### MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice

**Hilary Term 2016**

**QUALITATIVE METHODS**

**COURSE TUTORS:**
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**This Option runs on Fridays as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Date and Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 1:</td>
<td>Tuesday 19th January 2016 2.00 - 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 2:</td>
<td>Tuesday 26th January 2016 2.00 - 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 3:</td>
<td>Tuesday 2nd February 2016 2.00 - 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 4:</td>
<td>Tuesday 9th February 2016 2.00 - 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Interviews</td>
<td>Tuesday 16th February 2016 11.30 - 1.30 Meeting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 5:</td>
<td>Tuesday 16th February 2016 2.00 – 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVivo Workshop</td>
<td>Friday 19th February 2016 12.00 – 2.00 IT Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 6:</td>
<td>Tuesday 23rd February 2016 2.00 - 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 7:</td>
<td>Tuesday 1st March 2016 2.00 – 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar 8:</td>
<td>Tuesday 8th March 2016 2.00 – 3.30 Seminar E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Please note that in week 5 interviews with police officers at the Centre for Criminology will be carried out as part of this course.

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**Introduction and Aims**

This course introduces students to different methods of qualitative inquiry, data gathering, analysis and reporting. We will consider when the use of qualitative methods are appropriate and also question the assumed polarity between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Special emphasis will be given throughout the course to ethical issues and cross-cultural and comparative practices. Students will study examples of research techniques and carry out applied practice themselves. Interviews and more contemporary forms of data capture such as visual methodologies and the internet will be covered in the course. Students will also have the opportunity to analyse data using NVivo (a qualitative computerized data analysis programme).
Seminar Schedule

1. Selection of Methods, Negotiating Access, Emotions and Ethics
2. Visual Methodologies, and the Internet
3. Ethnography and Observation
4. Interviewing

*Police Interviews (16th February 2016)*

5. Transcribing, Coding and Analysing Data

*NVivo Workshop*

6. Participatory and Arts-based Methods
7. Drawing Inferences and Reporting on Data
8. Discussion Panel: Qualitative Methods in Action
Seminars and Reading

This outline details the seminars that the course encompasses. Students are expected to come to the seminars ready to engage in discussion and for each seminar, you are expected to read all of the essential reading. The course involves active student participation and students should therefore come to the seminars having completed any exercises given as homework. The additional readings provide the keen students with extra work and provide further reading for your assessed essays.

The introductory paragraph to the readings for each week provides a guide to the key issues you should be considering when preparing for class. The questions for discussion are there to assist in critical reading of the materials. As you do the reading you should also formulate your own questions and raise these in the class for discussion.

There is a weblearn site to support this course with additional information and resources:
https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/socsci/law/crim/qual_meth/page/home
Students registered for the course have been given access to these pages.

Preparatory Reading

Some of the following texts provide a useful overview of the topics covered during the course:


Seminar 1: Selection of Methods, Negotiating Access, Emotions and Ethics

This week we will discuss how criminologists select their research method, negotiate access to data, and prepare research proposals. Particular attention will be paid to the ethical issues inherent in most criminological inquiry. In class we will discuss the Oxford University Ethical review policy and the instructions on conducting ethical review from the British society of Criminology.

Please see:
https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/
http://www.britsoccrim.org/docs/CodeofEthics.pdf

OVERVIEW


ACCESS

ETHICS

OR


**RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

A selection of example research proposals from Criminology students and faculty will be made available on the Criminology Weblearn resources page:

[https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/socsci/law/crim/page/resources](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/socsci/law/crim/page/resources)

Please review 2-3 of these proposals for discussion in this week’s seminar.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Is objective research possible?
2. How should a researcher conduct him or herself?
3. How do we gain people’s trust?
4. How should the researcher deal with his or her emotions in qualitative research?
5. What is informed consent?
6. What are some ethical and/or practical challenges posed by cross-gender or comparative research?
7. Is it possible to over-research a topic or a community?

**Further Reading**


Seminar 2: Visual Methodologies: The Image

Criminological research on the image has proliferated in the last decade. Criminologists have moved beyond utilizing media representations of crime and its control and are now turning to such varied visual media as documentary and art photographs, art and cinema. There has been what might be described as a ‘visual turn’ in criminology and this class addresses its methodological implications. The seminar is split into three parts:

1. In the ‘overview’ we will engage with the recent criminological literature that explores how the image functions or ‘works’. We can understand this literature as fundamental in instructing how we ought to utilise the image for the purposes of our own criminological research. Next, we explore the way in which the images work specifically in relation to criminology. Through assessing some applied instances of the themes and issues already highlighted this second set of literature demonstrates how images work in practice to construct and even constitute our understanding of crime and its control.

2. In the second part of the seminar, we will construct a link between the rise of the image and the simultaneous rise of (online) social media. Indeed, it is worth noting that both cultural and visual criminologists make this link, claiming that the discipline’s newfound methodological interest in the image constitutes an intellectual response to the more pervasive rise of the image in social life more generally which, in turn, is owing to online social media technologies e.g. the internet. The internet acts as a medium through which the image is disseminated and subsequently understood and as such constitutes another area for interpretation.

3. Finally the seminar consolidates the reading, offering students the opportunity to select and/or create their own image to interpret in addressing the question: ‘what is crime?’ Images of crime and justice saturate our lives. From TV and video games, to mug shots and newspaper photos, to surveillance footage and night vision cameras, to YouTube clips of bullying, brutality and war, images have come to play a vital part in the way we think about crime. But what does crime and injustice actually look like? The tents of Occupy or is crime’s aesthetic bound up in the architecture of the financial district? The answers to these questions lie in how we ideologically address what they represent but also, as we shall see, in the images themselves.

Before the Seminar
We want you to take a photograph that asks us to question our sense of what is, or isn’t, harmful, and write a short paragraph explaining your choice of image. You don’t need photography skills or fancy equipment (a camera on your phone will be perfect) - just imagination. As a class we will highlight the key themes and links raised in the literature in relation to your image.
1. OVERVIEW

a) literature explaining the visual turn in criminology and how the image ‘works’ to construct our understanding of crime and its control.

Carrabine, E. (2012) ’Just Images: Aesthetics, Ethics and Visual Criminology’, British Journal of Criminology, 52 (3): 463-489. (for an overview of the issues raised in this article see the Centre for Criminology’s blog: http://crim.law.ox.ac.uk/?p=49)


b) Applied instances of the image


Discussion Questions

1. How do images operate to help us to understand crime and its control—are they simply representative or illustrative of the social world or do they play a more fundamental constructive role?
2. What methodological issues arise when conducting research on the internet?
3. What ethical issues arise when conducting research on images?
4. How can we integrate non-text based material into criminological research—think about this logistically/intellectually. i.e. when incorporating images think about their placement, is it play to simply, should the images be indexed or integrated into text? Does this even matter?
5. Why is it important to use social media as a research source?

Further Reading


Eli Pariser’s talk on “Filter Bubbles”:
http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles.html

Toole, P. and P. Ware (2008), ‘Observing Places: Using Space and Material Culture in Qualitative Research,’ Qualitative Research. 8(5): 616.


Seminar 3: Ethnography and Observation

Ethnographic research and observation are crucial qualitative strategies of data gathering. This week we will consider their strengths and weaknesses. We will also evaluate their possible contributions to the formation and reform of policy.

Exercise: Court observation

TO BE CARRIED OUT PRIOR TO THE CLASS

Task: Attend Oxford Crown Court and write a two-page account of your experiences of using observation. Include in your report an assessment of the strength and weaknesses of this method and discuss the barriers to making sense of the data.

OVERVIEW


COURTS


OBSERVATION


ETHNOGRAPHY


OR


Discussion Questions

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of observation?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of ethnography?
3. What happens when the site of analysis is dangerous or unfamiliar to the researcher?
4. Can ethnographic research be used to formulate policy?
5. What is the point of ethnographic research?
6. How do you know if your interpretation of what you are observing is accurate?

Further Reading


Seminar 4: Interviewing

This week we will discuss how to conduct a successful interview in a variety of settings. Examples that we will consider include individual face-to-face interviews, focus groups and telephone interviews. Particular attention will be paid to cross-cultural issues and the power dynamic of the interview itself.

Exercise: Paired Interviews

TO BE CARRIED OUT PRIOR TO THE CLASS

Task: Prepare a short interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions exploring the changing role of policing in the 21st century. Note: in class we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the questions you have chosen and together agree on one interview schedule which you will all use in the interviews you carry out in the day or two after the class.

TO BE CARRIED OUT AFTER THE CLASS

Task: In pairs you will conduct brief (not more than 30 minute) interviews with a police officer using the questions agreed in class (taking it in turns to ask questions and take notes on responses). THESE WILL TAKE PLACE THIS WEEK IN THE CENTRE FOR CRIMINOLOGY, DATE AND TIME TBC.

Following the interview, you will (still in pairs) transcribe the interview in Word and then email the transcribed interview to Dr Parmar and Dr Condry.

OVERVIEW


BACKGROUND ON POLICING


Have a look around the Thames Valley Police website: http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk

TRANSCRIPTION


INTERPRETATION


Discussion Questions

1. What is the main goal of the unstructured (or semi-structured) interview?
2. What are some weaknesses of the unstructured or semi-structured interview?
3. How, if at all, does the interviewer deal with sampling issues?
4. How should we respond to questions and demands made by interview subjects?
5. Should interviews be tape recorded or is note-taking sufficient?
6. How can we make ourselves understood in an interview?

Further Reading


FURTHER READING ON POLICING


Introduction to NVivo Workshop: Date to be confirmed – please sign up for this class with the Information Technology Service.

This class introduces the basics of the NVivo qualitative data analysis programme and discussing other methodological and criminological issues associated with qualitative methods and IT.

In preparation for this seminar, please watch the following tutorials:

Get up and running with NVivo 9: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3wdeZUGVY&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3wdeZUGVY&feature=plcp)

Organize material into themes with coding: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9eTvP3E5TE&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9eTvP3E5TE&feature=relmfu)

Work with interviews, articles and other documents: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDMxcHpMSOw&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDMxcHpMSOw&feature=relmfu)

Find themes and analyze text: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypo6lrpwDZ8&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypo6lrpwDZ8&feature=relmfu)

These should take about 1 hour to watch in total.
Seminar 5: Coding and Analysing Qualitative Data

A seminar based upon the reading will take place on Tuesday from 2-3.30 as usual. We will then hold an NVivo workshop on

This week we will code and analyse systematically the data gathered from all of the police interviews using NVivo. Students will continue to work in their pairs and code the interviews into key themes (nodes), producing a print out of their key themes with illustrative quotations. Please bring an electronic copy of your transcripts to the class.

TO BE CARRIED OUT AFTER THE CLASS

Task: In pairs you will prepare a brief two-page account of the findings of the police interviews.

OVERVIEW


DATA MANAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION


Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the benefits of using computers in analyzing qualitative data?
2. What are some of the pitfalls in using computers in analyzing qualitative data?
3. How easy is it to be confident that an issue in the research is a theme?
4. What should you do with issues that do not seem to fit the rest of the trajectory of the research?
5. How is it best to write up the research findings?

Further Reading


Seminar 6: Participatory and Arts-based approaches

In this seminar we explore participatory and arts-based methods in qualitative research. Though these terms cover a number of approaches, they have in common a focus on working in partnership with research participants (at various stages of research), creativity in method and design, and a focus on the transformative and / or empowering potential of research, particularly with marginalized groups. We will consider some of the debates in this field and how these approaches might enhance our understanding of the politics of research.

We will be joined by Andrew Marotta from the University of Oxford’s Department of Education to talk about his experiences of using participatory methods with young people in schools in the US.

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES


**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some of the benefits of participatory approaches?
2. What are some of the potential pitfalls?
3. Why are these approaches relatively under-utilized in criminological research?
4. How might researchers ensure their approach is informed by intersectionality?
5. Can research really be transformative or empowering for participants?

**FURTHER READING**


Seminar 7: Drawing Inferences and Reporting on your Data: Does research have an impact?

In this seminar we will discuss how best to report on qualitative research. Student pairs will report on the process of conducting interviewing, analysing data and identifying key themes. We will also discuss what to do with research findings and how to put together a research proposal.

OVERVIEW


IMPACT


AND/OR


Discussion Questions

1. How can criminologists draw inferences and conclusions from their research?
2. Is qualitative research ‘generalizable’?
3. Can qualitative research inform policy?
4. Should criminologists feed their research findings back to their participants?
   If so, how?
5. What is the point of qualitative criminological research?

Further Reading


Week 8: Discussion Panel: Qualitative Methods in Action

In this week we will have a panel of criminological researchers who will discuss their experiences of many of the issues we have covered in the course ‘in action’. This will be an opportunity to hear about how other researchers have designed and implemented qualitative research and how they have addressed and overcome various dilemmas. There is no reading for this week, but in preparation please come prepared with questions for the panel and topics you would like them to address.