Course Description
This course introduces students to qualitative research methods and design in the social sciences. In small-scale projects, students gain experience with various elements in the research process and research methods characteristic of qualitative research. Differing assumptions about how knowledge is generated and the nature of truth claims are explored.

Rationale
This course serves an essential need for doctoral students to understand and apply the multiple forms of research that fall under the umbrella of “qualitative research.” Students will gain an understanding of the basic mechanics of qualitative research, but as importantly will also gain an understanding of the various ways in which particular forms of qualitative research are fundamentally grounded in theories of knowledge (epistemologies), theories of the social world (paradigms or theoretical perspectives), and traditions of practice (methods, genres, or discourse communities).

Objectives of the Course
The specific goals for this course include the following:
- To learn more about the research process and how to use qualitative research techniques as part of this process.
- To understand different approaches to qualitative research and the epistemological and ontological assumptions associated with these approaches.
- To develop practices to support thesis and dissertation research.
- To prepare students so that they may choose and explore specific methods further in order to conduct, with appropriate guidance, a high quality qualitative dissertation.

Required Texts
**Grading Basis**

1. Attendance, Preparation, & Participation ........................................ 10%
2. IRB Certification (required to submit study) ...................................... 0%
3. Manuscript Critique ........................................................................... 20%
4. Researcher Positionality Statement .................................................... 10%
5. Research Proposal ............................................................................. 10%
6. IRB Study Approval (required to conduct study) ................................. 0%
7. Revised Interview Questions (required, ungraded) .............................. 0%
8. Interview Transcript .......................................................................... 10%
9. Field Notes ......................................................................................... 5%
10. Codes .................................................................................................. 5%
11. Analytic Memo .................................................................................. 25%
12. Roundtable Presentation .................................................................. 5%
**Total** ................................................................................................. 100%

**Grading Scale**

Letter grades will be assigned for class participation and assignments. Written work is graded on demonstrated insight, completion of expectations of the assignment, coherence of organization, and grammar, spelling, and syntax. Letter grades have the following meaning. Letter grades with a + and – are also used. Letter grades are converted to a 4.0 scale using the standard University of Pittsburgh values to compute a final grade.

An “A” signifies work that clearly exceeds expectations. Written work falling into this category will demonstrate clarity of purpose, organization, and communication. It will also demonstrate original interpretation of course material. “A” level participation need not mean a large quantity of participation but should denote the student who prepares for class and consistently indicates having thought about the material.

A “B” signifies work that meets expectations, meaning that all aspects of the assignment are completed, but it lacks some aspects of “A” work, particularly inconsistent preparation for class or written work that demonstrates less significant insight into the material or frequent grammatical errors.

A “C” for written work denotes poorly constructed, supported, or inconsistent argument, or work with multiple spelling and grammatical errors; a “C” for participation signifies a student who regularly misses class or is otherwise unprepared on multiple occasions.

A “D” signifies minimal attention to assignments or class preparation.

An “F” is assigned for undone work or any work that breaches University standards of academic integrity.

**Incomplete grades:** Incompletes are rarely awarded except in exceptional cases. The student must have actively attended to the course requirements and needs extended time to complete the required work to meet minimum expectations. If you are allowed to take an incomplete, a proposed plan of action outlining how you will complete the work by the end of the following term must be drafted and approved.

**Course Requirements and Expectations - Assignments**

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Assignments are due at or before the beginning of class. Late work is not accepted without prior discussion with the instructor.

All of the writing you do for this seminar should be word-processed in 12 point font, double-spaced with one inch margins (yielding approximately 250-275 words/page). Please use APA style.

The course will be conducted as a doctoral seminar, with the expectation that you will be fully prepared for class discussion and exercises. The two instructors will occasionally combine the sections and switch sections for instructional activities. Your work will be graded and evaluated by the instructor of your
section. A few weeks into the term, you will be assigned to a peer-debriefing group for class exercises. You are encouraged to follow up with your group members outside of class for de-briefing on assignments.

**University Policies**
Several university policies are pertinent to this course. As instructors we are committed to pedagogy that is anti-racist, non-sexist, non-classist, non-heterosexist, and non-gender-normative. This includes fostering an environment that is as safe and inclusive as possible. It is our intention to name and correct as best as possible any actions on our part that fall short of these commitments. If everyone in the class is likewise committed, the work should be more easily facilitated. We are also committed to making the class physically accessible to anyone wishing to participate.

**School Grievance Procedures.** The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in the School of Education believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow the procedure described in the Guidelines by (1) first trying to resolve the matter with the faculty member directly; (2) then, if needed, attempting to resolve the matter through conversations with the chair/associate chair of the faculty member’s department; (3) if needed, next talking to the academic integrity officer of the school; and (4) if needed, filing a written statement of charges with the academic integrity officer. As Associate Dean, Dr. Gunzenhauser serves as academic integrity officer, so you would take steps (3) and (4) with the Interim Dean, Dr. Lindsay Clare Matsumura.

**Academic Integrity.** Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators. See the School of Education Academic Integrity guidelines, http://www.education.pitt.edu/CurrentStudents/PoliciesandForms.aspx

**Disability Services.** If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located in 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

**Statement on Classroom Recording.** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.
Communication
Sending emails
- Use your pitt.edu email address. You can email directly from the CourseWeb site or from your username@pitt.edu email. Instructors may not receive emails that are not from a pitt.edu address because of spam. Please be careful about this.
- Tell your instructor who you are and indicate what you need. In the subject, indicate the course name, and remember to sign your email.

Getting an email response
- Schedule: Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm
- Response Time: 48 hours

Meeting and feedback on assignment drafts
- Your instructor is glad to schedule a conference at a mutually convenient time. Email your instructor and suggest 2 or 3 available days and times.
- Your instructors are committed to providing you the feedback you need on your assignments. With the volume of students and assignments, it is not possible to individually grade and fully comment upon assignments ahead of the deadline. If you would like your instructor to review a paper or assignment ahead of the deadline, please email your instructor to arrange a brief appointment in person or over the phone.

Absence Policy
Class attendance is very important, and so students should make every opportunity to attend class on time and for the full duration. Class will start on time each class session. Email or phone your instructor ahead of time if you will miss class for any reason (this is requested only as a courtesy so your instructor will know whether to expect you).

For a second absence, regardless of the reason and for each subsequent absence, students are required to write a reflection paper (400-500 words) that covers all of the readings scheduled for that day. The reflection paper should include a summary of each author’s argument, a statement about the author’s subjectivity, and reflections on the strengths and limitations of the selection. Writing this paper will not replace the lost opportunity for class discussion; nor is it punitive. Instead, it will enable the student to still keep up with the course and the instructor to respond to the student’s understanding of the material. Please remember to do this; your instructor will not remind you that this paper needs to be done. Successful completion of the reflection paper, due by the next class period, will contribute toward the student’s participation grade. Neglecting to do so will drop your participation grade.

Assignments

1. Attendance, Preparation, and Participation
This course requires your active, thoughtful, daring, candid and respectful participation in all activities. Come prepared to be actively engaged in each class. Prepare for each session by completing all readings and assignments to enable you to enter fully into the discussions and contribute to the development of our class conversations.

2. IRB Certification
Bring to class on the date indicated on the course schedule print-outs of your pitt.citi.edu IRB certification modules. IRB certification is required to submit your study for IRB approval.
3. Manuscript Critique (500 words*)
You will write a 2-page manuscript critique on one of three possible articles. The three options to choose from are posted on CourseWeb and will be discussed in class on January 25th. This critique requires you to identify the author’s thesis, note the main ideas that support this thesis, summarize the text in your own words and evaluate how the author conveyed his/her ideas. This exercise is designed to support your understanding of research design and the development of a critical analytical lens. Be sure that your critique includes the following elements:

a. **Identify the study’s purpose.** Is the purpose of the study clear? Is the rationale for the study well supported on theoretical and/or empirical grounds? Ask yourself what the context of the study is and how the researchers articulated the need for and contribution of the study reported. Ask yourself if the authors’ intended purpose, stated contribution and actual study align in ways that make sense.

b. **Review the study design.** Do the data collected address the purpose stated? Were the data collected in a reasonable way or are there problems with the data collection method? Was the sample selected for theoretical and/or empirical reasons and/or is it a sample of convenience? To what extent does the sample as selected provide opportunities for theory testing?

c. **Review the analytic procedures.** Do the authors state explicitly how they engaged in data reduction? Do the analyses conducted address the purpose stated? Ask yourself if conducting the analyses would result in a data source that could answer the research questions as stated. Do the authors provide enough detail? Ask yourself if you could replicate the analytic process independently.

d. **Evaluate the conclusions drawn from the study.** Are the results described clearly, adequately, and accurately? Were the interpretations and conclusions sound? Ask yourself if the authors overgeneralize from the data presented and if they account for alternative hypotheses. Determine how effective the author’s write up of results was from your own perspective as a reader.

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* A note on word limits: Word ranges provide a sense of the depth expected for the assignment. Typically there are about 250 words per double-spaced page when printed in a 12-point font.
4. Researcher Positionality Statement (1000-1250 words*)
This 4-5 page assignment requires you to synthesize the readings as well as our discussions about your epistemological stance. It asks you to engage with questions that many scholars wrestle with in their work: What is you role as researcher in relation to your research? This means a deep engagement with your position in the world and how that affects access to information, knowledge and power. Further, this means questioning how your privilege or lack of privilege influences the way your knowledge is perceived by others. Questions to consider include:

a. How has your identity (gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class etc.) informed you about the world around you?

b. What has brought you to your project? Can you trace when you first became interested in this subject/your research question? Why is this project important to you?

c. As you have already begun thinking about your project, think about you role as a researcher. How does your gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, nationality (or any other important identity category) affect your motivation and/or perspective for your project?

d. What power and privileges do you bring to your research project? What might you take for granted in terms of access to information, certain research methodologies, or “insider”/“outsider” status?

5. Research Proposal (1250-2000 words* and 10-15 interview questions)
Your problem statement and research questions act as a road map for a potential study. During this course, you will begin to construct a data record for answering your research questions. Although it is sometimes the case that the data record you produce and the insights you gain from data analyses will encourage slight revisions to the focus of data collection, a thoughtful problem statement and set of focused research questions provide important structure that enables the researcher to conceptualize the study and to re-conceptualize it as the study proceeds. Please also note that one of the benefits of a well designed and implemented data collection effort is a robust data record that can support multiple sub-studies. It is not uncommon that several journal articles will be produced from one dataset. You will bring drafts of your research proposal to class and then submit revised electronic copies by the end of the week.

The proposal should have all of the following components:

a. An introduction that explains the topic and its significance as a topic of study.

b. A brief literature review that places your topic in the context of prior research. Refer to at least ten (10) references from the literature that inform your focus, question, and analysis. At least two (2) should be theoretical or conceptual pieces, and if these two references report data, that should not be the only function of the piece. At least six (6) should be research articles. In other words, the literature chosen should have some theoretical depth to it.

Some guidance here:

a.) Use Scopus (see http://www.library.pitt.edu/db/s) and other scholarly databases to locate research articles related to your focus, and if you’re digging into something new or arcane, look for studies that overlap with your topic – that study a similar phenomenon, that study the same setting or population, or that use the same theoretical frame. Use E-Z Proxy obtain secure remote access to restricted library materials (See http://www.library.pitt.edu/offcampus )

b.) Plan at least one trip to Hillman Library to access articles and books not available electronically and to scan the latest issues of pertinent journals not yet catalogued in ERIC.

c.) Use the Library of Congress database (loc.gov) for books not listed in Hillman.

d.) Use Interlibrary Loan when needed.

e.) Be on the lookout for the types of journals you cite. Supplement articles in practitioner journals (which sometimes refer to research studies but often do not) with research articles.

f.) Limit the number of non-peer-reviewed studies you rely upon.
g.) As you go along, systematically keep track of all your references and citations, perhaps using Mendeley or EndNote.

h.) Attend one of the library orientation sessions scheduled specifically for education graduate students during the term (schedule provided in class and/or on CourseWeb). Contact a reference librarian and/or attend a library instructional session for advanced assistance.

c. A problem statement and statement of purpose.

d. Research questions that address the problem statement and that connect to the literature review. It can be helpful to draft working hypotheses based upon prior theory or empirical evidence. This will help you be explicit about the connections to literature and also your study’s unique contribution.

e. A draft protocol of interview questions. You may not have read and/or absorbed the appropriate Seidman section at this point, so do your best, and you’ll have a chance to revise them.

f. A sampling strategy. Identify the number and kinds of persons you would interview in order to get the best data possible. In addition, identify whom specifically you will interview for the subsequent class assignment (without telling me the individuals’ names). The best learning experience will come from interviewing adult persons you do not know or don’t know very well. Do not interview a best friend, close colleague, or family member – there could be good reasons for conducting research with these significant others, but it is difficult to learn interview methods that way (and nearly impossible for someone else to offer suggestions when reading your transcript). Also, unless you make prior arrangements with your instructor, do not plan to interview anyone under the age of 18.

g. A tentative data collection strategy, to include the two required interviews, one required observation, one required document analysis, and additional data collection you believe you’ll need to write your analytic memo. A rule of thumb for this assignment is at least 10 total hours of data collection (in combination of interviews, observations, document analysis, and other data forms). It is important that the field setting for observation and the document to be analyzed be as closely connected topically (i.e., cohesively related to your research questions) as possible to the interviews. For instance, if you are able to observe setting(s) in which one or more of your interview respondents are participating, that will provide you multiple data points about the same person and phenomenon.

h. An unsigned consent form adapted from the samples provided on CourseWeb. Also, in your paper, indicate what you will say to your respondent to obtain informed consent and to maintain confidentiality.

6. IRB Study Approval
Submit an application to the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board for approval of your study. Use the OSIRIS system to create an “Exempt” study, indicating either your advisor or your instructor as the mentor for the project. By the date indicated on the syllabus, email your instructor the IRB approval letter.

7. Revised Interview Protocol
Consider the feedback and suggestions from your classmates and the instructor (and ideas from your continued reading) to revise your interview protocol. This assignment does not receive a grade.

8. Interview TRANSCRIBED (45-60 minute segment; bring two or more copies to class) and Description of Setting and Nonverbal Communication (1000 words,* one copy)
It is important that this be an individual interview with an adult, because group interviews, focus group interviews, and interviews with children have different dynamics, require particular skills, and require different informed consent processes. This assignment has the following steps:

   a. To reiterate, select two persons who will be appropriate informants for the phenomenon you are studying. Do not interview a minor, a member of your family, or a close friend.

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b. Conduct two 45 to 60 minute interviews (one with each respondent) and audio-record them both. (If an interview lasts less than 45 minutes, conduct and audio-record another one with that person or someone else until you have at least 45 minutes to transcribe from one person and at least 90 minutes of total interview time). Do not video-record the interview.

c. After you have completed both interviews, decide which one (1) you will transcribe verbatim. Then, personally transcribe the interview word for word, including your questions and anything else you say (do not hire someone to transcribe). Record “ums,” “ahs,” incorrect grammar, sentence fragments, etc. Indicate pauses in speech or “dead air.” Set aside about 5 to 7 times the length of the actual interview for this process, depending on your typing ability and the availability of transcription devices.

d. For the second interview, record the data from that interview in whatever manner you decide. You will need to use data from that interview for subsequent assignments.

e. On both transcripts, assign pseudonyms to your interviewee, place names, and organizations. Do not use the respondent’s initials as the pseudonym.

f. Write a detailed description of the interviewee and the setting of the interview and record all nonverbal communication between you and the interviewee. Make this chronological, and if possible, make cross-references to your transcript.

g. Prior to coming to class, take some time to read back over your transcript. For class exercises the day your transcript is due, identify (highlight or pull out) four passages (of easily readable length) that you think might be significant (those that seem like “good” data). Also, highlight areas that you recognize (in hindsight) would have been appropriate areas to ask follow-up questions.

h. Bring one copy of your description and at least two copies of your transcript to class (you’ll need enough to share with a small group, and the instructor gets one copy at the end of class). We will devote time in class to group work with your materials.

9. Observational Field Notes (at least 1000 words*)

This assignment has the following steps:

a. Select a setting relevant to your topic of interest. It should be a setting in which you can be an observer rather than either a participant or a participant-observer. As explained above in the description of the proposal assignment, the closer the observation is to the settings in which you find your interview respondent(s), the more helpful the observational data will be for answering your research questions.

b. Conduct one 40 to 60 minute observation or series of observations. (The length of the observation will depend on the amount of action, the richness of the setting, and your interest in and willingness to record minute detail).

c. Obtain the verbal assent of those you observe, unless what you are observing is in full public view.

d. Your ultimate goal is to create meaning. To do so, put yourself in the shoes of those you observe, and concentrate on details that will enable you to recreate the scene for someone who is not there. Remember to show not tell. Take detailed field notes as you observe and record all action by participants. Include time, temperature, weather, lighting, noise level, overheard voices, and any other physical attributes of the setting. Describe in full detail the people you observe, using descriptive language (as opposed to interpretive or evaluative language – we’ll talk about this distinction in class). Consider including information on body language, tone of voice, facial expression, and movement. It is very difficult to avoid focusing exclusively on the spoken dialogue, but you must learn to do so. Whenever you feel your attention is centered solely on conversation, pull back and relocate your attention to the observable non-verbal context.

e. During the observation, try to be as unobtrusive as possible. Avoid speaking unless spoken to or unless absolutely necessary. Record attempts to remain solely an observer. Indicate to what degree you participated in the setting.
f. Record your interpretation of the mood of the setting, any evidence of tone in voices, and any evidence of meaning in non-verbal communication.
g. In a separate place in your field notes, note your own disposition at the time of the observation (in other words, record it but don’t make your field notes all about your experience).
h. Type up your field notes. Use the Hatch text as a guide. As much as possible, write in complete sentences.
i. Once you’ve finished with your field notes, generate a list of questions that you might ask those you have observed (or others you would like to interview) in order to clarify or make fuller meaning of what you have seen. Note what additional observations you would like to make in order to understand the setting more completely.
j. Bring at least two copies of your field notes to class. We will devote time in class to group work with your materials.

11. Analysis Codes
On the dates indicated on the syllabus, you will bring data and analysis codes to class to participate in group exercises. You should bring in printouts of data and hard copy summaries of codes that you plan to use for your analytic memo assignment.

12. Analytic Memo (3000-5000 words*)
By the end of the semester, you will have collected a few data records related to a topic that has some connection to a prior research literature. You will probably not feel comfortable writing something definitive about your topic or the data that you have collected, so think about this assignment as a “memo about analytic procedures.” In this assignment, the idea is to describe your analytic process and evolving understanding of how best to reduce data and engage in coding in order to answer your research questions.

The memo should have a meaningful introduction and conclusion, along with the following components:

a. **Description of data reduction.** Describe your system for identifying what parts of the corpus of data you collected were relevant to your research questions and how you developed a dataset.
b. **Description of coding process.** Make use of all of the data that you have collected for this project, making sure to represent interviews, documents, and observational data.
c. **Articulation of some preliminary insights.** Use a single code or small set of codes and explore results tentatively in written form. Employ analytic-commentary-units as described by Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (2011).
d. **Connection to your research questions AND prior theory and/or empirical findings.** Make connections between your results, your stated research questions and the research literature relevant to your study. “Speaking to the literature” can mean any number of things. This could be an interpretation of your data based on prior theory, an explanation of how your research fills a particular gap in the literature, or a comparison and contrast between your data and a prior study. Make the relation between your theme and the research literature fit what you have in your data.
e. **Future research.** Identify how you would proceed to investigate this theme further if you were to explore it more in depth in the future. You should address additional data to be collected, analysis methods to be used, and theory/literature to be consulted.
f. **Positionality.** Revisit your positionality statement. Speak to the strengths and limitations of your method, your involvement in the study, and the ways in which you have participated in the creation of meaning from the data.

11. Roundtable Presentation
You will prepare a roundtable presentation based upon the format of an individual paper session conducted at annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association. You will prepare a handout using PowerPoint or similar software and provide copies for your classmates.
Course Calendar

Part One: Situating Qualitative Research

1. Course overview & introduction
2. Purposes, principles & traditions of qualitative research
3. Establishing relationships, reciprocity, ethics and IRB
4. Indications of quality, trustworthiness and vigor

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
<th>Submission format</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>In class activity &amp; introduction to the course</td>
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<td>Hatch, Chapter 1, Deciding to do a qualitative study</td>
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<td>Erickson, Qualitative methods in research on teaching</td>
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<td>(#3) Hard copy</td>
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<td>Milner, Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen, posted on CourseWeb</td>
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Part Two: Design and Methods

1. Relationship between research questions & study design
2. Entering the field
   • access to sites, settings & individuals
   • organizing time and activity in the field
3. Data collection:
   • records of observed interaction
   • debriefing of student observation experience & records
   • interviewing
   • debriefing interviewing & experience of records
   • documents and archival records
4. Organizing & displaying data; preparation for analysis

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<td>(#4) At least 3 hard copies</td>
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<td>Seidman, Chapters 4 – 7</td>
<td>(pre #7) Draft interview protocol</td>
<td>(pre #7) At least 3 hard copies</td>
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Part Three: Analysis, Representation, and Reflexivity

1. Explore recursive analysis
2. Writing analytic memos
3. Triangulating data
4. Coding & identifying emergent patterns
5. Unpacking issues of representation
6. The potential of expanding into a full study

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<td>(#10 Codes)</td>
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