**ERMA 7210.001: Theory and Methodology of Qualitative Research[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Auburn University - College of Education

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, & Technology

Fall 2017

**1.** **Class Time:** Mondays, 5:00-7:50 pm

**Location:** Haley Center, Room 2467

**Instructor:** Hannah Baggett, PhD

**Contact information**:334.844.3024 [hcb0017@auburn.edu](mailto:hcb0017@auburn.edu)

**Office Hours**: Mondays and Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00, and by appointment

**Credit Hours**: 3 semester hours

**2.** **Special Accommodations**. Students who need accommodations are asked to electronically submit

their approved accommodations through AU Access and to arrange a meeting during office hours the

first week of classes. If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility,

but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center,

844-2096 (V/TT).

1. **Course Description**: This course is designed to give you an overview and introduction to the historical and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry. We will also compare and contrast the assumptions, design, and methods of different “schools” of qualitative inquiry. The primary purposes of the course are to: 1) introduce the founding and prevailing principles and paradigms of qualitative inquiry; how these have been used to describe social phenomena; and their underlying assumptions; 2) critique the limits and possibilities of the various paradigms of qualitative research; 3) help you become ‘good consumers’ of qualitative research; 4) provide an opportunity to begin honing your qualitative research design skills; and 5) push you to ‘get your feet wet’ in data generation.

1. **Required Texts**:

Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

*approaches (4th ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schwandt, T. A. (2015). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

**(Choose one of the following):**

Ferguson, A. A. (2001). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of black masculinity*. Ann Arbor:

University of Michigan Press.  
Lather, P., & Smithies, C. (1997). *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*. Westview

Press, Inc.

Weil, J. (2014). *The new neighborhood senior center*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Additional course readings and materials will be delivered via Canvas.

https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/images/cleardot.gif

1. **Required Materials:**

* Time management skills. (This course is time-intensive. I encourage you to consider your schedule before deciding to commit to this class.).
* Web access. You must have access to a web browser, and you must check your email accounts (Tiger Mail and Canvas) several times a week. Speaking of technology:

**The Web Ate My Homework and Other Excuses:**

By registering for this course, please realize:

* This course is hosted in Canvas and may require students to download and employ third-party software programs and troubleshoot their own technology problems. Since I can't make house calls or analyze multiple different student computer systems, troubleshooting may involve working with the campus help desk, LRC, peers, etc. That being said, if you have tech issues, I will happily try to help you during regular office hours.
* All assignments for this course are submitted to Canvas. Courses with electronically submitted assignments require students to take responsibility for saving/backing up work and for re-doing assignments if they fail to back up their work.  (It’s a good idea to create assignments in Word, Pages, or other word processing software in case Canvas times you out or you lose your connection.)

1. **Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

* Discuss the theoretical traditions of qualitative research;
* Discuss the limits/possibilities of various approaches to qualitative inquiry;
* Discuss the limits/possibilities of various techniques and procedures for collecting qualitative data;
* Assess the quality of qualitative research;
* Design qualitative research studies.

1. **Course Format:** Scholars have long theorized that educational pedagogy and practice is rooted in a ‘banking’ approach to teaching and learning (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997). In this banking model, students were (and in many cases still are) viewed as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher, who ‘deposits’ knowledge and expertise. In this way, students are positioned as passive and powerless, and teaching is a purely teacher-directed act. Due to this positioning, students are often unfamiliar with being responsible for active participation in their own learning.Since all education is political (Freire, 1970) and teachers generally develop courses around their convictions, I try to be very transparent about my teaching philosophy: I approach teaching from a critical stance, which counters passive transference of knowledge. Instead of assuming the role of ‘director’ of learning and ‘keeper’ of authority in a classroom of adults, I participate in teaching as a guide, wherein students emerge as co-directors of the curriculum. This model of teaching expects that students will contribute their own experiences, knowledge, and expertise, and empowers students to be actively involved in their own development. This empowerment is particularly critical in working with adult students who each add a valuable and unique perspective that is essential to quality graduate level learning. I view myself as both a learner and a teacher in the class, and I expect that you will also participate in both of these roles. Our course will include small group discussions and activities, whole-class discussions and activities, reflection, conferencing, fieldwork, and student-led discussions and presentations. It is important that students keep current with the assigned readings, attend class meetings, and participate in the discussions as informed members.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation (see weekly schedule for due dates):**

1. **Weekly Reader’s Reflections (5 pts x 13 weeks = 65 points total):** The reading for this class is not casual. To demonstrate that you have read, and engaged with the course readings, **a weekly reflection is due, based on the assigned readings, before the start of class each week by 12:00. You must attend class to earn credit for reflections.**

**Reflection Rubric**

1. Unpacks at least 2 specific concepts or points from the readings (with in-text citations). (1 pt)

2. Relation of new information to old information learned in the course to date. (1 pt)

3. Relation of information in article or reading to personal experience. (1 pt)

4. Discussion at a critical level, not just recitation and summary, **from *all* of the readings**. (1 pt)

5. Length of reflection: approx 1 page. (1 pt)

Note: Discussion at a critical level means discussing the concepts and ideas raised by the readings. You should synthesize the main ideas or themes across the readings, rather than respond to each reading in a laundry list. What are the cohesive ideas/patterns that go across the readings? Or, where do the readings seem to disagree? What questions do you have, after unpacking the readings? A critical discussion would not include your feelings about the author's writing style (e.g. “I like this article” or "This article is boring"), but aim for an intellectual/academic treatment of the ideas. Do not just tell me what the article or reading states...I already know this.

1. **CITI Training (completion):** Online ethics in research training required by the university before your begin conducting research with human subjects. Every *individual* enrolled in this class must complete their CITI training. In addition to the required modules, I encourage you to also complete any modules that are relevant to your field of study.
2. **Facilitating Discussion (10 points):** For one of the *assigned* empirical readings for class, you will be asked to facilitate the class discussion about its methodological merits and flaws (signup in Canvas).Use the Eight “Big Tent” Criteria to guide you (Tracy, 2010, in Canvas) and the Creswell and Poth (2017) text as starting places. The discussion should include the following three components to be ‘chunked’: 1) how the methods in the article map on to (or don’t) Creswell and Poth’s expectations/template for the approach; 2) the ethical issues treated in the article; 3) the trustworthiness and credibility of the researcher(s). This assignment will be assessed based on the degree to which your discussion and critique are thorough; thoughtful; grounded in your growing understanding of qualitative research methodology; and inclusive of your classmates (see rubric in Canvas). This assignment is intended to be formal in the sense that you will need to be prepared, but informal in the sense that you are not presenting anything to your classmates. Your task is to *lead* *our* *discussion* about the article, meaning that your job is to get your classmates talking about qualitative research methods by asking questions.
3. **Article Critiques (20 points each, x 2 = 40 points total):** As a researcher it will be critical for you to collect, read, and assess published reports, including ones employing qualitative researchmethods. Reading such papers can help you 1.) identify relevant evidence that can guide your practice (e.g., determine what to include in a comprehensive review of the extant literature), 2.) appreciate the utility of qualitative research when it comes to studying various topics, and 3.) select appropriate methods to address your own research questions.

When you locate pertinent research papers, it is critical that you can *assess* the quality of these published accounts and *synthesize* your understandings of these sources. This objective can be even more challenging in qualitative research given the variety of methods, styles, and philosophical approaches, as well as the uneven nature of the quality of some publications. To help you develop a critical eye for evaluating qualitative research you will be asked to critique a qualitative research article from a field of your choosing. To help you discern the quality of your chosen paper, you will use the Eight “Big Tent” Criteria to guide you (Tracy, 2010, see rubric in Canvas). You will need to submit a copy of the first page of the article, or more if required to capture an abstract, along with your critique. You should explicitly address each criterion, providing a clear statement of your assessment and critique of the article, *and* provide support for your evaluation (ie. Creswell, Schwandt, journal articles, etc.). Remember that the purpose of this assignment is **to critique**, not simply to summarize.

1. **Interview Assignment (10 points):** Individually, you will conduct and record a ten(ish) minute interview with a participant of your choosing. You will upload your recording to Canvas, and write a structured entry in your journal about ‘how you did’ as a qualitative interviewer. More details will be given in class.
2. **Field notes Assignment (10 points):** Individually, you will collect ten(ish) minutes of observational data “in the field” at a site of your choosing. You will submit your field notes to Canvas, and write a structured entry in your journal about ‘how you did’ as a qualitative fieldworker. More details will be given in class.
3. **Qualitative Research Project Proposal (60 points):** Working in a small group of two-three people, you will design a qualitative study that will include two sources of data. The design of your pilot study should fulfill Shulamit Reinharz’s[[2]](#footnote-2) three criteria for worthwhile research: 1.) Contribute to substantive area of inquiry, 2.) flesh out your understanding of what it means to do “postpositivist” research (Don’t worry if you don’t know what this means. You will.), and 3.) learn about yourself as a researcher—that is, be reflective about methodological learning and ongoing questions. Although this is a “group” project, each person in the group must complete their own CITI training and keep their own reflective journal.
   1. In-Class Literature Search (10 points): Details will be given in class.
   2. Letter of Intent, in two submissions (5 points each x 2 = 10 points total): Each group will submit an initial letter outlining what it is you want to know and how you plan to answer your questions, and a revised letter after your group has identified the ‘type’ of study you will propose to conduct (ie. which one of Creswell and Poth’s five approaches would you choose?). Your first letter should: identify your group’s problem and research questions, and **draw on the literature you found during your search** to frame your topic (1-2 paragraphs; 2 points); provide a brief explanation regarding why this is important to you and/or your field (not more than 1 paragraph; 1 point), briefly describe a qualitative pilot study that you might conduct (2 points). *Only one letter should be submitted per group* (including names of all group members), and each of the group members will receive the same grade for the letter of intent. Your second letter should be an updated version of the first, with specific articulation of how you will clearly align your design within the parameters of a specific qualitative approach (as outlined in the Creswell and Poth text), a secondary methodological source you will explore to frame your design (as suggested in the Creswell and Poth text), the specific data you propose to generate (focus group/individual interviews/observational data/archival data, etc.), and plans for analysis.
   3. Presentation of your proposed design (25 points). To present your proposed study, you will participate in a conference-style, not-more-than-15-minute. Your presentation should include: a definition of your topic/research question, a brief rationale, and the key assumptions you are making about this topic; what methods would be used to gather information (i.e., number, length, and focus of interviews/focus groups); and specifically how you would analyze these data.. Your description of your methodological learning should focus on the following: what you learned from developing the proposal study (i.e., emergent design, emergent questions, or lessoned learned), *and* what have you learned about yourself as a researcher and about the conduct of qualitative research.

You will not be allowed more than 15 minutes, and you will not receive credit for the parts you are unable to share because you went over time. My advice is to organize the 15 minutes in the following way: 1.) approximately five minutes to introduce and describe the study and a (very) brief overview of relevant literature; 2.) approximately ten minutes to share your proposed study, and 3.) approximately one to two minutes each to share your methodological learning and lingering questions. This assignment will be assessed based on the criteria found in the rubric in Canvas.

Please plan to give your presentation in a manner consistent with paper presentations as scholarly conferences. **And please plan to rehearse**. This is a tight timeline, and I doubt you will be successful without practice. Group projects will be graded as such. It is my expectation that each member of the group will contribute equally to the proposed design. Each member of the group will receive the same grade for the presentation with the exception of the methodological learning portion. That will be graded individually; each group member should plan to present their methodological learning alone.

Reflective Journal (15 points). This semester, you will be asked to keep an *individual* reflective journal. Your reflective journal is a place to keep track of how your research question and proposed design have evolved. That is, it may contain several drafts of these. It should also contain a description of the materials and data you would collect, including details about site selection, inclusion criteria for participants, how you would gain access and recruit, etc. Much of this will come directly from/lead directly to your letter of intent. You should think of this as a precursor to writing a methods chapter of a proposal for dissertation study. As it is a *reflective* journal, it is also a place for you to document your methodological learning—What have you come to understand about research practice and yourself as a researcher? How is your understanding of self as instrument evolving? How are you both a help and hindrance to your work? **It should incorporate specific concepts from course readings and discussions (including citations).**

Feel free to use first person in your writing; after all, this is about you. Please note, however, that your reflective audit trail should do more than rehash class and document your notes. If you’d like a little more structure to your audit trail, I would suggest three categories: theoretical memos (TM), methodological memos (MM), and personal memos (PM). Learn to use your journal as a **habitual** way of jotting down your thoughts, questions, and notes for later application to your dissertation research process. You are encouraged to use your writing as a means of inquiry. Later you may find that your journal entries will become important data for research you are conducting, as well as a valuable means of sense-making and a source that documents personal transformation. Be sure to document dates and times of your entries.

This assignment will be assessed based on the degree to which it is complete, comprehensive, and detailed and the extent to which it reveals your own thinking and growth as a researcher (see rubric in Canvas.)

1. **Final Grade:**

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| Assignment | | Points Possible |
| CITI Training | | completion |
| Literature Search | | 10 |
| Letter of Intent (in two submissions) | | 10 |
| Facilitating Class Discussion | | 10 |
| Article Critiques | | 40 |
| Interview Assignment | | 10 |
| Field Notes Assignment | | 10 |
| Reflective Journal | | 15 |
| Proposal Presentation | | 25 |
| Attendance, Class Participation  (including reading reflections and book study) | | 70 |
| **TOTAL** | | **200** |
| Points | Letter Grade |
| 180 to 200 points | A |
| 160 to 179.99 points | B |
| 140 to 159.99 points | C |
| 120 to 139.99 points | D |
| Below 120 points | F |

**10. Course Policies**:

1. Professionals show up on time and prepared every day for work. Your attendance is expected during each class session. Failure to attend class sessions usually results in a lower grade due to the challenging nature of the course content, and to the ‘workshop’ approach to class structure.
2. Professionals complete assignments on time. Assignments are due in Canvas as indicated in the syllabus and the course calendar. Assignments handed in after this time will be considered late. **Late assignments will be penalized by 10% per day late**.
3. Professionals use appropriate means for discussing disagreements. Please respect our class time together and my own time as a teacher and researcher by planning to discuss grades or other points of contention during office hours or by appointment, **not via email**.
4. Professionals take responsibility for their own learning. My overarching goal is to support class members in becoming the very best they can possibly become at this point in their professional development. Please allow me to assist in any way possible including, but certainly not limited to: listening, providing feedback, answering questions, sharing and addressing concerns, brainstorming, clarifying course content or expectations, and mediating or facilitating work with collaborating peers. While I do check my e-mail regularly, **I do not check e-mail after 9 pm. Please allow me 48 hours to respond to email.**
5. Professionals give credit where credit is due. Even though I will encourage you to work in groups and learn from each other, each individual is held responsible for his/her own behavior and learning. I expect students to submit their own work for all assignments. The University Academic Honesty Code and the Tiger Cub Rules and Regulations pertaining to Cheating will apply to this class. See also Student Policy eHandbook ([www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies](http://www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies)) for rules on academic honesty. If and when resources are found (even those online!), proper citation must be used. Details regarding APA formatting and citations will be available on Canvas, and it is a doctoral student’s responsibility to learn and adhere to APA style guidelines. Failure to provide appropriate citations constitutes a violation of the Auburn University Academic Honesty Code. In addition, written assignments that are similar or identical to those of other students in the class (past or present) is also a violation of the Code. Violations of the Auburn University Academic Honesty Code will be treated according to university policy. Rewriting and resubmission is not an option. **Finally, you may not submit the work of someone else or work that you have submitted for another class to satisfy a requirement of ERMA 7210.**
6. Professionals make others aware of what they need to be successful. Please inform me within the first week of class if you require adaptations/modifications to any assignment because of special needs (disabilities, religious observances, and so on).

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| **Weekly Calendar** | | |
| **Date** | **Readings** | **Assignments** |
| **Week 1**  8/21  Introduction: What is qualitative research anyway? | Dictionary Terms: Reflexivity  Textbook Reading: Chapter 1  Reflective Journaling: Ortlipp (2008)  Subjectivity: Peshkin (1988) |  |
| **Week 2**  8/28  Foundations of qual research | Dictionary Terms: Subjectivity, Field journal,  Auditing, Methodology, Objectivity, Paradigm, Positivism, Postmodernism, Postpositivism  Textbook Reading: Chapter 2  History of Qualitative Research: Erickson (2011)  Example of a qualitative manuscript: Kennedy-Lewis, Murphy, & Grosland (2016)  Criteria for evaluating Qualitative Research: Tracy (2010) |  |
| **Week 3**  9/4 | **No class, Labor Day** | **CITI training**  **due Sunday, 9/10** |
| **Week 4**  9/11  Research Ethics and Positionality | Dictionary Terms: Ethics of qualitative inquiry, Informed consent, and Institutional review board; Reflexivity (again)  Ethics Readings: Tillman (2002); Orb, Eisenhower, & Wynaden (2000)  Positionality: Bourke (2014); Diaz-Strong, Luna-Duarte, Gomez, & Meiners (2014)  Textbook Reading: Chapter 3, pp. 55-60 |  |
| **Week 5**  9/18  Searching the literature (for qual) and developing a topic | Textbook Reading: Chapters 3 and 6  Lit search readings: video (linked in Canvas); Boote & Beile (2005)  Developing Research Questions: Creswell (2016), pp. 97-101 | **Letter of Intent 1 due Sunday, 9/24** |
| **Week 6**  9/25  Narrative and Phenomenological Research | Dictionary Terms: Narrative, Phenomenology  Textbook Readings: Chapter 4, pp. 70-83; Chapter 10, pp. 258-260  Narrative Examples: Berman et al. (2009); van Wormer & Falkner (2012)  Phenomenology Examples: Edwards (2013); Bartholomew et al. (2015) | **Article Discussions in class** |
| **Week 7**  10/2  Grounded Theory | Dictionary Terms:Grounded theory methodology  Textbook Readings: Chapter 4, pp. 83-96;  Grounded Theory Examples: Brown (2006); Helmer (2015); Hoover & Morrow (2014) | **Article Discussions in class;**  **Article Critique 1 due Sunday, 10/8** |
| **Week 8**  10/9  Ethnographic Research | Dictionary Terms:Ethnography  Chapter 10, pp. 260-263  Ethnography Examples: Collier, Sorensen, & Iedema (2015); Jones (2012); Lambert, Wright, Currie, & Pascoe (2017) | **Article Discussions in class** |
| **Week 9**  10/16  Case Studies | Dictionary Terms: Case study research  Textbook Readings: Chapter 4, pp. 97-107; Chapter 10, pp. 264-265  Case Study Examples: Baggett & Simmons (2017); Chur-Hansen et al. (2015); Anyon (1981) | **Article Discussions in class;**  **Article Critique 2 due Sunday, 10/22** |
| **Week 10**  10/23  Overview of Qualitative Data Generation | Dictionary Terms: Focus groups; and Interviewing, types of; Data management, storage, retrieval; Description; Document analysis; and Generating data;  Textbook Reading: Chapter 7  Interviewing and Focus Groups:  Josselson (2013)  Jacob & Furgerson (2012)  Packer-Muti (2010) | **Interview and Field notes assignments due 10/29** |
| **Week 11**  10/30  Inductive Analysis | Dictionary Terms:  Analyzing qualitative data, Inductive analysis, Inference, Interpretation, Triangulation, Trustworthiness criteria, and Validity  Textbook Readings: Chapters 8, 10  Validity Readings: Creswell & Miller (2010) | **Letter of Intent 2 due Sunday, 11/5** |
| **Week 12**  11/6  Deductive Analysis and Representation | Dictionary Terms: Representation, Crisis of representation, Generalization, Warranted assertion, and Writing strategies  Theory and Coding: Flennaugh, Cooper Stein & Carter Andrews (2017)  ‘Thinking’ with Theory: St. Pierre & Jackson, (2014); Lightfoot (2004) |  |
| **Week 13**  11/13  Turning the Story; Revisiting Positionality | Textbook Readings: Chapters 9 and 11  Power and Positionality: Merriam et al. (2001) |  |
| **Week 14**  11/20 | **No class; Thanksgiving Break** |  |
| **Week 15**  11/27  Research Presentations | **Presentation of Proposed Study** | **Presentations submitted to Canvas by 5:00 11/27** |
| Week 16  12/4  Research Presentations, as needed;  Book study;  Wrapping up | In-class book discussion, synthesizing for your reflective journals, wrapping up the semester. |  |
|  |  | **Reflective Audit Trails due Sunday, 12/10** |

1. This syllabus draws from syllabi written by Daniel Henry, Jeffrey Brooks, Antoinette Errante, Ron Chenail, Aaron Kuntz, Carey Andrzejewksi, and Bonnie Fusarelli. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Reinharz, S. (2002). *On becoming a social scientist*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)