NRE501_X  Interview Methods (1.5 credits)

Winter B 2015 Syllabus

Time and Location:

Instructor: Paige Fischer, Assistant Professor, SNRE, apfisch@umich.edu, 734-763-3830

Office hours: By appointment

Course overview: Interviewing is an important method for research and practice in the fields of natural resource management and environmental conservation because interviews reveal detailed information about how and why people think and behave in the ways that they do. Interviews also provide insight on the broader context in which people and organizations make decisions. This course will introduce students to qualitative interviewing as a research strategy and practice. After reviewing some of the epistemological issues surrounding interviewing, students will learn the art and practice of individual and group interviewing. The course will expose students to key interview-based works in natural resource and environmental fields and give students a chance to develop their own skills through classroom activities and projects.

Expectations: This is an upper level/graduate level course geared toward students who are interested in research and practice in the fields of natural resource planning and management and environmental conservation. The course will entail considerable reading, writing, and hands-on work collecting and analyzing interview data. Class meetings will involve lectures by the instructor, student-led reflections of the readings, in-class interviewing activities, and computer labs. Each student is expected to complete weekly reading and writing assignments, and conduct a term project involving the collection, analysis and interpretation of interview data.

Learning outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the utility of interviewing as a method for data collection and analysis
2. Decide when interviewing methods would be beneficial for answering a natural resource management or environmental conservation question
3. Identify some of the key features and techniques in successful interviewing
4. Design a interview-based study including the development of an interview guide
5. Analyze interview data using traditional and software-aided techniques
6. Interpret the results of interview analysis for the research question at hand
7. Convey results of an interview study in a format that would be acceptable to a peer-reviewed journal

Assessment: Progress toward learning outcomes will be assessed through evaluation of:

- Weekly written summaries of the reading 20%
- Weekly assignments relating to the interviewing project 20%
- Final paper on the interviewing project 30%
- Final presentation on the interviewing project 10%
- Class participation 20%

**Weekly reflections on the reading:** On a designated day each week students will post a clearly and tightly written 300-word reflection the assigned reading on CTools. In the written summary the student will identify key concepts introduced in the readings problems and discuss questions and concerns prompted by the readings. Students do not have to discuss each reading in equal depth, but must demonstrate that they read each book chapter or paper carefully. Students are encouraged to review each other’s summaries in preparation for the class discussion.

**Weekly assignments:** Each week students will complete an assignment in the progression of stages of a interviewing project including the identification of a question that can be addressed with interview methods, a draft interview guide for collecting interview data and the generation of a map, analysis of interview data with the aid of a software program, and reporting of interview data in an ethnographic format. Refer to the course schedule for specific assignments.

**Final paper:** A 10-page double-spaced paper (not including references) reporting on the student’s interviewing project is due on the last day of class. This paper should follow the traditional research paper format with the following sections: Introduction, including research question or hypothesis and objectives; Methods; Results; Discussion and Conclusion, with implications for natural resource planning and management or environmental conservation.

**Final presentation:** Students will present their interview projects to the class.

**Grading scheme:** A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=<60

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

**Academic Honesty:**