Course Overview  We hear a lot about focus groups these days, particularly in an election year when politicians are routinely criticized for running their campaigns (and their policy decisions) based on focus groups. And the use - and misuse - of focus groups and qualitative research in business is growing as well. Qualitative research includes much more than focus groups, and that definition is growing and changing continuously in response to technology and consumers' media habits.

Students planning to pursue a career in marketing, consulting, or general management are likely to encounter the need for this type of research. The purpose of the course would be to provide an overview of qualitative market research, including the differences vs. quantitative research, best practices in using qualitative research and common ways in which it is used and misused. Emphasis will be on the business environment, but time will also be spent on political, legal, and general research applications.

Specific topics covered in addition to the qualitative research overview would include focus groups, individual and small group interviews, ethnography, online bulletin boards and other online methodologies, social media mining, internal / employee research, political research, and legal / jury research. Class will be a mixture of lecture / discussion, guest speakers, and small group work.

Course Requirements  Students will actually design and run focus groups as part of a group project. In addition, there will be individual assignments and tests, and class participation will be important. Students must have completed Ugba 106 as a prerequisite.