EDUC 792: Qualitative Methods in Educational Research
Fall 2015

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: Tuesdays, 1:00 – 4:00 pm in ROOM 2334
LAB: Wednesdays: 1:00 – 3:00 pm in ROOM 2320

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:


ADDITIONAL READINGS

• On CTools

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

Readings and Class Discussions
Everyone is expected to be a fully engaged and active participant in the course, lab sessions, and research team. Class time will be devoted to discussion, group and individual activities, and work on team projects (often in the lab session). Participation in class will contribute 15 percent 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.

Please review the schedule of readings in advance so that you will have time to fully digest 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. If at all possible, please let me know when you must miss class so I can adjust class/lab activities accordingly.

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. A Reflective Memo on objectivity/subjectivity (Individual Assignment)

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

3. 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; please 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) – A 45-minute 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. Your presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes so that we have at least 15 minutes for questions and discussion.

6. A Research Proposal (Individual or Team) that summarizes your team’s pilot project and proposes 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 (You cannot do both!).

Proposals 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.

Qualitative Methods 4 Fall 2015
**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 me, you are accountable to your team, which relies on everyone's contributions to the group project.* Late assignments are those that have not been cleared with me; these will be penalized one-half grade.

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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>Class Participation</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection (Objectivity/Subjectivity)</td>
<td>Wed., Sept. 30</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Question/Proposal (1 per team)</td>
<td>Friday, Oct. 2 by 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Round of Data Collection/consent forms</td>
<td>by Friday, Oct. 30, 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Memo on Round 1 data collection</td>
<td>by Friday, Oct. 30, 3 pm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Round of Data Collection</td>
<td>by Friday, Nov. 20 by 3 pm</td>
<td>credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Memo on Round 2 data collection</td>
<td>by Friday, Nov. 20 by 3 pm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Codebook (one per team)</td>
<td>by Wed., Nov. 25</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coded Interview Transcript</td>
<td>by Wed., Nov. 25</td>
<td>credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytic Memo</td>
<td>by Friday, Dec. 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Presentation (1 per team)</td>
<td>Tues. &amp; Wed., Dec. 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project Memo</td>
<td>Monday, Dec. 14</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Self and Team Assessments</td>
<td>Tuesday, Dec. 15</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.

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

**Ctools:**

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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:**

**CTools:**
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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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>September 22 and 23</th>
<th>Foundations continued…</th>
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**Topics:**
- Objectivity/subjectivity in research
- Choosing a research team

**Class Session: Epistemologies/Ontologies**

**Text Readings:**

**Lab Session: Objectivity/Subjectivity and Speed Dating:**

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

**CTools:**

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

**DUE: Reflection on Objectivity/Subjectivity (your research interests)**

**DUE Friday, Oct. 2 at 10 am: 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: (you already read this; review)
- 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**

**CTools:**

Week 5  October 6 and 7  Interviewing

**TOPICS:**
- Interviews as a data collection strategy
- Constructing and conducting interviews

**Class Session: Conducting Interviews**

**CTools:**

**Lab Session:** Interview Protocol Development


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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>October 13 and 14</th>
<th>Fieldwork and Observations</th>
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**TOPICS:**

• Conducting and recording observations

**Text Readings:**


**Lab Session**


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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>October 20 (Lab Only; Fall break)</th>
<th>Validity</th>
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**TOPICS:**

• Practices that contribute to quality

• Criteria for judging qualitative research studies

• Norming in Teams

**Lab Session:**

**Text Readings:**

• Maxwell, Chapter 6: Validity: How might you be wrong?

**CTools:**


• National Science Foundation (2004). Workshop on interdisciplinary standards for systematic qualitative research. Washington, DC: Author. (READ Pages 1 – 19.)

**Week 8**  
**October 27 and 28**  
**Gaining Access, Developing Trust, Acting Ethically**

*DUE by Friday, October 30 at 3 pm: Documentation of First Round of Data Collection and Reflective Memo*

**TOPICS:**
- Gaining access to sites and participants
- Building trust and rapport
- Ethical issues

**Class Session:**

**CTools:**


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


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

**CTools:**

• AERA Code of Ethics
**NOTE: For Higher Ed students: The ASHE conference begins Thursday, November 5**

**TOPICS:**
- *Introduction to qualitative data analysis*
- *Coding*

**Class Session:**
**Text:**

**CTools:**

**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**

**TOPICS:**
- Explanations and theory building

**Class Session:**
**CTools:**

**Lab Session: Interpretation and Analysis**

• No additional readings

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

*DUE: Round 2 Data Collection due Friday, November 20 by 3 pm*

**Topics:**

• Member checks
• Analytic memos

**Class Session:**

**CTools:**


**Lab Session: Memo-writing and Work-in-progress**

• No additional readings

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**Week 12  November 24 and 25  Videotape and Document Collection and Analysis**

**Due:** Code Book (one per team) and Coded Interview (Individual) due on Wednesday, Nov. 25

**Class Session:**

**CTools:**


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

• No additional readings

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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>December 1 and 2</th>
<th>Writing and Reporting</th>
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**DUE: Analytic Memo due on Friday, December 4**

**Class Session:**

**Text:**


**CTools:**


**Recommended Reading - Food for Thought:**


**Lab Session: GROUP WORK ON PROJECTS**

• No additional readings

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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>December 8 and 9</th>
<th>Reporting and Team Presentations</th>
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**DUE: Team Paper due on Monday, December 14**

**DUE: Optional Self- and Team-Assessments due on Tuesday, December 15**

**Topics:**

• Writing qualitative research proposals

• Team presentations
Class Session:
Text Reading:
  • Maxwell, Chapter 7: Research proposals: Presenting and justifying a qualitative study

Ctools:
  • Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications