THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Course Outline

Department/Program: School of Social Work
Year: January 2012
Course Title: SOWK 654: Advanced Qualitative Inquiry
Course Schedule: Friday, 9:00 – 12:00
Location(s): Jack Bell Building (2080 West Mall) room 122

Instructor: Deborah O’Connor/ Pilar Riaño-Alcalá & Brian O’Neill
Office location: Jack Bell Bldg., Office 333 & 236
Office phone: (604) 822-5299/7-5493 & 2-2460
Office hours: Friday, 1:00 – 2:00 and by appointment
E-mail address: deborah.oconnor@ubc.ca; pilar.riano@ubc.ca; brian.oneill@ubc.ca

Revised February 14, 2012

Course Description (from calendar):
This focus of this course will be to develop a sophisticated understanding of a wide range of approaches to qualitative research. It will promote a more reflective/reflexive approach to research in the social sciences with a particular focus on positioning qualitative research approaches. Attention will be paid to the interpretive, political and rhetorical nature of qualitative research.

Objectives:
• To develop a critical analysis/interpretation of a broad range of approaches to qualitative research;
• To operationalize the link between epistemology, methodology and method;
• To develop expertise with one approach to inquiry

Pre requisites and/or Course Restrictions (from calendar):
SOWK 554 or equivalent. Students must have some experience conducting qualitative research.

Students entering this course will be expected to have a basic familiarity with qualitative research including experience analyzing qualitative data and writing up a qualitative research study.

Format of the course:
Based on an assessment of the learning goals and needs of course participants, classes will include short lectures, discussion of readings, small group work, peer presentations and completion of a series of assignments throughout the term. The content and schedule of topics, and value of assignments may be revised based on students' learning goals and needs.

**Required and Recommended Reading:**


This text will be used as a general reference point – chapters will be recommended each week as appropriate. It has been selected because it is probably one of the best known and most comprehensive reference texts available about qualitative research – if you are only going to purchase one book on qualitative research this is usually the book that is recommended. Finally, this is just out, so I thought made a particularly useful contribution for establishing the state of knowledge in this area.

This text will be supplemented with a reading package and students are expected to read beyond the required readings.

**Course Assignments, Due dates and Grading:**

1. Critiquing qualitative research: Select a journal article outlining a qualitative study related to the topic you will be researching and
   a) write a critique of it using class readings and discussions;  
   b) Step back and begin to articulate the framework you used for critiquing. IE. What did you look at, what questions did you ask the text?.... We will discuss this in class.

   This assignment will be completed in class (March 2nd) by a group critique of two articles. There will be no mark for this exercise

   **Suggested Readings to assist with assignment:**
   *Education for Health Change in Training and Practice* 13(1) pp. 113-122


See also recommended readings in week 13 – they all focus on criteria/standards for evaluating qualitative research.

2. Critical examination of an approach to qualitative research
The purpose of this assignment is to develop familiarity and expertise with an approach to qualitative research by applying it to a research problem of your choice. You will be expected to: a) clearly articulate what approach/ideas you are using to guide your approach to research; b) apply this particular approach to design a study; c) critically analyze the strengths and limitations associated with using this particular approach. This assignment will be developed and presented in two ways:

a) Class presentation:
Objectives of assignment:
• Assist others to understand this way of approaching qualitative research;
• Obtain peer feedback to assist in developing your ideas;
• Develop skills as an instructor;
Length: 1.5 hour
Value: 40% - grading will be done collaboratively by peers and instructor
Due: Class presentations will take place in March 30th. This is a one day seminar.

b) Methodology section of proposal – see Evaluation Criteria for further information.
Length: 20 pages
Value: 50%
Due: April 27, 2012

3. Reflexive journal: (see guidelines enclosed)
Throughout the course maintain a journal documenting your thoughts and reactions to the course readings and discussions. Be prepared to share this journal with other members of the class. The objectives of this assignment are: a) to encourage you to critically reflect upon the readings and your own learning; b) to foster the practice of journaling which is an important skill, art and practice associated with good qualitative research.
Value: 10%
Due: last class

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1 Please note: this paper is about the methodology you will use to study a topic and NOT about a substantive topic! Provide only a very basic overview of the issue in order to orient the reader.
Grading Criteria

Assignment 2 - Critical Examination of an approach to Qualitative Research (Written)

I. Description of Approach (25 marks maximum):
   25: Provides comprehensive overview of main aspects associated with particular approach. Draws on ‘classical’ readings in the area and supplements with newer emerging perspectives;
   20 - major attendance to most of above
   16 - minor attendance to most of above

II. Originality and Analysis (30 points max.)
   35 - original idea or approach: effort to integrate previously unintegrated material; creative development of ideas; management of difficult conceptual task; perceptive critique of relevant literature
   29 - major attendance to most of the above
   25 - minor attendance to most of the above - ie. repetition of material from references with only minor modification

III. Implications on Research Design (25 points max.)
   25- In-depth and explicit analysis of the link between epistemological issues and practical implications of particular approach on all aspects of the research process including: sampling, data collection; options for analysis; researcher’s role, ethical issues and validity issues;
   20- Less sophisticated analysis of implications
   16- Superficial description of implications

IV. Presentation of Ideas
   a) Logical Development (10 points)
      • well developed, logically sequenced initial orientation, body and final summary; sense of continuity and connection of ideas; clear transitions between paragraphs; focussed;
   b) Style (10 points)
      • excellent sentence construction and choice of words; correct use of technical terms and abbreviations; adherence to all APA requirements

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2 I am re-noting: Do keep in mind that this paper is about the methodology you will use to study a topic and NOT about a substantive topic! Provide only a very basic overview of the issue in order to orient the reader and provide a foundation for your research question.
Course Schedule:

Week 1 - Introduction – What do we want to know?

Week 2 - Developing a ‘map’ for analyzing approaches

Required Reading:
Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (2011) Introduction (chapter 1) and Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences, Revisited (chapter 6).

O'Connor D. L. (2001) Journeying the Quagmire: Exploring the discourses that shape qualitative research. Affilia, 16(2)

Supplementary Reading:


Week 3 - Critical Research: Power, positioning and politics

Readings:
Handbook chapters: Part II, chapter 7-9

Supplemental Reading
Creswell, J. (2007) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five traditions. 2nd edition Thousand Oaks: SAGE – This book is highly recommended as a background to beginning to situate different approaches but it has serious limitations!


Week 4 – Post-structural Research: Texts, tensions and fragmented realities Feb 17 - Pilar

Readings:
Handbook chapters: Chapters 11 – 13, chapter 23

Supplemental Readings


Week 5: Implementing and Anchoring Paradigms: Strategies of Inquiry March 2 - Brian

Required Reading:
Handbook, Part III – chapters 15 – 21

Week 6 - Putting methodology to work: Design decisions March 9 – Pilar
Panel with PhDers recently graduated and with others who have recently completed their research.

Readings
Handbook, chapters 25 – 27, 29


Week 7 Analysis: Categorizing and Contextualizing March 16 - Brian
Handbook chapters 35,36,39
Week 8  Interpretation, Evaluation and Presentation March 23 - Pilar

Required Readings
Handbook, chapter 23, 24, 34, 40, 41

Recommended:


Week 9 – 12  TBA based on student presentations – one article to be identified (and provided) by each presenter to class at least one week before presentation. March 30 – Pilar & Brian – all day

Week 13  – April 3 (TBC) The future

Required Reading:
Handbook, chapter 42 – 43 and Epilogue

Attendance:
Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Please notify me of absences and request any handouts. This course depends upon the participation of achieve maximum usefulness and interest!

The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.
Participation:
Students are expected to contribute to discussion in classes based on the weekly readings and to present their own study for feedback.

Academic Dishonesty: Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic regulations” for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Also visit www.arts.ubc.ca and go to the students’ section for useful information on avoiding plagiarism and on correct documentation.

Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should also retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standing. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the university.