

## **EPS 586: Introduction to Qualitative Research**

**Fall 2010**  
**403 Rackley Building**  
**Wednesdays 11:15 – 2:15**

### **Instructors:**

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### **Overview and Objectives**

This introductory course is designed for persons who wish to gain a general understanding of qualitative research and for those who desire to conduct studies using qualitative methods. For the latter group, this should be the first of at least two courses. Our goal is to facilitate better understandings of the following questions:

1. What is qualitative research?
2. What constitutes quality qualitative research?
3. What are the tools/methods of a qualitative researcher?
4. What can be considered a viable, appropriate qualitative inquiry?

### **Required Texts**

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. B. & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

(Additional readings on ANGEL, as assigned)

## Required Equipment and Materials

You will need a reliable tape recorder/digital recorder and, if the former, a supply of audiotapes. You will also need access to a PC. Transcription machines will be made available in HIED library. Transcription software can also be downloaded at no cost at Express Scribe:

<http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/>.

You will need to develop a system to organize and store data. We suggest three-ring binders, crates that can hold hanging files, or you may wish to purchase qualitative software (N-Vivo, N6). You will also be responsible for providing a token of thanks to persons you interview. This should cost you no more than \$10 in total.

## Our Topic

In order to build a research community we have decided to focus the exercises and activities of this class around a common theme. This theme is both broad and relevant to the environment in which we live and study. It is

*We Are.....*

## Major Assignments:

1. **Reflective Journals/Memos.** These are one-page (300-500 words, single-spaced) “think-pieces” in which you reflect upon your readings OR one-page summaries/reflections on data collection events (we will be referring to these as “memos”). Topics will be specifically assigned (see schedule) and you should submit your entry electronically by noon on Monday. You will receive a response to your entry electronically by one of the instructors by 8 a.m. on Wednesday. If your submission does not meet expectations you will receive an “R” and will be allowed to take up to 24 hours to “resubmit.” Points will be awarded commensurate with the quality and timeliness of the submission.

**Please be sure you review your submission and response before our Wednesday class and BRING A COPY TO CLASS (a copy that contains the instructor’s responses) so that you are able to discuss and/or expand upon it during our “issues” section.**

2. **Position Papers.** During our first class you will be asked to devote about 30 minutes to “think on paper” about your ideas, understandings, questions, concerns, biases, etc. about QUALITATIVE RESEARCH. On December 1<sup>st</sup> you will resubmit a reconsidered/revised version of this paper. We will give you various ways in which you may construct these revisions. Papers will include a

list of references. **PLEASE NOTE:** you may wish to work on this exercise/“paper” throughout the semester.

3. **Exercises/Activities.** See schedule and weekly “clarification” on ANGEL.
4. **Reading Research.** A major portion of our course readings will draw on published research that draws on different qualitative traditions. You will be given a list of these readings and, in groups of three (organized between sections), you will be responsible for leading a class discussion and preparing a class activity that helps us to USE the reading to understand particular aspects of qualitative research methodology and design. This task will be demonstrated/modeled for you twice at the start of the semester by each instructor. We also invite/strongly encourage at least one member of the presenting group to meet with us (the instructors) during our weekly planning meeting for the class (Tuesdays from 11-12). Finally, your group should locate in the published article five (5) terms or concepts related to qualitative research. These will be posted on our ANGEL site in a GLOSSARY and will include: a) the excerpt of text from which the term/concept was drawn; b) an in-your-own-words definition of the term/concept.
5. **A Qualitative Research Pilot Project.** In groups of 4-5 students (within sections), you will design and write up a plan (that will look something like a proposal) for a pilot study that is qualitative in its methodology and orientation. This project will use data collected during the semester and will include a brief review of literature on *your* version of *our* topic. During our final session, pilot projects will be presented and displayed in “poster” format. Criteria for evaluation of this project will be determined by the class, and rubrics will be created for both peer and instructor evaluation.
6. **Quizzes.** The currency of qualitative research is LANGUAGE. Mastery of the methodology is, in part, evidenced by the words you use to talk about research. We will be on the lookout for examples of this development in your talk and your written work. We also are designing a way to assess this development more directly. Twice during the semester, we will administer short quizzes on our growing glossary (see Reading Research) on ANGEL.

### **A Word on Groups**

Doing qualitative research depends on other people (whether actual or virtual). In addition, the validation processes related to qualitative traditions turn on the idea of consensus. Hence, the collective is an important aspect of the methodology. We will be doing in-class group work during every session. By Class 5 (Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>) you will be required to form, enlist in, or be assigned to a permanent group. As you probably know, this class is one of the EPS department’s “cross listed” classes. We value the academic diversity afforded by these classes. We also value the demographic diversity of our department. In forming groups, we trust that you will draw upon this asset.

### Typical Class Schedule

Issues: 15-20 minutes  
 Reading Research: 30 minutes  
 Topic: 30 minutes  
 Break: 10-15 minutes  
 Exercises/Group Work: 60 minutes  
 Debrief/wrap-up: 30 minutes

### Grading & Evaluation

The following point system will be used for grading purposes:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Journal/memos (10 entries)	<b>20</b>	
Position Papers (2 submissions)	<b>10</b>	Paper 1 = 2 Paper 1, revised = 8
Exercises/datasets (~ 8 submissions)	<b>30</b>	exercises weighted differently
Reading Research Presentation	<b>10</b>	class presentation = 8 glossary terms = 2
Qualitative Research Pilot Project	<b>20</b>	peer evaluation = 5 instructor evaluation = 5
Quizzes (2 quizzes)	<b>10</b>	5 points each
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

All assignments are due on the date indicated on this course outline. Journal entries will not be accepted after the day/time due. If lateness is anticipated regarding other assignments, please negotiate with your section instructor.

#### *Points/grade equivalents:*

<b>A</b>	=	96-100 points
<b>A-</b>	=	90-95 points
<b>B+</b>	=	87-89 points
<b>B</b>	=	83-86 points
<b>B-</b>	=	80-82 points
<b>C+</b>	=	77-79 points
<b>C</b>	=	73-76
<b>D</b>	=	65-72

## About Assignments and Workload

We have noted assignments in their short forms on the class schedule (to follow). We will also take time during our break-out sessions (debriefing) to describe these in more detail. Finally, each week we will make available on ANGEL a written “clarification” for each assignment. This course is primarily a “workshop” course and, as such, requires up to 3 hours outside of class for each hour spent in class. In other words, you should expect to spend about 9 hours per week (or one graduate student day) completing assignments. In our clarification section, we will approximate how long we think an assignment should take. We also suggest that you keep a LOG of your research activities outside of class. Note that the data collection for your pilot project will require access to settings and persons. The sooner you can form a group and decide on a general area in which your inquiry can begin, the fewer logistical and temporal obstacles you will encounter. We will be talking about possible sub-topics during the first few weeks of class and will help you think about how to “enter the field.”

## Statement of Compliance with ADA

In order to address the special request to facilitate learning of any students with disabilities, including those with hearing and sight loss, it is necessary for those students to inform the course instructor who will bring these requests to the attention of the Administrative Assistant.

## ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS & REQUESTS

Attendance/Lateness: We expect everyone to be at every class meeting. We realize that sometimes an absence is unavoidable, but barring extenuating and unavoidable circumstances, we expect everyone to attend each class. Coming to class late is a distraction to everyone. Again, we understand that there are sometimes extenuating and unavoidable circumstances, and we would rather have a student arrive late than not at all. However, please make *every effort* to be in class on time.

Classroom Distractions: Please turn off and put away cell phones during class time unless due to circumstances beyond your control you *must* have a cell phone on (if this is the case, turn off the ringer and turn on the buzzer. In addition, please inform one of the instructors that you need to have your phone available because of an emergency situation). Please wait until the break or the end of class to check messages, text, and so forth. Likewise, we don't *prefer* people to have open laptops in class for a graduate seminar. We would rather have class participants focused on each other than on their laptop screens, although this is something we can discuss if you feel strongly about it.

Assignment Deadlines: We don't have an explicit policy regarding the late submission assignments, but we do expect assignments to be turned in on time (reflective journals/memos, however, will not be accepted late. This is because they are integral to the "issues" segment of each class). Please make every effort to get ALL assignments in on time. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, please let us know in advance and we will make alternate arrangements.

Preparation: Come to class having read, taken notes on and thought carefully about the assigned readings. The discussion format of the class makes this essential. The syllabus is flexible and we can and should make adjustments as the class sees fit.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. See Policy 49-20 at <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/>

## Schedule, Topics, Readings, Activities

	TOPIC	READING	ACTIVITY/ASSIGNMENT DUE
<b>Aug. 25</b> <b>(Class 1)</b>	Introduction: Positions & Perspectives (Dorie)	n/a	
<b>Sept. 1</b> <b>(Class 2)</b>	Where we come from: Historical roots/philosophies that inform QIR “the interpretive turn” (Dorie)	B&B: Chapter 1 RR: Merriam: Chap. 4 +	MEMO #1: <u>Your</u> question (of the 11) OR a 12 <sup>th</sup> question.
<b>Sept. 8</b> <b>(Class 3)</b>	Where do studies come from? Of passion and pragmatics and Getting Started (Kai) <b>SIGN-UP FOR RR (btw)</b>	B&B: Chap. 2 – 54-59 – basic design and choosing a study Maxwell Chaps. 1 & 2: design and goals Merriam 1&2 – RR: Merriam: 15	MEMO #2: Researcher Identity Memo Maxwell: Ex. 2.1
<b>Sept. 15</b> <b>(Class 4)</b>	Conceptual Frameworks: What’s experience/theory/previous research/your own theorizing got to do with it? (Dorie)	B&B – pp. 64-66; 133-151 (on documents, etc.) Maxwell Chap. 3 – Conceptual Frameworks RR: Merriam: Chap. 17	ACTIVITY D1: documents (2) + document summary sheets MEMO #3: Where might these lead me?
<b>Sept. 22</b> <b>(Class 5)</b>	Observation & Fieldwork (Kai) <b>FORM GROUPS (w/i)</b>	B&B, Chap 3 pp. 82-102: Doing fieldwork – access and other issues; Chap. 4 Obs. and fieldnotes, pp. 117-129; App. A & B RR: Merriam: Chap. 10	ACTIVITY O1: 10-minute sketches MEMO #4: Issues re: observation
<b>Sept. 29</b> <b>(Class 6)</b>	Ethnography (Dorie)	B&B, Ethics, revisit Chap. 1 Fetterman – on ANGEL RR: Merriam: Chap. 12	ACTIVITY O2: Shadowing activity (DUE IN TWO WEEKS - Oct. 8 <sup>th</sup> ) w. MEMO #5  VISIT PSU Office of Research Protection AND Code of Ethics for <u>one</u> professional org. TAKE PSU “TEST” Send “certificate”
<b>Oct. 6</b> <b>(Class 7)</b>	Interviewing (Dorie) <b>O2 (SHADOWING DATASET) DUE</b>	B&B – Chap. 3, 103- 116 – Interviewing; Chap. 4, 129-133 RR: Merriam: Chap. 3	Finalize fieldnotes MEMO #6: If I could ask....

<b>Oct. 13 (Class 8)</b>	Phenomenology (Dorie)	Kvale: Chap. 7 & 8 (ANGEL) Merriam: Chap. 5	ACTIVITY: planning for first interview – open-ended – MEMO #7 on logistics of getting an interviewee
<b>Oct. 20 (Class 9)</b>	INTERVIEWS: Closer looks (Kai) <b>INTERVIEW #1 DUE</b>	Maxwell: Chaps. 4 & 5 Merriam: Chap. 6	Conduct Interview 1 Record & transcribe MEMO #8
<b>Oct. 27 (Class 10)</b>	Grounded Theory (Dorie)	Merriam: Chap. 8	MEMO #9 – Int. #1 – click and clunk
<b>Nov. 3 (Class 11)</b>	Design Revisited (Kai)	Evensen, Salisbury, Glenn (2001) (ANGEL)	Conduct Follow-up Interview Record & transcribe MEMO #10
<b>Nov. 10 (Class 12)</b>	Qualitative research for what? Evaluation/policy studies (Kai)	Prins & Schafft (2009) B&B – Chap. 2 pp. 59-76	Work on group project – Two add'l. datasets due from each member
<b>Nov. 17 (Class 13)</b>	Of inquiries, projects, and proposals <b>TWO DATASETS DUE</b>	B&B: Chap. 7 Kornhaber: Enhancing equity in gifted education: A framework for examining assessments.	½ day in the library
<b>Dec. 1 (Class 14)</b>	NO CLASS MEETING Group Conferences <b>Position Paper 2 DUE</b>	B&B: Chap. 2, pp. 76-81 Maxwell: Chap. 7 and Appendix	
<b>Dec. 8 (Class 15)</b>	POSTER SESSION Moving out/moving on (last class meeting)		
<b>Dec. 15</b>	<b>Pilot Project Write-up DUE</b>		