

Advanced Qualitative Research

EDUC 3106

First Wednesday of each month: 3-5:40 (Posvar 5315) - refer to weekly schedule for relevant in-person)

Remaining Wednesdays: 3-5:00 (web-based)

Zoom information:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87948969041?pwd=GWbAXWOJJpz8V9a6Xf1WAJcl3uZGr8.1>

Password: AdvQual

Instructor: [Leigh Patel](#), Ph.D.

Office hours: by appointment

e-mail: lpatel@pitt.edu

Tentative Weekly Schedule

Knowing and knowability in social science research

“The people themselves are not a homogenous cultural collectivity but present numerous and variously combined cultural stratifications which, in their pure form, cannot always be identified within specific historical popular collectivities.”

Antonio Gramsci

“My whole point in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ is that you can't simply make the subaltern visible or lend her a voice. (the subaltern is very often, though not quite always, gendered female in my work... because women the world over are still structurally subordinated to men.) But just to make sure you've all got it into your heads this time, I'll say it again: there's no quick fix for inequality.”

Gayatri Spivak

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

Audre Lorde

“The story does not simply describe, it demands representation outside itself. Indeed, the story cannot tell itself without our willingness to imagine what it cannot tell. The story asks that we live with what cannot be explained and live with unexplained cues and diasporic literacies, rather than reams of positivist evidence.”

Katherine McKittrick

Course Overview

This course is designed to provide you with both theoretical and practical opportunities to explore and apply qualitative research methods in the social sciences. The course focuses on first defining and problematizing the necessary and relative components of epistemology, social theory, methodology, and methods and then supporting class members to develop research questions and designs that best support ways of knowing for the betterment of living beings. This course is also designed to be a collaborative and supportive learning space for everyone enrolled. *This is a reading and writing intensive course, in which writing is expected and shared each week.*

The course is largely dependent upon a discursive, recursive, and collaborative inquiry process. As such, your participation not only as an emerging researcher but also as a member of this learning community is crucial to individual and collective growth. You will have the opportunity to engage in several specific applications as well as producing a final report of your work, and your writing, critical reading and weekly participation are equally substantive in the course requirements.

EDUC 3106 will provide students with opportunities to:

- Distinguish and understand the interrelationships among theory, method, and methodology
- Interrogate the potentials, tensions and issues that cut across quantitative and qualitative orientations to social science research
- Distinguish between various qualitative research methodologies
- Develop and construct a research project that coherently addresses theory, methodology, methods, and audience
- Analyze a set of data through multiple lenses, working with existing data or collecting new data as part of the course.
- Situate research methodologies within genealogies of colonization and power
- Produce a potentially publishable empirical research paper

Course Scope and Sequence

In this first phase of the course, we will pay particular attention to the genealogies of social science research and the role of answerability to all beings. This discussion will frame the logical and purposeful development of answerability within empirical, applied and ethical research. This second phase of the course will include traditionally sanctioned but also heavily critiqued approaches to qualitative data analysis, such as coding. Throughout the course, you will draw upon your understanding of qualitative

research and your field of interest to develop a research approach of your choice – one that particularly befits your research project and produce a theoretically and methodologically sound proposal for a qualitative study. In the third phase of the course, we will pay particular attention to writing for specific audiences and purposes. Throughout the course, we will attend particularly to the colonial genealogies of research and approaches that work outside of colonial logics of objectivity, ownership, and property rights.

Course Readings

Materials for this course will include texts, films, videos, and audio recordings. The tentative weekly schedule can be found [here](#). Note that only the first month is mapped out to maintain flexibility and design the scope and sequence collectively. The assigned readings be comprised of four sources, two assigned through the instructor and two kinds brought to classes by the other participants.

Instructor-assigned

These texts will be read by all course participants. The purpose of these shared readings is to provide a shared vocabulary, foundation, and understanding of key concepts, issues, and tensions in qualitative research.

- Required Articles: available via course reserves in the library or online
- Required Course Texts:

Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions.

- Strongly Recommended Course Texts:

Tachine, A., & Nicolazzo, Z. (Eds.). (2023). *Weaving an otherwise: In-relations methodological practice*. Taylor & Francis.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. St. Martins: New York.

Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. (2023). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research, 2nd Ed*. Routledge: New York.

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2019). *Black feminism in qualitative inquiry: A mosaic for writing our daughter's body*. Routledge.

Optional (for coding as one, normaliz[ed] way of analyzing data): Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Optional (for a engaged and rigorous exploration of where critical theory and Indigenous ways of knowing meet and depart) Grande, S. (2015). *Red Pedagogy*:

Native American social and political thought, 2nd Ed. Rowman Littlefield:
Lanham, MD.

Student-selected

In addition to the readings assigned by the instructor, you will also be responsible for researching, reading, and reflecting upon qualitative research published in your field of inquiry. These requirements are to both to assist us in exploring various manifestations of qualitative research and to broaden your knowledge of these approaches in your own field.

- Articles: Each month, you should find, read, and bring to class a qualitative research article pertinent to your field for the third week in the month. It is recommended that you sketch a one to two paragraph of the article which you will post to our online discussion space, presenting the major points of the article during class, and reflecting primarily upon the ways that *data and theory are situated relationally*.
- Monograph / book: By the fourth week of the course you should *select and obtain* a monograph that details a qualitative inquiry in your area of interest. Examples of relevant texts will be shared. For the first half of the class, you will read this monograph and participate in reading and writing groups in which you will share and explore cross-cutting issues of qualitative research. If you wish, you can write a review of this book, for potential publication, as a structured way to write regularly, as a formal assignment in the course. (see course requirements)

Course Requirements/Projects

Our work together in this course will be discursive, recursive, and iterative. Becoming a well-informed, theoretically rigorous, and reflective social scientist involves a great deal of inquiry into theory, research, and one's own experiences and assumptions. To reach this, we will strive for praxis in the course's activities and requirements – engaging in practice to interrogate our theoretical stances and using theory to question findings from practice. The following sets of requirements, both participatory and written, are designed to support your learning and unlearning processes. Class sessions typically will reflect a dual seminar and workshop format, with discussion of readings and topics facilitated during a seminar approach and hands-on analytic and writing work with your empirical data during workshop time.

In-Class Participation and weekly writing assignments - required of all (50% of final grade)

Much of being a social scientist is predicated upon a readiness, willingness, and passion to see the world from others' perspectives, even if that means changing one's own perspective. As such, discourse and dialogue will be mainstays of your work in this course, making class participation inseparable from your and others' learning, both in-class and in our [online discussions space](#). We can use perusall, through Canvas, to interact with each other and our texts. Additionally, you will participate in writing workshops regularly, revising, revising, and revising as you receive feedback from each

other and as you engage with course texts. Lastly, we will use an online discussion google doc for a threaded conversation about each week's topics. The online discussion space will also allow us to make connections across texts. Class attendance is essential to learning in this course. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading(s), associated activities, interacted with the texts and each other via online discussion spaces and writing groups and poised to listen, pose questions as well as answer questions. Each student will also act as the discussion anchor for the week: providing a discussion prompt in our online discussion guide. Students are also expected to consider societal dominance and oppression in their contributions and be ready to step up and listen up. Essentially, the *consistency and quality* of participation is important. Contributions to class should reflect requisite knowledge, awareness of self, and regard for the larger learning community.

All of that said, guess what? People are still getting sick from COVID, grieving, struggling with a society in material and perhaps moral peril, and the planet is talking back to us, loudly. If life happens for you in such a way that you need to pause or need support, please reach out to me. I want all of us to be well. You start with you: be well and show up. Reach out if you need help.

How Care Will Show up in Course etiquette, aka We are All Responsible for the Shared Space

In general, use the following to ground yourself before, during, and after class sessions: step up, listen up, and show up. When we are web-based, if you can, have your camera on and sound on unless the sound in your atmosphere is distracting to you and others. It helps to bring human and our lifeworlds sounds into the space. When we meet in person, I will be masking. You can choose not to, but I ask you to think about space, health, and persistent chronic illnesses that persist in the so-called 'post-COVID' world act accordingly. If you're feeling unwell or are sick, please stay home and join class via zoom if you are able. By prioritizing disability justice in the interest of abolishing a healthcare system that is individualistic and rampantly denies the constant interconnectedness and impact we have on each other, we have the always available ability to act from a base of collective care.

Book Review - Optional (Reading a monograph in your area of interest is not optional)

As part of the weekly writing workshop time, you will read a contemporary book-length monograph that utilizes qualitative research to address a social science topic. Journal-length writings are challenging for qualitative studies, as the data is typically larger and not entirely conducive to linear text. Reading a monograph-length book will allow you to delve more deeply into how theory shapes methods into methodology as well as get close to the most precious promise of qualitative research: nuance and detail. You may choose write a professional review of that book, but you are not obligated to do this. Should you choose to do work on your writing through this option, here is more information. This review will serve to focus your emerging skills of writing for various audiences beyond dissertation committees. Due date TBA (book selection by January

29th). See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for examples of book reviews of scholarship for wide audiences.

Final paper/project and presentation (50 % of final grade)

The final requirement is the development of a qualitative research study proposal or a student-defined writing project, in consultation with the course instructor. In the first two weeks of the class, we will meet 1:1 to discuss where you are in your program, your research focus and agree upon a path and writing focus for the semester. In most cases, the writing projects will involve focusing on your key area of your research, reflect the essential components of a purposeful and answerable research project, and apply critical, feminist, and/or decolonial positionalities throughout. The fourth week of every month will include a writing workshop. By Mondays at 5pm, please circulate your working draft to members of your writing group, and we will use class time for writing workshop in class (2nd class session will provide more details about the do's and don'ts of writing groups). Additionally, you will present your work in the form of a roundtable presentation at the final class session of the semester. You are highly encouraged to approach this paper as a design-based project, rather than a lock-step structure that follows a colonial format for research designs. Your final paper (see grading below) will receive feedback throughout the course and some round-up feedback from the instructor with one-on-one meetings to close out the course.

GRADING, sigh.

Grading in many ways gets in the way of learning, and I am far more interested in learning than putting a number on what possibly has been learned and unlearned. Read [this short piece](#) that deftly explains how arbitrary while also intersectionally harmful grades are. And it must be true because a mathematician wrote it, and they best know numbers, right? By the way, Bob Moses used math as a language for freedom. But, back to grading, which is far afield of freedom.

You all know how to student. You have studented your way through many years of schooling, and for some of you, this has involved a good deal of harm and miseducation. Let's get into learning, which also means unlearning. Let's aim for the strength that Prentis Hemphill says is found in the space between stability and vulnerability. Part of the rationale of co-designing our learning space is to be answerable while actively taking part in the design of how learning can take shape. That is partially why our reading/text schedule is not fully formed at the start of the semester. None of what I just described deserves to sit under the low ceiling of an arbitrary point system.

And I know you want to know how 'grading' will happen. In essence, you will either pass (A-B) or fail (anything below a B) this course. If you are in danger of failing because of lack of engagement or engaging in distracting ways of being, for example

‘being the devil’s advocate,’ because you are evading responsibility for your arguments, you and I will talk. However, simply showing up isn’t the same as ‘passing,’ in the many meanings that word has. To pass, in our course, means to design, to try. You need to show up, listen up, engage in design, in dedicated study, and in thoughtful argumentation, again and again. Be willing to get something wrong to learn from that wrong. Be willing to dream. Why know if it doesn’t include space to dream? Seek to know and create knowledge with others for a clear purpose.

This statement on grading is heavily influenced by the intellectual work of Dr. Shanyce Campbell

If you are experiencing home/health/food insecurity, please contact me or another person/org you trust. You are not alone.

Required Statements from the University of Pittsburgh

Lightly annotated by Prof Patel

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.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#).

As a tradition of modernity, doctoral degrees are considered to be both original and field-impacting. A tall order for any text. As written by Tazbah Rose Chavez for *Reservation Dogs*, “There are no separate entities. Only things that rely on each other.” And, vectors of oppression are conduits that structure systemic theft, including theft of ideas and authorship. In this course, we will dedicate particular attention to the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston, asking about the conditions of her life, her death, and how her work is now regarded as a hallmark of field-based anthropology..

Dis/ability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140

William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

If you have an undocumented disability and/or an invisible disability, you are welcome to approach me at any time to talk about how I and others can best support your learning. Getting a disability documented is fully entrenched with the racial capitalism and ableism that runs rampant in many of society's healthcare systems.

Optional statements, also lightly annotated by Prof Patel

Accessibility

Canvas is ADA Compliant and has fully implemented the final accessibility standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Please note that, due to the flexibility provided in this product, it is possible for some material to inadvertently fall outside of these guidelines. Also, accessibility is about disability rights. Disability justice is something else entirely, but we'll get into that.

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, see: <http://diversity.pitt.edu/affirmative-action/policies-procedures-and-practices>.

If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online: <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/make-report/report-form>. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Universities are inextricable from this nation's rapid economic growth through enslavement of African peoples and the dislocation and attempted genocide of Native peoples. This legacy now intertwines with many universities acting more like Univers-Cities where the university is the primary employer, labor contractor, landlord, law enforcement presence on campus, and healthcare provider, all while seeking to grow endowments at all costs. To quote Ruha Benjamin again, "Plantations were diverse and inclusive. So, what are we actually talking about?" Her question is meant to draw attention to conditions of power as we say widely-used words. Diversity and inclusion are topics we'll address in class, informed by knowing how such statements have come into being and how they are emptied of material impact.

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.

It's fairly evident that we can control very little about how others may remember or narrate something we've said or done. So, when it comes to class discussions, be kind, be generous, be respectful. Let's not record each other without permission or engaged in McCarthy-esque characterizations, ok? Thanks.