

# AVReQ

## Qualitative Research with Sensitive and Vulnerable Groups Seminar Series

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is designed as preparation for undertaking qualitative research and dissertation work in sensitive locations, on controversial topics, and with vulnerable, hard-to-access groups. Students will be able to design and critically discuss methodological choices in order to analyse key aspects of qualitative research on sensitive and vulnerable groups and in sensitive and dangerous settings.

### LECTURER

John D Brewer is Professor of Post-Conflict Studies in the Senator George J Mitchell Institute at Queen's University Belfast, Honorary Professor Extraordinary at Stellenbosch University and Honorary Professor of Sociology at Warwick University.

A selection of John Brewer's free and openly accessible published material is available [HERE](#).

### OUTLINE OF SESSIONS

All the sessions are divided into two parts separated by a short interval. Please note that some sessions include a practical component.

In-Person Sessions			
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>7 MARCH</b>		10:00-12:00	Introduction to two key questions: What is qualitative research? What is sensitive research? An outline of the special issues in qualitative research with sensitive and vulnerable groups
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>8 MARCH</b>	Morning	10:00-12:00	Formulating a qualitative research design for sensitive and vulnerable groups <b>Classroom practical:</b> Sampling in qualitative research – how, what, where
		Afternoon	14:00-16:00
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>9 MARCH</b>		10:00-12:00	Ethics in qualitative research with sensitive and vulnerable groups. Discussion of the 'new ethics' for social justice in research

Online Sessions			
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>MARCH 23</b>		10:00-12:00	Formulating questions and selecting methods of data collection <b>Classroom practical:</b> Doing interviews and managing sensitivity in interview questions
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>APRIL 13</b>		10:00-12:00	Emotional labour costs when researching sensitive and vulnerable groups
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>APRIL 20</b>		10:00-12:00	Being reflexive as a qualitative researcher in sensitive, dangerous and vulnerable settings Discussion of the Boston College and Alice Goffman affairs

To register click [HERE](#)

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### *Seminar Series*

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course, students will have:

- Engaged in up-to date debates about advanced methodologies in qualitative research, including reflexive and collaborative approaches.
- An overview of the strength and limitations of a variety of tools, techniques and approaches used in qualitative research.
- A conceptual understanding of the specific opportunities, challenges, and problems deriving from the application of methods in researching sensitive and vulnerable groups.
- Developed a reflexive practice in order to approach issues of sensitivity, danger, and risk in qualitative research.
- An understanding of the importance of risk evaluation in qualitative research.
- An appreciation of reflexive practice in their research context.
- Applied ethical and reflexive instruments to carry out research in particularly sensitive settings.

#### **SKILLS ACQUIRED**

By the end of this course, students will have acquired the capacity to:

- Critically appraise, design and conduct research in sensitive settings.
- Keep abreast of advanced methodologies in qualitative research.
- Understand and evaluate the use of different methods and their use in qualitative research.
- Understand the specific ethical and practical challenges inherent in carrying out research with actors in sensitive and vulnerable settings.

#### **Practical study skills**

The module provides students with the opportunity to acquire and develop generic analytical, reasoning, literacy and communication skills – including the ability to think creatively, self-critically and independently that will be beneficial in further research, or employment. These transferable skills will include:

- Assessing risk and danger in research settings.
- Reflexive practice skills.
- Effective oral communication skills.
- Advanced written skills.
- Personal study management skills.
- Ability to be self-directed and exercise initiative.
- Ability to effectively and creatively use information and communication technologies.
- Ability to independently reflect on one's own progress and identify and act upon one's own development needs.
- Ability to manage time and multiple commitments.
- Ability to work efficiently to deadlines.
- Ability to think and argue creatively, in an advanced manner, to display originality of thought and argument and clearly support arguments in innovative ways.

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### SUGGESTED READINGS

**Brewer, J. D. (2000).** *Ethnography*. Open University Press.

**Brewer, J. D. (2016).** The ethics of ethical debates in peace and conflict research: notes towards the development of a research covenant. *Methodological Innovations Online*, 9, 1-11.

**Connolly, P. (2003).** Ethical Principles in Researching Vulnerable Groups.

**Millar, G. (2018).** Ethnographic peace research: the under-appreciated benefits of long-term fieldwork. *International Peacekeeping*, 25, 5, 653-676.

**Social Science Research Council (USA) DDS Working Paper Series on Research Security in High Risk Areas** Accessible at <http://www.ssrc.org/working-papers>

### *Being a reflexive qualitative researcher*

**Gill, F., & Maclean, C. (2002).** Knowing your place: gender and reflexivity in two ethnographies. *Sociological Research Online*, 7, 2, 118-128.

**Mauthner, N., & Doucet, A. (2003).** Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37, 3, 413-31.

**May, T. (1999).** Reflexivity and sociological practice. *Sociological Research Online*, 4, 3, 184-192.