I. COURSE PURPOSE

This doctoral level course explores critical issues in specific qualitative research methods at an advanced level, including the philosophical underpinnings, ethical and socio-cultural considerations, and value stances of the methodologies. The course focuses on connecting research questions with different research approaches. While recognizing numerous methodological approaches 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 use of computer software for managing the data, analysis, and presentation of qualitative findings. Course format consists of lecture, seminar discussion, and computer lab.

This course is consistent with the mission of the National Catholic School of Social Service. The complete mission statement can be found at http://ncsss.cua.edu/mission.cfm

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students will accomplish the following core objectives:

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

2. Understand variations in the epistemology, philosophical underpinnings, and presentation and interpretation of findings for different qualitative research approaches.
3. Develop an increased understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in research observation and interviewing, using specific research methods, with a particular focus on socio-cultural considerations and the researcher’s unique instrumental role.

4. Understand and distinguish between the research methodologies used in grounded theory research, narrative research, and phenomenology.

5. Demonstrate skill in the methods of qualitative data collection and the use of computer software in data analysis.

6. Examine and analyze the relevance, quality, and rigor of specific qualitative methods for program evaluation and the study of specific social work problems that evolve from both macro and clinical social work orientations.

7. Gain experience in evaluating and analyzing qualitative research.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Texts


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. Grading Policy and Weights of Assignments
Grades will be based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the Graduate Announcements. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted late. The following provides weights for the various course assignments:

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Grading System

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E. Preparation, Attendance & Participation
Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises and online forums as required.

F. Course and Instructor Evaluation
NCSSS requires written evaluations of doctoral level courses, and students will receive an evaluation form during the last class. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and welcome. 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

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (http://ncsss.cua.edu/courses/index.cfm), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

NCSSS is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members – including students, faculty, administrators, and staff – strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life experiences will arise. It is how
we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

Since this is an advanced doctoral-level course, the format will be participatory and collegial. The instructor’s responsibility will be to guide and facilitate the process and to ensure that class activities support and enrich course content. The student’s will be to come to class prepared to be an active participant by drawing on the week’s readings and relevant experience. Participation is both a method of learning, through engaging in a process of critical thinking, and a demonstration of understanding. Contributing to the learning environment is a course expectation.

A. Scholastic Expectations
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, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. Behavioral Requirements
Students are expected to maintain accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity in the classroom. Students should:
- Attend all classes and contribute constructively to the classroom culture
- Recognize and avoid behavior that jeopardizes the learning/teaching environment of other students or the instructor
- Demonstrate competence in planning academic activities and in following through on those plans
- Reasonably respond to and respect others’ reactions to one’s comments or actions in the classroom
- Use an appropriate level of class time and instructor’s time and attention in and out of class
- Behave in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of the social work profession.

C. 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 (http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm) and appropriate Program Handbooks.

D. Confidentiality
Each student is expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement. This agreement covers “practice materials” in classes, supervisory sessions, case conferences, seminars, and other educational settings within the NCSSS doctoral program. These materials are for professional learning purposes only and are subject to strict professional standards of confidentiality. These same standards of confidentiality also extend to various forms of written communication and peer consultation.

Adherence to these standards means all students refrain from communicating beyond the
classroom setting about practice material that is presented in class. Students will also refrain from using social media outlets (blogs, twitter, Facebook, etc.) or email to discuss practice settings, program responsibilities and projects with individuals who are not in teaching or supervision roles directly related to the situation.

E. 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, you must present that documentation to your instructors and arrange a meeting with as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

F. Use of Electronic Devices
Please **turn off all cell phones** or other devices that would disrupt the learning environment of the classroom.

CLASS SCHEDULE

**Class 1: Introduction to Qualitative Research & Selecting a Method to Meet your Purposes**

*Required readings:*

Creswell, pp. 1-41

Padgett, pp.1-56


**Select 2 of the following articles to read and report on in class:**


**Class 2: Authenticity and trustworthiness in qualitative research**

**Required readings:**


**Recommended readings:**


**Class 3: Data collection: structured to less structured**

**Assignment 1 due**

**Required readings:**

Creswell, pp. 145-178

Padgett, pp.99-139


**Recommended readings:**


**Class 4: Data Collection Part 2**

In this class we will discuss the data collection strategy, interview guide and details regarding your participation in an on-going research study (for Assignment #2)

Readings: TBA

**Session 5: Data Collection Field Work (out of class)**

**Class 6: Data analysis: structured methods with a deductive orientation**

**Required readings:**

Creswell, pp.179-212

Padgett, pp.141-182

**Class 7: Narrative Approach**

**Required readings:**

Creswell, pp. 70-76


**Recommended readings:**


**Class 8: Grounded Theory Approach**

*Required readings:*
Creswell, pp. 83-90


*Recommended readings:*


**Class 9: Coding and Analyzing the Data**

*Required readings:*

Creswell, pp. 179-213

Atlas.ti online tutorial (further explanation given during in class)


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**Class 10: Phenomenological Approach**

*Required readings:*

Creswell, pp. 76-83


**Class 11: Managing and re-presenting the data; evaluating**

*Required readings:*

Gibbs, Chapters 2 & 8


*Recommended readings:*


**Class 12: Writing up Qualitative Findings**

*Required readings:*

Creswell, pp. 213-241

Padgett, pp. 231-253

**Class 13: Challenges and possibilities for the qualitative researcher**

*Required readings:*

Padgett, pp. 255-278


*Recommended readings:*


**Class 14: Synthesis and Conclusions**
Assignment Details

Assignment 1: Reading Reflection (20% of grade)

Please email a brief (5-8 page) reflective response to several of the readings for Sessions 1-3; choose the readings you wish to reflect on, at least one article from each of the three classes. Each journal entry should be a considered response to whichever readings or portions of the readings intrigued you, resonated with you, provoked you, disturbed you, and/or expanded your understanding of qualitative research. Choose wisely. Clearly, you will not be reflecting on every point in every article. Include an integrative note at the end about how the readings, as a group, furthered your growth as a scholar, as well as a list of articles or book chapters cited. The instructor will be looking for critical thinking, engagement with the material, and application to your own practice or research interests.

Assignment 2: Data Collection Interviews & Write up (40% of grade)

| Purpose of the assignment | to experience key components of the qualitative data collection process (gaining entry/engagement, documenting and recording data) |

- Participate in collecting data for an IRB-approved research study as assigned in class. Under the direction of the Principal Investigator, conduct interviews and record data. This assignment will require significant out of classroom time, coordinated with your professor and other research collaborators.
- Following each interview, students will write up the interview exchange following the guidelines outlined by the Principal Investigator
- After each interview the student should will write an entry in a personal reflexivity journal.

Assignment 3: (10% of grade)

| Purpose of the assignment | to reflect on key components of the data collection process (gaining entry/engagement, documenting and recording data) |

- In addition to completing and turning in your interview data, you will complete a 5-10 page reflection paper about this process:
  - Draw from your personal reflexivity journal to reflect on the experience
    - What was surprising about this data collection experience?
    - What was most challenging and/or rewarding?
    - What did you learn about yourself as a researcher that could help you in future endeavors?
    - How would you recommend changes to strengthen this study—research question, data collection plan, selection of participants? How could you strengthen the qualitative aspects of the study?

Attendance and Participation (30% of grade)

Attendance is the bare minimum required and will not result in full points. To earn full points, students will read all of the material prior to class and actively engage in class discussions. Further,
students may be given quizzes in class or small assignments in class that may need to be finished out of class, which will count toward this grade. As part of this participation grade, students will present critiques of qualitative research articles published in social work academic journals.

In classes 6, 12, 13 selected students will present. In class 14 all students will present.

After selecting a qualitative social work research journal article to critique, students should use the following guide to prepare a 15 minute power point presentation (maximum 15 slides---this should be a visual aid, you will cover much more than is listed on the slide):

(1) **Research aims**: Briefly identify: a) the research question, b) the purpose of the research, and c) the likely intended audience. If the answers to any of these questions are not evident in the article, state that.

(2) **Nature of the data**: a) What kind of data were collected, and how was it collected? If individuals were interviewed, how were they recruited and what were the selection criteria? b) Does data collection appear to be thorough? complete? i.e., was theoretical sufficiency achieved? c) Are a range of views or perspectives offered? d) Is any potentially contradictory data mentioned?

(3) **Data analysis**: a) What is the method selected? b) Does the analysis meet all the requirements of the chosen analytic method? d) Do you consider the chosen analytic method to be appropriate to the research question/s and purpose/s? e) Why or why not?

(4) **Trustworthiness and authenticity**: a) Are study limitations and/or potential threats to trustworthiness explicitly stated? b) Is researcher positioning clearly revealed? c) Were actions taken and documented to enhance authenticity of findings (e.g., member checking, seeking alternative interpretations, etc.)? d) Were sufficient data extracts provided to illustrate how codes, themes, or interpretations were arrived at? e) What is your view of the trustworthiness of the findings? How would you suggest enhancing trustworthiness?

(5) **Ethics**: Were there any ethical issues (explicitly identified or implicit) for you, for participants, or for stakeholders? Were you comfortable, overall, with the ethics of this project?

(6) **Evaluation**: Overall, what do you feel were the strengths and limitations of the article? Did findings contribute to professional knowledge?

(7) **Personal experience**: What did you learn about the method the author(s) used that was new or surprising to you? Would you be interested in using this method yourself? Why or why not?