COURSE DESCRIPTION
Prereq: consent of advisor; doctoral student. Introduces students to the principles, methods, and analytical techniques utilized when conducting qualitative research in social work and social welfare. (Y)

COURSE COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS FOR THIS COURSE

1. Have a beginning understanding of the philosophical issues and debates associated with qualitative research.

2. Identify the strengths and appropriate uses of qualitative research.

3. Compare and contrast the five major qualitative traditions (e.g., narrative, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology) and appreciate how qualitative research design and procedures vary by the research tradition or approach employed.

4. Understand the prominent ethical issues and concerns in qualitative research.

5. Identify issues of academic rigor and understand how to critically evaluate and enhance the “quality” of qualitative research.

6. Identify and use the basic methods of data collection (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus groups, content analysis, and field observations).
7. Have a beginning understanding of how to prepare qualitative data for analysis and how to generate analysis units (e.g., codes, categories, memos) and procedures.

8. Understand how to summarize, compile and report qualitative research.

9. Be able to provide as well as to accept constructive critiques on qualitative research issues and decisions.

TEXTS AND REQUIRED MATERIAL


INTRODUCTION:
This doctoral-level seminar is designed to introduce students to the principles, methods, and analytical techniques utilized when conducting qualitative research in social work and social welfare. The course is designed to provide substantive methodological content for various phases of the qualitative research process accompanied by experiential learning opportunities. The purpose of this course is to prepare students to select and implement qualitative research designs that are appropriate and adequate for answering contemporary social work practice and social welfare policy research questions. Four domains of knowledge are addressed in the course: (1) the philosophical frameworks and ethical considerations that shape qualitative research; (2) considerations in the design and implementation of qualitative studies; (3) the major data collection techniques employed in qualitative research (e.g., observational/field research, interviews, and focus groups); and (4) strategies for analyzing and reporting qualitative data. Both post-positivist and constructivist philosophical approaches to the use of qualitative methods will be examined. Five models of qualitative research design and methodology (e.g., narrative, case study, ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenology) will be studied. The course is designed to provide students with the tools to critically evaluate as well as to enhance the academic rigor or “quality” of qualitative data.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:
Students are expected to demonstrate their progress in basic comprehension, integration, analysis, and application of the course material through class assignments (e.g., papers, poster presentations, discussions).

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS
This course will require each student to undertake a series of written assignments leading up to the final paper on a research topic of your choice, which will be (1) a small qualitative pilot study OR (2) a qualitative research proposal. Students are expected to inform the instructor by the second week of class of their research topic and work to be undertaken over the course of the
The written assignments may include elements of the fully developed pilot study/research proposal and will help you stay on track in order to finish the final assignment by the end of the semester. Description of these assignments and their due dates are included in the course schedule described below. **Written assignments must be emailed to the instructor by 4:00 pm on their due date.** Papers sent late will be graded down unless arrangements have been made prior to the due date with the instructor due to a significant personal emergency. If a paper is submitted past the due date and time, it will be graded down as follows:

- Up to 12 hours late = ¼ grade down
- 12.01 to 24 hours = ½ grade down
- 24.01 to 48 hours = 1 grade down
- 48.01 to 72 hours = 1.5 grade down
- 72.01 to 96 hours = 2 grades down

Final grades will be determined in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Related Course Competency #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Literature Review</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>#1, 2, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of Five Traditions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>#2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection, Coding, and Analysis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>#3, 5, 6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Research Proposal/Qualitative Pilot Study</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>#2, 4, 5, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class presentation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>#2, 4, 5, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Grades will be assigned as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>A Outstanding Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-94.9</td>
<td>A- Excellent Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89.9</td>
<td>B+ Very Good Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86.9</td>
<td>B Good Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82.9</td>
<td>B- Less than expected for Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79.9</td>
<td>C Poor Performance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Policy:**
Students may pass the course with a grade of C but must maintain a B average
(See graduate Bulletin, Wayne State University [http://www.bulletins.wayne.edu/gbk-output/index.html](http://www.bulletins.wayne.edu/gbk-output/index.html))

Grade distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-95 A</td>
<td>94.9-90 A-</td>
<td>89.9-87 B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.9-77 C+</td>
<td>76.9-73 C</td>
<td>72.9-70 C-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

The course will be structured in a seminar format, with didactic lectures kept to a minimum. Course readings will include conceptual papers and empirical papers that illustrate the
application of these techniques. Each week we will discuss the assigned readings and assignments, share field experiences, work on designing a research project, and practice qualitative research techniques. Each week you should come prepared to discuss the class readings.

**ROLE OF THE STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR**

See University Statement of Obligation of Students and Faculty Members of the teaching - learning process [http://www.bulletins.wayne.edu/fib/fib2d.html](http://www.bulletins.wayne.edu/fib/fib2d.html)

- **Classroom participation.** Your active participation is expected and welcomed. You are expected to arrive for class on time and stay until the end of the class session. Further, you are expected to attend all class sessions; it is your responsibility to make up any work for any missed sessions. In order to keep class discussion friendly and scholarly, each of us needs to be open to mutual critique and support within an atmosphere of trust and appreciation for diversity and disagreement. Mutual respect and civility are expected in the classroom as well as in any communication between students, and between students and instructor. It also requires that all of us take responsibility for completing all assigned readings, coming to class prepared to discuss the readings, sharing responsibility for leading and contributing meaningfully to class discussions, and for seeing that others have the opportunity to share their observations and insights. Students are expected to apply information discussed in class as it relates to the development of their own pilot qualitative research study or research proposal.

- **Incompletes,** i.e., “I” grades are only given in extreme circumstances. The instructor must be apprized of the circumstances that prohibit the student from completing course assignments as outlined in the syllabus. These situations must be discussed well in advance of the end of the semester. The instructor reserves the right to determine if the circumstances are sufficient to justify an incomplete in the course.

- **Email communication:** I will try to respond to your email in a timely manner (within 24 hours) but an immediate response is NOT guaranteed. I may not reply to email sent after 5pm until the next day.

- **Life Happens** – If you become seriously ill, experience the death of a loved one or have a life altering experience (e.g., divorce) that is negatively influencing your participation in our class, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss your options. If emergencies arise that require an absence from a session, be sure to get the information that was covered in class from a student you trust.

- **Technology in the Classroom** – Laptops and tablets are permitted in the classroom but please refrain from using the Internet. Please refrain from using cell phones in class.
- Papers should be turned in with no errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. The formal of the assignment should follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) Additional style information is available at [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org). Also, a list of supplemental materials not found in the print manual is available at [www.apastyle.org/suplement/index.aspx](http://www.apastyle.org/suplement/index.aspx).

- **Student Disability Services** - If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TTY: telecommunication device for the deaf; phone for hearing impaired students only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

- **Data confidentiality**. Please remember that any classroom discussion of practice and research experience needs to be mindful of the confidentiality of participants and clients. All students are **encouraged** to complete the CITI on-line training program for responsible conduct of research. If students choose to conduct a small qualitative pilot study for their final project, they **must complete** the CITI training and submit a copy of the documentation substantiating completion. If the student plans to publish the data, IRB approval must be sought early in the semester prior to data collection.

**WSU STUDENT RESOURCES**

Students with disabilities

Academic integrity and student code of conduct
[http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/Academic_Integrity.html](http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/Academic_Integrity.html)

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Wayne State:
[http://www.caps.wayne.edu/](http://www.caps.wayne.edu/)

**Course Learning Units**
**Session 1 Introduction and Course Overview**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Session 2 Epistemology and Ontology**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


Session 3 Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility in Qualitative Research

Required Readings:


Supplemental Readings:


PART II: Considerations in the Design and Implementation of Qualitative Studies
Session 4 The Qualitative Research Process: How to Begin
Required Readings:

Padgett, D.K. (2008). Choosing the right qualitative approaches (pp. 29-43) and Getting started: Choosing a topic and designing the study (pp. 45-52). In *Qualitative methods in social work research*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.


Vivar, C. G. et.al. (2007). Getting started with qualitative research: Developing a research proposal. *Nurse Researcher, 14*, 60-73.

Supplemental Readings:

Session 5 Entering the Field: Gaining Access to Study Sites and Participants

Required Readings:


**Supplemental Readings:**


**PART III The Primary Data Collection Techniques Employed in Qualitative Research**

**Session 6 Interviewing Individuals**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


Session 7 Interviewing Groups

Required Readings:


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Session 8 Observations and Use of Documents or Other Forms of Existing Data**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**PART IV: Strategies for Analyzing and Reporting Qualitative Data**

**Session 9 Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Session 10 – Spring Break**

**Session 11 Data Analysis Continued**


**Session 12 Analytical Rigor and Data Quality**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Session 13 Exiting the Field and Telling the Story**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Session 14 Overview and demonstration of Nvivo**


Please download a free copy onto your laptop prior to class but no sooner than a week prior to class (free demo is for one month) [http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo_free-trial-software.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo_free-trial-software.aspx)

**Session 15 Presenting Qualitative Research Proposals/Research Paper**

Poster presentations of pilot research study/research proposal

Note: Syllabus may be modified by instructor based on the needs of the class
**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Please note that each assignment should be linked to a specific research topic selected by the student and that the topic will remain essentially the same for the duration of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1: Preliminary Literature Review</th>
<th>Due Week 4 January 28, 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct a preliminary search of the research literature (8-10 articles) on a topic of interest to you. Examine both quantitative and qualitative studies but ensure that you have included key qualitative studies on your topic. Write a five page literature review (a synthesis of research studies on your research topic of interest. Your paper should address the following:</td>
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</table>
| I. A brief background of the topic (e.g., significance or prevalence of the problem)  
II. A synthesis of the previous research that has been conducted related to this topic and the gaps in the research  
III. Provide justification for how qualitative research methods can address those gaps.  
IV. Conclude the paper with your proposed research question and a discussion of how your research question is important to social work theory, practice, or policy? |
| Include a reference list with all cited works. Please note that your reference list is not included in the five page limit. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#2: Qualitative Research Strategies: Comparison of the Five Traditions</th>
<th>Due Week 7 February 18, 2014</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the research topic you have selected to study this semester, write a 5-8 page paper that compares and contrasts the five qualitative traditions as they apply to the study of your chosen topic.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Briefly summarize the major assumptions/premises of each tradition. How does each of these traditions influence: (a) the nature of the questions being asked on your particular topic; (b) the conceptualization of the research topic; (c) the selection of study participants and research sites; (d) the research design employed in the study; and (e) the ways in which data will be analyzed and interpreted?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Which tradition do you propose to utilize for your pilot research study/research proposal? Why? (Provide a detailed rationale for selecting this particular design strategy).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be prepared to share with the class which tradition you will utilize for the pilot study/research proposal and why.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
#3: Qualitative Data Collection, Coding, and Analysis  

*Full description of the assignment is posted on Blackboard.*  

Using the research topic you have selected to study this semester, select one of the following data collection techniques:  

1. In-depth interview: sampling plan, guide, transcript and summary of findings  
2. Focus group interview: sampling plan, guide, transcript and summary of findings  

Regardless of the data collection method chosen, you will be required to spend at least one hour gathering your data and several hours coding and analyzing the data in preparation for writing up the main findings. Prepare a five page paper that includes all of the elements outlined in the “Assignment 3” handout (under the Syllabus/Assignment tab in Blackboard).

### #4: Final Paper and Presentation  

| Option A: a pilot study | Presentation due on Week 15  
| Option B: a research proposal | April 15, 2014 |

You will be given two options for your major assignment: a pilot study or a research proposal. Students also will be expected to prepare a poster presentation of their Pilot Research Study/Research Proposal.

The final assignment, building on a number of the individual written assignments, is the preparation of a manuscript depicting the results of a pilot research study or a research proposal, not to exceed 20 doubled spaced pages (excluding references and figures/tables).

#### Option A: Pilot Research Study Option  

Students who select this option will be required to have multiple data points (minimum of three but these could vary by data collection technique employed; for example, three interviews). You may also consider the use of different sources of data (e.g., field observations or archival data). As is common in qualitative research, beyond these minimal requirements, it is not possible to gauge at the onset of a research project, what is required to even minimally address your research question(s). This will emerge during the course of your data collection and analysis. Please be aware of this as you plan your time for this course.

Use the suggested outline described below for the write-up of your pilot study as well as the oral presentation.
I. Abstract (One page maximum). This is brief description of the study.

II. Specific Aims (Two pages maximum). What were the objectives of the research? What research question(s) was/were addressed? Why was this/were these (an) important question(s)?

III. Background and Rationale (Five pages maximum). Your preliminary literature review can be incorporated into this section, but you should make any revisions requested by the instructor. To recap, this section will include I-III from the literature review (brief background of the topic, synthesis of the prior research and gaps in the research, and justification of how qualitative research can address those gaps). In addition, you need to discuss the conceptual framework that was employed in your study? What is the justification or relevance for it (i.e., why is this a good fit for this research topic or project)? [Note that part of assignment #2 can be used to address these last two questions, but you must make any revisions requested by the instructor.]

IV. Research Design and Methods (Five pages maximum):
   a. Research Questions. What were the specific research questions that you studied?
   b. Data Collection Instrument or Protocol. Describe your interview/observation protocol and explain how the key constructs were captured in the protocol.
   c. Research Design. What qualitative method/design did you employ in your research? Describe in detail your data collection plan, including whether data were collected at multiple points in time. Be sure to explicitly discuss how your research plan was capable of answering your research questions. How did you establish trustworthiness of your data?
   d. Sampling. How was the study population defined? How did you know that you had sufficient cases in your sample (i.e., what helped you to determine the optimal number of cases)? How were participants recruited into the study? How does your sample affect the transferability of your findings? How did you address human subject issues?

V. Study Findings. (Five pages maximum). Summarize the key findings of your study.

VI. Conclusions and Discussion. (Two pages maximum). Synthesize the key “take-away” points from your study. What are the limitations of your study?
Option B: Research Proposal Option

You are asked to write a research proposal utilizing a qualitative design of your choice. The overall purpose of the research proposal is for students to have a “hands on” experience of writing a feasible research plan in the student’s domain of knowledge. Specific goals are to (1) familiarize students with the research literature and the philosophical/theoretical frameworks that undergird research in the student’s chosen area of study; and (2) to provide students with the opportunity to generate researchable questions, select an appropriate research design; and describe the data collection methods and analysis strategies that are best for conducting research on the chosen topic.

Use the suggested outline described below for the written proposal as well as the oral presentation.

I. Abstract (One page maximum). This is a brief description of the study

II. Specific Aims (Two pages maximum). What are the objectives of the research? What is (are) the research question(s) that will be addressed? Why is this/are these (an) important question(s)?

III. Background and Rationale (Six pages maximum). Your preliminary literature review can be incorporated into this section, but you should make any revisions requested by the instructor. To recap, this section will include I-III from the literature review (brief background of the topic, synthesis of the prior research and gaps in the research, and justification of how qualitative research can address those gaps). In addition, you need to discuss the conceptual framework that will be employed in your study? What is the justification or relevance for it (i.e., why is this a good fit for this research topic or project)? [Note that part of assignment #2 can be used to address these last two questions, but you must make any revisions requested by the instructor.]

IV. Research Design and Methods (Eight pages maximum):

a. Research Questions. What are the specific research questions to be studied?

b. Data Collection Instrument or Protocol. Describe your interview/observation protocol and explain how the key constructs will be captured in the protocol.

c. Research Design. What qualitative method/design will you employ in your research? Describe in detail your plan for collecting the data, including whether data will be collected at multiple points in time. Be sure to explicitly discuss how your research plan is capable of answering your research questions.

d. Sampling. How is the study population defined? What is your proposed sample size? When will you know you have sufficient cases in your sample? What will help you determine that optimal number of cases? How will participants be recruited into the study? What will you do to maximize participation? How will the sample you propose to use affect the transferability of
your findings?

e. Data Analysis. Describe how the data will be analyzed and how you will enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

V. Protection of Research Participants. (Two page maximum). What are the potential risks to study participants? What are the benefits, if any, to study participants? How will you protect participant confidentiality?

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Falmer.


Phenomenological inquiry in psychology (pp. 21-62). New York: Plenum Press.


