

Course Framework

QUAL 8400: Qualitative Research Traditions¹

Please Note: This document serves as an overall framework for the course. It will be a guide for our activities during the term - but it is a living document and may change during the course of the semester as we negotiate the learning process.

Course Facilitator

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Course Overview

Qualitative Research Traditions (QUAL8400) is a core course in the Qualitative Research Program at The University of Georgia. The course is designed to enhance your understanding of the foundations of qualitative research: history, philosophy, nature, types, examples, and evaluation. To accomplish this, the course introduces you to theories that have influenced and continue to influence the qualitative research process. We will also explore qualitative design, ranging from narrative to case study. Finally, we will read and evaluate reports of qualitative research (book and article formats) to enhance and refine your understanding of qualitative research.

To provide an anchor for our exploration, you will be thinking about yourself as a researcher, your area of research, and the design of a study using a qualitative approach to address your question(s). We will explore different aspects of the qualitative research experience during the term as we focus on the theoretical foundations. Throughout, we'll have *activities to engage your mind*, both in and out of class. A primary goal is to explore the theoretical foundations of qualitative research from a variety of perspectives to meet multiple needs in practice.

The philosophical foundation of the course is not that there is **one perspective** for qualitative research, but rather **perspectives** that are a **better fit** for a particular person.

¹ This syllabus is adapted from syllabi created from past QUAL8400 offerings by Drs. Roulston, Preissle, Freeman and P. Reeves.

We'll work within a framework of a resource-based learning environment (Hill & Hannafin, 2001), one in which people, things and ideas are viable sources from which to seek information and assistance. The overall goal is not to become **an** expert in all of the theories and methods, but to become *more of an expert* in the theories and methods as well as how to design a research project. We feel that knowledge of the qualitative research process, working in concert with tools and skills determined necessary for a given framework in a particular context, will enable you to accomplish this goal.

Course Activities and Procedures

The course has several assignments. Below is an initial description of each activity; more details are provided in separate documents.

Participation (15 points). This course will be highly interactive, in and out of our face-to-face meeting each week. You will be completing tasks individually as well as in small groups. Your participation in the discussions, activities and assignments is not just important to you; it is important for our learning community.

Research Crits (15 points). You are responsible for reading and critiquing one (1) book length presentation of qualitative research from a selected list (10 points) and one (1) published article (5 points) reporting on qualitative research related to your area of study. An overarching question guiding your reviews should be: what can I learn from this book/article to inform my work?

Interview Activity (Guide/Transcripts/Reflection) (15 points). You will conduct one (1) 20 to 30-minute interview. This activity will include: (1) creating an interview guide in a small group, (2) conducting the interview (individual), (3) transcribing 10-minutes of your interview (individual), and (4) writing a reflection on your process (individual).

Your Research. There are four parts to the work you will do during the term related to your research.

Part One: Goals and Subjectivities Statement (10 points). In this paper (2-3 pages), you will describe the goals for your research within a specific context. You will also write your subjectivities statement, a brief description of your beliefs related to research.

Part Two: Problem Statement and Research Questions (10 points). In this paper (1-2 pages), you will describe the context for your research in more detail and state the problem that you will seek to solve. You will also outline the research question you plan to address with your study.

Part Three: Theoretical Framework (15 points). You will prepare a publishable theoretical framework manuscript (10-15 pages) related to your area of interest. The manuscript will help form the foundation for your study, identifying major theories and findings from previous research as well as areas in need of further exploration.

Part Four: IRB Proposal (20 points). For this part, we will use the form from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Georgia. The IRB Proposal will include information from the three previous steps, along with additional information as well as drafts of the instruments you will use to collect your data. All researchers who

study humans are required to submit a proposal describing their research to the IRB. You can download the form here: <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/how/application>

****SPECIAL NOTE**** Some of you may be hoping to use the qualitative research course sequence (QUAL 8400, 8410, 8420, etc.) to provide a foundation for your research (e.g., dissertation, thesis). You can certainly do this – but if that is your intent, you **MUST** submit your IRB application for a full review by the review board. If you hope to collect data in QUAL 8410 that is related to your IRB, you need to submit the form at the end of QUAL 8400 so that you will have approval and be ready to collect data when you take QUAL 8410.

Course Procedures

During the first class session (20 August), you will be asked to complete a "skills" and "interest" inventory to find out more information about you. This is the *Researcher Profile* activity. This initial information will help me better plan for both the group and individual needs of class members.

You will complete several *Reading Tasks* throughout the term. Almost all of the reading for the course will come from the books you purchased for the course (with the exception of the *Research Crits*). The *Reading Tasks* are designed to assist you with building your knowledge base and understanding of the research process. Please note that some of the work you will complete for the *Reading Tasks* will be done in groups, face-to-face and online.

You will also be heavily engaged in *Your Research* through a variety of activities throughout the course, ranging from the completion of CITI training (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/training/>) to completing your *IRB Proposal*. These activities are designed to get you thinking deeply about research overall, *your* research, and the qualitative research process.

As noted above and in the description of the *Interview Activity*, you will be completing some work in the course in a group. You will be relying upon and learning a lot from each other throughout the course. Please be prepared to contribute constructively to your group.

Finally, you will engage in a lot of *hands-on, minds-on* activities during class. We will have research-related activities, discussions of the readings, and general conversations about the research process in our face-to-face class meetings. *Participation* is a big component of your assessment for the class, so please be prepared to engage.

Course Goals & Objectives

Course Goals

Participants in the course will become intelligent consumers and proficient users of theories related to qualitative research, qualitative data collection methodology and research design.

Course Objectives

Upon completing the course, each learner will be able to...

__ Describe the nature of qualitative research and explain the range of problems addressed by qualitative research. What is qualitative research? What kinds of human phenomena does qualitative research examine? What are the different ways it is conceptualized? What goals does it attempt to achieve? How does it define problems? What are its origins?

__ Reflect on the personal and conceptual presuppositions and assumptions that you bring to your proposed research project and compose a subjectivity statement to be reviewed by your peers.

__ Examine ethical dilemmas and issues related to the research process.

__ Recognize exemplars of qualitative research by identifying the goals and presuppositions of different exemplars and critically evaluating the designs for their accomplishment of specified research goals.

__ Develop an understanding of the relationship of theory to the research process through an examination of a variety of theoretical orientations.

__ Identify the tasks and processes required to (1) generate appropriate research problems, (2) design relevant qualitative research strategies to examine these problems, and (3) select pertinent data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis methods to explore the problems.

__ Apply the qualitative research skills you are developing to critically analyze your own and others' proposals and completed (published) studies. You will identify and apply the alternative standards used to assess qualitative research.

__ Work collaboratively in groups on research design and interpretation activities.

Required Texts

Note: additional readings will be available online or in eLC

Anafara, Jr., V. S., & Mertz, N. T. (2006). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: Using our selves in research*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publications.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting qualitative research: Working in the postpositivist traditions*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Choose One

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The second shift*. New York: Penguin.

McCarty, T. L. (2002). *A place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the struggle for self-determination in Indigenous schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Nathan, R. (2005). *My freshman year: What a professor learned by becoming a student*. New York: Penguin.

Venkatesh, S. (2008). *Gang leader for a day: A rogue sociologist takes to the streets*. New York: Penguin.

(very strongly) Recommended Text

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Electronic Communication

eMail. All students are required to have and use email for communication in the class. For urgent messages that concern everyone, please use the class listserv. Other email should be sent to individuals using their private email account.

SPECIAL NOTE: Email is **by far** the best way to get in touch with me. I will make all effort to respond to your messages within 24-48 hours. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, please email me again; your message may have just gotten buried in my inbox. To help me with quick identification, **please put QUAL8400 in the subject line!**

eLearning Commons (eLC). eLearning Commons is the new online learning environment at The University of Georgia. It is replacing WebCT, which will no longer be used on campus as of January 2010. We will use eLC in a variety of ways throughout the course. Use your UGA MyID to access our eLC space.

- First, eLC will be used as a way to share resources. Course resources (including this document) can be found in our eLC space.
- Second, eLC will be used to submit all assignments for the course (Assignment Drop Box).
- Finally, we will use eLC to facilitate the sharing of *Big Ideas and Questions* about the course readings each week. On the first day of class, we will create groups of four to five members. You will share your *Big Ideas and Questions* from the reading with your posting group each week before class. A posting of 2-3 big ideas and 1-2 questions each week is the expectation. Your *Big Ideas and Questions* will set the foundation for our discussions in-class, so it is important that you not only share your ideas and questions, but that you read those of your posting group members. **Everyone needs to post your Big Ideas and Questions between class and the following TUESDAY at 5p.** This deadline should enable everyone to share their ideas and questions, as well as allow time for everyone to review the postings of their posting group members **before** class. We will use your postings to guide discussions each week, although your group may pursue other ideas and questions as well. **SPECIAL NOTE:** Your *Big Ideas and Questions* are yours; they do not have to be "polished." In fact, I would expect them to be "ideas and questions in process."

Listserv. A listserv has been created for the duration of the course. We can use this as a means to keep in touch with each other, posting comments or questions as well as sharing resources or references with each other. To post to the list, send an email message to: QUAL8400Fall09@listserv.uga.edu Keep in mind that whatever you share with the list will go to EVERYONE on the list. The default settings are: (1) replies will go to all on the list, (2) attachments will be rejected, and (3) a Web archive will be created of the list postings.

Course Assessment and Grading

You start the class with an "A." Keeping the "A" is relatively simple...

- (1) **Think and share your ideas!** Come to class prepared to engage in discussion and activities,
- (2) **Follow the directions for assignments** and ask for clarification as needed. Assignments will only be submitted **once** – unless you get less than 15% of the possible points on an assignment. In these instances, you may choose to resubmit the assignment within one week of receiving initial feedback for re-evaluation and assessment.
- (3) **Support and participate** in activities in and out of class. Keep in mind that the content **and** quality of your written work is important in the assessment process. So let those creative juices flow! and
- (4) Come to class **on time** and turn your assignments in **on time**.

All work will be submitted electronically via *eLC* in the "Assignment Drop Box." You will receive feedback and grades for all submitted work, normally within **two weeks** of submission. Grades will be posted under the Communication icon of "My Grades" on *eLC*.

During the summer of 2006, UGA implemented the +/- grading system. Under this system, letter grades correspond to the following:

A = 4.0 A- = 3.7

B+ = 3.3 B = 3.0 B- = 2.7

C+ = 2.3 C = 2.0 C- = 1.7

D = 1.0 F = 0.0

Individual assignments will be graded using a scale following the points as outlined below:

A	95-100 points;	A-	90-94 points		
B+	86-89 points	B	83-85 points	B-	80-82 points
C+	76-79 points	C	73-75 points	C-	70-72 points
D	Less than 70				
F	Less than 60				

Each assignment is worth a specific number of points, as depicted below.

Activity	Due Date	Points
Goals and Subjectivities	10 Sept	10
Research Crit: Article	24 Sept	5
Interview Activity	8 Oct	15
Problem Statement and Research Questions	22 Oct	10
Theoretical Framework	5 Nov	15
Research Crit: Book	19 Nov	10
IRB Proposal	10 Dec	20
Participation (individual, group, class f2f/e)	throughout	15
Total Points		100

Grading is based on individual student “mastery” of the content rather than “on the curve.” Consequently, it is possible for all students to get an A in the course.

Assignments must be submitted on time. Failure to do so **without prior notification and permission** will result in lost points for that assignment - **.5 point for everyday it is late.** If there are extenuating circumstances for which you require more time to complete an assignment, please arrange an appointment with me to discuss this on an individual basis.

Academic Honesty Policy

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. For more detailed information about academic honesty visit: <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>

Assistance and Special Needs/Accommodations

If you are having trouble with the course, please let me know as soon as possible. Depending on your challenge or question, you will receive assistance via email, telephone or face-to-face meeting.

Assistance with writing and editing is available from the Division of Academic Enhancement at Milledge Hall Learning Center (phone: 706-542-7575) and the UGA Writing Center (<http://www.english.uga.edu/~writingcenter/home.html>). You can also get "walk in" assistance in the Student Learning Center (and a great cup of coffee or tea at Jittery Joe's!). You can find more information on the Web:

http://www.slc.uga.edu/students/writing_center.html

Remember to allow **EXTRA TIME** for writing/editing assistance. Deadlines will not be extended to accommodate editing.

It is the policy of The University of Georgia to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals. If you have special learning needs or need special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible.

Some of My Perspectives and Beliefs

I think it is important for each of you to have an idea of my perspectives and beliefs coming into the course. I think this will help us get to know each other quicker. My sharing of some of my perspectives and beliefs can set a foundation so we can continue to build our understanding of each other as the term progresses.

As I am sure all of you do, I have a varied academic background, one that is filled with diverse experiences. I come from a working class background, but grew into a middle class experience. These experiences have helped to shape my belief in and demonstration of a strong work ethic. I believe that through hard work and reflection, deeper understanding can be constructed. The workload in the course is intense, but I hope that you will find the work of value.

I am a passionate believer in lifelong learning - and consider myself a learner first and foremost. My role as a professor is viewed from the lens of a facilitator, one who works to create resource-rich environments in which learning can occur.

I am also an avid proponent of the free discourse of ideas, and believe that an open exchange of ideas is an integral part of the learning process. Some of the class discussions and readings may challenge your beliefs, views and theoretical stances. I think that by being pushed, we grow. I expect all of us to be open to difference and willing to interpret and explore ideas that might be outside our comfort zones.

I work hard in my classes to create a "safe space" for everyone. I have opinions and will share these, and expect that you will do the same. We will not always agree - and that is healthy. I do expect that we will be respectful and appreciative of each other's ideas and perspectives, and work to ensure that no one dominates the conversation (me included!). I expect that we will all communicate in ways that demonstrate respect, appreciation, and sensitivity to others.

I assume that most (if not all!) of you are enrolled in this course because you have a desire to build knowledge and skills related to the understanding and use of qualitative methodologies. I also assume that your desire to learn more about qualitative methodologies is for use in your academic program, for completing your doctoral research, and/or for your future career as a scholar. The projects in the course are designed to enable you to build your knowledge and skills while applying them to meet your own academic and professional needs.

Immediate Responsibilities

Note: The *Immediate Responsibilities* listed below apply to the first evening and week of the course (week of 17 August). Refer to CSM (could, should, must) e-mail notes for guidance with *Immediate Responsibilities* throughout the course.

__ Complete the *Researcher Profile*.

__ Sign up for *Groups*.

__ Play around with the eLC site, get to know the various components and download additional resources.

__ Complete the *Initial Thoughts re: Research Project* document (your notes - but bring to class!).

__ Complete the CITI training (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/training/>). Bring your printed certification to class with you.

__ Complete the readings for our next class meeting:

- McCotter, <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR6-2/mccotter.html>
- Maxwell, preface and chapter 1
- Trochim, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php> - qualitative measures, qualitative debate, data, approaches, methods, validity