**ERMA 7216.001: Theory and Methodology of Qualitative Research[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Auburn University - College of Education

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, & Technology

Summer 2017

**Location:** Content delivery, asynchronous discussions and assignment submission via the Canvas learning management system.

Synchronous meetings via Zoom meeting: https://d.adroll.com/cm/aol/outhttps://d.adroll.com/cm/index/outhttps://d.adroll.com/cm/n/out<https://auburn.zoom.us/j/5913393078>

These meetings will be recorded and available for later viewing if you are unable to join us for a synchronous meeting.

* + Please have a headset, webcam, desktop or laptop, quiet location and high speed Internet connection available for these meetings.
  + A practice session/open house to test your webcam and headset in Zoom will take place on Wednesday, May 17th from 5-6:30 pm. Plan to login for a few minutes from wherever you will normally attend class to test your Internet connection and devices.

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**Office Hours**: on campus Thursdays 3:00-4:00, virtual office hours Wednesdays 12:00-1:00. I’m also

available to meet in Zoom for a few minutes prior to class, and I am always happy to arrange a mutually

convenient time to meet in person, by phone, by Skype, or Google Hangout. E-mail is the quickest way to

reach me,and I try to answer e-mails within 24 hours during the week.

**Credit Hours**: 3 semester hours

**Date Syllabus Prepared**: May 2017

**Special Accommodations**. Students who need accommodations are asked to electronically submit their approved accommodations through AU Access and to arrange a meeting during the first week of classes. If you need accommodations, contact the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096.

**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 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 conducting qualitative research—fieldwork and deskwork.

**Required Materials:**

* Creswell, J. (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.
* Additional course readings and materials will be delivered via Canvas.
* Time management skills. (This course is time- and reading-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:**

* This course relies heavily on online technology and often requires 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.
* All assignments for this course are submitted electronically 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 and possibilities of various approaches to qualitative inquiry;
* Discuss the limits and possibilities of various techniques and procedures for collecting qualitative data;
* Assess the quality of qualitative research;
* Design qualitative research studies; and
* Conduct qualitative research.

1. **Course Philosophy:** 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 synchronous 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 Discussion Post (10 pts x 10 weeks = 100 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 on the day of our synchronous meeting.**

**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 posting: 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.

And, because this is a distance course, **you are also expected to respond to your classmates' posts throughout the week**.  If you are unable to attend class synchronously, you are expected to respond to multiple classmates' posts throughout the week.

**Peer Feedback (Responding to Classmates) Rubric**

1. Mentions at least 2 specific points from the classmate's discussion post. (2 pts)

2. Offers substantive feedback that is grounded in the readings (with in-text citations). (2 pts)

3. Length of posting: approx 1/2 page. (1 pt)

1. **Article Critique (20 points):** 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.). Remembler that the purpose of this assignment is **to critique**, not simply to summarize.

1. **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). Ideally, you will choose a week that you are available for a synchronous meeting to lead the discussion. In addition, you will be responsible for posting your discussion questions in Canvas that week, and monitoring and responding to your classmates’ discussion.

Use the Eight “Big Tent” Criteria to guide you (Tracy, 2010, in Canvas) and the Creswell 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’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.

1. **Qualitative Research Project and Presentation (50 points):** Either individually, or with a group of no larger than three people, you will design and execute a qualitative study with two sources of data (interview data and archival data). The design and the conduct 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.

*NOTE: Each student will collect data as part of this class; however, the data collected is for educational purposes only and NOT for thesis, dissertation, or any additional projects or publications.*

* 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. Although you do not have adequate time to apply for IRB approval for your pilot study, I am requiring that you are at least eligible for IRB approval (i.e., have completed your 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. Literature Search Assignment (Completion): You will use the library databases, such as ERIC, Education Research Complete, PsychInfo, SportDiskus, etc. to locate and compile a minimum of 10 empirical articles that report findings from researchers who have employed qualitative methods to investigate the topic. (Articles that include quantitative and mixed methods are not appropriate for this assignment.)
  3. Letter of Intent, in two submissions (10 points total): You 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 you have identified the ‘type’ of study you will conduct (ie. which one of Creswell’s five approaches have you chosen?). Your first letter should: identify your problem and research questions, and **draw on the literature you found during your search** to frame your topic (1-3 sentences; 1 point); provide a brief explanation regarding why this is important to you and/or your field (not more than 1 paragraph; 1 point), describe a pilot study that you plan to conduct (2 points) and include a fieldwork calendar for completing your pilot by the time of your presentation (1 point). Be sure your calendar aligns with our class calendar and leaves you adequate time to collect and analyze your data and prepare your presentation*.* 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 text), the specific data you will generate (focus group/individual interviews, and what ‘types’ of documents you will seek and obtain), and a strict timeline for collection and analysis.
  4. Interview Protocol (Completion): Individually, you will develop an interview protocol. Use your readings to inform the questions you craft, and making sure questions are not leading or compound.
  5. Your two types of data:

Interview (Conduct and Transcription): You are required to conduct at least one interview as part of your research project. The interview you conduct should be at least 20 minutes, and no longer than one hour. Then, you must transcribe the recording, and code the data. You must transcribe your own interview recording (as opposed to hiring a transcription service) so as to become intimately involved in your participant’s stories*. You will submit your transcript(s) as part of your reflective audit trail journal.*

**AND**

Document/Archival Collection: Through this part of the assignment, you will develop your ability to examine documents/archival/artifact data. Collect at least one document or artifact related to your research topic. For example, if you are working in a school setting, there are many forms of artifacts that you could collect and interpret including: mission statements, schedules, teachers’ planning books, bulletin board content, Internet Web pages, student papers, etc. If you are engaged in historical research, your archival data could include court records, letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and similar types of documents. *You will individually submit*: 1) a description of where and when you collected the data; and 2) copies of the archives/artifacts you used. Again, group analysis will be conducted across all your data sources.

* 1. Presentation of your pilot study (25 points). When you have completed your pilot study, you will participate in a conference-style, not-more-than-15-minute presentation of the **findings, and your methodological learning**. 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 used to gather information (i.e., number, length, and focus of interviews/focus groups); and specifically how you analyzed these data. The description of the pilot study should detail your preliminary findings, which should be warranted with data. Your description of your methodological learning should focus on the following: what you learned from conducting the pilot (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 may use any presentation method you like, including a Powerpoint, Prezi, Voicethread, etc. during our last synchronous meeting of the summer, or a recorded presentation to be viewed during that week.

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 three to four minutes to introduce and describe the study and a (very) brief overview of relevant literature; 2.) approximately seven minutes to share your pilot data and discuss preliminary findings and implications for future practice and research, and 3.) approximately four to five minutes to 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 and approach and their alignment with the research question(s), c) clarity and appropriateness of the pilot study, d) coherent and warranted initial analyses and conclusions, e) level of preparation (i.e., attractiveness and usefulness of presentation materials and timing;), and f) reflective analysis (see rubric in Canvas). Please plan to give your presentation in a manner consistent with paper presentations as scholarly conferences.

* 1. Reflective Audit Trail Journal (15 points). This semester, you will be asked to keep a reflective audit trail. Your reflective audit trail 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 reflective audit trail may contain several drafts of these. It should also contain the materials and data you collect. 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 section for an article or the methods chapter of a dissertation. As it is a *reflective* audit trail, 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? I encourage you to make notes here about your experiences before, during, and after each phase of the research process. Feel free to use a personal tone; 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 use in your dissertation research. 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**. It should incorporate specific concepts from course readings and discussions (including citations).** (See rubric in Canvas.)

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| Task | Points Possible |
| CITI Training | Completion |
| Evolving ‘Elevator’ Speech | Completion |
| Lit Search Assignment | Completion |
| Letter of Intent | 10 |
| Reflective Audit Trail Journal | 15 |
| Pilot Study Presentation | 25 |
| **TOTAL** | **50** |

1. **Final Grade:**

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| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Percentage of final grade |
| Facilitating Class Discussion | 10% |
| Article Critique | 20% |
| Pilot Study | 50% |
| Reading reflections and discussion responses | 20% |
| **TOTAL** | **100** |

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| Points | Letter Grade |
| 90 to 100 points | A |
| 80 to 89.99 points | B |
| 70 to 79.99 points | C |
| 60 to 69.99 points | D |
| Below 60 points | F |

**10. Course Policies**:

1. Professionals show up on time and prepared every day for work. If you anticipate missing a synchronous class, be advised that you will be responsible for viewing the recording of our meeting, and for more discussion later in the week.
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.
3. Professionals use appropriate means for discussing disagreements. If you don’t understand something, ask your peers, during class, or in a discussion forum. To discuss grades or other points of contention, make a virtual appointment (via Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout, etc.). I do not discuss grades via email.
4. Professionals take responsibility for their own learning. 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. While I do check my e-mail regularly, **I do not check e-mail after 10 pm (to protect my sanity). Please allow me 24 hours to respond to email.**
5. Professionals give credit where credit is due. 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. 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. Details regarding APA formatting can be found online and in an APA manual. **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 7216.**
6. Professionals understand that teaching and learning are ongoing processes for everyone. To cycle back to my previously articulated teaching philosophy, understand that I am learning along with you, and that my teaching practice is also a work in progress. Please help me take a collaborative approach to solving any problems that may arise.
7. 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** | **Major Assignments** |
| **Week 1**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 5/22 at 4:00 pm  Foundations of Qualitative Research | Textbook Reading: Creswell, Chapter 1  Reflective Journaling: Ortlipp (2008)  Subjectivity: Peshkin (1988)  Dictionary Terms: Reflexivity |  |
| **Week 2**  Synchronous meeting on Wednesday, 5/31 at 4:00 pm  Foundations of Qualitative Research, cont. | Dictionary Terms: Auditing, Methodology, Objectivity, Paradigm, Positivism, Postmodernism, Postpositivism, Subjectivity  Textbook Reading: Creswell, Chapter 2  Example of a qualitative manuscript: Kennedy-Lewis, Murphy, & Grosland (2016)  Eight “Big Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research: Tracy (2010) | **CITI training due by Sunday, 6/4** |
| **Week 3**  No Synchronous meeting this week  Research Ethics; Searching the Literature and Identifying a Topic of Interest | Dictionary Terms: Ethics of qualitative inquiry, Informed consent, and Institutional review board  Ethics Readings: Tillman (2002); Orb, Eisenhower, & Wynaden (2000)  Textbook Reading: Creswell, Chapter 3  Lit search reading: Boote & Beile (2005)  Developing Research Questions: Creswell (2016), pp. 97-101 | **Literature Search Assignment due Friday, 6/9**  **Letter of Intent due Sunday, 6/11** |
| **Week 4**  Synchronous meeting on Wednesday, 6/14 at 4:00 pm  Reflexivity;  Narrative and Phenomenological Research | Dictionary Terms: Narrative, Phenomenology  Textbook Readings: Creswell, Chapter 4, pp. 65-82; Chapter 10, pp. 253-273  Narrative Examples: Berman et al. (2009); van Wormer & Falkner (2012)  Phenomenology Examples: Edwards (2013); Bartholomew et al. (2015) | **Article Discussions in class** |
| **Week 5**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/19 at 4:00 pm  Grounded Theory and Ethnographic Research | Dictionary Terms:Ethnography, and Grounded theory methodology  Textbook Readings: Chapter 4, pp. 82-96; Chapter 10, pp. 273-279  Grounded Theory Examples: Brown (2006); Helmer (2015)  Ethnography Examples: Collier, Sorensen, & Iedema (2015); Jones (2012) | **Article Discussions in class;**  **Article Critique 1 due Sunday, 6/25** |
| **Week 6**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/26 at 4:00 pm  Case Studies;  Overview of Interviewing | Dictionary Terms: Case study research; Focus groups; and Interviewing, types of  Textbook Readings: Chapter 4, pp. 96-110; Chapter 10, pp. 279-286; Chapter 7  Case Study Examples: Chur-Hansen et al. (2015); Anyon (1981)  Interviewing: Josselson (2013)  (Supplementary)Focus Groups:  Jacob & Furgerson (2012)  Packer-Muti (2010) | **Article Discussions in class;**  **Revised Letter of Intent due Sunday, 7/2;** |
| **Week 7**  No synchronous meeting this week  Data collection | Dictionary Terms: Data management, storage, retrieval; Description; Document analysis; and Generating data  **Post interview protocol to Canvas for feedback; conduct and transcribe interviews with participants.** |  |
| **Week 8**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/10 at 4:00 pm  Inductive Analysis | Dictionary Terms:Analyzing qualitative data, Inductive analysis, Inference, Interpretation, Triangulation, Trustworthiness criteria, and Validity  Textbook Readings: Chapter 8, revisit 10 |  |
| **Week 9**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/17 at 4:00 pm  Deductive Analysis and Representation; Preparing your presentation | Dictionary Terms: Representation, Crisis of representation, Generalization, Warranted assertion, and Writing strategies  Textbook Readings: Chapter 9, 11  Example of theoretical frame: DeCuir & Dixson (2004) |  |
| **Week 10**  Synchronous meeting on Wednesday, 7/26 at 4:00 pm | Presentations of Pilot Study Findings |  |
|  |  | **Reflective Audit Trails due Saturday, 7/29 by midnight** |

1. This syllabus is based on syllabi written by Carey Andrzejewksi, Bonnie Fusarelli, and Trena Paulus. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Reinharz, S. (2002). *On becoming a social scientist*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)