

## Y611

### Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry

#### Fall 2017 Online Section

**Faculty:** Dr. Barbie Dennis

**Office Hours:** Friday 9-10am online using the “conference tool” in Canvas. This will be a public, group accessible form of office hours. If the time does not work or you want a more private meeting, then please message me through canvas to arrange a time. I will also hold face to face office hours at my campus office on Wednesdays from 2-3.

**Contact:** It is best to message me through canvas, but my email is [bkdennis@indiana.edu](mailto:bkdennis@indiana.edu) and my office phone is 812-856-8142

**Course Website:** I use canvas for our site interactions, including messaging. I ask that you contact me through CANVAS. I will have you submit assignments, hold discussions and so forth through CANVAS.

**NOTE: All times are listed in EST.**

#### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is a narratively conducted, interpretive approach to research that generally uses a flexible design. There are many methods and theoretical perspectives through which qualitative inquiry can be engaged generally aiming to better understand everyday social life from a naturalistic (non-experimental) approach. On the level of methods, we want you to leave the course with a beginning capacity to conduct observations and interviews, to design a research plan, and to interpretively analyze the data. From a methodological perspective, we want you to be able to conceptualize the process and mode of qualitative inquiry including its ethical and validity implications. There are a variety of ways to achieve these goals.

You will be required to do fieldwork. It is through the fieldwork that methods and methodology are put into practice. The course is also reading intensive in the sense that reading qualitative research can help us to better understand the practice and thinking of qualitative inquiry.

## **Course Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the common characteristics of qualitative research;
- Utilize common practices associated with conducting qualitative inquiry;
- Outline ethical considerations common to the qualitative research process;
- Describe the various types of data collected in qualitative research studies;
- Create an interview protocol;
- Carry out fieldwork, including making observations and interviews;
- Discuss the process of preparing qualitative data for analysis;
- Describe the qualitative data analysis process (specifically associated with 'coding' and 'thematic analysis');
- Outline the arguments associated with establishing quality in qualitative research studies; and
- Describe issues related to representation and writing up findings in qualitative research.

## **Recommended Equipment:**

- I recommend you gain access to an audio recorder with software that allows you to listen to a recording from your computer. This will be important for the fieldwork project. There are a variety of ways that you can securely and safely record your interview and subsequently transcribe it.
- InqScribe (<https://www.inqscribe.com/>) is a great tool to support the transcription process. There is a free, trial version that will likely suffice for the purposes of the course. YOU can also use the following free transcriber: <http://www.theftwtranscriber.com/download/>
- I would like you to download the free version of QDA Miner Lite which is only available for PC (<http://provalisresearch.com/products/qualitative-data-analysis-software/freeware/>). If you have a Mac computer, then you will need to look at this workaround: <http://wheaton.libguides.com/QualResearch/QDAMiner>. Alternatively, you could download a free trial version of NVivo or Atlas Ti for Mac.

## **Web Resources and Networks:**

There are several web resources that you may find useful.

- The International Institute for Qualitative Methodology's Webinar series: <http://www.iiqm.ualberta.ca/WebinarSeries/MasterClassWebinarSeries.aspx>
- Methodspace (<http://www.methodspace.com/>)
- The Qualitative Report (<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>)
- Top Qualitative Research Blogs (<http://www.qualitative360.com/news-and-blogs/11-editor-s-pick-top-qualitative-research-blogs>)

### **My Approach/Commitment:**

I remember the first course I took on qualitative research. It was an eye opener, really. There is so much to learn and discuss. The basic metaphor I use when thinking about research is a conversation. The kinds of conversations I want to encourage in our class are the very kinds of conversations I want research to generate. We will all be participants in this conversation. It is important that the conversation is inclusive – everyone is welcome at the table. It is important that the conversation is non-judgmental. No idea is off limits. No learning should be thwarted (though we sometimes must negotiate in respectful and kind ways). All perspectives are welcome and everyone should have a free and equal opportunity to learn and engage.

There are lots of cool ways to do qualitative inquiry well. Let's explore these together. This exploration will ask us to question some of our own underlying assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs. We will think about our beliefs about truth, objectivity, subjectivity, narration, position, bias and so forth.

I love talking about theory. I you will join me in some bit of theoretical questioning. Each week there will be a bit of theory to talk about – theory that is tightly linked to the practices we will be engaged in. Each week you will have a practical, field-based assignment.

As we sit together in conversation, we are co-participants. I am teaching in the traditional sense of the word, but I do have responsibilities that are different from yours. I have organized you into small groups for the learning and discussion groups of the class. I will participate in all the groups, but you will only be participating in the group to which you are assigned. I will facilitate the discussions, preparing discussion prompts each week and engaging in each of the threads as is warranted. I will also, of course, meet with you during office hours, though you are not obligated to attend. And I will be available to meet with you more personally at other time should you desire such a meeting. Just let me know. And, of course, I will mark your work providing feedback that is intended to support your efforts to become qualitative researchers.

However, I also consider myself a learner. I will have genuine questions and will not often be the bearer of answers. Teaching and learning are tightly connected

and I hope as we sit at the conversational table, you, too will join me in the teaching, facilitation and learning process. If at any time things are not working for you, please let me know as my main concern is that this be a good wholesome learning opportunity for all of us.

**Texts:**

1. Sarah Tracy. 2013. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact. First Edition.* Wiley-Blackwell. Called T in schedule

ISBN-10: 140519202X

ISBN-13: 978-1405192026

2. Choose one of the following **Special Texts** (Called ST in schedule):

- a. Gyatri Reddy. 2005. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India. First Edition.* University of Chicago Press.

ISBN-13: 978-0226707563

ISBN-10: 0226707563

- b. Signithia Fordham. 2016. *Downed by Friendly Fire: Black Girls, White Girls, and Suburban Schooling.* University of Minnesota Press.

ISBN-10: 0816689679

ISBN-13: 978-0816689675

- c. Shabana Mir. 2014. *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity. Reprint Edition.* University of North Carolina Press.

ISBN-10: 1469629968

ISBN-13: 978-1469629964

**Other Required Readings:**

In addition to the required texts, many articles or chapters will be required readings. All of these readings can be found on Canvas in the Resources Tab. These will be designated by author's last name and (E) to indicate that it is an electronic reading.

**Course Expectations and Assignments/Activities:**

This course requires a significant amount of reading, fieldwork, and discussion. Firstly, you will be expected to participate in weekly discussions which bring together practice, theory and reading. Second, you will be engaged in fieldwork which assignments each week. There are a couple of weeks where those assignments are a little more time intensive and I will indicate this in the syllabus with an asterisk. There are also weeks where you will be in the conducting an observation or an interview and these will require that you schedule your time with others so you will need to plan ahead to get these scheduled during the weeks indicated on the syllabus. Throughout the course, know that I will be here to support you and facilitate the learning process! My intention is to make this a truly meaningful learning (and growing) experience.

Throughout your work, I am hoping to understand how you are understanding particular concepts and practices we are learning, reflect with you on key issues and core concepts, facilitate your fluency and clarity with respect to talking about qualitative inquiry, and encourage your thought engagement with me and others in this exploratory process.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Points</b>
1. Participation	60
2. Fieldwork Activities	90
a. Photo/Narrative Introduction	
b. Thick Description of Context	
c. Observation	
d. Observation Report	
e. Interview	
f. Interview Report	
g. Positionality Reflection	
h. Initial Data Analysis Report	
3. Reading Response	25

175 total points

### **Participation (60 POINTS):**

Each week, we will have a discussion using the discussion threads on canvas. You will participate each week in small groups of 3-4. These groups will be assigned for the second week. The first week's discussion will be a whole class discussion. I will post discussion prompts in three categories for each week's thread. Prompts will be posted by Monday morning at 8am EST and the week's discussion will end by Thursday evening at 5pm EST. You should post 3 substantive posts each week to receive credit. Each week you will be able to earn 5 points for these discussions with a one week pass in the sense that the total amount of points is 5x14 weeks rather than 5x15 weeks (though if you

earn 5 points all 15 weeks you get the extra credit). Weekly Discussions cannot be made up and posts offered after Thursday at 5pm will not count toward the scoring.

A substantive post is a post that draws on the readings and talks specifically about the content in a meaningful way. Posts like “I agree” and “That is a good point” or “I didn’t really understand the reading” can be good to make, but will not count as a substantive posts. In other words, you are likely going to post more than 3 times and this is good because it will contribute to the conversational dialogue in important ways. You should do this in addition to the 3 substantive posts. On weeks you earn the full 5 points it will be because you wrote three substantive posts that pushed the conversation deeper and forward based on the readings, personal experience, and outside sources you made available to the group AND because you responded to groupmates’ postings, raised important questions or in other communicative ways interacted throughout the week with the discussion.

The point of this way of structuring the participation grade is to honor the research that indicates online class discussions are a primary pedagogical tool. It means being able to get online more than once a week. You can expect that I will also be engaging in these discussions.

### **Reading Response: (25 POINTS)**

You will write a 1 page reading response for the ethnography you selected to read (referred to as Special Text in the schedule) The reading response will be uploaded to both your group discussion (and will count as one of your substantive posts for the week) and to the assignment folder. It is worth 25 points should focus on the following methodological questions:

- (1) Who is the ethnographer and how is their positionality reflected in the ethnographic work?
- (2) What were key methodologies engaged (e.g. how were data collected, how long in the field, how were data analyzed, how trustworthy is the research)?
- (3) What did you learn about qualitative research by reading the text?

### **Fieldwork (90 POINTS):**

The fieldwork component of the course prepares you to begin thinking about qualitative methodologies in thoughtful and complex ways. When you leave the course, you should be able to build on this starting place as you pursue any number of complicated and interesting research projects. Our fieldwork will focus on the work that is going on around us. For example if we are teachers, we will focus our fieldwork on teaching or building administration. If we are counselors, we will focus our fieldwork on counseling. During the first week of class you will identify the work that you are involved with and interested in. If

you are teaching pre-service teachers then you will focus on that. If you are in game development or you are a health professional then you will focus on that. You will begin with a very basic question that emerges from your own work and you will use the fieldwork assignments to focus on that.

Therefore, this semester you will not simply read about qualitative research, but you will also carry out a semester-long research study. The goal is for you to 'try out' the qualitative research process in an environment where you can acquire extensive feedback and support, thereby preparing you for future qualitative research. All assignments are submitted through canvas under the assignment tab.

- a. **Photo Narrative Introduction:** During this first week, I want you to provide a brief 1-2 page narrative about yourself and what interests you, particularly regarding your work (paid or unpaid). I want you to end the narrative introduction with some genuine questions you have that emerge with respect to your work. Then I also want you to include a photograph of yourself, your work, or your interests. You will post this assignment both in the assignment folder, where I will mark it, but also in the whole class discussion (10).
- b. **Thick Description of Context:** You will submit a thick, rich description of your research site. Perhaps this is the school you work at or the counseling center where you meet with clients. I want you to enter the site as if for the first time. Write down everything you can see in detail, things you hear, how the place feels, what you notice about it. Take some photos if you can. Combine your description with any photos you have taken. Be sure to write your description in the first person. Be sure to include the date and time. (10)
- c. **Observation:** I want you to observe (as a passive observer) your workplace, either someone else teaching or a teaching meeting where you can remain passively focused on the observation, or people at the school engaging in learning activities, for example. To do this observation, you will be expected to observe for 30 minutes. This observation will involve you using an audio-recording device to capture the speaking and other sounds, while also taking thick field notes capturing as much of what you see and understand as possible. Be sure to describe the context of the observation as well. This assignment can be found in the quiz tool as Observation. Just answer the questions. (5)
- d. **Observation Report\*:** This assignment takes a little bit more time. You transcribe the audio file you made during the observation (you can use Inqscrib for this) and then embed your observational notes. Be sure to use italics for all the speech you capture verbatim from the recording device and use regular font for everything else. Be sure to include the date, time, place and who is present during the observation. This

information should be captured in your fieldnotes for the observation. (15)

- e. **Interview Protocol:** You will: 1) briefly describe who you will be interviewing and 2) create a list of the 5-8 questions that you will pose. We are aiming for thirty minute interview with a person engaged in work that is similar or tangential to yours or who participated in the observation. (5)
- f. **Interview:** Conduct approx.. 30 minutes interview. This assignment can be found in the quiz tool as Interview. Just answer the questions. (5)
- g. **Interview Report\*:** This assignment takes a bit longer. You will transcribe the interview. Transcribing interviews is easier than transcribing observations. Be sure to include descriptive information as context – who is being interviewed, when, where, why? (15)
- h. **Initial Data Analysis:** You will carry out an initial data analysis of your observation and/or interview data, and then share your preliminary findings through this report using QDA miner lite. The details of what should be included in this report are listed in the assignment guideline posted in Canvas. (15)
- i. **Final Fieldwork Reflection:** This reflection will allow you to bring together your data collection, analysis, and reflections. The goal of this reflection is to offer a brief description of your research process, including your data collection and analysis. You will also offer initial ‘findings’ and reflect on the process overall. The format of this final reflection will be a video (not more than 5 minutes) uploaded to the class canvas discussion site to be viewed by myself and your peers. Essentially, this will be a mini-conference presentation. (10)

### Grading Policy

The following is the grading scale. As noted above, your final grade is based on the number of points you earn throughout the semester.

#### Grading Scale

A	94%
A-	90 - 93.5%
B+	87% - 92.5%
B	84% - 86.5%
B-	80% - 83.5%
C+	77% - 79.5%


#### Schedule:

The Discussion Topic and Readings are listed by week. The Readings should be completed by Monday. Assignments are always due Thursday at 5:00pm on the week listed. *Plan ahead notes are offered in this purple font.*

WEEK OF:	DISCUSSION	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
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	<b>TOPIC</b>		<b>DUE BY THURSDAY AT 5pm EST</b>
8/21	The Self: Introductions		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Photo Narrative Introduction: Post in the Class Discussion, but also in the assignment folder</li> <li>2. Introduction QUIZ (not graded)</li> </ol>
8/28	Qualitative Research: A starting place and a conversation	T1 T2	Begin reading your special text in preparation for the discussion the week of 9/18
9/4 Labor Day on Monday so discussion postings will start on 9/5	Qualitative Research: Theoretical Underpinnings	T3	Be sure to have the site picked out. You will need to do your first site visit during the week of Sept. 25.
9/11	Power	Walford 2011 (E) Mack 2012 (E) Payne and Hamadi 2009 (E)	Schedule your observation for 30 minutes during the week of October 9.
9/18	Power, theory and practice through example	ST	Reading Response ST
9/25	Entering the field	T4	
10/2	Observations and Field Notes	T6	Thick Description of Context
10/9	Observation Continued	Polkinghorne 2005 (E)	Observation Remember to set aside extra time following the observation to transcribe and prepare the

			observation report.
10/16	Interview Preparation	T7	Observation Report Schedule your interview for the week of 10/30
10/23	Conducting Interviews	T8	Interview Protocol
10/30	Analysis	T10	Interview Remember to set aside extra time this week to transcribe the interview.
11/6	Analysis Cont.	O'Connor and Gibson (E)	Interview Report
11/13	Quality of Qualitative Research	T14 Dennis 2013 (E)	It may take a couple of weeks to do the initial data analysis so set time aside each week for this until it is due.
11/20 Thanksgiving no class this week			
11/27	Ethics	Dennis 2016 (E) Fahie 2014 (E)	Initial Data Analysis
12/4	Possibilities Self Reflection	T14 Peshkin 1988 (E)	
12/11	NO CLASS FINAL EXAM PERIOD		Final Fieldwork Reflection (Video)