



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

National Catholic School of Social Service

Washington, DC 20064

202-319-5458

Fax 202-319-5093

SSS 955

ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Susanne Bennett, PhD

(3 Credits)

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I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course explores critical issues in qualitative research methods at an advanced level, including the philosophical underpinnings, ethical and socio-cultural considerations, and value stances of the methodologies. Focus is placed on connecting the epistemology of knowledge with methods, with the recognition that different research questions require different methods of appropriate research and emerge from different ways of knowing. The course includes an emphasis on issues of special challenge to qualitative research, such as the selection of participants, the development of rapport in the field, and the establishment of rigor and quality within data analysis. While recognizing that there are numerous methodologies within qualitative research, this course provides an in-depth exploration of conceptually different methods, with an emphasis on the application and critique of these methods. In addition, the course introduces the student to the use of computer software for managing the data, analysis, and presentation of qualitative findings. Course format consists of lecture, seminar discussion, and computer lab.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of their course participation, students will accomplish the following core objectives:

1. Develop knowledge in the philosophy, values, and ethical considerations unique to qualitative research.

2. Develop an increased understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in research observation and interviewing, with a particular focus on socio-cultural considerations and the researcher's unique instrumental role.
3. Understand and distinguish between the research methodologies used in grounded theory research, narrative research, and participatory action research.
4. Develop an appreciation of the usefulness of qualitative methods for research evolving from both macro and clinical social work orientations.
5. Demonstrate skill in the methods and the technology of qualitative data collection, including the use of documents as data sources and the use of QDA computer software in data analysis.
6. Examine and critique the relevance, quality, and rigor of selected qualitative methods for the study of specific social work problems.
7. Understand variations in the presentation and interpretation of findings for different qualitative research approaches.
8. Gain experience in conducting some form of qualitative research.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Required Texts (copies of all texts are on reserve in the library and additional readings are on blackboard)

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publication. ("Charmaz, [Text]" in syllabus)

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *The basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Corbin & Strauss [Text] in syllabus)

Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications. ("Grbich, [Text]" in syllabus)

Padgett, D. K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. ("Padgett, [Text]" in syllabus)

Padgett, D. K. (Ed.). (2004). *The qualitative research experience*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ("Padgett, [Reader]" in syllabus)

B. Recommended Texts

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Tolman, D. L., & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.). (2001). *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods*. New York: New York University Press.

Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press.

C. Other Recommended Resources

<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/web.html> (online journal)

<http://sophia.smith.edu/~jdrisko/index.htm> (webpage with links for qualitative research)

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm> (online journal)

<http://www.atlasti.com/> (webpage for Atlas.ti QDA software company)

D. Course Assignments

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate actively and meaningfully in class discussions. Each student is expected to share current knowledge and relevant experience, as well as analytic and scholarly thinking about the course content. All required readings must be completed *prior* to the class, and students should be prepared to critique the usefulness of these readings for social work research. In the event that it is necessary for a student to miss a class section or to be late, it is expected that the student will notify the instructor *prior* to the class. The following individual assignments will be discussed in class and detailed handouts outlining the requirements will be distributed:

1. Participant observation exercise—due class #4 (10% of final grade)
2. Scholarly paper—60% of *final* grade, divided as follows:
 - a. Intensive interview & transcription—due class #7 (20% of final grade)
 - b. Analysis of transcription using Atlas.ti—due class #10 (15% of final grade)
 - c. Final paper, based on interview & analysis—due class #13 (30% of final grade)

3. Class presentations and class participation—25% of *final* grade, divided as follows:
 - a. Presentation & critique of one research study—dates individually determined (10% of final grade)
 - b. Participation in weekly seminar style discussions of readings—throughout semester (15% of final grade)

E. Grading Policy

Based on the University grading system (see Policy in NCSSS Bulletin), grades for this course will be determined by the extent to which the student meets the course objectives as demonstrated through the assignments and seminar participation.

#1	Participant observation exercise	Due class #4	10%
#2	Scholarly paper	Classes # 7, 10, & 13	60%
#3	Presentations, class participation	Throughout semester	25%

F. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at <http://evaluations.cua.edu/evalutions> using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests. Students and instructor are mutually responsible for ongoing, shared, verbal evaluation of the course in order to meet the learning needs of the students.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA (v. 6 format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. Academic Honesty

Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. Accommodations

Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

Class Schedule

Class 1 INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Themes

- Theoretical and disciplinary origins of qualitative methods
- The place of qualitative research in social work
- The differences between qualitative and quantitative research and qualitative research and clinical/macro practice

Required Readings

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 1-45). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Padgett, D. (1998). Does the glove really fit? Qualitative research and clinical social work practice. *Social Work, 43*(4), 373-381.

Padgett, [Reader], Introduction, Finding a middle ground in qualitative research, pp. 1-18.

Padgett, [Text], Chapters 1-2, Introduction; Choosing the right qualitative approach(es), pp. 1-44.

Recommended Readings

Brun, C. (1997). The process and implications of doing qualitative research: An analysis of 54 doctoral dissertation. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 24*(4), 95-112.

Rabinowitz, V. C., & Weesen, S. (1997). Elu(ci)d(at)ing epistemological impasses: Re-viewing the qualitative/quantitative debates in psychology. *Journal of Social Issues, 53*(4), 605-630.

Class 2 GETTING STARTED

Themes

- Epistemology
- Formulating the questions
- Testing theory or developing theory
- Literature review
- Designing the study
- Sampling

Required Readings

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (2003). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 253-291). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Drisko, J. (2003, January). *Improving sampling strategies and terminology in qualitative research*. Juried paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, Washington, DC.

Grbich, [Text], Part 1, The state of the art, pp. 1-36.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 3, Getting started: Study design and sampling, pp. 45-61.

Recommended Readings

Padgett, [Reader], Part I, Exemplars: Designing an exemplary qualitative study, pp. 19- 121.

Schwandt, T. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.) (pp. 292-331). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Class 3 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AS INSTRUMENT: ETHICAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Themes

- Reflexivity
- Issues of gender, culture, social class, and vulnerable populations
- Informed consent in the “field”
- Confidentiality and loss of privacy

Required Readings

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 7, Feminist research, pp. 95-107.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 11, Ethical issues in qualitative research with high-risk populations: Handle with care, pp. 236-249.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 4, Ethical issues in qualitative research, pp. 63-78.

Recommended Readings

Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten lies of ethnography: Moral dilemmas of field research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3), 267-294.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.) (pp. 398-432). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Class 4

IN THE FIELD

Themes

- Importance of observation
- Recruitment of participants and selection of site
- Theoretical sampling
- Developing rapport and self-disclosure
- Intensive interviewing and focus group interviews
- Using documents and existing data

Required Readings

Padgett, [Text], Chapters 5-6, Entering the field and conducting observation; Interviewing and use of documents, pp. 79-130.

Weiss, R. S. (1994). Respondents: choosing them and recruiting them. In *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies* (pp. 15-59). New York: The Free Press.

Recommended Readings

Weiss, R. S. (1994). Issues in interviewing. In *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies* (pp. 121-150). New York: The Free Press.

Weiss, R. S. (1994). Preparation for interviewing. In *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies* (pp.39-59). New York: The Free Press.

Class 5 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Themes

- Dealing with data volume
- Content and visual analysis
- Moving from codes to themes
- Pros and cons of analysis with qualitative software
- Introduction to ATLAS.ti V5.0 in the doctoral computer lab

Required Readings

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 8, Content analysis of texts: Written/visual documentation, pp. 111-123; Chapter 12; Visual interpretation, pp.155-169; Chapter 17, An overview of qualitative computer programs, pp. 225-235.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 8, Qualitative data analysis software: A user's appraisal, pp. 189-210.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 7, Data analysis and interpretation, pp. 131-177.

Recommended Readings

Muhr, T., & Friese, S. (Eds.). (2004). *ATLAS.ti V5.0: User's guide and reference* (2nd ed.). Berlin: Scientific Software Development. (This guide has been placed on blackboard for review as needed)

Class 6 RIGOR AND QUALITY

Themes

- Trustworthiness and credibility
- Guidelines for enhancing rigor
- Use of mentors and peer debriefing

Required Readings

Anastas, J. (2004). Quality in qualitative evaluation: Issues and possible answers. *Research on Social Work Practice, 14*(1), 57-65.

Drisko, J. (1997). Strengthening qualitative studies and reports: Standards to enhance academic integrity. *Journal of Social Work Education, 33*(1), 185-197.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 9, The role of the mentoring relationship in qualitative research, pp. 211-224.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 10, Peer debriefing and support groups: Formation, care, and maintenance, pp. 225-235.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 8, Strategies for rigor (pp. 179-198).

Recommended Readings

Drisko, J. (1999, January). *Rigor in qualitative research*. Juried paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for Social Work Research, Austin, TX.

Lietz, C., Langer, C., & Furman, R. (2006). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research in social work: Implications from a study regarding spirituality. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(4), 441-458.

Morse, J., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K. & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 1-19.

Classes 7-11 COMPARISON & CRITIQUE OF 3 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES: GROUNDED THEORY, NARRATIVE, AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION

Themes of Classes 7-11

- Epistemology and theoretical underpinnings of each methodology
- Research questions appropriate to each methodology
- Methods of collecting and analyzing data unique to each methodology
- Exemplars of these methodologies

Classes 7-8: GROUNDED THEORY

Required Readings

Charmaz, [Text], Chapters 1-6, pp. 1-150.

Corbin & Strauss, [Text], Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-115.

Recommended Reading

Corbin & Strauss, [Text], Chapters 6-12, pp. 117-274.

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 5, Grounded theory, pp. 70-83.

Classes 9-10: NARRATIVERequired Readings

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 9, Narrative analysis, pp. 124-135.

Mishler, E. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5(2), 87-123.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 2, Narrative analysis: A feminist approach, pp. 48-75.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 12, "Doing" narrative analysis, pp. 250-268.

Recommended Readings

Frank, A. (2002). Why study people's stories? The dialogical ethics of narrative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(1), 1-20.

Murray, M. (2000). Levels of narrative analysis in health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 5(3), 337-347.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Class 11: PARTICIPATORY ACTIONRequired Readings

Chesler, M. S. (1991). Participatory action research with self-help groups: An alternative paradigm for inquiry and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 19, 757-768.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory action research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 567-606). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Padgett, [Reader], Chapter 6, Evaluation research, pp. 147-174.

Recommended Readings

Gibbon, J. (2002). Doing a doctorate using a participatory action research framework in the context of community health. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12, 546-558.

Tolman, D. L., & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.) (2001). *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods*. New York: New York University Press.

Class 12 WRITING UP AND PRESENTING QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Themes

- Aligning interpretive style with epistemology and data
- Organizing report and choosing writing style
- Dissemination of findings

Required Readings

Charmaz, [Text], Chapter 7, Writing the draft, pp. 151-176.

Corbin & Strauss, [Text], Chapter 13, Writing theses, monographs, and giving talks about your research, pp. 275-295.

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 16, Writing up and data display, pp. 205-222.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 9, Telling the story, pp. 199-220.

Class 13 USING MIXED METHODS; CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Themes

- Challenges of combining epistemologies
- When and why mixed methods may be preferable to qual vs. quant

Required Readings

Chamaz, [Text], Chapter 8, Reflecting on the research process, pp. 177-185.

Grbich, [Text], Chapter 15, Incorporating data from multiple sources, pp. 195-204.

Padgett, [Text], Chapter 10, Mixed methods, pp. 221-237.

Recommended Readings

Bryman, A. (2007). Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. *Journal of Mixed Method Research*, 1(1), 8-22.

Morgan, D. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Method Research*, 1(1), 48-76.