University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

EDCI 791-0101 Qualitative Research I: Design and Fieldwork

Fall 2014  
Wednesdays, 4:30-7:15pm  
Benjamin Building, Room 2101

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Office #2233 Benjamin Building  
jdtturner@umd.edu

Office hours: By appointment

Course Purpose

If the other is the enabling condition of ethnographic research…then an ethnography must be both an adequate account of the…practices of others and accountable to those others.  
--Patricia Sullivan, “Ethnography and the Problem of the ‘Other’”

This course serves primarily as introduction to the use of ethnographic, field-based research methods in education. However, there is much debate about what constitutes ethnographic research, or fieldwork. This has been particularly evident over the last few decades with the growing use of postmodernism and its general critique of knowledge production in all disciplines. Different fieldwork methods and perspectives have proliferated. This course will also examine elements within this debate.

The course is organized around several facets of fieldwork research. First, the course examines the epistemological, ontological, and axiological moorings of different types of qualitative research. Second, it considers the practical dimensions of qualitative research. Third, it looks into some of central issues and dilemmas that arise while engaging in qualitative research.

Course experiences include reading articles that explore the debates in qualitative research, studying several monograph-length examples of field-based studies (traditional and hybrid), and undertaking various aspects of the research process (e.g., constructing a research focus, collecting various types of data, recording them, analyzing them, and reporting emerging patterns and themes). These experiences are designed to help you develop and sharpen your capacities as a field researcher and at the same time provide you opportunities to become conversant with current debates and issues in qualitative research.
Readings:

We will use the following texts in our course:

Text (needs to be purchased online from amazon, etc.)

Articles/Chapters
- Additional readings are required for the course. They are available online on our elms coursesite and are indicated by a * on the calendar. Look on the PAGES tab on the left–hand column, and open the Pages tab, then open Front Pages to access the course readings.

Requirements

Class Participation and Attendance:
You will be expected to attend all scheduled classes and participate actively in discussions. You are expected to be a collaborative participant of all the work in class. Our discussions serve as a place for you to sharpen your thinking, test your ideas, exchange insights and perceptions, and contribute towards others’ ideas. You will be assigned a participation grade for this strand of the course. You cannot participate and engage in ideas in the class if you do not attend them.

Assignments:
****Note: Please upload all assignments to elms under the Assignments tab (left column). If you need to email me for any reason, or to make sure that you turn in an assignment, please email me at jdturner@umd.edu

Critical Questions
This assignment requires you to develop critical questions related to the assigned readings. For this assignment, develop 2-3 critical questions. **Print these out and have them available for class** on the date(s) that this assignment appears on the syllabus calendar.

IRB Application
For this assignment, you are expected to complete the IRB process and complete the CITI training as mandated by the IRB office at UMCP. This process will allow you to use the data that you collect for four purposes beyond this course (e.g., as a pilot study for your dissertation research). You will work with your advisor on the IRB application. The CITI training is an online course that needs to be completed solely by you. Because the semester is short, you need to submit this application on irbnet and list Dr. Andy Elby (our IRB liaison for TLPL) as a reader/reviewer of the application no later than **September 22**.
Brief Article Critique (ungraded but will be reviewed by peers and/or instructor)
Individually, you will read the article assigned for the critique. Take notes on the article as you read. Then develop a brief article critique, using bulleted points only (but full sentences), based on the components in the Oxford University Press framework for critiquing qualitative studies. Your critique should be 2-3 pages. This critique will NOT be graded, but will be reviewed by peers and/or the instructor so that constructive feedback can be provided.

Article Critique Presentations
In small groups, you will be required to critique an article and present this critique to the class. Because these presentations will occur later in the semester, you will be expected to draw from the theoretical and methodological discussions we have held previously. You will be expected to (1) critique the main arguments of the study as well as to (2) critique its methodological features, and (3) compare and contrast the text to other readings in the course. The group will present their article critiques to the class on November 5 or November 19.

Discussion Leaders
You will be required to work in a small group to take leadership of 1 class discussion on the assigned topic and readings. You should organize sufficient material for approximately 45 minutes. As Discussion Leaders, you should assume that we have read the materials, so this should NOT be a lecture related to the readings. Rather, your job is to plan and implement activities designed to help us to summarize and synthesize critical points and ideas, to raise new perspectives and questions, to help us make connections to other reading, and to help us reflect on the theoretical and practical issues related to qualitative research. In terms of the activities, feel free to use a variety of techniques and technology in terms of media clips, video, etc. to help us think through salient points and issues within the readings and to help us draw implications for undertaking qualitative inquiry.

Small-scale Qualitative Research Project
During the semester, you will be expected to develop and carry out a very small-scale qualitative research project in a field setting. The project is intended to provide you with beginning experiences in field-based research. Qualitative research typically requires many months (years?) of field research. However, given the constraints of the semester, and other course demands, this project provides you with only an initial opportunity to try out conceptualizing a study, practicing methods and techniques, and undertaking initial forms of data analysis (EDCI 792, a sequel to this course, provides expanded and detailed opportunities to learn more sophisticated data analysis approaches).
The various assignments described below are designed to provide you with windows into learning about different aspects and stages of field research. A brief outline of each assignment is provided below as well as the due dates. We will discuss the details of these assignments more fully in class.

**Part 1. Proposal.** In this paper you will lay out your research problem, your set of research questions, and explain the who, what, where, when, and how you will study this problem. No “formal” literature review is required, although it is usually helpful to frame your problem with research from 2-3 citations. This assignment will be due on **September 24** (2-3 pages, no more!)

**Part 2. Site Access/Setting/Observation.** The first part of this paper will provide a brief account of how you intend to accomplish (or did accomplish) research site access, one of the trickiest aspects of field work. The second part of this paper will provide an account of your initial entree into the field, including a description of the setting. The third part will include a write up of an observation (1) you do based on your fieldnotes. This assignment is geared towards learning how to take and organize fieldnotes, and write up a detailed description drawn from those fieldnotes (raw fieldnotes can be attached as an appendix, but this is not required). The fourth part of your paper should include a reflection of helpful techniques and problems that emerged collecting the fieldnotes during the observation. This assignment is due on **October 22**. (8-10 pages, no more). Note: Consider Entry, Role, and Reciprocity issues.

**Part 3. The Interview.** This assignment requires you to conduct an interview with one of your informants and transcribe the tapes. The heart of the paper requires you to analyze the interview data and write up this analysis vis-à-vis one or more of your research questions (2-3 pages). As a postscript (1 page), you should also include a brief account of the interview techniques you used, and elements of the interview process that you found interesting or in need of further inquiry. This assignment is due on **November 12** (4 pages maximum, with interview transcription attached as an appendix).

**Part 4. Data Analysis/Assertions.** The final assignment requires you to provide a written account of an emerging pattern or theme from your fieldwork. You are asked to develop at least one assertion (but no more than 2) from your data that center on one key theme (8-10 pages, no more). In addition you will be required to add a postscript (2 pages, no more) describing the changing nature of your research, how you might go about narrowing your focus, how and what disconfirming evidence might you need to pursue. Note: This paper is not intended to be a final report, but rather represents a small but significant part of the larger story you might tell. This paper’s main focus will be on your analysis of the data you have collected and the convincing evidence (data) you marshal to support your assertions. This paper is due on **December 10**.
Grading:

My philosophy of grading is that numeric assessments help record your accomplishments. I do not use grades to rank or sort students. Therefore, I will try to set clear standards for you to meet and help you reach those standards by commenting on your work and by allowing time for discussion on assigned projects in class. Both the content and quality of your writing are important. I suggest reading aloud every assignment before handing it in and making sure that all your work is proofread carefully. I take your usage of grammar and spelling into consideration when evaluating your work.

Each assignment will be weighted according to the following breakdown:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brief Article Critique</td>
<td>UNGRADED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article Presentation (group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRB Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td><strong>Research Project:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site Access/Setting/Observation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<td>Data Analysis/Assertions</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

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<tr>
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*Note: For the course, if you require any special accommodations due to a documented disability, please let me know.*
Course Calendar
(subject to changes as necessary)

September 3: *Introductions, Syllabus, Logistics, Readings, etc……*

In terms of readings, some are from the Bogdan and Biklen book. Those identified by the * are articles that are posted on Canvas.

September 10: Intellectual moorings in qualitative research: Purposes and histories

Have Read—


Critical Questions Due

September 17: Intellectual moorings in qualitative research: Validity and ethics

Have Read—


Brief Article Critique (ungraded) Due
IRB Due By Sept 22—send me an email from IRB stating that you have successfully submitted your IRB for review

September 24: Qualitative Research Design


Research Project Part 1 (Proposal) Due

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October 1: Fieldwork: Problems and Possibilities

Have Read—


Discussion Leaders Group 1

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October 8: **Qualitative Data Collection: Methods and Approaches**


**Discussion Leaders Group 2**

Send to Dr. Turner an Electronic Copy of the Article Your Group Will Be Critiquing

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October 15: **Participatory and Action-Based Methodologies**

*Have Read—*


**Discussion Leaders Group 3**
October 22: **Beginning analysis in qualitative research**

*Have Read—*


*Bogdan, R. C. and Biklen, S. K. (2007). Data analysis (Chapter 5), in Qualitative research for education: An Introduction to theory and methods (pp. 159-197).*


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October 29: **Writing qualitative research reports as interpretive and analytic work**


*Bogdan, R. C. and Biklen, S. K. (2007). Writing it up (Chapter 6), in Qualitative research for education: An Introduction to theory and methods (pp. 159-197).*


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**Discussion Group 4**

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November 5: **Critiquing qualitative research: Perspectives, positionalities, and possibilities**

**Article Critique Presentation Groups A and B**

**Readings determined by groups A and B**
November 12: Dilemmas of representation, contexts, relationships, and social positionings in qualitative texts

* Have Read—


* Research Project Part 3 (Interview) Due

November 19: Critiquing qualitative research: Perspectives, positionalities, and possibilities

** Additional readings may be posted on elms at the discretion of the professor

** Article Critique Group Presentations C and D

**Readings determined by Groups C and D

November 26 and December 3: Peer Editing Work Groups

**Provide an electronic draft of your data assertions/analytic themes to your partner by 11/26

**Write comments on the electronic draft (e.g., using comments in word) AND discuss the drafts either face to face or virtually (e.g., skype) by 12/3

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December 10: Discussions of Individual Research Projects (LAST DAY OF
CLASS)

Come to class prepared to briefly (10 minutes) and informally talk about
the project you undertook and how it went. Tell us a little bit about the
results of your work and any special considerations that arose,
circumstances or issues about which you think we might all learn valuable
lessons of the sort we have considered in the course.

Research Project Part 4 (Data Analysis/Assertions) Due

CourseEvalUM Fall 2014

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility
you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is
confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University
as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to
complete your evaluations for fall semester courses in December 2014. Please go
directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu)
to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you
will have the privilege of accessing online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the
thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.
Mandatory CITI Human Subjects Training Requirement in EDCI

All graduate students in EDCI programs (M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D., Ed.D. and all graduate certificate programs) are required to complete CITI Human Subjects Training. By completing this requirement, graduate students will be allowed to fully participate in individual, class and team research initiatives in the Department.

To complete the CITI Human Subjects Training requirement, go to the CITI Training Website at [https://www.citiprogram.org](https://www.citiprogram.org), fill in the required information, select University of Maryland College Park from the college/university drop down menu, and complete the Social and Behavioral Research module. Complete the CITI Human Subjects Training requirement during the first course in your graduate program. Keep in mind that CITI Human Subjects Training is valid for three years and must be renewed for each additional three-year period.

If you completed CITI Human Subjects Training (again, Maryland requires the Social and Behavioral Research module) at another college or university before entering a graduate program at the University of Maryland, go to your CITI Training Website home page at [https://www.citiprogram.org](https://www.citiprogram.org), find the college/university drop down menu, and change your previous college or university to University of Maryland College Park.