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

Auburn University - College of Education

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, & Technology

Summer 2018

**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 Thursday, 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**: Virtual office hours Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00-4:00. 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 2018

**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 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.

**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.
* Additional course readings and materials will be delivered via Canvas.

**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:**

* 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.)

**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.

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 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 Assignments (see weekly schedule for due dates):**

1. **Weekly Reader’s Reflections and Class Participation (50 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 (10 points):** Online ethics in research training required by the university before you 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. **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 citational support for your evaluation (ie. Creswell & Poth, Schwandt, journal articles, etc.). Remember that the purpose of this assignment is **to critique**, not simply to summarize.

1. **Facilitating Discussion (20 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 the 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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **Qualitative Research Project Proposal:** Working in a small group of two to three people, you will design and propose 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.
5. **Individual In-Class Literature Search (10 points)**: Details will be given in class.
6. **Letter of Intent, in two submissions (10 points each x 2 = 20 points total):** Each group will submit an initial letter outlining what it is you want to know and how you might 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; 4 points); provide a brief explanation regarding why this is important to you and/or your field (not more than 1 paragraph; 2 points), briefly describe a qualitative pilot study that you might conduct (4 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.
7. **Presentation of your proposed design (30 points)**. To present your proposed study, you will participate in a conference-style, not-more-than-20-minute presentation. 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 or observational data; how you will recruit participants, etc.); 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 questions, or lessoned learned); what have you learned about yourself as a researcher and about the conduct of qualitative research.

You will not be allowed more than 20 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 your time in the following way: 1.) approximately three to five minutes to introduce and describe the study and a (very) brief overview of relevant literature; 2.) approximately 10 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.

1. **Reflective Journal (20 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.)

**Final Grade:**

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| Assignment | | Points Possible |
| Attendance, Class Participation  (including reading reflections) | | 50 |
| Facilitating Class Discussion | | 20 |
| Article Critique | | 20 |
| Interview Assignment | | 10 |
| Field Notes Assignment | | 10 |
| CITI Training | | 10 |
| Literature Search | | 10 |
| Letter of Intent (in two submissions) | | 20 |
| Reflective Journal | | 20 |
| Proposal Presentation | | 30 |
| **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.
2. Professionals complete assignments on time. Assignments are due in Canvas as indicated in 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. 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 will apply to this class. See also (<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AcademicHonestyCode.pdf>) for rules on academic honesty. If and when resources are found (even those online!), proper citation must be used. Failing to do so 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. 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, 5/21 at 5:00 pm  Foundations of Qualitative Research | Textbook Reading: Creswell, Chapter 1  Schwandt Dictionary Terms: Reflexivity  Reflective Journaling: Ortlipp (2008)  Subjectivity: Peshkin (1988) | **CITI Training**  **due Sunday 5/27** |
| **Week 3**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/4 at 5:00 pm  Foundations of Qualitative Research, cont. | Dictionary Terms: Subjectivity, 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 4**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/11 at 5:00 pm  Research Ethics; Searching the Literature and Identifying a Topic of Interest | Dictionary Terms: Ethics of qualitative inquiry, Informed consent, and Institutional review board; Reflexivity (again)  Ethics Readings: Tillman (2002); Orb, Eisenhower, & Wynaden (2000)  Textbook Reading: Chapters 3 and 6  Lit search readings: video (linked in Canvas); Boote & Beile (2005)  Developing Research Questions: Creswell (2016) | **Literature Search Assignment due Wednesday, 6/13**  **Letter of Intent due Saturday, 6/16** |
| **Week 5**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/18 at 5:00 pm  Narrative and Phenomenological Research | Dictionary Terms: Narrative, Phenomenology  Textbook Readings: Chapters 4 & 10 regarding narrative and phenomenological approaches  Narrative Examples: Berman et al. (2009); van Wormer & Falkner (2012)  Phenomenology Examples: Vagle (2010); Bartholomew et al. (2015) | **Article Discussions in class** |
| **Week 6**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 6/25 at 5:00 pm  Grounded Theory Research | Dictionary Terms:Grounded theory methodology  Textbook Readings: Chapters 4 & 10 regarding grounded theory approaches  Grounded Theory Examples: Brown (2006); Helmer (2015); Sondel, Baggett, & Dunn (2018); Hoover & Morrow (2014) | **Article Discussions in class**  **Article Critique due Saturday, 6/30** |
| **Week 7**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/2 at 5:00 pm  Ethnographic and Case Study Research | Dictionary Terms: Ethnography; Case study research; Focus groups; and Interviewing, types of  Textbook Readings: Chapters 4 & 10 regarding ethnography and case study approaches  Ethnography Examples: Collier, Sorensen, & Iedema (2015); Jones (2012)  Case Study Examples: Baggett & Simmons (2017); Anyon (1981) | **Article Discussions in class** |
| **Week 8**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/9 at 5:00 pm  Qualitative Data Generation | Dictionary Terms: Focus groups; and Interviewing, types of; Data management, storage, retrieval; Description; and Generating data  Textbook Readings: Chapter 7  Interviewing and Observational Data Collection:  Josselson (2013)  Jacob & Furgerson (2012)  Tieken (2013)  Resources for Observational Data Collection (page in Canvas) | **Interview and Field notes Assignments due Saturday, 7/14** |
| **Week 9**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/16 at 4:00 pm  Qualitative Analyses | Dictionary Terms: Analyzing qualitative data, Inductive analysis, Inference, Interpretation, Triangulation, Trustworthiness criteria, Validity, Representation, Crisis of representation, Generalization, Warranted assertion, Writing strategies  Textbook Readings: Chapter 8, 10  Theory and Coding: Duncan Andrade (2009;  Flennaugh, Cooper Stein & Carter Andrews (2017) | **Revised Letter of Intent due Saturday, 7/21** |
| **Week 10**  Synchronous meeting on Monday, 7/23 at 5:00 pm | Textbook Readings: Chapter 9, 11  Presentations of Proposed Studies |  |
|  |  | **Reflective Audit Trails due Sunday, 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)