

QUAL 8410 Designing Qualitative Research

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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.

We 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 for application within your academic program, for writing a doctoral dissertation and/or for your future career. The course is designed with flexibility so that you will be able to develop projects that will suit your own academic and professional needs. The workload in the course is extensive; however, we 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. We view ourselves as both learners and teachers in the class, and expect each of you will also participate in both of those roles. The quality of your participation both in the whole class 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 examining 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.

WebCT

WebCT will be an integral part of this class. Be sure to check the site at least once a week. We will be using it to communicate with one another during the week and to store resources.

Discussion Board: We will use the discussion board to post announcements, questions, comments, references and group presentations. Be sure to check this board at least once a week.

E-mail: If you need to communicate with me, please e-mail me through the WebCT site. I normally have a 24 response time. If you do not hear from me within 24 hours, try again. I may have lost the message in my cyber files.

Course Materials and Links: On the site, you will find the course syllabus, assignment outlines, and presentations slides. You will also find links to IRB, the library, and many qualitative research resources.

Articles: The articles for this class have been scanned and are available electronically as PDF files. Click on the link for course readings. The password is "data." You may also go directly to the Course Reserve module in GIL (<http://gil.uga.edu>). The articles we will be reading are listed below:

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. *In Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, (Eds.). pp. 509-535. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ellis, C., and Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject. *In Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, (Eds.). p. 733-768. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Janesick, V. (2000). The Choreography of Qualitative Research Design: Minuets, Improvisations, and Crystallization. *In Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, (Eds.), Pp. 379-399. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory Action Research. *In Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, (Eds.), p. 567-605. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. (2000). Case Studies. *In Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, (Eds.), p. 435-454. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Required Texts

Texts are available at The University Bookstore.

Bentz, Valerie Malhotra, and Jeremy J. Shapiro. (1998). *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Patton, Michael Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Course Activities

IRB Proposal (15 points)

You will construct a research proposal for your research project. You will submit a Human Subjects Research Application as part of your course work. Your research 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.
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 tract 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 ERSH 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. Links to the IRB webpage, IRB guidelines and sample consent forms, and human subject applications may be found on our WebCT site under “Useful Links.” The addresses of the above sites are as follows:

IRB webpage: <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso>

IRB guidelines and sample consent forms: <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelines.html>

Human Subjects forms: <http://www.ovpr.uga/forms/app.04-2004.doc>

Research Project

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.

We have designed assignments in the course to engage you in the activities of interviewing, participant observation and archival data collection and interpretation. Assignments should ideally be connected to your research project. You will be required to collect three forms of data, one primary form of data collection (interviews) and two secondary forms (field notes and archival data).

The final research project report will contain the following components:

- Abstract (to be shared in class presentation)
- Purpose/Research Question
- Subjectivities Statement
- Literature Review
- Description of Participants and/or Context
- Explanation of Data Collection Process
- Explanation of Data Analysis
- Preliminary Findings
- Response to Research Process

We have constructed the course in this way 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 paper with the mid-point paper, which is an earlier draft of the final paper.

Article Review (10 points)

You are to select one article reporting on qualitative research on which to write a review. The review of the article should be one single-spaced page in length and should contain the following:

- Research Purpose/Questions
- Theoretical (Conceptual) Framework
- Data Collection Methods
- Data Analysis Methods
- Findings/Conclusions
- Personal Reactions/Critique

Interview Project (Guide/Transcript/Reaction) (25 points)

You will be conducting two, one-hour interviews as the primary method of data collection for your research project. This interview project involves creating an interview guide, conducting the interviews, transcribing your tape, and writing a reflection on your process (2-3 pages double-spaced). We strongly urge you to transcribe your own interview tape so as to become intimately

involved in your participant's stories. Transcription involves making analytic choices, and some scholars argue that it is the first stage of analysis. Transcription machines may be checked out from the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT), located on the second floor of Aderhold Hall, 542-8007.

Participant Observation/Documentary Project (15 points)

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).

Within the research site you have chosen, examine at least one 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. Submit a report of the project (4-5 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) a written reflection on the process.

Mid-Point Research Project (20 points)

Introduction to the topic of research

Research question

A well formulated research question(s) that guides your research study.

Literature review

Your review of literature should be written concisely and serve as a framework for your study (3-4 pages double spaced). You will need to review 6-8 articles in your area of interest.

Subjectivity Statement

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

Response to Research Process

This is a reflective summation of the research experience to this point. Describe for your readers exactly how you feel about the research process and if there is anything you might change in conducting future research studies (1-2 pages double spaced).

Reference List

The mid-point paper should be 8-10 double spaced pages in length (excluding references)

Final Research Project (20 points)

Along with the items included in the mid-point research project, add 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

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. Your explanation will probably be 1 page 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 exactly how you feel about the research process and how you might change it in conducting future research studies (1-2 pages).

The final paper should be 20-25 double-spaced pages in length (including references).

Assessment

The key to doing well in this course is simple. Keep up with the weekly schedule, 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. Let this class be a place to let your creative energies flow freely.

Grades will be based on the following scheme:

IRB Proposal (and consent form)	10
Article Review	10
Mid-point paper	20
Interview assignment	20
Documentary & participant observation project	10
Final Research Project	25
<hr/> Total Points	<hr/> 100

Grading policy follows that of The University of Georgia:

100-90% = A 79-70% = C below 60% = F
89-80% = B 69-60% = D

Attendance

I expect regular attendance and points will be deducted from the final grade if there are excessive absences (missing more than 6 hours of a 3-credit course). Your participation in class discussions and course activities is essential. If you have a conflict with a session due to prior commitments, please see me privately (so as not to use our limited class time with individual scheduling concerns).

I expect people to come to class prepared, to contribute to class discussions, and participate in activities. Frequent lack of preparation or failure to contribute will also be taken into account in the final course grade.

You will be expected to share written work with others in the class for discussion and feedback.

Assignments

Late assignments are not accepted. If there is an extenuating circumstance arrange an appointment to see me to make arrangements. Points will be deducted for papers submitted after the due date (10% of the total points per day). Remember that **both** content and quality of your writing products are very important. Extensions will not be granted on the due date of assignments.

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 the course instructor as soon as possible to discuss your request.

Non Native Speakers

Non native English speakers are strongly encouraged to recruit an editor outside of class to review their written work.

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 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 we may not challenge your views or disagree with them. But it does mean that you will experience no consequences for disagreeing with us. If you feel that we are violating this commitment, please arrange an appointment to discuss the issue.

Additionally, class discussions can easily be environments that are unfair to some students. As scholars at a major research university, we must all be sensitive in our participation. Numerous studies have found that Whites tend to dominate other races unless many of the discussants are members of those other races. In addition, some students, both male and female and of all races, tend to dominate class discussions, while others participate very little. Certainly some people, for various reasons, choose a lower level of participation. The important issue is that we all be sensitive that we are not unfairly dominating by talking too much or talking too loudly. The 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 agree.

Additionally, we request that students not discuss problems of local school districts when attempting to highlight an argument they are presenting. It is inappropriate to mention the names of administrators, teachers, or school districts in class discussions. The professional integrity of our colleagues in education should be respected. A graduate class at The University of Georgia should not become a forum for discussion of political issues facing a school district.

Academic Honesty

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. Academic honesty is defined broadly and simply -- the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed. Academic honesty is vital to the very fabric and integrity of the University. All students must comply with an appropriate and sound academic honesty policy and code of honest behavior. All members of the University community are responsible for and involved in bringing about an honest university, and all must work together to ensure the success of the policy and code of behavior. All members of the University community are responsible for knowing and understanding the policy on academic honesty. The statement on policy and procedures will be made readily available to all students and faculty to ensure understanding of the academic honesty system and its proper functioning. The entire University Community works together to operate the academic honesty system. Where suspected violations of the academic honesty policy occur, appropriate procedures are designed to protect the academic process and integrity while ensuring due process. The academic honesty system is an academic process, not a court of law.

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. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Each student is responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. For further information:

http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/culture_honesty.htm

Instructor

I am a part-time Assistant professor here at the University of Georgia. I received my Ph.D. from the University of Georgia, Department of Educational Psychology, Qualitative Inquiry Program in the summer of 2004. My degrees include a MA in Education from Antioch University, Seattle and a BA in English from the University of Washington. Prior to entering graduate school I taught elementary school in private and home-school settings.

Course Schedule

January 10 Introduction

- January 17 Research designing
 *Janesick
 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 1
 Patton, Preface and Ch. 5
- January 24 Research reflecting
 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 2
 Draft of IRB forms for class review
- January 31 Research interviewing
 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 3
 Patton, Ch. 7
 *Stake
 Final IRB forms due
- February 7 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 4
 Patton, Ch. 1
- February 14 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 5
 Patton, Ch. 2
 *Charmaz
 Article Review Due
- February 21 Research observing
 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 6
 Patton, Ch. 6
- February 28 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 7
 *Kemmis and McTaggart
 Draft Mid-point Project Due
- March 7 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 8
 *Ellis and Bochner
- March 14 **Spring Break**
- March 21 Research collecting
 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 9
 Patton, Ch. 8
 Interview project due
- March 28 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 10
 Patton, Ch. 3

- April 4 Research representing
Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 11
Patton, Ch. 4
Participant observation/artifact project due
- April 11 Bentz and Shapiro, Ch. 12
Patton, Ch. 9
- April 18 Final Research Presentations
- April 25 Final Research Presentations
Final research project due

Summary of Due Dates

<i>Project</i>	<i>Due Dates</i>
IRB proposal: 1 st draft	January 24
IRB proposal	January 31
Article Review	February 14
Mid point Paper	February 28
Interview Project	March 21
Participant Observation & Archive/Document Project	April 4
Class presentations	April 18 and April 25
Final project	April 25

NOTE: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.