EDUC 792 – QUALITATIVE METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
Lecture: Mondays, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Room 4212 SEB
Laboratory: Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Room 2334 SEB

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Office: #4047
lbricker@umich.edu
734-647-2975 (office phone)
Office Hours: by appointment

CTools: Log onto the CTools site (www.ctools.umich.edu) with your uniqname and password. You will see a tab titled EDUC 792 001 W14. I will use this site to post all course materials (e.g., weekly readings, handouts, assignments), as well as build a course wiki listing various resources related to course themes. You will use this site to post to forums, submit assignments, etc. It is your responsibility to check CTools regularly. Please let me know if you do not have regular Internet access so that I can help you make alternative arrangements.

Course Texts:
NOTE: Additional readings will be uploaded to the course’s CTools site in a timely fashion.


COURSE DESCRIPTION
“…individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences…These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views…Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others…and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (pp. 20-21).

“Serious researchers repeatedly move back and forth among these four areas of thought [imagery, sampling, concepts, and logic], and each area affects the others. I may choose my sample in a way that takes into account my image of what I’m studying, but I will surely modify my image on the basis of what my sample shows me. And the logical operations I perform on the results of some part of my work will probably dictate a change in my concepts. And so on. There is no sense imagining that this will be a neat, logical, unmessy process” (p. 9)
-- Howard Becker from Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You’re Doing It (1998)
Course Overview
In this course, we will explore what it means to utilize qualitative methods in educational research. We will do this by: (a) interrogating various readings, (b) interacting with qualitative researchers, (c) practicing certain techniques, (d) collecting data (or acquiring existing data), (e) analyzing those data, (f) beginning to write like qualitative researchers, and (g) engaging in rich discussions throughout the semester. Course participants should be aware that this is an introductory qualitative methods course, and thus will not involve advanced applications of different types of qualitative methods. With that said, this course will provide participants with basic understandings about qualitative research (what it is, and why it is used), its philosophical underpinnings and associated assumptions, and different types of research methods and analytic techniques that fall under the qualitative umbrella.

The following questions will guide our work:
1. What is qualitative research, and why are qualitative research methods utilized? What types of questions typically launch qualitative studies?
2. What philosophical ideas underpin qualitative research methods, and what assumptions guide the work?
3. What different methods are typically situated under the qualitative umbrella, and what types of analytic techniques tend to be utilized by qualitative researchers?
4. How do qualitative researchers tend to communicate about their work?

Course Objectives
In order to target course goals and interrogate the course’s guiding questions…
1. Participants will read and discuss philosophical, “how to,” and example texts related to qualitative methods, continuing to hone their academic literacy competencies (especially identifying, interpreting, and producing academic arguments).
2. Participants will dialogue with qualitative researchers.
3. Participants will explore course themes and practice various techniques through the collection (or acquisition), analysis, and communication of qualitative data.
4. Participants will explore related issues, such as those related to human subjects, data collection and analysis, equipment and storage, and communication.

COURSE POLICIES
Course Evaluation
Grades are based on total points earned. No curve is used. The course grading scale is as follows:

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NOTE: See “Course Assignments and Projects” for a list of course assignments and their accompanying points.

Additional Policies and Expectations
1. Academic and Professional Integrity
   It is expected that all members of this learning community will conduct themselves with integrity related to all aspects of our academic and professional lives. This includes making certain that plagiarism never occurs. If you are unsure about how to correctly attribute ideas, words, work, etc. to others, please ask. Please refer to the following website for specific policies and procedures related to academic and professional integrity:
   http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/academic_integrity/

2. Accessibility
   Every member of this learning community has the right to full participation. If you need an accommodation(s) for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. We can work with Services for Students with Disabilities (http://ssd.umich.edu/) to ensure that your learning is fully supported. I will, of course, keep our discussions private and confidential.

3. Discrimination/Harassment
   No member of this learning community should be subject to discrimination of any kind and/or harassment, as these practices have no place in a just society. Please refer to the following websites for University policies related to discrimination and harassment:
   http://urespect.umich.edu/report/what/#Report3
   http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/discrimination_harassment/

4. Diversity/Social Justice
   It is my intention to facilitate this course in ways that acknowledge and respect all aspects of diversity. This includes respect for ideas and practices related to gender, sexuality, disability, religion, age, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, and culture. Not only must we have respect for each other relative to diversity but we must also examine how issues of diversity and equity interact with the use of qualitative methods in educational research.

5. Classroom Community
   Our work together relies on honest, open, and respectful dialogue so that all participants feel free to express their views. Disruptive behavior (e.g., inappropriate language, talking over others, harassing others) has no place in our course and will result in the loss of participation points at the very least. Here are a few guidelines to help facilitate our conversations and activities each week:
   a. There is no such thing as a stupid question. Please ask any and all questions that you have and remember that by asking your questions, you are allowing us to learn as a community because you are helping to make ideas visible.
   b. Be respectful of others’ ideas and experiences even if they are different from your own. We do not have to agree but we do owe it to each other to listen to and consider each other’s
points of view. On a related note, please respect confidentiality both in the class and outside of it.

c. Listen to others by trying not to interrupt until whoever is talking is finished and until you have heard and considered what others have said. Do not assume that silences are unproductive. Give others time to think, consider, and formulate ideas.

d. Monitor your participation. If you are outgoing and tend to dominate conversation, use this course as a chance to practice allowing others a space to participate. If you are less outgoing and tend to let others do the talking, use this course as an opportunity to practice speaking up and adding to the conversation.

e. Please turn cell phones off or to vibrate before each class session out of respect for our community. On a related note, use laptops appropriately (e.g., for note taking, presentations). Unless directly related to this course, please refrain from texting, visiting Facebook, etc. Please turn off all MP3 players.

6. Attendance, Participation, and Communication
Regular, on-time attendance and thoughtful participation during class discussions and other activities are essential not only to your individual performance and learning but also to the success of the course and our community. We all share responsibility for the learning and teaching in this course. Because you will not be able to participate in the class community if you are not present, absences will result in the loss of participation points, except in cases of extreme circumstances (e.g., family emergency, illness). If you know that you have to miss a class session, please notify me PRIOR to your absence. You are responsible for obtaining all materials (including summaries of class activities and discussions) and making up any missed work. I expect excellent communication (e.g., notifying me prior to any absence, notifying me about any issues regarding assignments).

7. Late Work, Extension Requests, and Revisions
LATE WORK: Unless I state otherwise, all assignments are due on the dates listed in the syllabus. Again, unless I state otherwise, you will be expected to post assignments on CTools (in your DropBox folder, using the Forums function, etc.).

EXTENSIONS: I understand that we are all busy people and sometimes, we are not able to adhere to stated due dates. If you need an extension, please talk with me in person or contact me via email or phone. Make sure you contact me prior to any given due date or I may not be able to grant your extension request. If you choose to take advantage of my liberal extension policy, I will not grant any of your future requests.

REVISIONS: You may revise and resubmit assignments that you submitted on time (this policy does not apply to late work unless I have granted you an extension). You have one week from the time you received feedback to revise and resubmit. In addition to the revised assignment, you must also provide a summary of the revisions you made based on the feedback you received.

8. Format Guidelines for All Course Writing and Other Applicable Assignments
Unless I note otherwise, all assignments must be typed. Per the American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines, please double-space your work, use 1” margins all around, and use 12 point Times New Roman font. As with all assignments, I expect you to attend closely
and carefully to spelling, grammar, and other conventions. When citing and referencing course and other materials, please follow the APA Style Guidelines – 6th edition. You can access the APA style manual through University of Michigan’s libraries or online at http://www.apastyle.org. Purdue University also has a very helpful online APA guide: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE-1: More information (i.e., detailed assignment guidelines with evaluation criteria, when applicable) will be posted to CTools in a timely fashion, and discussed in class.

NOTE-2: Deadlines listed here are tentative, and might be reassessed based on our progress throughout the course. Be prepared to be flexible.

NOTE-3: You will have the option of working individually, or in a group of no more than 3 people. If you choose to work in a group, some of the assignments will be group efforts (those marked with an asterisk), and some will be individual, meaning that everyone in the group will be responsible for submitting his/her own work. (If you choose to work alone, all of your assignments will be individual, of course.) If you choose to work in a group, I will ask your group to submit a group self-assessment at the end of the semester to get a sense of how you think you worked together (and this self-assessment will factor into your final points total). Be aware that if you choose to work in a group, all group members will receive the same number of points for group assignments.

NOTE-4: Unless you have Human Subjects approval from the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board, you MAY NOT publish or formally present (e.g., as part of a conference) any of the data and/or analysis of those data that you collect and/or acquire for this course.

1. Reading Discussion Papers – credit/no credit – 10% of final course grade

Due Date: Rolling throughout the semester. You must submit 10 of these to your DropBox (which means that you may choose four weeks throughout the semester, not counting spring break, where you do not submit). If a given week also has readings listed for the lab section of the course, you may also use those readings for this assignment. I would base your 10 choices on issues/themes in which you are most interested and/or need the most guidance. You will select ten weeks during the course of the semester to submit a one-page (single spaced) written commentary. For each week that you submit this short paper, you will speak to one of the following:

(a) a quote from one of the readings that you found “…insightful, interesting, surprising, controversial, or otherwise though provoking – and some description of its impact on [your thinking] and/or your research interests…”

(b) a question or questions that one/all of the readings raised for you and why

(c) a summary of the week’s readings (or one of the readings or an interesting idea in one, or across, the week’s readings), including its impact on your thinking and/or research interests.

*Adapted from Knapp/Gallucci Syllabus – University of Washington, 2004
2. Attend At Least Three Job Talks Given by Candidates for the Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity Faculty Position – credit/no credit – 5% of final course grade
Due Date: Rolling throughout the early part of the semester (late-Jan. through Feb.)
As you may know, the University of Michigan School of Education is currently searching for a cluster of faculty positions. We are searching for scholars who are methodologists AND whose research focuses on aspects of diversity and equity. Job talks will take place this semester (we anticipate late Jan. through Feb.). Not all candidates will be qualitative researchers, but several will be. You will select three job talks to attend (I will post dates/times as soon as I have that information), and will then “blog” about the talk you attended using the Forum function in the course’s CTools site. In addition, you will respond to at least two other people’s posts.

3. Research Question & Initial Project Idea* – 25 points – 5% of final course grade
Due Date: February 3, 2014
In no more than three pages, you must pose your research question, and describe your project idea, including your rationale for selecting this project, and your tentative proposal for data collection. Make sure that your question is one that is capable of being investigated using qualitative methods. Your tentative proposal for data collection should include: (a) a time line, (b) the methods you propose, at this point, to use [this could change based on revisions of your ideas], and given those methods, the type of data you envision collecting (and then analyzing later in the course).
⇒ NOTE: I will give you feedback on this assignment within the week, which will include deadlines for your reflective memos.

4. Conceptual & Methodological Sketch (DRAFT)* – 75 Points – 15% of final course grade
Due Date: February 24, 2014
In no more than 6-8 pages, you will begin to communicate about your project. Specifically, you will introduce it, begin to outline the theoretical framework you are utilizing, and begin to draft what is typically referred to as the methods section of an empirical paper. In essence you are elaborating your initial description of your project idea (based on feedback from your peers and me, based on readings, based on discussions, etc.). For your final paper, you will revise this document, and add a description of your data analysis, a preliminary description of your findings, and your thinking about “next steps.”

5. Four Reflective Memos – 100 points (25 each) – 20% of final course grade
Due Dates: Memos A-C have rolling deadlines, depending on one’s/the group’s project. Memo D is due on or before April 7, 2014.
In no more than three pages (for each memo), you will write four different reflective memos throughout the course of the semester about the details of your data collection, and about subjectivity issues in qualitative research. The following are the topics on which you will reflect:
(a) Reflections on observation and field noting
(b) Reflections on interviewing and field noting
(c) Reflections on one additional method and/or data collection issue – depending on your project (e.g., document collection and analysis, discourse documentation and analysis, digital photograph [self]documentation and analysis, video and/or audiotaping observations, video and/or audiotaping interviews)
(d) Reflections on subjectivity issues in qualitative research (e.g., the researcher as research

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instrument, researcher positionality with respect to the researched)

5. Preliminary Data Analysis Discussion* – 75 points – 15% of final course grade
Due Date: March 31
In no more than 5 pages, you will describe your analytic techniques, the assertions that those techniques have allowed you to formulate, the evidence from those techniques that you are using to warrant your assertions, any disconfirming evidence present in your data set, and questions you have at this point about your data analysis.

6. First Draft of Manuscript & Presentation* – 150 points – 30% of course grade
--Presentations will take place on April 14 (in lab), April 16 (in lab), and April 21. Individuals and groups will select the date they wish to present their work to the class. Presentations are 10 minutes in length with no more than 5 minutes of Q & A.
--The first draft of your manuscript is due no later than April 27 (Sunday) at 5:00 p.m.
Using feedback on your conceptual and methodological sketch, as well as your continued work throughout the rest of the semester, you will draft a manuscript that reports on your work this semester and responds to your research question(s). In addition, you will present your work to the class.

COURSE SCHEDULE*
NOTE-1: I reserve the right to revise this schedule whenever necessary. Note that all readings listed are to be done in ADVANCE of the lecture or lab (i.e., complete the readings listed for any given week prior to that week’s lecture or lab).

NOTE-2: As you may know, there are two other sections of this course being offered this semester. The other professors and I are in conversations about offering (potentially) four optional sessions, which would be open to anyone registered for qualitative methods this semester. The themes of the sessions we are discussing include: (a) human subjects/institutional review board; (b) equipment for data collection and storage; (c) qualitative data analysis software; and (d) discussions with a panel of qualitative researchers from across the School of Education. Stay tuned for details (including days/times).

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 13 & JANUARY 15, 2014 – BEGINNING THE DISCUSSION

JANUARY 13 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
Merriam: Chapter 1 (What is Qualitative Research?)
Merriam: Chapter 2 (Types of Qualitative Research)
Becker: Chapter 1 (Tricks)

JANUARY 15 (LAB)
READINGS:
Maxwell: Chapter 1 (A Model for Qualitative Research Design)
Maxwell: Chapter 2 (Goals: Why Are You Doing This Study?)
Becker: Chapter 2 (Imagery)

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Read over the syllabus in detail and ask any questions that you may have at this point.
2. Decide whether you will work alone or work in a group. If you choose to work in a group, decide who your partner/group mates will be (remember – no more than 3 per group).
3. Decide whether you wish to submit a human subjects application for your project.
4. Discuss and draft your “Research Question & Initial Project Idea” paper (due Feb. 3) via DropBox in CTools (We will discuss this assignment in detail on Jan. 15.)

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 20 (NO CLASS) & JANUARY 22, 2014 – POSTPOSITIVISM & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN
*NOTE: No lecture this week due to the Dr. King Holiday. We will meet only for lab.

JANUARY 22 (LAB)
Merriam: Chapter 4 (Designing Your Study and Selecting a Sample)
Maxwell: Chapter 4 (Research Questions: What Do You Want to Understand?)
Becker: Chapter 3 (Sampling)

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Remember that your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper is due on or before Feb. 3.
2. If you are planning to submit an IRB application, you should be finishing that and submitting it.
3. If the schedule is available, decide which Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity job talks you will attend given your schedule.

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 27 & JANUARY 29, 2014 – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN CONTINUED...

JANUARY 27 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
Maxwell: Chapter 3 (Conceptual Framework: What Do You Think is Going On?)
Maxwell: Chapter 5 (Methods: What Will You Actually Do?)
**JANUARY 29 (LAB)**

**READINGS:**
Becker: Chapter 4 (Concepts)
Maxwell: Chapter 7 (Research Proposals: Presenting and Justifying a Qualitative Study)
Merriam: Chapter 3 (Qualitative Case Study Research)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**
1. Decide which Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity job talks you will attend given your schedule. Start attending the job talks and blogging about them using the Forum on CTools (directions about how to blog are listed on CTools within this Forum).
2. Remember that your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper is due next week (Feb. 3), if you have yet to submit it.

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**WEEK 4 – FEBRUARY 3 & FEBRUARY 5, 2014 – ISSUES RELATED TO VALIDITY, GENERALIZABILITY, ETHICS, OBJECTIVITY, ETC.**

**FEBRUARY 3 (LECTURE)**

**READINGS:**
Maxwell: Chapter 6 (Validity: How Might You Be Wrong?)
Merriam: Chapter 9 (Dealing with Validity, Reliability, and Ethics)

**FEBRUARY 5 (LAB)**

**READINGS:**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**
1. Continue attending the job talks and blogging about them using the Forum on CTools.
2. Based on peer and my feedback on your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper and your IRB application, begin your data collection.
3. Remember to complete your Reflective Memos A-C, depending on the timeline to which we’ve agreed (see my feedback on your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper).
4. Remember that your Conceptual and Methodological Sketch (DRAFT) is due on Feb. 24.
WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 10 & FEBRUARY 12, 2014 – OBSERVATIONS AND FIELD NOTES

FEBRUARY 10 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
Merriam: Chapter 6 (Being a Careful Observer)

PICK ONE:
Tzou, C.T., Scalone, G., & Bell, P. (2010). The role of environmental narratives and social positioning in how place gets constructed for and by youth. Equity & Excellent in Education, 43(1), 105-119.

FEBRUARY 12 (LAB)
READINGS:

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Continue attending job talks re: the Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity search. Post questions, ideas, wonderings, etc. to the CTools forum.
2. Your data collection should be continuing.
3. Remember to complete your Reflective Memos A-C, depending on the timeline to which we’ve agreed (see my feedback on your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper).
4. You should be working on your Conceptual and Methodological Sketch (DRAFT). It is due on or before Feb. 24.
WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 17 & FEBRUARY 19, 2014 – INTERVIEWS AND FIELD NOTES

FEBRUARY 17 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
Merriam: Chapter 5 (Conducting Effective Interviews)

PICK ONE:

FEBRUARY 19 (LAB)
READINGS:

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Continue attending job talks re: the Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity search. Post questions, ideas, wonderings, etc. to the CTools forum.
2. Your data collection should be continuing.
3. Remember to complete your Reflective Memos A-C, depending on the timeline to which we’ve agreed (see my feedback on your Research Question & Initial Project Idea paper).
4. Your Conceptual and Methodological Sketch (DRAFT) is due next week (if you haven’t yet submitted it). Please upload to your DropBox on CTools.

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 24 & FEBRUARY 26, 2014 – PROGRESS CHECK
NOTE: Additional readings will be determined for this week based on class members’ needs.

FEBRUARY 24 (LECTURE)
READINGS:

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Merriam: Chapter 7 (Mining Data from Documents)

**PICK ONE:**


**FEBRUARY 26 (LAB)**

**READINGS:**


**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Continue attending job talks re: the Methodology in Research on Diversity and Equity search. Post questions, ideas, wonderings, etc. to the CTools forum.
2. Your data collection should be concluding, so that you are prepared to analyze after Spring Break.
3. All Reflective Memos (A-C) should now be submitted (or submitted over Spring Break).

**WEEK 8 – MARCH 3 & MARCH 5, 2014 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

*Use this week to catch up, if need be, and read for next week.

**WEEK 9 – MARCH 10 & MARCH 12, 2014 – DATA ANALYSIS – PART I**

**MARCH 10 (LECTURE)**

**READINGS:**

Becker: Chapter 5 (Logic)


Merriam: Chapter 8 (Qualitative Data Analysis)


**PICK ONE:**


**March 12 (Lab)**


**Assignments:**

1. You should be analyzing your data.
2. Remember that your Preliminary Data Analysis Discussion is due on or before March 31.

**Week 10 – March 17 & March 19, 2014 – Data Analysis – Part II**

**March 17 (Lecture)**

**Readings:**


**PICK ONE:**


**March 19 (Lab)**

**Readings:**


**Assignments:**

1. You should be analyzing your data and writing your Preliminary Data Analysis Discussion. It’s due on or before March 31.
2. Remember that your Reflective Memo about subjectivity issues in qualitative inquiry is due on or before April 7.
WEEK 11 – MARCH 24 & MARCH 26, 2014 – DATA ANALYSIS – PART III

MARCH 24 (LECTURE)
READINGS:

PICK ONE:

MARCH 26 (LAB)

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. You should be wrapping up your data analysis.
2. Remember that your Preliminary Data Analysis Discussion is due next week (to DropBox on CTools) – if you haven’t already submitted it.
3. Remember that your Reflective Memo about subjectivity issues in qualitative inquiry is due on or before April 7.
4. Sign up for a presentation slot (April 14, 16, or 21).

WEEK 12 – MARCH 31 & APRIL 2, 2014 – NARST CONFERENCE – NO CLASSES

ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Use this week to catch up, if need be, and read for next week.
2. Remember that your Reflective Memo about subjectivity issues in qualitative inquiry is due next week – if you haven’t already submitted it.
3. You should be starting to draft your draft Manuscript and prepare your Presentation.
4. If you haven’t already done so, sign up for a presentation slot (April 14, 16, or 21).
WEEK 13 – APRIL 7 & APRIL 9, 2014 – WRITING AND COMMUNICATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

APRIL 7 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
Merriam: Chapter 10 (Writing Qualitative Research Reports)
PICK ONE:

APRIL 9 (LAB)
READINGS:

ASSIGNMENTS:
*You should be drafting your Manuscript and preparing your Presentation. Presentations start next week. Manuscripts are due on or before April 27 at 5:00 p.m. (via DropBox on CTools).

WEEK 14 – APRIL 14 & APRIL 16, 2014 – WRITING AND COMMUNICATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH...CONTINUED

APRIL 14 (LECTURE)
READINGS:
To Be Determined (based on course participants’ wants/needs)

APRIL 16 (LAB)
READINGS:
To Be Determined (based on course participants’ wants/needs)

ASSIGNMENTS:
*You should be drafting your Manuscript and preparing your Presentation (if you still have to present next week). Manuscripts are due on or before April 27 at 5:00 p.m. (via DropBox on CTools).
WEEK 15 – APRIL 21, 2014 – WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS (LECTURE ONLY THIS WEEK – NO LAB)

READINGS:
To Be Determined (based on course participants’ wants/needs)

ASSIGNMENTS:
* Manuscripts are due on or before April 27 at 5:00 p.m. (via DropBox on CTools).