

Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods Syllabus Fall 1999

Professor Judith Davidson
Graduate School of Education
University of Massachusetts-Lowell
Wednesdays: 4:00-6:30 pm

#1 9/13/99

Introduction to Course

Focus of Class:

- overview of course, expectations, readings & assignments
- overview of the roots of qualitative research
- introductions and discussion of our individual research interests and goals

Assignment for following week

1. Readings for class discussion
 2. Journal entries
 3. Background work on possible research sites
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#2 9/20/99

What is qualitative research? What is a paradigm?

Focus of Class

- to gain an appreciation of the philosophical foundations of qualitative research including an introduction to post-modernism and the paradigms
- to gain perspective on contemporary issues in research methodology
- to explore potential research topics

Readings for discussion

- Glesne, Chapter 1 (required text)
- Guba & Lincoln. "Competing paradigms in qualitative research".
- Miller, Nelson, & Moore, "Caught in the Paradigm Gap".
- Davidson: Example of unpublished log
- Siegesmund, R. "Reflecting on the I in inquiry"

Assignment for next class

1. readings for class discussion
 2. journal entries
 3. work on site selection; meet with instructor about site selection
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#3 9/27/98

PLANNING FOR RESEARCH...Shaping a Research Question

Focus of Class:

- Issues in beginning a research project: selecting a site, developing the research question, gaining access,
- developing a cover story
- discussion of students' research plans
- formation of research support teams

Readings for discussion

- Glesne; Chapter 2, Prestudy tasks: Doing what is good for you.
- Maxwell; pp 1-62
- Davidson, Draft Example of Cover Story
- Wasser; Questions that drive research
- Cotner: "Everything and the Kitchen Sink..."

Assignment for next class

1. Readings for next class discussion
 2. Journal Entries
 3. Work on site selection; meet with instructor re: site selection
 4. Develop written individual cover stories
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#4. 10/4/99

Ethics and Subjectivity

Focus of Class

- self and other; the Subjective "I's"
- what are the obligations of the researcher
- what are the dangers to the researchee
- issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and trust
- discussion of emerging in-the-field research issues
- sharing of individual cover stories

Required Readings for Class Discussion

- Glesne, Chapter 5 & 6, Rapport & Subjectivity: Ethics
- Peshkin, "In search of subjectivity--One's own" [To be distributed]
- Peshkin, Prologue and Chapter 1 from Places of memory
- Human Subject Policy for UMass-Lowell. To be distributed.
- McQuillan & Muncey, Protecting Your School's Interest while Promoting Quality Research.

Assignment for following class session:

1. Readings for next class discussion
2. Journal Entries; Explore Subjective "I's"

#5. 10/18/99

Participant Observation and Fieldnotes I

Focus of Class:

- discussion of critical issues in participant observation: being present in the space of others, crafting the researcher role
- fieldnotes; how to write up, form and style
- discussion of emerging in-the-field research issues

Readings for discussion

- Glesne, Chapter 3
- Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, chapters 1-3
- Example of fieldnotes from Bogdan and Biklen

Assignment for next class

1. Readings for next class
2. journal entries
3. Fieldwork

First Graded Assignment DUE

- Formal memo describing research question, site, and ethical issues
 - Journal entries completed to date (2 per week)
 - Completed Cover Story
- [For Feedback from Professor and Research Support Group]

#6 10/25/99

Participant Observation and Fieldnotes II

Focus of Class

- deepening understanding of participant observation techniques
- refining the production and quality of fieldnotes
- beginning preliminary chunking and analysis of raw data
- continuing discussion of emerging research issues

Readings for discussion

- Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw; Chapters 4 & 5
- Intrator, S. "Poetics of Fieldwork..."
- colleagues' fieldnotes

Assignment for next class

1. Readings for next class
2. Journal Entries
3. Fieldwork

#7. 11/1/99

The Ethnographic Interview I

Focus of Class:

- kinds of interviews; formal, informal, focus group, extended...
- designing an open-ended interview and selecting interviewees
- setting up, conducting, writing up and following-up on an interview
- discussion of in-the-field emerging issues

Readings for class discussion

- Glesne & Peshkin, chapter 4
- samples of interviews
- sample of a draft interview protocol

Assignment for the following class

1. Readings for next class discussion
2. journal entries
3. fieldwork

#8 11/8/99

Ethnographic Interview II

Focus of Class

- deepening understanding of the ethnographic interview
- examining examples of our own work to better understand researcher's role
- looking at the relationship of researcher questions to content gleaned

Readings to be discussed

- Examples from fieldwork

Assignments for next class

1. Readings assigned
2. Journal Entries
3. Fieldwork

#9 11/15/99

Analysis and Interpretation I: Preliminary and Intermediate Analysis

Focus of Class

- Taking a more formal look at the analysis that has been ongoing since the initiation of the research work
- Understanding descriptive vs. interpretive codes
- Developing more formal coding categories
- Understanding how initial coding categories are refined through "coding on"

Readings for Discussion

- Glesne, Chapter 7
- Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, Chapter 6

Assignments for Next Class

- assigned readings
- journal entries
- work on coding of own observations and interviews
- write a memo about one specified code

Third Checked Assignment DUE

- One full set of observational fieldnotes
 - One Interview write-up
 - Completed Journals to date

[For Feedback from Professor and Research Support Group]

#10 11/22/99

Analysis and Interpretation II: Writing Qualitative Research

Focus of Class

- continued examination of emerging fieldwork issues
- examination of coding systems under development
- examination of coding memos
- thinking about the movement from memos to written product

Readings to be discussed

- Glesne, Chapter 8, 9 & 10
 - Emerson, Fretz & Shew, Chapters 7 & 8
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#11 11/29/99

Analysis and Interpretation III: Theory, Validity, Warrants

Focus of Class:

- evaluating ethnography: what's a "good" educational ethnography?, what standards will we employ for our own work?
- continuing discussion of emerging fieldwork issues

Readings for Class discussion

- Maxwell; pp. 63-98
- Glesne, pp 32-33
- Altheide & Johnson "Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research" to be distributed

Assignment for next class

1. Readings for the following week
2. Journal entries
3. Fieldwork and/or analysis

#12 12/6/99***Analysis and Interpretation IV: Applying Criteria for Quality***

Focus of class

- applying what we have learned to a finished product
- discussion of final products underway

Readings for discussion

- Finder's: Hidden literacies and life in junior high

Assignment for next class

- preparation of final submission and final presentation
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#13 12/13/99***Presenting Professional Work: Methodology Round Table Talks***

Students will present their studies in Round Table Discussion groups to class members and other invited guests. Due to the importance of professional dialogue within research fields, this is a very important requirement of the course. If for some reason, you are prevented from attending the final session, you will be asked to make a presentation of your work at a specially scheduled session at the beginning of the subsequent semester. The course grade will be incomplete until this requirement is fulfilled.

Following the Round Table Discussions there will be a reception for class participants and guests.

#14 Special Make-up Session

We will miss one class session due to the Columbus Day Holiday, October 11, 1999. You will be expected to make-up that session in the following way:

1. One-on-one meeting with the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss research project ideas and ethical issues involved.
2. Schedule a meeting with research support group sometime in the later part of the semester to discuss analysis issues on the various projects.

Both items are required.

**Final Project Due: No Later than 10:00 AM
Monday December 20, 1999**

