

University of Maryland
College of Education
Qualitative Research Methods in Education
EDPL 700
Fall 2006
Monday, 4:15-7:00
Room # 3236

Caroline Eick
Visiting Assistant Professor
Room 2110 D Benjamin Building
Email: ceick@wam.umd.edu

Office Hours
Tuesday, 3:00-4:00
& by appointment

Course Overview

This course is designed to familiarize students with the major qualitative modes of inquiry in education, including ethnographic field strategies, case studies, action research, grounded theory approaches, historical research and phenomenology. Students will learn to differentiate between these research methodologies, and to identify stages of qualitative research, from design to narration, including building a conceptual framework, defining data collection methods, organizing and interpreting data, writing, and articulating value and logic. Students will have an opportunity to practice organizing the various stages of a qualitative mode of inquiry of their choice by conducting a small scale pilot study and producing a rudimentary research proposal.

Class Format and Approach

The course is organized around five units that correspond to five phases of research design: the formation of the purpose of a study and research questions; data collection processes; data analysis; narrative report; and evaluation. Within each unit we consider the particular research phase for each of the six qualitative modes of inquiry: ethnographies, case studies, action research, grounded theory approaches, historical research and phenomenology. Folded into the first unit will be an introduction to the epistemologies that underpin each qualitative mode of inquiry discussed in this course. Classes are a combination of lectures, discussions of readings, and group-work. Groups are organized, as much as possible, to include students at different levels in their graduate careers, and from different academic concentrations and departments within the college of education. Approximately one third of the time is devoted to discussions of readings, another one third to group-work, and the last third to group presentations/findings.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete all of the readings, attend class regularly, deliver assignments on due dates, and participate fully in class discussions and group-work. Students, who for valid reasons cannot attend a class, should let the professor know in advance. Absent students are responsible for making arrangements to acquire missed materials and information from other students.

Students are required to hand in their assignments at the beginning of class on due dates. Late papers will be penalized a letter grade unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor, and only in extreme circumstance (e.g., serious health problem) will an incomplete be granted. Due dates for assignments are:

1. **First assignment due October 9 (week 5)—20% of course grade:**
Introduction to study of choice
2. **Second assignment due October 30 (week 8)—20% of course grade:**
Data collection report
3. **Third assignment due November 20 (week 11)—20% of course grade:**
Data analysis report
4. **Fourth assignment due December 11 (week 14)—20% of course grade:**
Final Paper / Narrative + Standards of evaluation
5. **Participation in group-work and class discussions—20% of course grade.**

Description of Assignments

These assignments are designed to help you gain experience in organizing the various stages of a qualitative mode of inquiry of your choice. You will conduct a very small scale pilot study, or build on one you may already have conducted, to produce a *research proposal*. In order to deliver the first assignment on time, and equally, to make timely progress toward following assignments, it is important that you choose a study of interest as early in the course as possible. While by the end of this course you may or may not have produced a thesis, dissertation, or grant research proposal ready for professional scrutiny (depending on the level of your graduate studies), you will have produced the structure of a proposal ready to be polished for eventual submission.

Introduction to study of choice [Due October 9]

In this short assignment (3 to 5 pages, double-spaced), you introduce the study of your choice, which you situate within a qualitative inquiry of your choice. In this introduction, you:

- State the problem or issue leading to the study—*the need for the study*
- Articulate the central purpose of the study
- Formulate the overarching research question
- Address the conceptual framework (very brief literature review for the purposes of this assignment -> to ground proposed study in research already done)
- Follow conceptual framework with sub-questions that elaborate the overarching research question, and you justify particular qualitative mode of inquiry
- *All of the above three components must reflect the particular qualitative tradition of inquiry you selected.

Research Methods [Due October 30]

In this short assignment (3 to 5 pages, double-spaced), you lay out a plan for collecting data to answer your research question(s). In this report, you:

- Identify the site or individual(s) in your study
- Explain how and why you selected the site or individual(s)
- Explain how you will gain (or have already gained in pilot study) access to the site or individual(s), and how you established (or will establish) a rapport

- Describe the kind of data that you are collecting
- Describe how you are recording the information
- Explain how you are storing the data
- *All of the above components must reflect the particular qualitative tradition of inquiry you selected.

Data analysis / Preliminary findings [Due November 20]

In this short assignment (3 to 5 pages, double-spaced), you explain your analysis strategies as these apply to your research in progress. In this report, you:

- Describe how you are organizing files for data
- Explain how you are classifying the data information (if you are using computer programs and databases, explain). Here you should be as specific as possible, and should encode your descriptions and explanations with terms that reflect the distinct qualitative mode of inquiry you are pursuing.
- If possible, identify an emerging interpretation / introduce preliminary findings

Final Paper / Proposal [Due December 11]

In this final paper (10 to 20 pages not including references or appendices), the draft of a proposal for your study, you include the following:

- Introduction to proposal
- Methodology section
- Data analysis section
- Criteria of interpretation that have been applied to analytic processes that help identify sources of bias / discuss questions of validity.
- Conclusion
- References (limited to references actually cited, not a bibliography of relevant literature)
- Appendices (will be addresses during class)

All assignments will be graded for clarity, coherence, and strength of arguments; as well as for featuring the required components as described here above.

Group Work [Throughout the semester]

Group-work is an essential component of this course. It provides opportunities for creating smaller learning spaces within the broader EDPL 700 learning community; spaces within which students, not the instructor, take the lead in advancing their learning processes, and establishing support networks. While there are weekly tasks assigned for groups to produce, how groups choose to proceed in their collaborations is defined by each group, not by the instructor. Group assignments follow readings for each week on the syllabus. Group members may propose a different assignment if the relevance of proposed alternative is effectively argued.

To ensure effective reporting of group-work, weekly rotating facilitators for each group take notes, report in whole class discussion at end of group-work, and hand-in a copy of produced work to instructor. More details about facilitators' roles, instructor's continued involvement with groups during class-time, and other logistics, will be explained first day of class.

University of Maryland Point Distribution for Grades

A+ = 95-100; A = 89-94; A- = 83-88; B+ = 77-82; B = 71-76; B- = 65-70; C+ = 59-64

Summary of Key Dates

October 9: Introduction to study of choice

October 30: Research Methods

November 20: Data analysis / Preliminary findings

December 11: Final paper

Additional Information

Documented Disabilities

The University of Maryland encourages instructors to make accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss an academic accommodation, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Honor Code

"The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>."

Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, students will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. Please advise me as soon as possible of any absences for religious observances.

Required Material

The readings are outlined in the syllabus. Other than the assigned individual readings, the following books are required:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-7619-0143-4

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.

Additional readings are either on the e-reserve course system, accessed via databases, and cited in syllabus under weekly readings, or will be provided by instructor.

CHRONOLOGY / TOPICAL OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Day 1: Monday (9/11)—Introductions, Course Review & Logistics

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Read Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: Problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass-> Read Introduction & Chapter 1

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Introduction

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 1

- Overview of course syllabus and materials
- Organization of groups (facilitators, etc.)
- Mini-lecture / Intro to qualitative inquiry and some terms
- Group-Work / Warm-up: Group members share research interests and, informed by mini-lecture, summarily explore possible modes of inquiry for particular research interests / Purpose: Help each other identify pilot studies / Group facilitators present the range of studies to whole class.

UNIT I JUSTIFYING A STUDY

Day 2: Monday (9/18)—

Statement of problem and purpose; and what does “methodology” imply, anyway?

Required readings for this week include:

* Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Allyn Bacon. -> Read chapters 7 and 9 (Electronic reserve)

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage ->Read Chapters 4, 5 and 6

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*, 4rd. ed. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 2, pages 23 through 38

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*, 2nd ed.. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 2

Some questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- What is the relationship between theory/ideological perspective and methodology
- In what ways do ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions shape methodology—or is it the other way around?
- Is the inductive process a defining characteristic of all qualitative modes of inquiry?
- Can one articulate the need for a study (a statement of purpose) without encoding it in terms specific to a methodological approach?
- Creswell differentiates rhetorical and methodological assumptions (p.75)—is that a logically sustainable differentiation?
- Why the “low status” of educational research?

**Note: Students are strongly encouraged always to produce their own questions regarding content of readings and course discussion, and to challenge the formulation of questions presented by the instructor.*

Group Work:

Craft drafts of statements of purpose that focus on one phenomenon from different perspectives. Craft a purpose statement (1) for an ethnographic *or* an historical investigation; (2) a grounded theory investigation, *or* case study, *or* action research; and (3) for a phenomenological inquiry. Groups choose one phenomenon on which to focus (i.e. vouchers; doctoral advisement in research 1 universities; etc.).

Day 3: Monday (9/25)—Research questions

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Review chapter 6

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: Problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.-> Read Chapter 2

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 2, pages 38 through 50

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 4

* Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences, 6th ed.* Boston: Pearson Allyn Bacon. -> Review chapters 7 and 9 (Electronic reserve)

Some questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- Discuss questions of authority and authorship in the formulation of a research question.
- Discuss the development and function of the research question in qualitative modes of inquiry.
- What makes for a “good” research question in qualitative research?
- How might qualitative research questions be well-suited to “address” messy human interactions, complex social phenomena?
- What might be the necessary predispositions, habits of mind and heart, for researchers to nurture in order to engage in ambiguous, inductive, and reiterative research processes?

Group Work:

This week’s task builds on last week’s group-work. Craft a “descriptive” research question for an ethnographic investigation; a “process” question for a grounded theory investigation or case study; a “meaning question” for a phenomenological, oral historical or biographical inquiry; and an action research question. Groups continue to focus on the one phenomenon chosen last week.

UNIT II DATA COLLECTION

Day 4: Monday (10/2)—*Identifying site(s) and individual(s); Sampling strategies*

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Read Chapter 7 /pages 109-120

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 3

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 5

Some questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- What is the nature of data in qualitative research?
- Discuss Maxwell's comment: "You *are* the research instrument in a qualitative study" (p.79)
- Discuss tensions between the need for the qualitative research process to remain flexible and the need for the research design to present a coherent plan that meets the criteria of "do-ability."

Group Work:

Groups craft a list of five questions, or a statement paragraph of five sentences, that problematizes the relationship between data and researcher in qualitative modes of inquiry. Group members are encouraged to build on last week's work (use last week's research questions as inspiration, etc.).

Day 5: Monday (10/9)—*Forms of data and recording procedures*

First assignment due: Introduction to study

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Read chapter 7 / pages 120-128

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 4 (Read Chapter 6 / Optional)

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Review Chapter 5

Some questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- How might data reshape research questions?
- What is “observation” in qualitative research methods? What are its many forms? What are its challenges?
- What is “interviewing” in qualitative research methods? What are its many forms? What are its challenges?
- How might one consider documentary evidence in qualitative research?

Group Work:

Based on research questions crafted on day 3 (facilitators make sure to bring copies of group notes produced on day 3), explain, for each qualitative mode of inquiry, types of data that will be collected, and the ways that the data will be recorded and organized. Justify.

Day 6: Monday (10/16)—*Storing data and field issues*

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Read chapter 7 / pages 128-137

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.-> Read Chapter 9

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read or Review Chapter 6

Presentation by invited guest speaker on NVivo qualitative data analysis program.

Group Work:

Building on last week’s group-work, identify possible field issues / challenges to data collection processes. Remain grounded in the qualitative modes of inquiry, your developed research questions, and your forms of data.

UNIT III DATA ANALYSIS

Day 7: Monday (10/23)—Strategies for analysis / Emphasis on historical (including oral historical and biographical), phenomenological, and ethnographic modes.

Required readings for this week include:

* Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Allyn Bacon. -> Review chapter 9 (Electronic reserve)

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage ->Read chapter 8

*Kaestle, C. F. (1997). Recent methodological developments in the history of American education. In Jaeger, R. (Ed.) *Complementary methods for research in education*. Washington, D.C.: AERA. (Electronic reserve)

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*, 4rd. ed. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 5

Questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- In a general sense, what makes for an analysis?

-In what ways is qualitative data analysis an iterative process for each of these qualitative modes?

Group Work:

Groups are given a same set of data to encode / organize. Analyses are compared across groups in whole class discussion.

Day 8: Monday (10/30)—Strategies for analysis continued / Emphasis on grounded theory, case study and action research

Second assignment due: Data collection report

Required readings for this week include:

* Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Allyn Bacon. -> Review chapter 7 (Electronic reserve)

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage ->Read Chapter 9

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*, 4rd. ed. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Review Chapter 5

Questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

-In what ways is qualitative data analysis an iterative process for each of these qualitative modes?

Group Work:

Groups are given a same set of data to encode / organize. Analyses are compared across groups in whole class discussion

Day 9: Monday (11/6)—*General review (from beginning of semester) and comparisons across modes of inquiry*

Required readings for this week include:

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.-> Read Chapter 10

Using Heath's piece (Discipline and disciplines in education research / chapter 10 in Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). Cited here above) as bouncing board for discussion, and background against which to contextualize our conversations, we will revisit major epistemological and methodological considerations brought up throughout our course up to now.

Note: All students are asked to come prepared with questions and comments. Each student will be asked to provide at least one question or comment that reflects on a particular connection between any statement found in Heath's piece and course readings and discussions.

Group Work:

Group members discuss significant personal insights experienced throughout the semester regarding any aspect of course content. The task for each group is to produce a synthesizing paragraph (one to three sentences) that captures the gist of these insights. Facilitators share in whole class discussion.

UNIT IV NARRATING FINDINGS

Day 10: Monday (11/13)—*Rhetorical structures /Emphasis on historical, ethnographic and phenomenological modes of inquiry*

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage ->Read chapter 9

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.*. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 7 + Appendix

Note: In preparation for submission of final paper / proposal, students will be asked to articulate one or two questions / issues for which they seek feedback.

Group Work:

Group members concentrate on a task of their choosing. When reporting on group-work to whole class, facilitators justify the relevance of their choice of task for this week's class work, before providing a synthesis of their group-work.

Day 11: Monday (11/20)—*Rhetorical structures continued / Emphasis on grounded theory, action research and case study*

Third assignment due: Data analysis report

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage ->Review Chapter 9

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd. ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read pages 161-170

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.*. Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Review Chapter 7 and Appendix

Questions / Issues to consider in preparation for whole class discussions:

- "...writing as part of the research process" (Marshall & Rossman, p.161)
- What do Marshall and Rossman mean by : reporting...has built-in relevance." (p.165)

Group Work:

Group members concentrate on a task of their choosing. When reporting on group-work to whole class, facilitators justify the relevance of their choice of task for this week's class work, before providing a synthesis of their group-work.

**UNIT V
STANDARDS OF QUALITY**

Day 12: Monday (11/27)—*Emphasis on historical, ethnographic and phenomenological modes*

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Read Chapter 10

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.-> Read Chapter 7

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 6

Group Work:

Group members concentrate on a task of their choosing. When reporting on group-work to whole class, facilitators justify the relevance of their choice of task for this week's class work, before providing a synthesis of their group-work.

Day 13: Monday (12/04)—*Emphasis on grounded theory, case study and action research*

Required readings for this week include:

Cresswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage -> Review Chapter 10

Lagemann, E.C. and Shulman, L.S. (Eds). (1999). *Issues in education research: problems and possibilities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.-> Read Chapter 8

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research, 4rd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Read Chapter 7

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd ed.* Thousand Islands: Sage.-> Review Chapter 6

Group Work

Group members concentrate on a task of their choosing. When reporting on group-work to whole class, facilitators justify the relevance of their choice of task for this week's class work, before providing a synthesis of their group-work.

Day 14: Monday (12/11)—
Final paper due

Required work for this week:

Students prepare a 2 to 3 minute oral report in which they describe the challenges and triumphs they experienced while conducting their pilot research, and writing their proposals.

Group Work

Groups produce a synthesis of major insights / challenges experienced throughout the course work.

Student Evaluations