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Feb. 6</th>
<th>Power, truth, &amp; free speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Feb. 13</th>
<th>Power, representation, &amp; the “field”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Week 6
Feb. 20
Power, performance, & positionality


Week 7
Feb. 27
Group 1: Discourse analysis & visual methodologies


Week 8
Mar. 6

Group 2: Ethnography & participant observation


March 11-17: NO CLASS for SPRING BREAK

Week 9
Mar. 20

Group 3: Interviews & focus groups


Week 10  Mar. 27  Group 4: Historical & archival research


Week 11  Apr. 3  Special topics: TBD - Groups A & B to select 2-3 readings for the class

April 8-14: NO CLASS for AAG

Week 12  April 17  Special topics: TBD - Groups C & D to select 2-3 readings for the class

Week 13  Apr. 24  Data analysis, writing, & rigor


### Week 14  
**May 1**  
**Peer review sessions**  
No seminar meeting: separate peer review group meetings to workshop final papers.

---

**Notecard Template (Word document available on Blackboard):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis/central argument(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion questions (1-2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notable quotes:**