I. COURSE PURPOSE

This is an advanced course in research design and includes an examination of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research designs. The course builds on earlier coursework in theory, research and statistics.

The qualitative portion of this course provides an overview of the philosophical underpinnings, ethical and socio-cultural considerations, and value stances of qualitative methodologies. Focus is placed on connecting the epistemology of knowledge with appropriate methods, with the recognition that different research questions require different methods of research and emerge from different ways of knowing. The course emphasizes issues of special challenge to qualitative researchers, such as the selection of participants, the development of rapport in the field, the investigator’s reflexivity, and the establishment of rigor and quality within data analysis. Students are introduced to qualitative data analysis software and develop skills designing a qualitative study for human subjects review.

The quantitative section of the course provides an overview of deductive derived research designs such as classical experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, survey designs and designs based on secondary data analysis. Emphasis is placed on the role of theory in the development of research designs.
II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand and appreciate the intrinsic relationship between theory and research.

2. Understand the basic logic underlying research design.

3. Acquire knowledge of key issues in research methodology for social work research.

4. Demonstrate knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative research designs in investigating issues of importance to social work.

5. Defend one’s knowledge and ideas about social work research in clear, concise, logical, scholarly fashion.

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

7. 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.

8. Develop an appreciation of the usefulness of qualitative methods for research for both macro and clinical social work practice orientations and questions.

9. Examine and critique the relevance, quality, and rigor of selected qualitative methods and epistemologies for the study of specific social work problems.

10. Gain experience in designing a qualitative research study to be submitted for review by the CUA Internal Review Board for Human Subjects.


12. Recognize the challenges, pros, and cons of mixed method research studies.
13. Understand the appropriate use of experimental, quasi-experimental and survey designs.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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


B. Recommended Texts


C. Course Assignments

See handouts from the individual instructors regarding assignments for the qualitative and quantitative portions of the course.

D. Grading Policy

Grades for the course are based on the University grading system. The grade is based on content (substance, attention to assignment, attention to page limit), writing style, and timely submission (assignments submitted later than the assigned or agreed upon date will be downgraded). See directions in handout of course assignments and in scholarly expectations below for further clarification.

E. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires evaluation of this course and the instructors. At the end of the semester, written evaluation forms will be distributed for you to complete anonymously. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructors during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.
IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to Doctoral Program Handbook (available on the NCSSS web page) 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. It is expected that all assignments will be submitted on the due date. Failure to submit work on time will result in a lowered grade, unless there has been an alternative arrangement with the professor prior to the due date of the assignment.

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 Doctoral Program Handbook.

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 Course

Themes
- Introduction to course and team teaching methods
- Understanding research in the context of “mixed methods”

Readings

Class 2: Historical Overview of Qualitative Research

Themes
- Understanding theoretical and disciplinary origins of qualitative methods
Appreciating the place of qualitative research in clinical and macro social work practice

Readings


Class 3: Getting Started & Designing a Study (Participant observation paper due)

Themes

- Examining existing theory or developing new theory
- Formulating questions, selecting epistemology, & deciding methodology
- Using literature
- Determining sample & sampling techniques

Readings


**Class 4: Role of the researcher as instrument: Reflexivity & Ethical Issues**  
(Research question & outline of research design due)

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

**Readings**


**Class 5: In the Field (Consent form & interview guide due)**

**Themes**
- Importance of observation
- Developing rapport and self-disclosure
- Intensive interviewing and focus group interviews
- Using documents and existing data

**Readings**


**Class 6: Data Management and Analysis (in class exercises)**

**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 V6

Readings
Muhr, T., & Friese, S. (Eds.). (2004). ATLAS.ti V.6: User’s guide and reference (2nd ed.). Berlin: Scientific Software Development. (This guide has been placed on blackboard)


Class 7: Rigor and Quality (Final proposal due; submit to CUA-IRB after approval of professor)

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

Readings


Class 8: Science and the Scientific Approach

Themes
- Science and common sense
- The aims of science, scientific explanation, and theory
- Deductive reasoning
Readings

Kerlinger & Lee Chapters 1.

Class 8: Issues in Research Design

Themes
- Purpose and principles
- Inadequate designs
- Internal and external validity
- Experimental and control groups
- Randomization

Readings

Kerlinger & Lee Chapters 18, 19 and 20.

Class 9: Classical Experimental Designs

Themes
- Components of the classical experimental design
- Factorial designs
- Correlated group designs
- Analysis of covariance designs

Readings

Kerlinger & Lee Chapter 21.

Class 10: Examples of Experimental Designs

Readings


Class 11: Quasi-Experimental Designs

Themes

- Nonequivalent Control Group Design
- No-Treatment Control Group Design
- Time Designs
- Single subject Designs

Readings:

Kerlinger & Lee Chapter 22


Class 12: Non-experimental Research Designs

Themes

- Field experiments
- Field studies
- Survey designs
- Path analytic studies

Readings

Kerlinger & Lee Chapters 23, 24 and 25.


Class 13: The Analysis of Secondary Data

Themes
- Sources of secondary data
- Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)
- Agency data

Readings


Class 13: Critique of Research Article

Class 14: Mixed Methods

Themes
- Choosing a mixed method design
- Examples of mixed methods designs
- Pros and cons of mixed methods designs

Readings