OBJECTIVES:

This seminar aims to help doctoral students get started on their thesis project. The seminar is intended primarily for PhD students interested in so-called “qualitative methods”. This expression covers a wide range of approaches that are based on a variety of ontological and epistemological foundations, but that all imply the collection and analysis of empirical materials expressed in terms other than numbers. In general, enthusiasm for these approaches is based on the fact that they build on human beings’ natural modes of learning by allowing the researcher to observe, listen, exchange, read experiment and interpret in order to better understand phenomena through direct contact with the world. However, while everyday knowledge may remain tacit, scientific research aims to produce explicit knowledge or interpretations. For these to be credible, it becomes necessary to systematize the collection and analysis of information: in other words to have some kind of “method.” This seminar aims to enable participants to learn the elements of method that will allow them to undertake quality qualitative research.

More specifically, the seminar has three objectives:

1) **Introduce participants to the range of qualitative methods available.** At the end of the seminar, participants should have developed an appreciation for different epistemological and methodological perspectives on qualitative research and be able to make appropriate choices. This also implies a consideration of criteria to evaluate the quality of research and tactics to ensure that this quality is achieved.

2) **Develop skills related to the use of the most popular data collection and analysis techniques.** Specifically, at the end of the seminar, participants will have acquired a
certain assurance in the use of observation and interview methods and will have learned the basics of a software program for the analysis of qualitative data: ATLAS/TI.

3) **Provide an opportunity for students to advance their thesis project.** Part of the seminar will take the form of a workshop in which participants will develop a practical project and discuss it with colleagues. At the end of the seminar, participants will have written a first draft of a research proposal that will include a justification for the research, the presentation of a conceptual framework, a research design and some exploratory collection and analysis of qualitative data.

**PREREQUISITES :**

There are no specific prerequisites. The idea time to take this seminar is after the preliminary choice of a topic, but before the first entry into the field. The seminar offers an opportunity to make initial contact with the field and to experiment with research methods that will be used later in the thesis. The course aims to be flexible in the sense that the main objective is to help students as much as possible in getting started with their research program.

**PEDAGOGICAL METHODS :**

Several pedagogical methods will be used:

- A practical research project that will require the use of qualitative methods.
- Readings and discussion of articles describing the methods used and their application.
- Practical exercises in class and between sessions.
- For some sessions, participation by invited speakers to exchange experiences.
- Lectures or class presentations on specific topics.

We hope to benefit also from the previous experience of class participants to enrich the discussion and learning.
PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS:

Compulsory

- Codex «Méthodes de recherche» 80469B1
- Codex «Applications de la recherche qualitative en gestion» 80469C2
- Logiciel ATLAS/ti. (Accès au laboratoire des étudiants de Ph.D).

Recommended

- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, *Qualitative data analysis*, Sage publications, 1995. (ou la version française)

EVALUATION:

1. **Readings, discussions, exercises and class activities**: 60%

Most sessions will require preparatory work on the part of participants including readings, exercises, assignments to be submitted. Each session will also require active participation. Sometimes students will be asked to facilitate a discussion on an assigned theme. Sometimes, we will work on advancing the thesis project. Sometimes, we will practice data collection and analysis techniques. Sometimes, we will comment on the work of our colleagues. Sometimes, we may exchange data among colleagues to discuss analysis methods. Participation in all of these activities is included in the overall evaluation.

2. **Presentation and final project report**: 40%

Each participant will undertake an individual research project during the seminar. The objective of this project is to advance the student’s thinking about their thesis. The final paper will include a justification for the research, the development of a conceptual framework, the presentation of a preliminary research design, and the collection and analysis of exploratory data. The empirical study will use data from at least two different sources (for example, combining three interviews with documentary evidence or observations). The exercise will lead to a written report of around 30 pages (30%) as well as a presentation during the final session (10%). Various intermediate reports (e.g., conceptual framework, proposed design, interview guide, coded data) will be handed in and discussed with colleagues during the seminar (see above). We will attempt to advance the project as much as possible during the course sessions. However, to provide time to complete the exploratory project satisfactorily, we will hold our final session at the end of August. This session will take the form of a colloquium where each presentation will be commented on by another member of the class.
**PRELIMINARY PLAN**

*N.B. The exercises indicated for each session are indicative only and may vary as needed. Class participation is part of the evaluation of each session.*

**SESSION 1 : INTRODUCTION (TUESDAY 4/5/10)**

- Seminar objectives and logistics
- Introductions, identification of interests of participants.
- How to choose a research topic?
- Specifics, joys and challenges of qualitative research.
- Doing qualitative research in theory and in practice.

**LECTURES**

- Patton, chap. 1. « The Nature of Qualitative Inquiry », *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*

**SESSION 2 : FORMULATING A RESEARCH QUESTION (FRIDAY 7/5/10)**

- Formulating a research project.
- Criteria for evaluating research questions.
- Discussion of participants’ research questions.

**LECTURES**


To hand in : The research question for your research project (5 %).
SESSION 3: PARADIGMS AND EXEMPLARS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (TUESDAY 11/5/10)

- Discussion of alternative epistemologies and orientations for qualitative research (11/5/2010)
- Questions raised by the examples.
- Methods and practices.
- Identification of exemplars

GENERAL READINGS

Examples (see the Applications codex):


To do: analysis of an article: prepare a presentation, defence or critique of one of the approaches and be prepared to discuss the others (5%).
SESSION 4: RESEARCH ETHICS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH (FRIDAY 14/5/10)

- Bibliographic research strategies.
- Data bases. and reference management software
- Ethical issues in qualitative research

READINGS:

- Revised draft second edition – Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans (see in particular chapter 10 on qualitative research).

To do: bibliographic research exercise (form to be determined as a function of the needs and state of advancement of participants’ research projects); Ethics exercise (5 %).

SESSION 5 : JUSTIFYING YOUR RESEARCH (TUESDAY 18/5/10)

- Strategies for justifying qualitative research
- How to position ones’ research with respect to others.
- Writing strategies for the literature review.

READINGS


Examples (see the Applications codex)

To hand in: a short literature review justifying your research project (maximum 5 pages, based on at least 5 articles/ major texts). Exchange with your colleagues (5 %).
SESSION 6: DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH 1 (FRIDAY 21/5/2010)

- The qualitative research process.
- Initial choices: can one/should one plan a qualitative research project?
- The “conceptual framework” for qualitative research.

READINGS

Examples (see the Applications codex)

To do and hand in: Construct a preliminary “conceptual framework” for your research: to discuss in class. Note your reactions to this exercise (5 %).

SESSION 7: DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH 2 (TUESDAY 25/5/10)

- Units and levels of analysis.
- Purposeful sampling.
- Alternate data sources.
- Access and confidentiality.

READINGS
- Patton, M.Q. chap. 5., «Designing Qualitative Studies», Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods

To hand in: Draft of a research design for your project (sampling, data sources, access issues) (5%).
SESSION 8: OBSERVATION (FRIDAY 28/5/10)

- When and why use observation?
- Participant and non-participant observation.
- How to observe, what to observe?
- How to take notes.
- Ethical dilemmas in observation.

LECTURES

To do: prepare an observation frame for an assigned theme and apply it to a simulated observation context (5%).

SESSION 9: INTERVIEWING (TUESDAY 1/6/10)

- When and why do interviews?
- Interview guides for different situations.
- Avantages and disadvantages of interviews.
- Ensuring quality interviews.
- Sharing experience and experimenting in class.

READINGS:
- Romelaer, P., Notes sur l’entretien semi-directif préparé pour le séminaire du CEFAG, novembre 2001. (English version to be distributed by email)

To do: Prepare an interview guide for your study (5%).
SESSION 10 : USING DOCUMENTS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (FRIDAY 4/6/10)

- When and why to use documents.
- Documents as historical records, cultural artifacts, discourse.
- Sources of documentary data.
- Discourse analysis based on documents.
- Invitée : Hélène Giroux.

READINGS

To do: A text analysis using cognitive mapping and/or other discourse analysis techniques (5 %).

SESSION 11 : DATA ANALYSIS AIDS (TUESDAY 8/6/10)

- Reduction and presentation of data.
- Data coding : exercises and styles.
- Workshop with ATLAS. Illustrations of functionalities on real data.
- Invité : à déterminer.

READINGS

To do : Prepare some data (interview, documents, etc.) for ATLAS and test the software. Come with questions/ comments! (5 %).
SESSION 12: STRATEGIES FOR THEORIZING FROM QUALITATIVE DATA  (TUESDAY 15/6/10)

- Data analysis strategies.
- From narrative to quantitative strategies.
- From coding to theorizing: how to make the leap.

READINGS:

Examples (see the Applications codex):

To do: Analyse a qualitative application article that you like. What strategies are used? How is this made convincing?

SESSION 13: QUALITY CRITERIA AND TRIANGULATION

- Quality criteria for positivist research
- Quality criteria for naturalist research.
- How to mobilize different data sources and methods.
- Illustrations and discussion of experiences.
- Invited speaker: recent graduates of doctoral program.

READINGS
- Patton, M.Q., “Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis”, Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, chap. 9, 2002, (541-589).

To do: Prepare a comment on criteria for judging the quality of your research (5 %).
SESSION 14: FINAL COLLOQUIUM (DATE TO BE DETERMINED – END AUGUST, BEGINNING SEPTEMBER)

- Presentations of completed projects

To do: hand in final version of project report.