

Qualitative Research in Education

3 units

Pre-requisite: Classified status, Introduction to Research class
Need to schedule a combination of classroom/computer lab.

Course Description

This course outlines the theoretical underpinnings and current trends in qualitative research practices for various fields related to educational inquiry. Students learn to identify the qualitative research practices appropriate for addressing research questions that are based on non-linear, verbal and graphic datasets, and professionally accepted methods for analyzing, discussing, and theorizing utilizing such data.

Course Objectives

- 1) Learn to distinguish research questions appropriate for qualitative data gathering and analysis.
- 2) Understand how validity and reliability concerns are approached in descriptive and qualitative research.
- 3) Develop a familiarity with the full range of descriptive, qualitative and mixed methodological research approaches for conducting educational inquiry.
- 4) Analyze qualitative, non-linear, verbal and graphic datasets and discuss these data using a range of presentation modes.

Overview: This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the interpretation and design of qualitative research in educational settings.

We will see that conducting qualitative educational research involves far more than selecting one's favorite approach from among the smorgasbord of research designs; rather, both researchers and those who interpret their work make choices that manifest implicit –and too often unstated– assumptions about important questions, including:

what is knowable? and who is in a position to know it?

what can be changed? and who can change it? and

whose interests prevail, in a society where cultural and economic difference is the norm, if knowledge is constructed in particular ways?

Viewed in this way, the course spans all of the “Learner Outcomes” in the College of Education’s **Conceptual Framework**:

Values and Beliefs: Qualitative educational research will be examined throughout in terms of three major value systems, the positivist, the interpretive, and the emancipatory or participatory paradigms. Additionally, emphasis will be placed on Teacher Research, its theoretical underpinnings and collaborative practice in classrooms and as a component for staff development and promoting educational leadership.

Knowledge and Skills: The course will address a range of interpretive skills required for reflective classroom practitioners to draw full benefit from qualitative educational research: distinguishing descriptive from experimental research, understanding and conducting literature reviews, designing teacher-researcher or action research projects, and writing research proposals.

Performance and Achievement: Throughout the course, the emphasis will center on qualitative research inquiry to improve instruction, counseling and administration in school settings.

Assessment and Reflection: The course will stress data-driven curriculum inquiry and on-going hypothesis building to guide teaching and learning.

Advocacy and Leadership: The development of analytical and reflective skills for curricular improvement is the hallmark of the educational professional, and lends authority to her or his advocacy on behalf of students and their communities.

Required Readings. Additional Readings will be available on reserve at the Library in Turlock or in Stockton.

Texts: Creswell, J. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Geisler, C. (). *Analyzing streams of language: Twelve steps to the systematic coding of text, talk and other verbal data*. Boston MA: Pearson Longmans.

Rossman, G.B, & Rallis, S.F. (2003), *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Online Participation: Throughout the terms, we will share in Group Discussions online using **Blackboard**. Students are expected to participate productively and constructively in every Group Discussion. In addition, many of the course readings are available online or by visiting Websites that will be listed in Blackboard. All required readings on Blackboard are marked with an asterisk [*].

Inclass Participation: Come to class having read the material assigned; class discussions are designed to extend and enhance your understanding, not to inform you of what you didn't read up on. If absent or if needing to arrive late or leave early from a class, a student will submit a short, dated "Reaction Paper" summarizing her or his thoughts on the assigned readings for the missed class. This is an effort to assure that a student not fall behind in the course.

Grade Components and Weighting

Skills Building Tasks	50 points	Total earned points will be converted to percentages resulting in the following grades:		
Midterm Exam	50 points			
Final Exam	50 points			A: 93+ A-: 90-92
Course Research Project	50 points		B+: 87-89	B: 83-86 B-: 80-82
Research Proposal	50 points		C+: 77-79	C: 73-76 C-: 70-72
TOTAL	250 points		D+: 67-69	D: 63-66

Skills Building Tasks

These are short assignments worth 5-10 points toward this component of your grade. They relate to skills building in interpreting qualitative research, gathering data including conducting interviews and taking fieldnotes, and coding and analyzing data using NVivo software. Some tasks will prove useful in writing the research proposal, while others will build toward the Class Research Project. They will be assigned throughout the course, with the potential for improving submissions for higher grades before the final session.

Midterm and Final Exams

These will occur during the 7th and 14th sessions (the latter during Exam Week). They will consist of multiple-choice, short answer and essay questions on topics covered in the first six class sessions and in the 8th–13th sessions, respectively.

Course Research Project

We will design a course research project, working as a team to gather and analyze a shared dataset using traditional and computer-based coding and analysis tools. Your participation in this project will be evaluated according to a rubric posted on Blackboard.

Thesis or Project Research Proposal

The research proposal summarizes and justifies your plan to conduct research on a specific topic. It is typically 10-15 pages in length, and is referenced using the APA style sheet. Use the following headings to organize your proposal. A grading rubric and guidelines for IRB submission are posted in Blackboard.

Title

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Significance of the Problem

Research Question(s)

Theory

Brief Review of Literature

This section summarizes the major sections of a literature review, and is thus much shorter than Chapter Two of a thesis. The goal of this section is to convey your awareness of previous research on key aspects pertinent to your research topic.

Research Design

Sample

Method

Data Analysis

Take special care to be specific in this section. Qualitative research designs necessitate especially clear justifications that data will be rigorously analyzed.

References

Schedule

Class	Topic(s)	Due
1	Introduction to course, Overview and history of qualitative & descriptive approaches to educational research	
2	Criteria for Reading and Evaluating Qualitative Research (QR); How validity and reliability concerns are addressed in QR	
3	Interview, case study and focus group research	
4	Ethnographic approaches	
5	Interpretive biography and narrative approaches	
6	Phenomenological approaches	
7	MIDTERM EXAM	
8	Teacher-researcher approaches	
9	Data collection methods	
10	Coding and data analysis	
11	Grounded theory approaches to designing, conducting, and analyzing verbal/visual datasets	Thesis or Project Proposal
12	Discussion of Thesis/Project Research Proposal; Choosing how to write the narrative	
13	Presentation and discussion of course research project	Class Research Project component
14	FINAL EXAM	