

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM
QUAL 8410: DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Fall 2008

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Office hours: By appointment.

Class: Wednesdays, 4:40-7:40, Room 531 Aderhold Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course on qualitative data collection addresses both theoretical and practical dimensions of conducting qualitative research. Data collection concerns are embedded within the larger processes of qualitative research methods and must be considered in holistic ways. For example, data collection decisions are inherently tied to particular epistemological stances of the researcher as well as the research focus. In addition, data collection processes are interwoven with analysis and often occur simultaneously. Therefore this course examines data collection issues within the larger framework of qualitative research. QUAL 8400 or an equivalent is a pre-requisite for this course.

I assume that most students enrolled in this course have a desire to acquire the knowledge and methodological skills that are part of qualitative research methods, whether for application within academic programs, for writing doctoral dissertations and/or for future careers. The course is designed with flexibility so that you will be able to develop some projects that will suit your own academic and professional needs. The workload in the course is extensive; however I hope that you will find the course intrinsically interesting and valuable.

An important aspect of the course will be ongoing collaborative interactions with your classmates. You will be working in a collaborative group for many of the class activities and projects. You will be learning a great deal from each other, and will need to make an effort to contribute constructively both to your group work and to the entire class. I view myself as both a learner and teacher in the class, and expect each of you will also participate in both of those roles. The quality of your participation both in whole class participation and in your collaborative group will be considered as part of your grade in the course.

Course Objectives

1. Students can conceptualize appropriate research problems and design a qualitative research approach to examine such problems using observation, interviewing, document analysis, or other related methods. They can prepare a proposal for a qualitative project that is approved by the UGA Institutional Review Board (human subjects review). They can identify the common qualitative data collection methods, specify how data are formulated into units, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different methods and formulations.

2. Students can reflect on the personal and conceptual presuppositions and assumptions that they bring to their proposed research project and compose a subjectivity statement to be reviewed by their peers.

a. They can project the ethical issues and dilemmas that may be associated with various phases of their proposed research and discuss how they expect to handle such challenges.

b. They can identify their conceptual frameworks and connect such frameworks to scholarly theories and pedagogies.

3. Students can diagnosis their skills in conducting high quality qualitative research interviews, in taking detailed field notes during observations in field placements, and in collecting and interpreting archival data. They can design and conduct a plan to improve their skills in these areas. They can select and assess different means for recording qualitative data: prerecorded, recorded (manual and automatic), and non-recorded (from human memory).

4. Students can apply the qualitative research skills they are developing in critically analyzing their own and others' proposals and completed studies. They can identify and apply the alternative standards used to assess qualitative research.

5. Students can work collaboratively in research group design and interpretation activities.

COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Electronic resources

Class resources will be posted on WebCT. Use your UGA MyID to access these on a regular basis. If you have problems using WebCT, contact the UGA Helpdesk at 542-3106.

Electronic discussions will take place within WebCT. Use the discussion boards as a means of keeping in touch. General questions about projects should be posted to these boards. You may also post comments, questions or references which may be of interest to others in the class. In addition, an announcement listserv will be set up for the class.

I will check the discussion boards on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and will respond to email within 48 hours during the weekdays.

Texts

George Kamberelis & Greg Dimitriadis (2005) *On Qualitative Inquiry*. Teachers College Press ISBN-10: 0807745448 – required

Seidman, Irving (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd edition). New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN 0-8077-4666-5 – required

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press – required

Prior, Lindsay (2003). *Using documents in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-761-95-7472 – suggested

Additional readings

Additional class readings are available from the UGA Central Library in both print and electronic formats. To access electronic documents, go to the Course Reserve module in GIL (<http://gil.uga.edu>) or check on WebCT. The password access is: datacoll.

COURSE ACTIVITIES

Overview

The goal of the course is for students to learn data collection skills and to further their understanding of qualitative research. The primary project will be a research project that allows you to practice data collection. You will each propose a research project that will address your needs in the course. Research projects must involve collecting a variety of forms of data and making sense of those data. An example of such project might be a pilot study that “lights the way” for a more developed research project, but is limited in scope. For this project, you will be required to collect

three forms of data, one primary form of data collection (interviews) and two secondary forms as appropriate (field notes and archival data).

Most project activities will be directly or indirectly related to the primary research project. I have designed assignments in the course to engage you in the activities of creating a proposal for review by the IRB, interviewing, participant observation and archival data collection and interpretation.

I have constructed the course so that the final report will be a matter of combining much of what you have done during the semester into a final, complete report. You will be able to get feedback on the progress you have made on the final project with assignments that lead up to it.

IRB Proposal and Description of Research

You will construct a research proposal for your research project using UGA's Institutional Review Board guidelines and forms. As part of your project, you will complete the online CITI IRB training and submit a Human Subjects Research Application.

You will need to look on the IRB webpage (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelines.html>) for details. Be sure that your research project will fall under the guidelines for Course Directed Human Subjects Activity.

Your research study should meet the following requirements:

1. **NO MINORS:** The project cannot include minors or any other vulnerable populations like pregnant women, prisoners, those who lack the capacity to consent, non-English speaking individuals, etc. Exception: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
2. **NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK:** "Minimal risk" is the probability and magnitude of harm that is normally encountered in the daily lives of healthy individuals. This also precludes the study of any illegal activities.
3. **NO DECEPTION:** The project cannot include any deception. Individuals must be fully informed and given the opportunity to voluntarily consent to participation.
4. **NO PUBLICATION:** Data from student projects approved under this fast track review category cannot be used for publication or for thesis/dissertation research.
5. **NO VIDEOTAPING:** Audio taping is allowed if the recording is erased upon transcription or no later than the end of the semester.

The IRB has given the instructors of QUAL 8410 the right to grant approval for your research project as part of the course requirements. We will spend time in the early part of the course to ensure that you are clear on your research purposes and questions and that you understand the whole IRB process. You will need to look at the IRB webpage for the Human Subjects application (<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/>).

In the case that you intend to publish from the study that you conduct as part of this course, after your application has been submitted and approved by the course instructor, it should be submitted for approval to the IRB. In this event, the study must be supervised, approved and co-signed by your major professor.

In addition to the formal IRB form, you will turn in a 1-2 page description of your proposed research and its goals. Include your research questions and an explanation of why they are worthy of study, as well as any other information about the context of your study that you would like to provide. Include a brief statement about your current theoretical orientation, however tentative.

Book review

You are each responsible for reading a book-length qualitative study, and writing a critique of it using guidelines from the book review section of a journal in which you would potentially like to publish. Turn in a copy of the journal requirements with your review. In addition to the criteria

established by the journal, include a brief section describing what you learned in this book that would inform your own work.

Interview Project (Guide/Transcripts/Reaction)

You will be conducting three one-hour interviews as the primary method of data collection for your research project. This interview project involves creating an interview guide, conducting the interview, transcribing your tape, and writing a reflection on your process (2-3 pages double-spaced). I strongly urge you to transcribe your own interview tape so as to become intimately involved in your participants' stories. Transcription involves making analytic choices, and some scholars argue that it is the first stage of analysis. (Note that additional data from either archival or observational sources is also expected in your overall research project.)

Group Participant Observation/Documentary Project

With a group, you will select a "research site" in which to develop and refine your participant observation skills. You will each observe in a setting (which may be related to your research project) for a single one-hour time period. You will take condensed field notes (those taken in the field) and expanded field notes (those constructed at your computer immediately following your fieldwork). Observations may be made in one setting, or multiple similar settings.

Within the research site you have chosen, group members will examine archival/artifact data. For example, if you are working in a school setting, there are many forms of artifacts that you could collect and interpret including: mission statements, schedules, teachers' planning books, bulletin board content, student papers, etc. If you are engaged in historical research, your archival data could include court records, letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and similar types of documents. The group will submit a collaborative report of the project (10-12 pages double spaced), including the following items: (1) inventory of data set (field notes & documents); (2) a written interpretation of patterns observed in the observations and archival data sets; and (3) group members' written reflection on the process.

In-class Assignments

Throughout the semester, we will engage in short research-practice activities in class. These will be small projects contained within the class period, and will involve interactive and collaborative practice in data collection or analysis. Each assignment will be explained within the class in which it is held.

First-Stage Research Project

This paper should be 10-12 double spaced pages in length (excluding references), and should contain the following sections.

Introduction to the topic of research

Purpose/Research question

- A well formulated research question(s) that guides your research study. This is the most critical part of this paper. This section should include not only your questions but why they are worthy of study.

Literature review

- Your review of literature should be written concisely and serve as a framework for your study (4-5 pages double spaced). You will need to review 8-10 articles in your area of interest. Both the literature relating to your subject area and to your theoretical framework should be addressed.

Subjectivity Statement

- Include a written subjectivity statement (1-2 pages double spaced) based on your particular framework of knowledge (i.e. epistemological stance) and reflecting other considerations regarding your personal history, gender, race, ethnicity, cultural history, particular interests, biases, and so forth.

Expected Data Collection Process

- This is a detailed description of the data collection methods you expect to use in your research project. What kind of participants are you looking for? What questions might you ask? In addition to the interviews expected in this project, what other data might you collect? Your explanation will probably be 1-2 pages in length.

Response to Research Process

- This is a reflective summation of the research experience to this point. Describe for your readers what you learned from the research process thus far and how you might use this learning as you carry out this study and conduct future research studies (1-2 pages).

Reference List

Final Research Project

The final paper should be 20-25 double-spaced pages in length (including references). It will include the items in the first-stage research project, with appropriate revisions, plus the following sections:

Abstract

Description of Participants and/or Context

- This description will be due after you have been immersed in the field for enough time to be able to construct either a portrait of a participant or a portrait of the context in which you are working. The portrait should be 2-3 pages and should be a rich description that engages your readers in your research setting or with your participants.

Explanation of Data Collection Process (replaces “Expected Data Collection Process”)

- This is a detailed description of the data collection methods you used in your research project. Describe for your readers exactly how you went about gaining entry into the field and collecting data from the research setting or from your participants. Explain any changes that were made from your initial plans. Your explanation will probably be 1-2 pages in length.

Explanation of Data Analysis

- Describe to your readers exactly how you went about analyzing your data (1 page).

Preliminary Findings

- This discussion will highlight the preliminary findings resulting from your data analysis (3-4 pages).

Response to Complete Research Process

- This final component of your research project will include a reflective summation of the entire research experience. Describe for your readers what you learned from the research process and how you might use this learning in conducting future research studies (1-2 pages).

ASSESSMENT

The key to doing well in this course is simple. Come to class on time, well prepared, follow the directions specified in assignments, don’t hesitate to ask for clarification if needed, and remember that both content and quality of your written products are important.

Grades will be based on the following scheme:

IRB Proposal and description of research	10
Book Review	15
In-class Assignments	15
First-stage research project (paper)	10
Interview assignment	10
Documentary & participant observation project	15
Final Research Project	25
<hr/> Total Points	<hr/> 100

Grading policy follows that of The University of Georgia and Qualitative Research Program policy:

100-93 = A	79-77 = C+
92-90 = A-	76-73 = C
89-87 = B+	72-70 = C-
86-83 = B	69-60% = D
82-80 = B-	below 59 = F

Assignments submitted after the due date will have points deducted for lateness. Significant lateness on assignments may result in a lowering of the grade by one full letter grade (i.e., an A becomes a B).

Incompletes will be rare, and given under advisement from Student Services. If you cannot complete the assignments for the course, the grade that will be given will be based on those assignments that were completed.

Excessive absences will also affect grades. See general policies.

GENERAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Attendance

Attendance is expected. Your participation in class discussions and course activities is essential, so students should be present and prepared for all sessions. If you anticipate a number of absences or late arrivals, it is recommended that you consider the course at a later date.

If for some sad reason you must miss a class, please contact me as soon as possible. Excessive absences (more than 6 hours) may result in a lowered grade. Missed in-class projects will receive a grade of “zero” until an alternative plan can be negotiated. It will be the student’s responsibility to propose a meaningful option and to show evidence of brilliantly completing this learning experience.

It is also expected that students will show evidence of a sense of responsibility and courtesy commensurate with being a professional. Promptness will be the rule.

Email and WebCT

All students are required to have and to use an electronic mail account. In addition, course assignments will be handed in and returned via WebCT. Be sure to check WebCT regularly for messages or postings. Students are expected to master the basic technologies required for the course. Please see me if you need assistance.

Writing criteria

Your writings for the course will be evaluated both on what you write (your essential ideas) and on how well you write. I will be interested in how well you express your critical and reflective thinking in class projects and in how well you demonstrate your understanding of the readings. All assignments should be word processed in 12-pt. font, double-spaced, spell checked and grammatically

correct and should follow publication standards as outlined by the American Psychological Association (referred to as APA style). It is wise to ask someone to proofread your work and for you to read your work aloud in order to prepare a high quality presentation. The very highest standards in written and oral communication are essential for your role as a researcher.

Accommodations for Qualified Individuals with Disabilities

It is the policy of The University of Georgia to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and desire accommodations to complete your course requirements, please notify me as soon as possible to discuss your request.

Tutorial Assistance

Assistance with writing and editing is available from The Division of Academic Enhancement at Milledge Hall Learning Center (Ph. 542 7575), or at the Student Learning Center (http://www.slc.uga.edu/students/writing_center.html).

Free and Open Exchange of Ideas: Classroom Climate

Qualitative research on human experience often involves controversial topics. People have strong feelings, values, and beliefs that affect how they interpret scientific and other scholarly information. Although diversity of opinions is central to the scholarly inquiry encouraged in this course, everyone is expected to accurately represent the variety of views discussed. We may agree to disagree, but we must be able to express the viewpoint with which we disagree. Sound scholarship depends, then, on respectful listening and sometimes respectful disagreement. It depends on what the philosopher Hannah Arendt called “visiting”; visiting is listening carefully to what others have to say, engaging in interactive dialogue with others, and respecting differences in perspectives.

As a graduate student at The University of Georgia, the free discourse of ideas should be expected. We believe the open exchange of ideas is necessary for learning. We all have opinions, and will express those. You are free to express either agreement or disagreement without fear of consequences. This does not mean of course, that I or other students may not challenge your views or disagree with them. But it does mean that you will experience no consequences for disagreeing. If you feel that I am violating this commitment, please arrange an appointment to discuss the issue.

Please be sensitive in your class participation by not unfairly dominating discussions. My goal is to create a psychologically safe space in which everyone feels that they can participate in the discussion. This does not mean people cannot disagree. This does not mean people cannot have emotions connected to their words. What it does mean is that we all need to be sensitive, appreciative, and respectful, no matter how strongly we might disagree.

Academic Honesty

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.

“I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” UGA Student Honor Code

The University of Georgia seeks to promote and ensure academic honesty and personal integrity among students and other members of the University community. A policy on academic honesty has been developed to serve these goals. See <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/> for more information.

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

Instructor information

My contact information is on the first page. While WebCT and e-mail are the preferred contact methods for most class questions, please do not hesitate to make personal appointments if needed. I will also be available briefly after each class.

I received my PhD in Instructional Technology from the University of Georgia in 1999. My research interests involve qualitative research methodology and practice, especially with the use of software. For my dissertation, I studied the use of qualitative data analysis programs (*Reflections of qualitative researchers on the use of qualitative data analysis software: An activity theory perspective.*) Currently, I am an evaluator on several grants, and co-direct the BRIDGE (www.teachersbridge.com).

On a personal note, my husband also works for UGA, as a web designer. We have a seven-year-old son and three cats. In my limited free time, I enjoy reading and aspire to regular exercise.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule provides a general plan for the course, but deviations may be necessary.

Date	Focus	Readings and Assignments Due
8/20/08	Introduction and goal setting	
8/27/08	Research designing	Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, Ch. 1-2 Seidman, Ch. 1-3 CITI training certificate due Draft of IRB forms for class review due
9/3/08	Research reflecting	Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, Ch. 3 OR Ch. 4 Seidman, Ch. 4-5 Final IRB forms due (upload by 4pm) Book choice
9/10/08	Research interviewing	Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, Ch. 5 Seidman, Ch. 6-7
9/17/08		Chenail (from WebCt) Choice of theoretical article First stage research proposal due (upload by 4 pm)
9/24/08	Observing	Emerson, Ch 1 Williams, WebCT Book review draft due for peer review
10/1/08	Collecting data	Seidman, Ch 8 and appendix One interview transcript due for in class work [Note: Midpoint withdrawal deadline 10-23-08]
10/8/08		Emerson, Ch 5 Book Review Due (upload by 4pm)
10/15/08		Prior Ch. 1, TBA
10/22/08		Pink, Ch 2 (from WebCT) Erickson (from WebCT)
10/29/08	Research representing	TBA Interview project due (upload by 4pm)
11/5/08		Emerson, Ch. 6
11/12/08	Class presentations – Participant observation project	Emerson, p. 35-38 and Ch. 8 Group participant observation/artifact class presentation (upload project by 4pm on 11/16/08)
11/19/08	Research presentations	
11/26/08	Thanksgiving Holiday	No class
12/3/08	Final Research Presentations	Final research project due now to 3:30, Dec. 8, 2008

Note: Grades are due December 19, 2008