

**ERMA 7210**  
**Theory and Methodology of Qualitative Research<sup>1</sup>**  
**Contemporary Qualitative Research in Educational Leadership: A Ten-Week Conference**  
**Auburn University - College of Education**  
Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, & Technology  
Summer 2010

1. **Class Time:** Tuesdays, 4:00 – 7:50 p.m.  
**Location:** Haley Center, Room 1454  
**Instructor:** Carey E. Andrzejewski  
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[dr.a@auburn.edu](mailto:dr.a@auburn.edu)  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:30-3:30, Tuesdays 1:30-3:30, and by appointment  
**Credit Hours:** 3 semester hours  
**Prerequisites:** N/A
2. **Date Syllabus Prepared:** May 2010
3. **Special Accommodations.** Any participant needing special accommodations should contact Dr. Kelly Haynes, Director of the Program for Students with Disabilities, located in 1244 Haley Center, Telephone: 334-844-2096 (Voice/TDD). Office Hours: 7:45 –1145 a.m. and 12:45 – 4:45 p.m.
4. **Required Materials:** [1] Creswell, J. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [2] Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [3] Web access. You must have access to a web browser, and you must check your email accounts (Tiger Mail and Blackbaord) several times a week. [4] Supplementary resources will be provided by the instructor via Blackbaord or in class. [5] Patience, time management, and a sense of humor (This course is time-intensive. I encourage you to consider your schedule before deciding to commit to this class.).
5. **Course Description:** This course is designed to give you an overview and introduction to the historical and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry in educational settings. We will also compare and contrast the assumptions, design, and methods of difference “schools” of qualitative inquiry. The primary purposes of the course are to 1.) introduce you to 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; and 4.) give you an opportunity to begin honing your skills as qualitative researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is based on syllabi by Daniel Henry, Jeffrey Brooks, Antoinette Errante, Ron Chenail and Aaron Kuntz.

6. **Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:
- Discuss the theoretical traditions undergirding qualitative research;
  - Discuss the relationship between theory and research;
  - Discuss the strengths and limitations of various approaches to qualitative inquiry;
  - Discuss the strengths and limitations of various techniques and procedures for collecting and analyzing qualitative data;
  - Discuss the strengths and limitations of various forms of writing up qualitative data;
  - Assess the quality of qualitative research; and
  - Conduct qualitative research.
7. **Course Format:** The class meetings will include small group discussions, class discussions, lectures, and student presentations. It is important to the collective enterprise that students keep current with the assigned readings, attend class meetings, and participate in the discussions as informed members. Your participation will ensure that our time together will be productive and worthwhile.
8. **Course Requirements and Evaluation (see weekly schedule for due dates):**
- A. **Reader's Questions:** Two questions are due each week based on the assigned readings. Please type your questions and do your best to keep them brief. The questions should be genuine; that is, *questions for which you do not have an answer*. They should also be as focused as possible and specific to the readings. As you read, ask yourself: Is there anything puzzling about what the author is saying? Is any of the terminology confusing? What don't I understand? What particular points would I like to know more about? These questions, which I will collect and return on a weekly basis, will also be discussed in class. Although not graded per se (only as part of the participation grade), questions for all the readings are a course requirement. At its heart, research is asking questions.
- B. **Article Critique:** As a researcher it will be critical for you to collect, read, and assess published reports including ones employing qualitative research methods. Reading such papers can help you 1.) identify relevant evidence which can guide your practice, 2.) appreciate the utility of qualitative research when it comes to studying various topics related to educational leadership, 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 methodologies, styles, and philosophical approaches, as well as the uneven nature of the quality of some published results. To help you to develop a critical eye for evaluating qualitative research you will be asked to appraise the quality of one of the qualitative research exemplar papers we will read as a class in preparation for classes 2-4 (see weekly schedule). To help you in discerning the quality of your chosen papers, you will use the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme's (CASP) *Making Sense of Evidence Tool: 10 Questions to Help You Make Sense of Qualitative Research*

([http://www.phru.nhs.uk/Doc\\_Links/Qualitative%20Appraisal%20Tool.pdf](http://www.phru.nhs.uk/Doc_Links/Qualitative%20Appraisal%20Tool.pdf) , included in Appendix A) to evaluate the article.

In addition to completing the article, you will be asked to facilitate the class discussion of the article—its practical, theoretical, and methodological merits and flaws. It will be helpful to use your CASP tool assessment of the article as a starting place. This assignment will be assessed based on the degree to which your critique (and the accompanying discussion) is thorough; thoughtful; grounded in the article, your understanding of educational leadership theory, and your growing understanding of qualitative research methodology; and responsive to the questions and comments of your classmates.

- C. **Mini-Study Proposal Reviews:** One of the service responsibilities of researchers is to review proposals for scholarly conferences. You will be asked to complete three blind reviews of mini-study proposals (see below) written by your classmates. We will use a modified version of the review rubric used by the American Psychological Association (see Appendix B). I have not tailored the items very much so it is likely that there will be some questions that are not immediately relevant to this class. For the sake of the assignment, please take the stance that you are reviewing the proposal for a large, scholarly conference and do your best to respond to each item as you would in that context. That will likely mean that some items are scored as a '1' and that is fine. Like the article critique, this assignment will be assessed based on the degree to which your reviews are thorough, thoughtful, well grounded, and future-oriented (i.e., your reviews should help your classmates to improve their proposals).
- D. **Observation and/or Interview Mini-Study:** Conduct an interview or mini-study. You have the requirement and the opportunity to experience doing fieldwork. I hope that you will engage with this project in ways that fulfill Shulamit Reinharz's 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 reflexive about methodological learning and ongoing questions. (Reinharz, S. (2002). *On becoming a social scientist*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.)
1. CITI Training. Online ethics in research training required by the university before you begin conducting research with human or animal subjects. **Your CITI training must be completed by June 1. Please bring a copy or your completion certificate to class.**
  2. Evolving 'Elevator' Speech. During the first class, you will create and deliver an 'elevator' speech about what it is you most want to know (i.e., a burning question you have about educational leadership). During weeks two, three, and four, you will work on revising that speech so that it grows into a question researchable through qualitative methods. I encourage you to think about your 'elevator' speech through the lenses of the five research traditions we will read and talk about (see Creswell, 2007). I also encourage you to give thought to the tradition that is best aligned with what you want to know. Once you have settled on a tradition, you will want to begin drafting your proposal.

Your elevator speeches will not be graded, but they will help you to move from an initial research idea to a doable research design, as outlined in your proposal.

3. Proposal. A proposal (approximately 3 pages) that includes: a) a definition of your topic and brief rationale, b) the key assumptions you are making about this topic, c) your research questions, d) what methods you will use to gather information and specifically how you plan to use these methods (e.g., number and length of observations or interviews), and e) a fieldwork calendar (Be sure your calendar leaves you adequate time to analysis your data and prepare your presentation.). Plan the study to include between ten to fifteen hours of fieldwork (planning, gaining access, data collection, data and data management). Please keep your methods as unobtrusive as possible, and inform (when appropriate) your participants that your work is part of a class exercise. You will likely find that it is helpful to choose a site/participants to which/whom you already have access. This assignment will be assessed based on its clarity, focus, and inclusion of all elements.

Your proposal is due on July 6. During that class, it will be reviewed by three of your classmates. At the end of class, you will receive their feedback, which you can use to revise your proposal before you submit it to me, no later than July 13. I will use the same rubric as your classmates, so you will likely find their feedback helpful.

4. Reflexive Journal / Audit Trail. This semester, you will be asked to keep a reflexive journal / audit trail. Although you may keep these two documents in one place and organize them chronologically, they serve different purposes. The reflexive journal will be a place for you to document your methodological learning – What have you come to understand about research practice and yourself as a researcher? I encourage you to make notes here about your experiences before, during, and after each phase of the research process. You may also record responses to class sessions and readings here. Feel free to use a personal tone; after all, this is about you.

Your audit trail, on the other hand, will be less personal as it is a place to document what you have done – what data did you collect, from/with whom, when, where, etc? This is also a place to keep track of how your research question and proposed design have evolved. That is, your audit trail may contain several drafts of these. It should also contain the materials/data you collect as well as a one-page schedule of your fieldwork experiences.

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.

5. 'Conference' Presentation. A conference-style, not-more-than-12-minute (This means you will be penalized for using more than 12 minutes.) presentation of your study describing its main features, preliminary results, and your methodological learning. My advice is to organize the 12 minutes in the following way: approximately four minutes to 1.) introduce the study and describe your methods 2.) share your data

and discuss preliminary findings and implications, and 3.) share your methodological learning and lingering questions. This assignment will be assessed based on the following criteria: a) clarity and rationale of the research question(s), b) explanation of methods or approach and their alignment with the research question(s), c) coherent and warranted initial analyses and conclusions, d) level of preparation (i.e., attractiveness and usefulness of presentation materials, and f) reflexive analysis. Please plan to give your presentation in a manner consistent with paper presentations as scholarly conferences.

Task	Points Possible
CITI Training	-
Evolving 'Elevator' Speech	-
Proposal	15
Reflexive Journal/ Audit Trail	15
Conference Presentation	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>

**E. Response to Mini-Study:** All researchers need feedback in order to improve their work. In the spirit of encouraging you to seek feedback from each other, each of you will be assigned as a respondent for a classmate's mini-study and presentation. I have scheduled time during the 9<sup>th</sup> class for respondents and presenters to meet about the mini-studies study, and respondents will be responsible for using the CASP tool (Appendix A) to provide feedback about the mini-study conference presentations.

Respondents, please keep in mind that the mini-studies are works-in-progress rather than completed studies (such as those that have been published in peer-reviewed journals). Some of the questions may not be relevant or helpful in this context. Please use your professional judgment to make an assessment about which items will be most helpful to your classmate. I also encourage you to think about three things as you complete the feedback/assessment tool: 1.) What are the strengths of the mini-study; on what should your classmate continue to build? 2.) What changes do you recommend? And 3.) What should your classmates think about next; what are the next steps in terms of refining the question and design, data collection, data analysis, and writing? This assignment will be assessed based on the degree to which your response is thorough; thoughtful; grounded in the mini-study, your understanding of educational leadership theory, and your growing understanding of qualitative research methodology; and useful (i.e., it will help your classmate advance their scholarly agenda).

## 9. Final Grade:

Assignment	Points Possible
Article Critique / Facilitating Class Discussion	15
Proposal Reviews	15
Observation and/or Interview Mini-Study	50
Mini-Study Response	10
Attendance, Attitude, and Class Participation (including reading questions)	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**The rubric for participation is as follows:**

### **A**

Students who obtain a participation grade of “A” will those who come to class prepared and are constantly seeking to share experiences and engage professionally in interactions with the class. In addition, these people will seek to test her/his ideas against her/his colleagues. An “A” grade means all homework/ discussion assignments are completed.

### **B**

Student receiving a “B” will be prepared and active within the class, but at times take less than a leadership role in pursuing issues that arise.

### **C**

Students receiving a “C” will play an inconsistent or limited role in the life of the class.

### **D/F**

The grades of “D” or “F” will be given to those students not regularly participating in class discussions/ activities or consistently unprepared for class.

## **Grading Scale**

Percentages	Letter Grade	Quality of Work
89.5 to 100%	A	Outstanding performance; excellent command of course content
79.5 to 89.49%	B	Good performance; good command of course content
69.5 to 79.49%	C	Satisfactory performance; average command of course content
59.5 to 69.45%	D	Marginal performance; below average command of course content
Below 9.5%	F	Unsatisfactory performance; poor command of course content

## 10. Course Policies:

- A. Professionals show up on time and prepared every day for work. Yes, professionals occasionally have to take sick days (or personal days), but the best are always there. If you have to miss a class, you will be responsible for the notes, assignments, and other duties that have been discussed.
- B. Professionals complete assignments on time. Assignments are due in class on the date given. Assignments handed in after this time will be considered late. Late assignments will be penalized by 10% per day.
- C. Professionals use appropriate means for discussing disagreements. If you don't understand something, ask during class. If you still don't understand, email, phone, or catch me in the building. If you think you deserve a different grade, please contact me within 48 hours. Please don't be so unprofessional as to take class time to discuss grades or other points of contention.
- D. Professionals take responsibility for their own learning. That said, my purpose is to help class members become 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. Always feel free to contact me by phone or by email. However, email is probably not the fastest way to get a response from me. If you contact me via email, allow two days response time. So, if you have an urgent concern or question, it is best to contact me by phone.
- E. Professionals give credit where credit is due. The University Academic Honesty Code and the Tiger Cub Rules and Regulations pertaining to Cheating will apply to this class. See also **Tiger Cub** for rules on academic honesty. Written assignments that include material that is similar to that from course reading materials or other sources should include a citation including source, author, and page number. Quotation marks should be used if the material is copied directly from the readings and text citations should be used (Author, year, page). If the material is paraphrased, (Author, year) should appear immediately following the paraphrased material. Failing to do so constitutes 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.**
- F. Professionals understand that teaching and learning are ongoing processes for everyone. There are things I haven't thought of here. Understand that I am learning along with you and your classmates. Please help me take a collaborative approach to solving any problems that may arise.
- G. Professionals make others aware of what they need to be successful. Please inform me within the first week of class if you require adaptations or modifications to any assignment because of special needs (disabilities, religious observances, and so on).

## Weekly Schedule

Date	Dictionary Terms	Readings	Assignments
1. May 25 Introduction: What is a paradigm anyway?	Auditing Methodology Modernism/ Modernity Objectivity Paradigm Positivism Postmodernism Postpositivism Subjectivity	Creswell Chapters 1, 2, and 6	
2. June 1 Narrative and Phenomenological Research	Ethics of qualitative inquiry Informed consent Institutional review board Narrative Phenomenology	Creswell Chapter 4, pp. 53-62 Creswell Chapter 10, pp 213-216 <u>Narrative Exemplars:</u> Choose <i>one</i> Drago-Severson & Pinto (2009) Wrushen & Sherman (2008) <u>Phenomenological Exemplars:</u> Choose <i>one</i> Beaubout et al. (2008) Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski (2004)	CITI training  Narrative and Phenomenological Article Critiques
3. June 8 Grounded Theory and Ethnographic Research	Ethnography Grounded theory methodology	Creswell Chapter 4, pp. 62-73 Creswell Chapter 10, pp. 216-218 <u>Grounded Theory Exemplars:</u> Choose <i>one</i> Gordon & Patterson (2006) Blase & Blase (2004) <u>Ethnographic Exemplars:</u> Choose <i>one</i> Vaught & Castagno (2008) Auerbach (2006)	Grounded Theory and Ethnographic Article Critiques
4. June 15 Case Studies and Hybrids	Case study research Emergent design Mixed methods	Creswell Chapter 4, pp. 73-84 Creswell Chapter 10, pp. 218-219 <u>Case Study Exemplars:</u> Choose <i>one</i> Gibbs & Slate (2003) Slegers et al. (2009)	Case Study Article Critiques
5. June 22 Data Collection: Documents and Observations	Data Data collection Data management, storage, retrieval Document analysis Field Journal	Creswell Chapters 3 and 7 Lichtman (2010)	



6. June 29 Data Collection: Interviews and Focus Groups	Focus groups Interviewing, types of	Creswell Chapter 10 (revisit) Barbour & Schostak (2005)	
7. July 6 Proposals and Peer Feedback	Generalization Triangulation Trustworthiness criteria Validity		Proposal Version 1  Peer Reviews (to be done in class)
8. July 13 Analysis and Representation	Analyzing qualitative data Computer-assisted data analysis Crisis of representation Inference Inductive analysis Interpretation Representation Warranted assertion Writing strategies	Creswell Chapters 8 and 9	Proposal Version 2
9. July 20 Work Day		Finalizing Your Mini-Study Consultations	Meeting with Respondent
10. July 27 Conference			Mini-Study Presentations  Reflexive Journals / Audit Trails due  Mini-Study Responses due

**Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP)**  
making sense of evidence

## **10 questions to help you make sense of qualitative research**

This assessment tool has been developed for those unfamiliar with qualitative research and its theoretical perspectives. This tool presents a number of questions that deal very broadly with some of the principles or assumptions that characterise qualitative research. It is *not a definitive guide* and extensive further reading is recommended.

### **How to use this appraisal tool**

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising the report of qualitative research:

- **Rigour:** has a thorough and appropriate approach been applied to key research methods in the study?
- **Credibility:** are the findings well presented and meaningful?
- **Relevance:** how useful are the findings to you and your organisation?

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important.

The 10 questions have been developed by the national CASP collaboration for qualitative methodologies.

## Screening Questions

### 1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Consider:

- *what the goal of the research was*
- *why it is important*
- *its relevance*

### 2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

Consider:

- *if the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants*

### Is it worth continuing?

## Detailed questions

*Appropriate research design*

### 3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

Consider:

- *if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which methods to use?)*

*Sampling*

### 4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?

Consider:

- *if the researcher has explained how the participants were selected*
- *if they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study*
- *if there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)*

*Data collection*

### 5. Were the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?

Consider:

- *if the setting for data collection was justified*
- *if it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc)*
- *if the researcher has justified the methods chosen*
- *if the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, did they used a topic guide?)*
- *if methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why?*
- *if the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc)*
- *if the researcher has discussed saturation of data*

*Reflexivity (research partnership relations/recognition of researcher bias)*

**6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?**

*Consider whether it is clear:*

- if the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during:*
- formulation of research questions*
- data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location*
- how the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design*

*Ethical Issues*

**7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?**

*Consider:*

- if there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained*
- if the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e. g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)*
- if approval has been sought from the ethics committee*

*Data Analysis*

**8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?**

*Consider:*

- if there is an in-depth description of the analysis process*
- if thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data?*
- whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process*
- if sufficient data are presented to support the findings*
- to what extent contradictory data are taken into account*
- whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation*

*Findings*

**9. Is there a clear statement of findings?**

*Consider:*

- if the findings are explicit*
- if there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments*
- if the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst.)*
- if the findings are discussed in relation to the original research questions*

*Value of the research*

## **10. How valuable is the research?**

*Consider:*

- if the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature?)*
- if they identify new areas where research is necessary*
- if the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used*

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