

Introduction to Qualitative Research in Education

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Fall 2016

Tuesdays, 4:50- 7:30

Dr. Beth Rubin

Office: GSE, Room 15A

Hours: Tuesdays 2- 4, and by appointment

beth.rubin@gse.rutgers.edu

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the theories and practices of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative researchers are interested in constructing in- depth descriptions of educational phenomena by spending time in the field and eliciting the meanings individuals give to different educational contexts, issues, and problems. From this course students will develop the skills to design their own research studies.

This course is structured to provide students with opportunities to understand the nature of qualitative inquiry, the kinds of questions addressed, and the various types of research designs used to answer them. During this semester, the aim is to provide students with a sense of the ideas and disciplinary contexts that have contributed to the development of this field of inquiry as well as what makes qualitative research a valid and reliable form of research. Students will be introduced to core qualitative data collection methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, and will have opportunities to practice these methods. The course will conclude with the development of a proposed research study, including the rationale for the study, some discussion of the conceptual framework and related research literature, and a section on the methodology (including data collection and analysis).

This course can be continued in Spring 2017. The next semester (Qualitative Research Methods II) is intended to deepen and strengthen students' familiarity and comfort with doing qualitative research work. It is organized to provide students with more opportunities to refine their research design and data collection tools and to actually implement the research study proposed during Qualitative Research Methods I. Students will collect data in the field, analyze this data and construct a research report. They will also further develop their skills as informed consumers of qualitative studies.

Both classes are structured to develop students' abilities to advise and support their colleagues in their research efforts. The emphasis on collegiality is intended to: facilitate students learning from one another, enhance their ability to critique each other's work in a constructive way and utilize critique in their own work, and develop a "research community" that can provide support as students continue in their doctoral programs.

Readings

Books

Required

1. Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches, Third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
https://www.amazon.com/Qualitative-Inquiry-Research-Design-Approaches/dp/1412995302/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1472504501&sr=1-1&keywords=cresswell+qualitative+inquiry+and+research+design
2. Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods, Third edition*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
https://www.amazon.com/dp/0761919716/ref=olp_product_details?_encoding=UTF8&me=#reader_0761919716

Recommended

1. Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
2. Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Weiss, R. (1995). *Learning from strangers*. NY: The Free Press.

Scholarly Articles and Book Chapters

These will be provided on our course Sakai site, under Resources.

Course Assignments

The activities required as part of your preliminary fieldwork include getting certified to conduct research involving human subjects, developing a research focus and identifying a research site, conducting observations, writing a field journal and fieldnotes, preparing for and conducting an interview, and analyzing this data. These activities will be ongoing from the start of the course. These assignments are meant to introduce you to methods of data collection and analysis and help you learn more about your research site and the issues that you might study in the spring. The following assignments are meant to guide you as you engage in preliminary fieldwork and develop a proposal for your spring semester research study.

I. Getting Ready to Conduct Qualitative Research

- A. *Analysis and presentation of research article*. In small groups you will meet before your assigned class to create an analysis of the week's qualitative research reading, prepare to present this analysis to the rest of the class, and prepare questions so you can lead the class in a discussion of the article. Focus should be on examining the article's strengths and weaknesses as a piece of research, including the assumptions, approaches, arguments and validity. All students are responsible for reading the qualitative research readings each week and participating in the discussion led by the presenting pairs. Various due dates.
- B. *Human subjects certification program (HSCP) training*. You must complete this training to engage in any kind of human research. You can access the training materials and exam online at

<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/hscpletter.php>. Please submit a copy of your human subjects certificate to our Sakai site (under Assignments) once you have completed the training.

II. Field Activities and Analysis

- A. *Observations*. Two observations. When you go to your site, you will make jottings documenting things such as what is happening at the site, specific phrases people use, and a map of the site. Note these in your “field journal” which you will carry around with you at your site. The field journal jottings will serve as the raw material for your more polished and complete fieldnotes. Fieldnotes need to be typed and will extend what you jotted in your field journal. These will be used in class for discussion. (Observations of around 45 min each)
- B. *Interview*. Interview protocol and interview. This interview should be conducted with a person similar to one who will likely be part of your spring research study or your dissertation study (e.g., if you want to study skateboarders at a local skate park, you might interview skateboarders who skate at a different skate park from the one you want to study). Bring a draft of your interview protocol to class for review. You will need to audiorecord and transcribe your interview. This interview will help you practice the skills needed to conduct an effective interview and it should help you think about and design your spring research study interviews. It will be used in class for discussion. Please attach a 1- page reflection paper that addresses what you learned from the interview experience, what you might do differently next time, and your positionality in the field during this activity.
- C. *Analytic Memo*. A preliminary analysis of your observation and interview. The purpose of this memo is for you to figure out what research questions and issues you want to explore in your spring semester research project. Towards this end, review the data you have collected over the course of the semester and write about themes you’ve identified, tensions or contradictions that you’ve noticed in relation to your interests, and questions about which you are curious. Class readings and exercises on interpreting and analyzing data should be helpful as you try to make sense of your data. Include codes that you used. (6 pages maximum, 12- point font, double- spaced).

III. Creating a Research Proposal

The final product for this class is a research proposal. I have broken down the task of writing a proposal into smaller chunks so that it can be completed with guidance and in a timely manner. Specific guidelines for the proposal will be discussed in class.

- A. *Proposal Paper 1: Research focus statement draft*. In order to begin your preliminary fieldwork, you will need to figure out what you are interested in studying. Towards that end, I want you to write a paper in which you identify a problem, phenomenon, cultural practice or construct (e.g., alienation, identity development, prejudice, civic engagement, problem- solving, etc...) on which you want to focus your spring semester research study. This idea may emerge from a question of practice. What do you know about this topic? Why are you interested in studying it? What do you want to know about it? What ideas do you have about how you might go about studying this

problem, phenomenon, cultural practice or construct (i.e. what do you think you will have to investigate to learn more about it)? It is expected that as you read the scholarship on this topic during this semester, this research focus statement will evolve. Include your purpose statement, your proposed research questions and the major theoretical concepts underlying the study. Include a list of 8 articles, books and book chapters on this topic that you plan to read in preparation for proposal paper 2 (the literature review) (3 pages maximum plus the resource list, 12 pt. font, double- spaced).

B. *Proposal Paper 2: Literature review draft.* For this assignment, locate, read, and review 8- 10 texts (empirical studies and conceptual pieces as appropriate) that are most relevant to your spring semester research study. (**This is not meant to be an exhaustive review, but an initial review of the literature.) Based on your reading, develop a literature review in which you discuss issues such as how your topic has been investigated in prior research, what others have learned about your topic, and what questions about your topic still remain. As you review the literature, think about how to integrate the ideas from different sources so that they can help you figure out what you will study, the kinds of questions you might ask, and the kinds of data sources you might collect. (5 pages maximum).

C. *Proposal Paper 3: Papers 1 and 2, plus methods section.* For this assignment, revise and edit Proposal Papers 1 and 2 incorporating instructor and peer feedback and add your methods section. Your methods section should include the following: (1) a description of your site; (2) a discussion of your role as a researcher; (3) a description of your study participants and how they will be selected; (4) a detailed description of your proposed strategies for collecting data sources (e.g., What will you observe at your site? Why? When? Whom will you interview? Why? When? What will you ask them?); (4) a discussion of strategies for data analysis; (5) a section addressing questions of validity. Proposal Paper 3 is 15- pages maximum (double- spaced, 12 point font), and will include the following sections: Purpose and Significance of the Project (1- 2 pages); Literature Review (4- 5 pages); Research Methods (3-5 pages).

Grading and Due Dates¹

Assignment	Due Date	Grade Value
Active Participation - In-class participation - Class attendance and preparedness (readings and daily assignments) - Presentation of work	various	10%

¹ Due by 4 pm of the due date (before class).

Assignment	Due Date	Grade Value
Field Activities & Analysis		55%
- HSCP Training	9/20	
- Observation 1	10/18 (bring draft to class 10/11)	- 12.5 %
- Observation 2	10/25	- 12.5 %
- Protocol	11/1 (bring to class)	
- Interview	11/15	- 15 %
- Analytic Memo	12/13	- 15 %
Research Proposal		35%
- Paper 1	9/30	- 10%
- Paper 2	10/28	- 10%
- Paper 3	12/18	- 15%
Total		100%

COURSE OUTLINE

Date **Topic, Focusing Question, Readings, Assignments**

Week 1 - 9/6

Introduction

What is qualitative research?

- The nature of qualitative inquiry in education
- Foundations of qualitative research
- Identifying sources
- Developing an inquiry
- Course overview

Week 2 – 9/13

Theoretical underpinnings and characteristics

What are the understandings of reality embedded in qualitative approaches?

- Different approaches to qualitative inquiry
- What can best be understood through qualitative study

Readings

1. Creswell, Chapters 2 and 4
2. Patton, Chapters 1 and 2
3. Creswell, one of the appendices (B-F) - to be assigned in class. Take notes and be prepared to share with a small group in class.

Week 3 - 9/20 Conceptualizing and framing a qualitative study, including conceptual framework and literature review

What types of questions can be answered through qualitative study?

How do you situate your study conceptually and in relation to existing research?

- Finding a researchable problem
- Articulating research questions
- Clarifying the purpose
- Figuring out which conversations I want to enter
- Summarizing what has already been learned about my topic of interest
- Articulating the what a new approach or perspective might add

Readings

1. Creswell, Chapters 3 and 6.
2. Patton, Chapters 3 and 4

Assignments

1. Complete HSCP training

Week 4 - 9/27 Research design and Observing as a data collection strategy (1)

How do you design a study that will answer your questions?

Why and how do we effectively observe our phenomena?

- Building the Study
- Sample and Setting
- Techniques of collecting data
- Researcher Role
- Participant observation
- Fieldnotes
- Using audiovisual data

Readings

1. Creswell, Chapter 7.
2. Patton, Chapter 5
3. Patton, Chapter 6.
4. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw. (1995). Chapter 2, "In the field," (p. 17-38), from *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*, University of Chicago Press.

Assignments

1. Write draft of purpose statement and bring hard copy to class.

Week 5 - 10/4 (no class)

1. Identify observation site, conduct and write up observation before 10/11

2. Proposal Paper 1: Purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework, Submit to Sakai 10/4

Week 6 - 10/11 Observing as a data collection strategy/fieldnotes workshop (2)

What make for rigorous and reliable fieldnotes?

- Writing descriptive fieldnotes
- Low and high inference language
- Observer comments

1. Emerson, Frez & Shaw, Chapters 3 and 4 (pages 39-65, 66-107)

Assignments

1. Conduct observation 1, draft due in class, bring hard copy to class.

Week 7 - 10/18 Validity, reliability and ethics in qualitative research

What makes qualitative research trustworthy, ethical, and rigorous?

- Subjective, contextual and relational considerations
- Equity and ethics
- Bias and assumptions
- Power and authority

Readings

1. AERA Code of Ethics, http://www.aera.net/AboutAERA/Default.aspx?menu_id=90&id=222
2. Creswell, Chapter 10.
3. LeCompte, M.D. & Goetz, J.P. (1982). "Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research." *Review of Educational Research* 52(1), 31- 60.
4. Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124- 130.

Assignment

1. Observation 1 write-up due to Sakai (revised and elaborated based on feedback from 10/11 class)

Week 8 - 10/25 Interviewing Part 1, Interview Questions and Techniques

How can we draw out the opinions, worldviews, and experiences of participants?

- Purposes and types of interviews
- Interviewing techniques

Readings

1. Patton, Chapter 7.

Assignments

Rubin/7

1. Proposal Paper 2: Literature review, submit to Sakai

Week 9 - 11/1 Interviewing Part 2

How can we become “conversational partners” with participants?

- Preparation for interviewing
- Ethical considerations when interviewing individuals in educational settings

Readings

1. Weiss, R. (1994). Chapters 3, “Preparation for interviewing” and 4, “Interviewing” (pages 39-59, 61-119), In *Learning from Strangers*, NY: The Free Press.

Assignments

1. Interview Protocol Draft: bring print copy to class.

Week 10 - 11/8 Focus Groups, Document collection and analysis and other forms of qualitative data

How to construct and run a focus group

What other methods of analysis are available to qualitative researchers?

Readings

1. Patton, M. (2002). Special application and issues, p. 385-418. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods, 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
2. Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass. Chapter 6.

Week 11- 11/15 Reviewing our interviews together/Writing a methods section for your proposal

Assignments

1. Interview transcript and reflection, submit to Sakai
2. Bring hard copy of transcript to class

Week 12 - 11/22 NO CLASS - Thursday classes meet today

Week 13 - 11/29 Analyzing data systematically (1)

How do we “make sense” of our data?

- Relationships between research questions, approaches, and methods
- Triangulation
- Memos
- Vignettes
- Organizing and managing data

Readings

1. Cresswell, Chapter 8
2. Patton, Chapter 8
3. Saldaña, TBA

Assignments

Read through your data set, making notes and writing memos on themes that you notice. Bring this work to class.

Week 14 - 12/6 Analyzing data systematically (2)

What is the difference between describing data and analyzing it?

- In vivo coding
- Pattern coding
- Validation techniques

Readings

1. Cresswell, Chapter 9
2. Miles, Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Drawing valid meaning from qualitative data: Toward a shared craft. *Educational researcher*, 13(5), 20- 30.

Assignments

1. Read through your data set, generate preliminary codes, organize and refine them, do a preliminary coding of your data on paper. Bring this work to class.

Week 15 - 12/13 Presenting our work to others

Assignments

1. Analytic Memo due
2. Presentations of one insight from fieldwork - 10 minutes per person.

Proposal Paper 3: Due: 12/18, 11:59 pm, to Sakai

** For students who are continuing next semester, a draft of research plan will be required along with IRB materials ready for submission by December **

Program and Professor Policies

Written Assignments

All assignments are due according to the course schedule. An assignment is considered late after 4 pm on the due date. If you need an extension for any of these projects you must negotiate with the professor personally, prior to the due date.

Assignments will be judged on the basis of responsiveness to the task or question, completeness, evidence of graduate level skills (clarity, depth, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) being applied, and overall quality. Specific evaluation criteria and descriptions are available for each project.

All graded papers need to be written and cited in APA format as summarized in the style guide that can be found at this link: <http://lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php>

Additional information can be obtained from the APA website at www.apastyle.org.

Your written assignments must be prepared as follows and submitted as an attachment:

- 1 Prepare these assignments in Microsoft Word, using Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1" margins.
- 2 Save your work as a .doc file.
- 3 Submit your assignment to the appropriate place in the Assignments section of our course
- 4 Sakai site. Look for feedback in this space.
- 5 Include in the subject line, in the following order: your initials, the name of the assignment, and the date (e.g., BR_Analytical Memo_10- 25- 14).
- 6 If you do not have Microsoft Word, please contact the professor.

Rewrites

All assignments turned in on the due date will be allowed one subsequent rewrite. That rewrite must be submitted within one week of you having received feedback. With each rewrite, you must submit the previous draft, including professor comments. Should you need to rewrite the final paper, you will receive an incomplete until the rewrite is completed.

In- Class Expectations

- Be respectful of people and their ideas.
- Be open to new learning and perspectives.
- Be accountable for raising and resolving issues that occur, with classmates, with your

- professors, with the course content, with assignments.
 - Be prepared to participate in class discussions, activities, and group assignments.
 - Be responsible by being on time with your assignments, insightful about your comments,
 - and active with your course readings.
 - No texting, emailing or Internet surfing while in class. Please leave class to take emergency calls or texts.
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Problems

If personal, work or family problems arise that interfere with your ability to complete or continue this course, see the instructor immediately. We can work together to help you resolve the problems with the course.

Special Needs

If you have special learning needs please schedule a time to talk with Dr. Rubin so that we can work together for your success.

Absences

Absence from class is occasionally unavoidable; however, given the hands- on nature of this course it is imperative that absences be kept to a minimum. Please alert Dr. Rubin if you have an unavoidable absence. You will be responsible for announcements made, topics covered, notes given and assignments due.

Academic Integrity

Rutgers prohibits conduct that is contrary to accepted principles of academic integrity. Violations of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy include but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication. Evidence of any such violations can result in a failing grade for the assignment, the course, or sanctions imposed by the university. For information on the academic integrity policy, please go to: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>; a multimedia presentation on plagiarism can be found at: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/integrity/realifeexamples.html>
