

COM 609: ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS
HUGH DOWNS SCHOOL OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
Fall, 2014: Class # 89157
Thursdays, 6:00 pm – 8:45 pm
Tempe, STAUF A13

Professor:

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm, and by appointment. Please contact the professor to schedule an appointment outside of regular office hours. You may always send a text message to me with quick questions and important information, but please remember to identify yourself in the text if it is the first time you have sent a text for this class.

Nature of the Course:

This course assumes that you have had prior basic instruction and experience with qualitative research methods and is not a fundamental “how-to” course in qualitative research methods. Rather, you, the students, will have the opportunity to work on a research project of your choice, as a means to apply, reflect, and develop strong methodological skills and the capacity to provide rich accountability and to critique both your work and the work of others. Some students may wish to use the course to make progress on their dissertation or thesis research, others may have independent research projects which they wish to use for the purposes of the class, while others may wish to begin a new study for the purposes of the class. The research which is selected for the class must be selected, with student commitment, by the third class meeting. As the course progresses, we will be exploring methodological and meta-theoretical issues and applications that help with the gathering, analysis, and reporting of qualitative data related to your study. All students will be required to discuss and share details about their research throughout the course, with fellow class members, to the entire class, and to the

professor. This provides practice in discussing one's research in a knowledgeable and professional manner to demonstrate serious engagement with his/her work, and the ability to communicate one's research to a variety of audiences in a variety of contexts. Furthermore, students will spend time considering the nature of their methodological "family tree" and legacy. Rather than being a course in "doing methods," it is a course in gaining the awareness and capacity to understand how the way one "does methods" is related to the nature of his/her strength and awareness of him/herself as a methodologist. While we are focusing on methodology, the course *will* require and dedicate time to particular methods and forms of analysis and recording, reporting, and sharing one's research. We will discuss contemporary trends in research, and students will be responsible for developing an individual, independent habit of seeking, reading, and critiquing qualitative research related to their chosen methodologies and research areas. The course will utilize a responsive, emergent approach to scheduling the specific readings and class activities around a general structure for the class. This will enable your research and the issues and needs arising from your work and discoveries to influence the nature of our activities without causing a distorted sense of "disruption" in the class. Evaluation of students will be based on participative attendance, completion of course assignments as required, and a variety of objective and subjective/reflexive markers utilized to reflect aspects of qualitative research design and process. The successful student should feel comfortable discussing his/her research professionally, with depth, openness, and substance, to academic peers, colleagues, and to non-academic individuals for whom the research is relevant or useful.

Course Texts:

Required:

Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research by Patricia Leavy

Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2014

This text will be used to focus our topical readings in a convenient manner. The book was ordered as the paperback, but it appears that the university ordered the hardback, which is exceptionally expensive. But we will be reading a large portion of the book, and for serious scholars who use qualitative research methods, it will provide a foundation for future work.

Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research by Alecia Y. Jackson & Lisa A. Mazzei

Publisher: Routledge, 2012

While our class is not a theory class, it is vital for us to learn how to apply the fundamentals of social theory to our qualitative research, and to get practice shifting our lenses and capacities for analysis of our data and ideas. This is vital for scholars able to discuss the relevance of their work with individuals who may base their analyses in different theoretical assumptions. It also assists in

identifying when and/or how a social-scientific theory grounded or used for analysis of qualitative research is itself theoretically grounded at a deeper meta-theoretical level.

Grounded Theory: The Philosophy, Method, and Work of Barney Glaser, edited by Vivian B. Martin & Astrid Gynnild

Publisher: Brown Walker Press, 2011

In 1967, a groundbreaking work was published by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. The ideas that they shared with the social scientific and academic world were strongly rooted in ideas of phenomenological and symbolic interactionist theories, and responded to the constraints of norms for social scientific, post-positivist methodologies, designs, and theory construction. Their work provided a powerful launching pad for much of the contemporary corpus of qualitative research methods of data gathering, analysis and reporting. As such, it is vital for any serious qualitative methodologist to get a firm comprehension of just how the methods s/he uses are rooted in methods and assumptions from these early works. This book explores the applications in various methodologies, and will be very useful to all qualitative researchers, regardless of the actual “groundedness” of one’s research.

Recommended:

Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, by Johnny Saldaña

Publisher: Sage, 2013 (2nd edition)

Saldaña has provided for us a rich handbook of sorts of an array of coding methods that can be used when analyzing qualitative data. It is easy to lose sight that methods of coding are largely the creation of the researchers who have analyzed their own data and discovered ways to make sense of it. Saldaña has synthesized not only the methods, but the legacy and uses of scores of coding methods. We will use and discuss the applications, uses, and value of these and other forms of coding.

Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice, by Patricia Leavy

Publisher: Guilford, 2009 (1st edition)

Leavy is perhaps the foremost and most deliberate, published methodologist in arts-based research which does not emphasize solely one type of artistic research. Too often, when taking the “impressionistic” (Van Maanen) or autoethnographic turn in one’s research, the use of artistic forms of representation has been implied to mean that the standards for accountability are somewhat washed out or minimized. Leavy provides a strong base for those who choose to make such representational turns in their qualitative research, as well as those who critique or review it.

Additional Texts:

There will be an ongoing reading list and list of suggested resources in qualitative research to be provided on the Blackboard site. It will use the above format to provide an annotated reference list of methods and methodology resources, and all students will be asked to add to it books with which they have strong familiarity or experience as part of the course assignments.

Assignments

Methodological Class Activities--15 pts.: There will be a variety non-graded, but “credited” class activities. These will be marked with a \checkmark , $\checkmark+$, or $\checkmark-$ as an indicator of the student’s engagement and demonstration of serious involvement, even when activities are “playful” or more social in nature. The typical mark for students will be \checkmark . A mark of $\checkmark-$ should be an indicator of major concern only if it is a regular mark. In all cases the $\checkmark-$ mark on an assignment will indicate such things as serious lack of participation without an effort to engage, dominating or silencing others, or such things as leaving the classroom, taking phone calls, checking Facebook, etc. Each methodological class activity will get a number of points towards a cumulative total that will be used to compute a total of 15 pts. of the course grade. These activities include class exercises, informal presentations of discussions and one’s work, written in-class work, etc.

Qualitative Family Tree-20 pts.: Each student will construct a diagram of his/her qualitative “ancestors” and lineage, as well as description of one’s legacy, actual or envisioned.

Suggested Qualitative Research Sources—25 pts.: Annotated References: Each student will be required to provide five (5) such references of significant books or research articles that contribute to the knowledge or practice of qualitative research methods. There can be no duplication, so in cases where students wish to write about the same book, the professor will ‘draw’. These must be books and articles that the student has actually read and used in his research and/or learning about qualitative research methods. This is not a place to “review” the text, but to provide helpful annotation that explains how it can be of benefit or use to a qualitative researcher, with insight garnered from the student’s experience with it. These annotations will be due by the fifth (5th) week of class, and the works desired by each student should be presented in class on the third (3rd) meeting. (It might be wise to have more than five options, in the event that there are “draws” on popular or frequently used books.) . More formal instruction will be provided.

Emphasis Assignments (Due separately)

Method Meets Art--25 pts: Each student will select one form of arts-based research practice discussed by Leavy and create it. Students may choose to work with another student in the class on this assignment, and students may use previous and collaborative research to complete this assignment—options may be discussed and negotiated with the professor.

Thinking with Theory—25 points: Students will work in assigned groups to present a theoretical analysis of their research projects, with an emphasis on the theoretical

significance of their analysis and observations. A fifteen-minute PowerPoint presentation with handouts will be done by each group, in “conference” format, and questions/answers will follow.

Coding Review—25 points: Students will work in assigned groups to write a review of the coding methods that their group members have used in their research, utilizing Saldaña and other sources as desired (including but not limited to course readings) to describe and discuss the advantages, disadvantages, strengths, weaknesses, etc., of the various methods used.

Demonstration of Methodological Expertise (Set: 105 pts—Due together and may be integrated.)

Research Design Diagram and Synthesis—25 pts. This assignment will be discussed and described in class, but will require the explication and illustration of the qualitative research design of the study the student selects for emphasis in this class, rationale, and cross-referencing of analogues.

Reflexive Critique of Self as Qualitative Researcher—20 pts. Given the parameters and concepts covered in the course, each student will write a reflexive critique of him/herself as a qualitative researcher, based on assignment to be provided.

Methods Applications-30 pts.: Each student is expected to apply specific and appropriate qualitative methods in the ongoing practice required for his/her selected study. This assignment requires that the student demonstrate competent application and use of the methods, as well as the ability to discuss them with the class when called upon to do so, and finally, to write a summary of the methodology and methods used. This includes the collection (field work, interviews, etc.), organization, and preliminary phases of coding of one’s work.

Analyses of One’s Qualitative Research Data-30 pts.: Each student will write an analytic report of his/her research *at the status of the study at the point in the class when the assignment is done*. Beyond a report of one’s methodological analysis, which is vital to this assignment, it is also an integration of one’s *memos* and supporting literature as relevant and necessary to one’s study.

Accountability Trails:

Each assignment assumes that accountability will be practiced, meaning that all necessary documentation, demonstration of exemplars and data, documents, etc., accompanies the assignment turned in. These must not be necessarily integrated into the work graded, but may be a separate appendix or portfolio, but are vital aspects of the evaluation of the assignment. Failure to turn in the evidence of the “accountability trail” will result in a 50%

reduction in the grade. The accountability trail will be used in tandem with one's written work to determine the grade for each assignment.

Excellence in clarity of one's accountability trail may result in 'bonus' points for the assignment, at the professor's discretion. Bonus points are not to be expected. Excellence should be your goal, regardless of the bonus points possible!

Grading

There are a total of 240 points possible for class assignments. Grades will be assigned according to the following scheme:

240 points: A+
≥ 228 and < 240 = A
≥ 216 and < 228 = A-
≥ 211 and < 216 = B+
≥ 204 and < 211 = B
≥ 192 and < 204 = B-
≥ 187 and < 192 = C+
≥ 180 and < 187 = C
≥ 168 and < 180 = C-
≥ 144 and < 168 = D
≥ 0 and < 144 = E

Ethical Standards and Grading

Students are expected to adhere to the university's code of conduct for students, available at <https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct>. All students should adhere to standards for ethical citation and use of the work of others, *including* personal conversations with others during which you obtain information, language, or ideas that you will use when writing. Failure to cite such interactions, and all quotes or ideas that are not your own is an act of plagiarism and can result in your failure of this class and further disciplinary action in the university, including possible expulsion from the university. Please do not be careless or opportunistic in your use of the work of others. Get in the habit of asking experts with whom you discuss your research how they wish to be referenced when you discuss your work with them and gain their assistance and advice. This includes all advice and suggestions from the professor of this class that results in substantive contributions and conceptual material you would not have been able to include in your work without the specific articulations, language and quotable suggestions provided.

Furthermore, as each student is conducting research as a graduate student in a graduate program at ASU, each student should adhere to the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Assurance, which requires the protection of human subjects. Your graduate advisor for your program is responsible for submitting, with you, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval application, to obtain approval for your research. Both you and your advisor should complete the CITI training designed specifically by ASU, and which will certify you for the conduct of research with human subjects. The links for both the Code of Conduct and Ethics, and the CITI training and test are located online at <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/code-conduct>

Each student will be required to submit proof that his/her research has met such standards, or, if conducting a new study for the purposes of the class, is in the process of obtaining such research. If you plan to publish or present your work, and you will be observing or interviewing human participants in your research (or have done so), you *must* have the IRB approval to meet federal requirement for institutional review of your research. Your graduate advisor is considered your research supervisor for your dissertation and thesis research. If you are going to conduct further research for a project under his/her supervision during this class, you *must* submit a copy of the IRB approval to the professor, so that you do not violate the guidelines for what was approved.