

**St. John's University**  
**Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership**

**EDU 7900**  
**Qualitative Research Methods in Education**

*“I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human.”*

—Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

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### **Course Description**

The course provides an introduction to qualitative inquiry for the social sciences, with a focus on education. Throughout the semester, students will explore both theoretical and practical issues of qualitative research. In particular, we will examine the major stages of the research process, including planning a study, collecting data, analyzing data, ensuring rigor, and presenting findings.

Qualitative research involves a variety of critical skills such as understanding, planning, recording, interpreting, analyzing, and presenting. As such, the course is reading, writing, and thinking intensive. Students will spend considerable time reading and discussing examples of rigorous qualitative research as well as participating in collaborative workshops to critique and improve your own work. To gain practical experience, students will design and implement a research project. The project will assist them to develop the skills, knowledge, and practices necessary to conduct meaningful and rigorous research.

Lastly, we will discuss the *how* of qualitative inquiry and also the *why*. As the epigraph suggests, a core focus of this course is the role and power of research. One of our core goals will be to explore how qualitative research may improve educational policy and practice.

## Course Objectives

The objectives of the course are threefold:

- To examine critical aspects of the qualitative research process through theoretical discussions and practical applications.
- To provide guidance for the major stages of doctoral study, focusing on planning for, thinking about, conducting, and finishing a dissertation study.
- To develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary in order to improve as leaders and learners.

## Required Texts

Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Luker, K. (2008). *Salsa dancing into the social sciences: Research in an age of info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rios, V. M. (2011). *Punished: Policing the lives of black and Latino boys*. New York: New York University Press.

I have attempted to select widely available, inexpensive, and useful texts. Students should purchase *Unequal Childhoods* (Lareau, 2011), *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (Luker, 2008), and *Punished* (Rios, 2011). The three books will be essential to our course and will also provide useful guides throughout your graduate and postgraduate studies. Used copies, along with reasonably priced digital copies, may be found on Amazon. I will provide digital copies of all other readings. See course schedule for more details.

## Recommended Reading

The below readings represent core texts of qualitative inquiry. These texts are not required reading for our course; however, if you plan to conduct qualitative research, they are essential readings and serve as excellent reference points for your growth as a researcher.

Agar, *The Professional Stranger*  
 Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*  
 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*  
 Denzin, *Interpretive Biography*  
 Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*  
 Kilbourn, "The Qualitative Doctoral Dissertation Proposal"  
 Koro-Ljungberg, *Reconceptualizing Qualitative Research*  
 Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*  
 Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*

Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*  
 Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*  
 Seidman, *Interview as Qualitative Research*  
 Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*

Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*  
 Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*  
 Wolcott, *Writing Up Qualitative Research*  
 Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*  
 Yin, *Case Study Research*

### Recommended Journals

Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies  
 Educational Researcher  
 Ethnography  
 Field Methods  
 International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education

Qualitative Inquiry  
 Review of Educational Research  
 Sociology of Education  
 Teachers College Record  
 Urban Education

### Course Requirements

Major course assignments pertain to the research process. Students will plan and enact a basic research project and produce a series of papers. I will use the assignment criteria along with writing rubric to evaluate papers (Appendix A). Because the project fulfills course requirements, students need not obtain approval from St. John's University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, if you expect to use the findings in a future paper or presentation, you must obtain IRB approval first.

The following assignments fulfill the objectives of the course. As the semester progresses, I will provide more details for each assignment. Of note, not only does the final paper serve as the capstone for the course, it will also function as the sample empirical paper for the doctoral comprehensive examination. While all papers serve as an opportunity to demonstrate excellence, students ought to approach the final paper with an added level of dedication and quality.

- **Participation:** Active participation is significant both to your success and the success of the course. Students ought to complete readings and submit assignments by the dates specified in the class schedule. Since the course meets fewer times throughout the semester, students ought to create a strategic reading schedule. That is, each class contains several weeks of readings; use extended breaks in-between classes to read ahead. Late assignments will result in significant grade reductions.

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for providing discussion content (Blackboard postings) as well as leading class discussions (facilitation). As 21<sup>st</sup> century researchers, we will incorporate social media into the fabric of the

course. In particular, students will post critical questions based on course readings. I will provide more details in class.

- **Project Description:** In groups, students will select a research topic, develop a research question, identify potential observation sites and interviewees, and write a 150-word abstract. Students will submit the materials as a group.
- **Observation Paper (4-5 pages):** Students will conduct a 60-minute observation of a setting. Subsequent observations may be necessary in order to gather more data. As an appendix, **include fieldnotes.**
- **Interview Paper (4-5 pages):** Students will interview a participant one to two times throughout the semester. The interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes. Subsequent interviews may be necessary in order to clarify information or gather more data. As an appendix, **include interview protocol.**
- **Final Paper (10-12 pages):** At the conclusion of data, students will write a research paper. Sections will include introduction, literature review, methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion. **Include at least 7-10 references.**

Grading Rubric	Letter grades
<b>Participation</b> (25 points)	A = 95 points and above
<b>Project Description</b> (5 points)	A- = 95 – 90 points
<b>Observation Paper</b> (20 points)	B+ = 87 – 89 points
<b>Interview Paper</b> (20 points)	B = 80 – 86 points
<b>Final Paper</b> (30 points)	C+ = 77 – 79 points
	C = 70 – 76 points
	F = 70 and below

### Writing Style

All assignments must be typed and should conform to the style and reference notation format outlined in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The APA manual is an essential tool for survival in graduate school. Please study it carefully and refer to it often. If you are unsure about APA formatting and citation rules, refer to the manual and consult with classmates. Additional resources may be found at Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL). Points will be deducted from your papers if they are formatted incorrectly. In addition, please thoroughly edit and revise; effective argumentation relies on clear, edited, and error-free writing. When grading papers, I use a basic writing rubric that focuses on argument, structure, evidence, and presentation (see Appendix A).

I attempt to provide timely, constructive feedback. I typically reply to student emails within 24 hours. I return assignments with feedback within seven days of submission. Papers will include a series of comments. Throughout the semester, students ought to

use the comments in order to guide future writing. For instance, if I suggest that you omit the passive voice and include more active verbs, future writing should incorporate the feedback.

Effective writing, a critical component of professional life, is a process that includes constant reflection, revision, and feedback. As a result, I strongly urge you to take advantage of the St. John's Writing Center (<http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/centers/iws/writingcenter>).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a cornerstone of scholarly pursuits. Graduate students and professionals ought not cheat or steal ideas from other authors or sources without giving appropriate credit and recognition to the originators of the work. Thus, any student who plagiarizes will receive a failing grade, and the case will be forwarded to the Dean of the School of Education.

### **Academic Accommodations**

The university provides accommodations for any student who requires special services, as long as s/he provides appropriate documentation. Please consult with the Office of Student Life – Disabled Student Services at St. John's University. While students sometimes worry about stigmas that accompany special conditions or circumstances, my goal is to create an inclusive and healthy environment. Please do not hesitate to speak with me if you have any questions or concerns.

### **Incomplete Grades**

Students who are unable to complete coursework due to documented illness or extreme emergency after the university course drop date, upon arrangement with the professor, may receive an incomplete for the course. During such cases, formal documentation will specify the assignments required to complete the course as well as the timeline. Incomplete assignments are usually due at the end of the next semester. Previously graded work may not be re-submitted. Please note that the professor only grants incomplete grades for extreme, documented circumstances.

### **Time Requirement**

The New York State Department of Education requires that each graduate course meet for at least 28 hours of instruction to earn three (3) graduate credits. St. John's University requires at least 30 contact hours of instruction and 15 additional hours at home to earn three (3) graduate credits. In addition to regular course work, NYSDE requires 120 hours of supplemental learning activities such as reading texts, writing papers, and conducting research. As a hybrid course that occurs in both physical and digital settings, the course fulfills state and university time requirements.

## University Core Values

Six core values—truth, love, respect, opportunity, excellence, and service—guide the university and its members.

- **Truth:** Knowledge in accord with reality, behavior faithful to ethical standards.
- **Love:** Extending minds and hearts to nurture one's own and another's good.
- **Respect:** Awareness of and esteem for all individuals.
- **Opportunity:** Occasions for serving others and preparing one's self for a fulfilling life.
- **Excellence:** Striving, growing, never being complacent.
- **Service:** Vincentian spirituality, a response to God's call to give of ourselves.

**Class Schedule**

	<b>Themes and Critical Questions</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>January 24, 2015</b>	<p><b>Introducing Qualitative Research</b></p> <p>What is qualitative research? How do qualitative and quantitative research differ?</p> <p>What do the big words—ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology—mean?</p> <p>What are the major research methodologies?</p> <p>What are research methods?</p> <p>What are the stages of research?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creswell, “Chapter 4: Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry”</li> <li>• Lincoln, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited”</li> <li>• Clemens, “Conducting a Neighborhood Ethnography”</li> <li>• Sipe and Constable, “A Chart of Four Contemporary Research Paradigms”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Outline research project</li> </ul>
<b>January 31, 2015</b>	<p><b>Planning an Ethical Study</b></p> <p>How does an investigator develop research questions?</p> <p>How does an investigator conduct a literature review?</p> <p>How does a researcher select methods?</p> <p>How does a researcher plan an ethical study?</p> <p>What are Institutional Review Boards?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luker, Chapters 4-5</li> <li>• Ellis, “Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting</li> <li>• <b>Submit project description</b></li> </ul>
<b>February 07, 2015</b>	<p><b>Ensuring Quality Research</b></p> <p>What is trustworthiness?</p> <p>How does trustworthiness differ from validity and reliability?</p> <p>How does a researcher ensure trustworthiness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eisenhart and Howe, “Validity in Educational Research”</li> <li>• Mathison, “Why Triangulate?”</li> <li>• Lincoln, “Varieties of Validity”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting</li> </ul>

<p><b>February 14, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Ensuring Quality Research</b>          How does a researcher ensure trustworthiness?          What are the opportunities for and barriers to trustworthiness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wolcott, “On Seeking-and Rejecting-Validity”</li> <li>• Wolcott, “Sneaky Kid”</li> <li>• Rios, Part I and Appendix</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting</li> </ul>
<p><b>February 21, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Going into the Field</b>          How does a researcher gain access?          What is reflexivity?          How does social position influence research?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Cure”</li> <li>• Luker, Chapter 6-7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> </ul>
<p><b>February 28, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Collecting Data</b>          What are the types of observations?          How does a researcher develop protocols?          How does a researcher create fieldnotes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luker, Chapters 8</li> <li>• Taylor and Bogdan, Chapters 2-3 (Participant Observation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting</li> <li>• <b>Submit observation paper</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>March 07, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Collecting Data</b>          What are the types of interviews?          How does a researcher develop protocols?          How does a researcher transcribe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kvale, Chapters 7-8 (Interviewing)</li> <li>• Rios, Part II</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> </ul>

<p><b>March 14, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Analyzing Data</b>                  What are codes, categories, and memos?                  How does a researcher develop themes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luker, Chapter 10</li> <li>• Gibbs, “Chapter 6: Comparative Analysis”</li> <li>• Corwin and Clemens, “Analyzing Fieldnotes”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting</li> <li>• <b>Bring four copies of interview transcription to class</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>March 21, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Technology and Digital Tools</b>                  What are the uses of technology for qualitative research?                  What are the implications of research across digital and physical settings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clemens, “Introduction to Using Social Media for Qualitative Research”</li> <li>• Clemens, “Friends, Lovers, and Social Media Experimentation”</li> <li>• Paulus, Lester, and Dempster, excerpts from <i>Digital Tools for Qualitative Research</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> </ul>
<p><b>March 28, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Presenting Research</b>                  How do researchers present findings?                  How does audience influence presentation?                  What is thick description?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creswell, “Chapter 9: Writing a Qualitative Study”</li> <li>• Geertz, “Thick Description”</li> <li>• Bourgois and Schonberg, “Introduction: A Theory of Abuse”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> <li>• <b>Submit interview paper</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>March 14, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Presenting Research</b>                  How do researchers present findings?                  What is the difference between showing and telling?                  How does researchers ethically and accurately represent the lives of participants?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lareau, Chapters 1-5 and Appendix A-B</li> <li>• Lincoln, “Self, Subject, Audience, Text”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> </ul>

<p><b>April 04, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Examining the Role of Qualitative Research for Social Justice</b>          What, if at all, is the role of social justice?          How do researchers ensure that they are promoting social justice rather than reproducing it?          How might qualitative research help produce more socially just public policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denzin and Giardina, “Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice: Toward a Politics of Hope”</li> <li>• Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, “Critical Race Theory, Transformational Resistance and Social Justice”</li> <li>• McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s readings</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> </ul>
<p><b>April 11, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Predicting the Future of Qualitative Research</b>          What is translational research?          How will new technologies influence qualitative research?          How might qualitative researchers adopt their work for multiple audiences?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hine, “Internet Research as Emergent Practice”</li> <li>• Tierney and Clemens, “Qualitative Research and Public Policy”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete week’s reading</li> <li>• Complete Blackboard posting or facilitation</li> <li>• <b>In-class project presentations</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>April 18, 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Paper Workshop (AERA Conference: Professor will Skype)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review paper drafts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring paper to class</li> <li>• <b>Submit final paper (April 25, 2014)</b></li> </ul>

**Appendix A. Writing Rubric**

	<b>Incomplete (F) 1</b>	<b>Novice (D) 2</b>	<b>Developing (C) 3</b>	<b>Proficient (B) 4</b>	<b>Expert (A) 5</b>
<b>Thesis</b>	Overall position is not evident. Topic is superficial or undeveloped.	Overall position is evident, but often too simplistic. Topic is simplistic.	Overall position is clear with a sense of developed ideas. Topic is interesting and significant, but not deeply explored.	Overall position is clear and developed. Topic is interesting, significant, and includes multiple perspectives.	Overall position is well articulated and thoroughly developed. Topic is very interesting, significant, and complex.
<b>Structure</b>	No argumentative structure is evident. Ideas are unconnected.	Argumentative structure is rudimentary. Claims are repeated rather than developed.	Argumentative structure is evident but sometimes simplistic.	Argumentative structure is evident and mostly reinforces the thesis.	Argumentative structure is clearly evident and progresses logically.
<b>Evidence</b>	Claims are not supported by reliable evidence from credible sources, making the paper unconvincing.	Some claims are supported by valid, reliable evidence, but support is inconsistent, making the paper less than convincing.	Claims are typically supported by valid, reliable evidence from credible sources, making the paper for the most part convincing.	Claims are almost always supported by valid, reliable sources, so that the paper is generally convincing.	Claims are supported by reliable, valid evidence from credible sources and effectively synthesized in a convincing manner.
<b>Presentation</b>	Paper includes a very high number of grammatical errors and does not conform to APA standards.	Paper includes a high number of grammatical errors and inconsistently conforms to APA standards.	Paper includes a moderate number of grammatical errors and reasonably conforms to APA standards.	Paper includes few grammatical errors and mostly conforms to APA standards.	Paper does not include grammatical errors and conforms to APA standards.

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