SYLLABUS

Time and location: Fridays 9:00 - 11:50 AM, 1040 DANA
Instructor: Michal Russo, michalr@umich.edu
Office hours: Mondays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00 PM in Dana 3008 or by appointment (in person or on Zoom).

Course overview
Individual and focus group interviews are critical methods for research and practice in environmental and sustainability fields. Interviews reveal rich and detailed information about how and why people think and behave in the ways that they do, and the broader context in which people make decisions. This information can help decision-makers develop policies and programs to harness people's motivations to engage in environmentally sustainable behavior and help them overcome constraints.

The course structure will follow a combined lecture and practicum format.

Lectures 9:00-10:20
Lectures will be given by the instructor, or guest speakers, and complement assigned readings. Lectures will follow a four-module organization, each focusing on a particular set of skills and learning outcome:
Module 1 | Introduction
- Understanding key differences between research paradigms and approaches, and when each is appropriate,
- Developing answerable research questions,
- Learning how to engage the community,
Module 2 | Data collection
- Designing sampling and recruitment strategies,
- Designing and testing an interview guide,
- Conducting individual open and semi structured interviews,
- Structuring and implementing focus groups,
Module 3 | Data analysis
- Managing and structuring qualitative data,
- Analyzing content to identify themes and patterns,
- Distilling qualitative content into conceptual models and matrices,
- Interpreting data to answer research questions,
Module 4 | Application
- Triangulating with other methods,
- Understanding and communicating the significance of findings,
- and Exploring pathways to elevate research impact.
Practicum 10:30-11:50
The practicum will center on a progressive class-wide qualitative research project to investigate Ann Arbor community’s understanding of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl), in terms of what known (and not known) about it, and what can and should be done about it. The class will lead decisions about the design, implementation, and communication of the research as a team. However, each student will produce individual work, including conducting an interview and producing an interview guide, a codebook, an analytical memo, and a graphic display of their key findings. The practicum will follow the lecture to provide an opportunity to practice new skills and engage in peer-learning. Practicum class time will be dedicated to collaborative work and peer review. Students will incorporate lessons from lectures and readings to lead practicum sessions.

Housekeeping
Expectations and Assessment: This is a graduate-level course geared toward master’s project and thesis students who are interested in research and practice in the fields of environmental management and sustainability. The course will entail reading, writing, and hands-on work collecting and analyzing interview data. In the past, some students used this course to conduct work on their master’s project or thesis research. While this is not an option this semester, students are encouraged to come and talk to me about their qualitative research design. I am happy to provide direction and feedback.

Each of the following expectations is worth one-fifth (20%) of student’s grade:
- student arrive to class on time and actively engage in 14 class sessions (unless arranged ahead of time),
- student successfully complete weekly reading quizzes,
- student complete assignments in a timely manner,
- student work effectively and respectfully in their team, including peer feedback,
- and student co-design and lead a practicum session.

Grading scheme:
Total scores for grading: Minimum for A+=97, A=93, A-=90, B+=87, B=80, B-=80, C+=77, C=73, C-=70, D+=67, D=63, D-=60, F=40

Schedule, readings, and resources:
- We will use a google folder to share all class files. The folder is divided into the lecture (slides, readings, resources) and practicum (activities, assignments, resources).
- We will use canvas for sending announcements. Please make sure you are receiving announcements in your email inbox.
- The schedule for this course is intentionally dynamic and responsive, as such weekly readings may change. I will post all final readings by end of day Friday, a week before they are due.
- Link to live schedule
Classroom policy / Ground rules (TBD)

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course before or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to be honest and ethical in their academic work. For more information about academic integrity and the University's policies and procedures in this area please refer to the Student Conduct website.

**COVID-19 statement:** Students and instructors are all adjusting to the changes and regulations that have been put in place this term in response to COVID-19. We are working to provide the best learning experience possible given the current circumstances of the pandemic. We have tried to add flexibility to our course structure and assignments to reflect the uncertainty that many students face. We are happy to work with students if anyone encounters a situation due to the pandemic that requires modified participation in the course. If you have suggestions for how we might support your learning in this course during this semester, please do not hesitate to let us know. You can find the latest updates about the University of Michigan and COVID-19 here: [https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/](https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/)