The University of Alabama Birmingham  
Applications of Qualitative Methods in Educational Research  
EPR 596-OC  
Spring 2001

“Any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it.”

John Dewey

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Office Hours: Before and after class and by appointment.

Course Description:  
“Qualitative research methods and techniques; their application to qualitative research design. Emphasis on types of qualitative information, methods of data collection, analysis and presentation of results; appropriateness of qualitative design.” UAB Graduate Catalog (1996-98). 3 hours.

Prerequisites: Admission into graduate studies, 692 or equivalent.

Course Objectives: This course uses a participatory approach to instruction. Specific details of the course will be defined collaboratively with graduate students who are participants. Additionally, the graduate student participants will:

1. Articulate the philosophies and epistemologies underpinning varying qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.
2. Discuss the tenets of positivistic and qualitative research methodologies.
3. Critically evaluate assumptions about research and methodology.
4. Discuss procedures in order to submit proper documentation for research involving human subjects to the UAB Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB).
5. Demonstrate skills necessary to engage in qualitative inquiry and
6. Write up a narrative analysis of a chosen data set.
7. Discuss various approaches within the scope of qualitative design.
8. Discuss the nature organization, and interpretation of qualitative data.
9. Discuss the ethical issues associate with the conduct of qualitative research.

Course Content:

Qualitative Research
- Focus - concepts, ideas, concerns, settings, groups
- Entry - contact purpose, products, processes, participants, roles, rapport
- Forms of Data - observation, interview, documents, workshops, records
- Records of Data – field notes, audio and video recordings, photocopies, photographs
- Analysis of Data - categorization, coding, description, characterization, explanation
- Products - studies, reports, biographies, histories, evaluations, plans, policies

Learning Strategies for the course:
Community Building
Presentations  
Readings  
Role Plays  
Simulations  
Class Trials  
Field Trials  
Learning Teams  
Fish Bowl Activities

**Products**  
Informal Reports  
Individual Field notes  
Formal Reports

**Issues of focus:**  
Voice  
Power  
Ethics  
Transferability

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**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

**Part A:**

1. **Going Indigenous**

For a period of at least two hours, course participants will spend time within a place where you have never been, nor really thought of previously going. Perhaps, a cultural event or religious practice of another ethnic group, a laundromat, or religious service that would be unfamiliar to you are among some suggested places from which to choose. This assignment is designed to offer you an authentic experience in constructing a narrative about the emic (an insider’s view). This is your attempt to gain entry, interact with people in the new setting, and tell a story from an insider’s perspective. You will record your experience in field notes, recordings, photocopies, and/or photographs or any other documents that assist you tell the story (this is your data set). You will identify emergent themes from your gathered data, and write a narrative about the experience. The reader of your written narrative should be offered a vicarious experience of what you experienced.

100 points

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**Part B:**

1. **Qualitative Study of the Course Experience in EPR 596.**

All course participants will complete this assignment. Through individually kept formal field notes (50 points), and any other documentation gathered from the class about learning sequences, readings in required and outside texts, and journal articles, you will delineate emergent themes and complete a formal qualitative report (100 points). This assignment is to be accomplished in a collaborative fashion. I strongly encourage you to complete this assignment as a cooperative group, however you may accomplish this as individuals only if you have to by addressing your rationale within the context of your paper.

150 points
Part C: Qualitative Research Project - This assignment may be accomplished in pairs, small groups, or individually.

1. An outside focus for study will be identified, proposed to the instructor, and concurrently accomplished during this 10 week period. Field notes, conducted individually or collaboratively, and other products (data set) for analysis will be gathered and analyzed as you complete a formal study. Themes will be discussed, and implications drawn from analyzed data.

150 points

Mid-term Exam (a collaborative endeavor) 75 points

Final Portfolio of aggregate work and reflective essay: This is a crucial product of the course. The materials we examine and the time we spend together will hopefully challenge you to examine some of your assumptions, axiologies, and ontologies. I highly recommend that you chronicle your course journey by keeping a reflective log (see Part B) and when you have insights, epiphanies, ambiguities, or just want to talk out loud to yourself, take the time to make an entry. It is your cognitive constructions about inquiry that I am interested in reading.

25 points
A = 450-500
B = 449-400
C = 399-350

Total possible points - 500

Required Texts:

UAB Thesis Manual

Other reading will be required

Additional and Optional texts (if you want to be smarter about qualitative research… or…”When enough is enough!!)


**Academic Misconduct:** All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and misrepresentation). The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct. See the UAB Blazer Direction Student Handbook for specifics.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.” If you consider yourself someone who needs reasonable accommodations, please call L. Ross Hunter, UAB Coordinator of Disability Support Services at 834-4205 or notify me in writing so that we may discuss your request.

**All classwork is expected to be word processed and citations are expected to be documented in full APA style.** Needless to say, attendance and participation are must for this type of course and will be considered in your overall grade. After 3 hours of missed class time, 25 point for each additional hour missed will be deducted from your final point total. Your voice and perspective is important to our collegial environment of collaborative learning about qualitative methodologies. I expect that we will all enjoy each others’ company and ideas as we emerge with a greater respect and sense understanding for class members.

**Very Tentative Course Schedule and Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/activities</th>
<th>Assignments for Next Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/20/01</td>
<td>Interviews and Introductions</td>
<td>Read Chapters 1, 2, 3 in Glesne</td>
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<td>Purse and Wallet Experiment</td>
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<td>Overview of Course</td>
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<td>Negotiate syllabus</td>
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Searching qualitative research – Mirror, Mirror
Systematic Reflection
Characteristics of positivist and
Post-positivist research
The Jerk - Garbage Can scene

4/3/01
Purpose and question of inquiry
Nature of qualitative research
Subjectivity
Work on topic, question, and proposal

Chapters 4 & 5 & 6
Going Indigenous Due

4/10/01
Part A: Going Indigenous due
An Overview of methodology
Framing the question
Researching the topic
Entry, Interviewing, Ethics

Articles

4/17/01
Varying qualitative paradigms
Examples

Study for midterm

4/24/01
Midterm

Chapter 7 & 8

5/1/01
Analyzing Data

5/8/01
Interpreting Data
Inter-rater reliability
Triangulation

Chapter 9 & 10

5/15/01
Writing the qualitative report
Your Story

Part B

5/22/01
Final Class Session
Part B: Qualitative Study of the Experience in EPR 596
Portfolios due

5/29/01
Final Exam
Final Project
Part C: Qualitative Research Projects Due

References


McLaren's (Eds.), Critical pedagogy, the state and cultural struggle. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.


