EDUC 792: Qualitative Methods in Educational Research
Fall 2016

INSTRUCTOR:
Lisa R. Lattuca
Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
Room 2117
School of Education
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734-647-1979

MEETING TIMES:
LECTURE: Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:00 pm in ROOM 2310
LAB: Fridays: 1:00 – 3:00 pm in ROOM 2320

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:

ADDITIONAL READINGS
• On CANVAS

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES
This course is designed to provide a general understanding of qualitative research methods and issues related to the design and conduct of qualitative studies. Students who intend to pursue qualitative research should take this introductory course and at least one additional course on qualitative methods. Supplementing coursework with other learning experiences (e.g., pilot studies, reading examples of research, reading deeply into methods to be used).

The general aim of the course is to facilitate understandings of the following questions:
1. What is qualitative research?
2. What constitutes quality qualitative research?
3. What are the various tools/methods of a qualitative researcher?
4. What are the critical components of a qualitative research proposal?

Readings, discussions, assignments, and in-class exercises are designed to
• develop your appreciation and understanding of the foundations of qualitative research and their implications for research.
• familiarize you with the basics of research design and evaluative criteria for qualitative studies
• build your observational and interviewing skills, and introduce you to other qualitative methods of data collection
• introduce qualitative data analysis, including coding and other analytic strategies
• enhance your ability to recognize and think about ethical issues in qualitative research and the effects of the research process on participants
• explore the role of reflection in qualitative research and develop your capacity for useful reflection on research.

The course meets for five hours per week (for a three-hour class session and a two-hour lab) and emphasizes experiential learning. You will have opportunities, both in class/lab and outside class, to learn by doing. I do not expect you to do everything “right” the first time and in fact the course is designed so that you learn from mistakes as well as from successes. Throughout the course you will be asked to reflect on what you learning; this reflection on the practice of research will enhance your capacity to read, evaluate, design, and conduct qualitative studies.

In general, our three-hour session will be devoted to discussion of the readings and group exercises. In the early part of the term, lab time will focus on building your knowledge base but later in the course, lab time will be spent working in teams on your research project. Attendance at both sessions is essential.

This course cannot cover all types of qualitative methods, nor can it cover the topic in depth. If you wish to pursue qualitative research projects, this course will provide you with the basic knowledge and skills you will need, but it is not a substitute for extensive reading and thinking about specific methods and their use, and additional learning through courses and supervised research experiences.

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: Readings, Class Discussions, and Attendance

Everyone is expected to be a fully engaged and active participant in the course, lab sessions, and their research team. Class time will be devoted to discussion, group and individual activities, and work on team projects to help you understand and apply what we are reading, and to make progress on your final project. Participation in class will contribute 10% of your final grade.

Participation grades will be based on the quality and continuity of participation as well as on clear demonstration of substantial engagement with readings, in-class activities, and assignments. Because the course emphasizes experiential learning, and because class time will often be devoted to team project work, attendance is critical. Please notify me if you must miss a class so I can adjust class/lab activities accordingly.

Please review the schedule of readings in advance so that you will have time to think through the assigned materials for each class meeting. During your reading, note key points, pose questions, and connect ideas and concepts so that you will be prepared to actively participate in
class. In addition to offering your insights and opinions in class discussions, you are expected to listen attentively to others and respond constructively to others’ comments.

**Written Assignments**

Throughout this semester you will learn and practice some fundamental skills needed for qualitative research through an extended course project. Each student will be a member of a research team (3-4 members) that will collaboratively

- identify a researchable question,
- design interview and observation strategies to begin to answer that question,
- collect data using these protocols,
- code data and develop a preliminary analysis,
- write up initial findings, and
- present your analysis and ideas for a full study in class.

Each team will submit a Team Research Proposal early in the term. We will discuss this proposal further in class. This assignment is ungraded; it is intended to ensure you identify a topic early and it allows me to provide feedback on the feasibility of the project for the course.

This group project will serve as a pilot study that could (hypothetically) lead to a full-scale study. The team project, however, is a vehicle for your learning about qualitative methods; it is not intended to result in a conference presentation or publishable study. Since I will not have you submit a proposal for your study to U-M’s Institutional Review Board, you may not publish from the data you collect. If you wish to use the data you collect at a later point, you must submit an IRB application, and discuss this plan with your team to ensure their consent to use their work.

Many of the components of your project will be assessed on an individual (rather than team) basis. Each individual on a team will conduct at least one observation and one interview for his/her team. Depending on the team’s research topic, a team will choose to conduct more interviews than observations or vice versa, but each member of the team will conduct at least three rounds of data collection, including at least one interview and at least one observation. The choice to emphasize either interviews or observations in your data collection strategy will be justified by the question your team is exploring. If observations will best provide the most useful data for answering your question, your team can decide to conduct two rounds of observations (each) and only one interview each. If interviews will provide the most useful data, your team can conduct two rounds of interviews (each) and each do a single observation. At the end of the process, your team will have a considerable amount of data to analyze for your final team project and presentation.

**List of Assignments:**

As the term progresses, you will document your learning as an individual and as a team by completing the following assignments.

1. Reflective Memo on your positionality as a researcher (Individual Assignment)

1. A Team Research Project Proposal (one per Team; ungraded)

2. Three “rounds” of data collection per team member
a. **Observation(s)**
   i. Fieldnotes for 1 - 2 observations (Individual Assignment)
   ii. One Reflective Memo on your observation experience (Individual Assignment)

b. **Interview(s)** NB: If you are doing a study that is primarily based on interviews, you must interview at least two different participants
   i. Interview Summaries for all interviews (Individual Assignment)
   ii. Transcription and coding of one interview (Individual Assignment; ungraded).
   iii. One Reflective Memo on your interview experiences (Individual Assignment)

4. **Preliminary Data Analysis**
   a. Codebook (Team Assignment; ungraded; assign one individual to upload and print)
   b. Analytic Memo – A written report that identifies and provides evidence of one or two key themes from your data collection (Individual Assignment)

5. **Final Team Presentation** (Team Assignment) – An extended presentation and discussion (using helpful slides or handouts) that summarizes what your team learned through its pilot study and that outlines a proposal for a full-scale study. Each presentation will be followed by 15 minutes of questions and discussion.

6. **Final Project Memo** (Individual or Team) that summarizes your team’s pilot project and outlines a plan for a full-scale study based on what you learned from your data collection and preliminary analyses. Your team may choose to write this report as a team or as individuals, but must agree on the approach taken; you cannot do both.

Final Memos should include the following:
   a. Your original research question and a discussion of how you refined your research question and/or subquestions as a consequence of the pilot study.
   b. A brief summary and assessment of your team’s data collection and (initial) analyses that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of your pilot and what was learned.
   c. A research design, including your (new) research question(s), and your plans and rationale for sampling, setting, data collection, validity concerns and procedures to address these, and analysis/es.
   d. A positionality statement that discusses how the different perspectives of the project team members contribute to the study and plans for reflexive practice during the study.

7. **Optional Self- and Team assessment** (Individual Assignment; ungraded)
   If desired, you may provide a self-assessment of your contribution to the team project and an assessment of the contributions of your team members. NOTE: Although I will not grade the self-assessment or team assessment, I may take into account what I learn about your individual and team activities in assigning individual grades for Participation, Team Presentation, and Final Project Memo.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**
For each major assignment, I will provide a rubric that clearly defines the standards of performance for that assignment and that provides feedback on your work. In general, I will look
for evidence of deep understandings of and reflection on subject matter; application of concepts and methods; balanced and critical discussion of concepts and ideas; clear and organized presentation of thoughts and ideas; and, when appropriate, connections to course readings.

Although the assignments for this class represent works-in-progress, you are expected to present them in a professional manner. Please take care in writing fieldnotes, memos, and final papers, taking time to edit and proofread and to give authors due credit when using their ideas.

**DUE DATES**
All assignments are due either on or by the dates posted in this syllabus (noted in listing below). If you have a serious conflict, you may negotiate an alternative date with me in advance. Please remember, however, that you are not only accountable to yourself and to me, you are accountable to your team, which relies on your contributions to the team project. Late assignments are those that have not been cleared with me in advance.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Contribution to Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection (Objectivity/Subjectivity)</td>
<td>Friday, Sept 30 by 3 pm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Project Proposal (1 per team)</td>
<td>Friday, Sept 30 by 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Round of Data Collection – Fieldnotes or Interview summary and transcript</td>
<td>by Friday, Oct. 28, 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Consent Form</td>
<td>by Friday, Oct. 28, 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Memo on Round 1 data collection</td>
<td>by Friday, Oct. 28, 3 pm</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Codebook (one per team)</td>
<td>by Friday, Nov. 18</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Round of Data Collection – Fieldnotes or Interview summary and transcript</td>
<td>by Wed., Nov., 23 by 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Memo on Round 2 data collection</td>
<td>by Wed., Nov., 23 by 3 pm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coded Interview Transcript</td>
<td>by Wed., Nov. 25</td>
<td>credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Memo</td>
<td>by Friday, Dec. 9</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Presentation (1 per team)</td>
<td>Thursday, Dec. 15</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project Memo</td>
<td>Monday, Dec. 19</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Self and Team Assessments</td>
<td>Monday, Dec. 19</td>
<td>no grade</td>
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**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**
All students are expected to comply with the Rackham Graduate School Policy on Academic Integrity (see link below). Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, falsifying or fabricating information, plagiarizing the work of others, facilitating or failing to report acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work done by another as your own, submitting work done for another purpose to fulfill the requirements of a course, or tampering with the academic work of other students. If you are unsure what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please consult the “addendum” to the Rackham statement, which defines the forms of academic dishonesty or bring your question to me. For Rackham Policy on Academic Integrity: [http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/statement_on_academic_integrity/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/statement_on_academic_integrity/)
**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in the course or who require special accommodations are encouraged to speak with me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If, during the course of the term, circumstances interfere with your ability to fully participate in the class, please see me so that we can determine how best to help you.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>September 8 (only)</th>
<th>Intro to the Course and Qualitative Research</th>
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**TOPICS:**

- *What is qualitative research? What are its characteristics?*
- *Course Overview*

**CANVAS:**


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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>September 15 and 16</th>
<th>Foundations of Inquiry</th>
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**TOPIC: Research approaches, historically and practically**

**Class Session:**

**CANVAS:**


**Lab Session: Historical development of research paradigms and examples continued**


*Recommended Reading for those interested in mixed methods and the problem of “paradigm”*:  

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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>September 22 and 23</th>
<th>Foundations continued...</th>
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**TOPICS:**  
- Objectivity/subjectivity in research  
- Positionality  
- Choosing a research team

**Class Session: Epistemologies/Ontologies**  
**Text Readings:**


• REVISIT pages 10 – 16 of Ravitch, S. M. & Carl, N. M. (2016). Qualitative research: An opening orientation – which we read for our first class.
Lab Session: Objectivity/Subjectivity and Speed Dating:

Text Reading:

- Maxwell, Chapter 2: Purposes: Why are you doing this study?

CANVAS:


If you want to read more on the foundations of, and debates about, qualitative and quantitative methods, see the series of articles in vol. 38, no. 6 (2009) of Educational Researcher in the section on “Epistemology, Methodology, and Education Sciences.”

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Week 4  September 29 and 30  Research Design, Part I: Questions and Methods

DUE: Reflection on Objectivity/Subjectivity (your research interests) Friday, Sept, 30 at 3 pm

DUE Friday, Sept. 30 at 3 pm: Research Question & Data Collection proposal (one per team)

TOPICS:

- Research design in qualitative inquiry
- Research design issues

Class Session:

Text Readings:

- Maxwell, Chapter 1: A model for qualitative research design
- Maxwell, Chapter 2: (REVIEW: you have already read this)
- Maxwell, Chapter 3: Conceptual context: What do you think is going on?
- Maxwell, Chapter 4: Research questions: What do you want to understand?
- Maxwell, Chapter 5: Methods: What will you actually do?

Lab Session: Design and Research

CANVAS:


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Week 5  6 and 7 Interviewing

TOPICS:

- Interviews as a data collection strategy
- Constructing and conducting interviews

Class Session: Conducting Interviews
**CANVAS:**


**Lab Session: Interview Protocol Development**

| Week 6 | October 13 and 14 | Fieldwork and Observations |

**TOPICS:**

- Conducting and recording observations

**Text Readings:**


**Lab Session**

Science Education Research: Learning, Teaching, and Being in Multiple Contexts (pp. 9–25). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.


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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>October 20 &amp; 21</th>
<th>Validity</th>
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**TOPICS:**
- Practices that contribute to quality
- Criteria for judging qualitative research studies
- Gaining access to sites and participants

**Lab Session:**

**Text Readings:**
- Maxwell, Chapter 6: Validity: How might you be wrong?

**CANVAS:**

**Lab Session:**

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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>October 27 and 28</th>
<th>Developing Trust and Acting Ethically</th>
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**DUE by Friday, October 28 at 3 pm:** Documentation of First Round of Data Collection, Team Consent Form, and Reflective Memo

**TOPICS:**
- Building trust and rapport
- Ethical issues

**Class Session:**

**CANVAS:**


For further reading (see methods section especially for challenges re: race/ethnicity):

Lab Session: Access, Recruitment and Debriefing on Data Collection Experiences

CANVAS:
• AERA Code of Ethics
• AAA Code of Ethics

Week 9 November 3 and 4 Data Analysis, Part I

TOPICS:
• Introduction to qualitative data analysis
• Coding

Class Session:
Text:

CANVAS:


**Recommended:**


**Lab Session: Developing Codes – Team Work**

• No additional readings

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**Week 10 November 10 and 11 Data Analysis, Part II: Theory Building**

**NOTE: For Higher Ed students: The ASHE conference begins Thursday, November 10**

**TOPICS:**

• Explanations and theory building

**Class Session:**


**Lab Session: Interpretation and Analysis**

• No additional readings

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**Week 11 November 17 & 18 Memoing and Member Checking**

**Due: Code Book (one per team) and Coded Interview (Individual) due on Friday, Nov. 18**

**Topics:**
• Member checks
• Analytic memos
• Beginning to write

Class Session:
Text:

CANVAS:

Lab Session: Memo-writing and Work-in-progress
• No additional readings

November 24 and 25 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

DUE: Round 2 Data Collection due Wednesday, November 23 by 3 pm

Week 12 December 1 and 2 Video, Documents, and Digital Research and Analysis

Class Session:
CANVAS:

**Lab Session: Data Analysis Workshop (in teams)**

- No additional readings

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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>December 8 and 9</th>
<th>Writing and Reporting</th>
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**DUE: Analytic Memo due on Friday, December 9**

**Class Session:**

**CANVAS:**

- Maxwell, Chapter 7: Research proposals: Presenting and justifying a qualitative study
- Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications

**For Later Use: Guide for Reporting Qualitative Research**


**Recommended Reading - Food for Thought:**


**Lab Session: GROUP WORK ON PROJECTS**

- No additional readings

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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>December 15</th>
<th>Team Presentations</th>
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**DUE: Team Paper due on Monday, December 19**

Optional Self- and Team-Assessments due on Tuesday, December 19