

## **Education 792: Qualitative Methods in Educational Research (Fall 2011)**

### **Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education University of Michigan School of Education**

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Class: Wednesday, 1-4pm, 2320 SEB; Thursday 1-3pm, 2320 SEB

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#### **Course Description**

This course is designed to provide an introduction to qualitative research methods, with a focus on research in higher education contexts, although others from different fields are equally welcome. The primary techniques of the case study method, including interviews, observation, and document analysis will be the primary skills developed. Introductions to critical ethnography, discourse analysis, and mixed methods will also be included. We will also consider strategies for validity and reliability, and the relevance of standard evaluative criteria such as objectivity, neutrality, and generalizability.

The course will meet for five hours per week, including a three-hour course and two-hour lab. Course time will focus on lecture/discussion of the readings and group exercises. Lab time will be used to develop skills, either through analysis of data gathered by students or exercises developed by the instructor. The written course assignments will consist of memos written throughout the course and a major course paper that is a polished accumulation of the prior work. As a result, the course load during the semester will be somewhat more intensive than usual, but will be more evenly distributed throughout.

#### **Objectives**

Upon completion of the seminar, students will be able to:

1. Understand the fundamentals of qualitative research, including epistemological claims
2. Understand the validity and reliability issues in qualitative research
3. Conduct effective interviews and observations using both notes and transcribed audiotapes
4. Engage in thematic analysis of documents, transcripts, and notes
5. Discuss the elements of a “good” qualitative study
6. Understand the important political and ethical issues in qualitative research
7. Create an effective presentation of qualitative data

## Course Requirements

*Class Participation.* As in any doctoral course, students and faculty need to be co-owners of the class and collectively responsible for its quality and outcomes. I will take responsibility for the overall design and direction of the course and for the academic requirements, but the course will be facilitated as a seminar or inquiry in which all participants hold themselves and each other accountable for a strong and rich intellectual enterprise and dialogue.

Your attendance is essential to a successful collective experience. The format of the class requires that each person come prepared to take an active role in class. This means not only having read the assigned materials, but also being prepared to discuss the salient issues, questions, and problems emerging from the readings, to utilize your knowledge and professional experiences in addressing the readings and any class activities. Class participation also involves opening oneself to challenge and to be challenged by the ideas and topics of the session. Class participation may also include individual meetings or writing to the instructor, in addition to in-class discussions and activities. Please notify me by email in advance if you are unable to attend any class session. The quality of your class participation is worth 30% of your final grade.

*Memos.* Most weeks, students will write memos of various lengths (from 1-10 pages) on the readings for the week. The requirements for each memo will be provided to you a week in advance, although the topics and due dates are listed below. These memos may serve as either communications to the instructor, dialogue concerning the readings, or work-in-progress. Memos will be evaluated as the course progresses, and will be graded as a portfolio at the end of the course. The quality of this work is worth 30% of the final grade.

*Final Paper.* The interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted throughout the course will lead to a final cumulative paper representing the student's learning in the course. This year, the project can be done as a pair or as a single person. This paper will be due **December 10th** and is worth 40% of the final grade.

## Course Texts

Merriam, Sharan B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (The 1998 edition is probably ok for money savers.)

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

Corbin, Juliet and Anselm Strauss. 2008. *The Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition probably ok, but be sure to read the right chapters.)

## **Optional Text**

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Order from Amazon]

## **Policies on Late Papers and Missed Classes**

Late papers are accepted up to a week late, with a penalty of half a grade, regardless of reason. The grade penalty is non-negotiable, but one late assignment does not generally hurt the final grade. Missed classes will hurt the class participation grade, also regardless of reason. Students who miss three class sessions must withdraw from the course.

## **Additional Readings**

The remainder of the course readings are available electronically through CTools. Please download and print out these articles at your own convenience. You may find it useful to have the readings bound or otherwise organized for the course.

## **Course Schedule**

### **September 7: Introduction to the Course**

Merriam, 1-4

Eisenhart, Margaret. 2006. "Representing Qualitative Data." Pp. 567-581 in Judith Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings about Case Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12: 219-245.

Cassell, Joan. 1978. "Risks and Benefits to Subjects of Fieldwork." *The American Sociologist* 13: 134-43.

### **September 14 & 15: Approaches to QR**

Milam, John H. 1991. "The Presence of Paradigms in the Core Higher Education Literature." *Research in Higher Education* 32: 651-68.

Phillips, D.C. 1983. "After the Wake: Postpositivistic Educational Thought." *Educational Researcher* 12(5): 4-12.

Maxwell, Joseph A. 2004. "Using Qualitative Methods for Causal Explanation." *Field Methods* 16: 243-264.

Small, Mario L. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Cases in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10: 5-38.

Due: Paradigms memo  
Lab: Paradigms lab

### **September 21 & 22: Validity**

Maxwell, Joseph A. 1992. "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research." *Harvard Educational Review* 62: 279-300.

Phillips, D.C. 1987. "Validity in Qualitative Research, Or, Why the Worry about Warrant Will Not Wane." *Education and Urban Society* 20: 9-24.

Lather, Patti. 1986. "Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research: Between a Rock and a Soft Place." *Interchange* 17 (4): 63-84.

Wolcott, Harry F. 1990. "On Seeking – And Rejecting – Validity in Qualitative Research." Pp. 121-52 in Elliot W. Eisner and Alan Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: The Continuing Debate*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Due: Validity memo

Lab: Evaluate Eckel, Peter D. 2000. "The Role of Shared Governance in Institutional Hard Decisions: Enabler or Antagonist?" *Review of Higher Education* 24: 15-39.

### **September 28 & 29: Interviewing: Part One**

Merriam, 5  
Weiss, 1-5

Due: Topic memo  
Lab: Group work on interview protocols

### **October 5 & 6: Interviewing: Part Deux**

Hammer, Dean and Aaron Wildavsky. 1993. "The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview." Pp. 57-101 in Aaron Wildavsky, *Craftways: On the Organization of Scholarly Work*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Snow, David, et al. 1982. "Interviewing by Comment." *Qualitative Sociology* 5: 285-311.

Peshkin, Alan. 1988. "In Search of Subjectivity – One's Own." *Educational Researcher* 17: 17-21.

Lab: Interviewing with notes

### **October 12 & 13: Experiences in the Field**

Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22: 267-294.

Lareau, Annette. 1989. "Common Problems in Fieldwork: A Personal Essay." Pp. 187-223 in *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*. New York: Routledge.

Vaughan, Diane. 2004. "Theorizing Disaster: Analogy, Historical Ethnography, and the Challenger Incident." *Ethnography* 5: 313-45.

Due: One interview, notes & transcript

Lab: Interview transcript analysis

### **October 19: Codes & Coding**

Merriam, 8

Strauss & Corbin, chapters 8-12 [consider reading twice], 15

Hahn, Christopher. 2008. "Level 1 Coding" and "Level 2 Coding: Excel." Pp. 86-110 and 146-163 in *Doing Qualitative Research Using Your Computer: A Practical Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

If you would like to read examples of how to develop coding schemes:

Harry, Beth, Keith M. Sturges, and Janette K. Klingner. 2005. "Mapping the Process: An Exemplar of Process and Challenge in Grounded Theory Analysis." *Educational Researcher* 34(2): 3-13.

Weston, Cynthia, et al. 2001. "Analyzing Interview Data: The Development and Evolution of a Coding System." *Qualitative Sociology* 24: 381-400.

Lab: Coding exercise ("College for All?")

### **October 26 & 27: Issues in Data Collection**

Merriam, 7

Strauss & Corbin, 6-7

Morgan, David L. 1997. Ch. 1-2 in *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Emerson, Robert M. and Melvin Pollner. 1988. "On the Uses of Members' Responses to Researchers' Accounts." *Human Organization* 47: 189-198.

Mathison, Sandra. 1988. "Why Triangulate?" *Educational Researcher* 17(2): 13-17.

Due: One interview transcript with emergent codes

Lab: Coding peer feedback

### **November 2 & 3: Observations**

Merriam, 6

Adler, Patricia A. & Peter Adler. 1998. "Observational Techniques." Pp. 377-392 in Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Emerson, Robert, et al. 1995. "Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk" and "Writing Up Fieldnotes 2: Creating Scenes on the Page." Pp. 39-107 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fine, Gary Alan. 2003. "Towards A Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life." *Ethnography* 4: 41-60.

Lab: Field Trip

### **November 9 & 10: What Does It Mean to Construct A Theory? A Festival of (K)notes**

Sutton, Robert I. and Barry M. Staw. 1995. "What Theory is *Not*." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40: 371-384.

DiMaggio, Paul J. 1995. "Comments on 'What Theory is *Not*.'" *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40: 391-397.

Weick, Karl. 1989. "Theory Construction as Disciplined Imagination." *Academy of Management Review* 14: 516-531.

Suddaby, Roy. 2006. "What Grounded Theory Is Not." *Academy of Management Journal* 49: 633-42.

Eisenhart, Kathleen M., and Melissa E. Graebner. 2007. "Theory Building from Case Studies: Opportunities and Challenges." *Academy of Management Journal* 50: 25-32.

Due: Observation Memo  
Lab: Peer debriefing: Codes

### **November 30 & December 1: Analytic Techniques & Writing**

Merriam, 10, Appendix  
Weiss, 7  
Strauss & Corbin, 15

Erikson, Kai. 1989. "On Sociological Prose." *Yale Review* 78 (1): 525-538.

Pratt, Michael G. 2009. "For the Lack of a Boilerplate: Tips on Writing Up (and Reviewing) Qualitative Research." *Academy of Management Journal* 52: 856-862.

Due: Sample write-up of one theme  
Lab: Peer debriefing of written samples

### **December 7: What Is Excellence in Qualitative Research?**

Golden-Biddle, Karen and Karen Locke. 1993. "Appealing Work: An Investigation of How Ethnographic Texts Convince." *Organization Studies* 4: 595-616.

Chambliss, Daniel F. 1988. "The Mundanity of Excellence: An Ethnographic Report on Stratification and Olympic Swimmers." *Sociological Theory* 7: 70-87.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67: 747-776.

Hallett, Tim. 2010. "The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School." *American Sociological Review* 75:1-22.

**Final Paper due Friday, December 16th, 5pm.**  
**Reflection Memo due Wednesday, December 21st, 5pm.**

## **Solving Problems**

*Archival research.* Gallo, Jason. 2009. "Doing Archival Research: How to Find a Needle in a Haystack." Pp. 262-285 in *Research Confidential: Solutions to Problems Most Social Scientists Pretend They Never Have*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

*Conference proposals.* Smith, M. Cecil and Russell N. Carney. 1999. "Strategies for Writing Successful AERA Proposals." *Educational Researcher* 28 (1): 42-45.

*Constructing interesting theories.* Davis, Murray S. 1971. "That's Interesting! Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 1: 309-344.

*Content analysis.* Altheide, David L. 1987. "Ethnographic Content Analysis." *Qualitative Sociology* 10: 65-77.

*Discourse analysis.* Taylor, Stephanie. 2001. "Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytic Research." Pp. 5-48 in Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

*Dissertation proposals.* Kilbourn, Brent. 2006. "The Qualitative Doctoral Dissertation Proposal." *Teachers College Record* 108: 529-76.

*Elites.* Odendahl, Teresa, and Aileen Shaw. 2002. "Interviewing Elites." Pp. 299-316 in Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*Extended cases.* Burowoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16: 4-33.

*Hearsay ethnography.* Watkins, Susan Cotts and Ann Swidler. 2009. "Hearsay Ethnography: Conversational Journals as Method for Studying Culture in Action." *Poetics* 37: 162-184.

*Historical methods.* Howell, Martha C. and Walter Prevenier. 2001. "B. Source Criticism: The Great Tradition" and "Historical Interpretation: The Traditional Basics." Pp. 60-68 (NOT 43-59) & 69-87 in *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

*Historical sociology.* Bonnell, Victoria. 1980. "The Use of Theory, Concepts, and Comparison in Historical Sociology." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22(2): 155-173.

*Interracial interactions.* Young, Alford A., Jr. 2004. "Experiences in Ethnographic Interviewing About Race." Pp. 187-202 in *Researching Race and Racism*, ed. Martin



Blumer and John Solomos. New York: Routledge; Dunbar, Christopher, Jr., Dalia Rodriguez, and Laurence Parker. 2002. Race, Subjectivity, and the Interview Process, Ch. 14 in Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*IRB*. Lincoln, Yvonna S. and William Tierney. 2004. "Qualitative Research and Institutional Review Boards." *Qualitative Inquiry* 10: 261-280.

*Language translation*. Temple, Bogusia and Alys Young. 2004. "Qualitative Research and Translation Dilemmas." *Qualitative Research* 4: 161-178.

*Mixed methods*. Johnson, R. Burke, and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie. 2004. "Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come." *Educational Researcher* 33(7): 27-31.

*Multi-site work*. Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There... and There... and There! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography* 4(2): 201-216.

*Normative case studies*. Thacher, David. 2006. "The Normative Case Study." *American Journal of Sociology* 111: 1631-1676.

*Numbers*. Maxwell, Joseph A. 2010. "Using Numbers in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16: 475-82.

*Overcoming reluctance*. Adler, Patricia and Peter Adler. 2001. "The Reluctant Respondent." Pp. 515-535 in *The Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Peer debriefing*. Spall, Sharon. 1998. "Peer Debriefing in Qualitative Research: Emerging Operational Models." *Qualitative Inquiry* 4: 280-292.

*Publishing standards*. Moss, Pamela A., et al. 2006. "Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications." *Educational Researcher* 35 (6): 33-40.

*Revisiting case sites*. Burawoy, Michael. 2003. "Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography." *American Sociological Review* 68(5): 645-79.

*Snowball sampling*. Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral." *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2): 141-163.

*Telephone interviewing*. Groves, Robert M. 1990. "Theories and Methods of Telephone Surveys." *Annual Review of Sociology* 16: 221-240; Shuy, Roger W. 2001. "In Person versus Telephone Interviewing." Pp. 537-555 in *The Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Theoretical mechanisms.* Hedström, Peter, and Richard Swedberg. 1998. "Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay." Pp. 1-31 in *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Whiteness.* Gallagher, Charles. 2000. "White Like Me? Methods, Meaning, and Manipulation in the Field of White Studies." Pp. 67-92 in France Twine and Jonathan Warren (Eds.), *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*. New York: New York University Press.

Revised: July 12, 2011