

First-Year Writing
Qualitative Research Report Assignment
Molly Westerman

The qualitative research report is our course's major assignment sequence and will continue throughout the entire semester. As a class, we will choose a research focus and gather interview data on St. Olaf students' attitudes regarding women's bodies. Each student will then work gradually toward a polished, nuanced, insightful report that places our findings in the context of a larger scholarly conversation.

phase 1: primary research and shorter report

Our class will collaboratively design a study based on qualitative interviews by defining a research focus, choosing a population and sampling method, and drafting and revising a flexible interview script.

After gathering interview data, you will transcribe and summarize your interviews so that everyone can access all of the data via our Moodle page.

Finally, each student will write a research report that states and supports a particular, thoughtful, nuanced interpretation of the data (in other words, a real and focused argument).

Regarding recording equipment: First, consider whether you already have appropriate equipment. Does your laptop have a built-in microphone? (If you're not sure, ask.) Or can you buy a cheap external microphone, or borrow one? Do you any sort of handheld electronic device that happens to be equipped with recording capabilities? Check that you'll be able to record a full hour at a time and that playback will be sufficiently clear for transcription. If not, do you have a generous and reliable friend who'll let you borrow something along those lines? If not, contact IIT to schedule borrowing an audio recorder. If they're all out, ask at Rolvaag about borrowing a camcorder (24-hour checkouts) and point it at a wall so you're only recording audio during your interviews. If you're borrowing equipment, schedule the equipment *before* you schedule your interviews.

between 9 & 15 March: complete one half-hour interview

22 March: post summary and complete transcription for the first interview

between 16 & 26 March: complete one one-hour interview

12 April: post summary and complete transcription for the second interview

23 April: full-length (4-6 page) rough draft due for in-class workshop

30 April: qualitative research report (first/shorter version) due via Moodle before the beginning of our class period; also hand me a hard copy of the grading sheet with your name on it in class

phase 2: secondary research and longer report

The final version of your report will be quite different from the one you submitted in November. Specifically, it must:

- make meaningful use of at least four scholarly sources, placing our data and your analysis in the context of a larger scholarly conversation
- expand to twice its original length (8-12 rather than 4-6 pages) without turning to wordiness, unnecessary repetition, or rambling—and while maintaining structural coherence and clarity
- represent a careful rethinking of your original report's claims, evidence, and structure, not merely an adding-on to meet the new length requirement

A successful project will use this longer format as an opportunity for more complex and precise analysis.

17 May: full-length (8-12 page) rough draft due for in-class workshop

21 May (2:00PM): qualitative research report (final/longer version) due via Moodle