Reflective Commentary on Syllabus

1. How does the course fit into your department’s/undergraduate program’s curriculum?

This course is actually an introductory course in a Psy.D. program. It is the first of two courses in learning how to create a qualitative research project. However, it would also be appropriate for students interested in doing an undergraduate Honors project, or for a student who was interested in becoming a research assistant for a professor’s qualitative study. It assumes no prior knowledge of the qualitative paradigm or methodology.

2. How was the focus of the course, e.g., on a specific methodology; a general overview of qualitative inquiry, determined?

The course includes a relatively brief overview of multiple (5) qualitative approaches to research (Wertz, 2011). This selection gives the reader a sense of the number and complexity of approaches in qualitative methods. The course then focuses on grounded theory, presenting two different grounded theory approaches. Presenting two approaches emphasizes the number of approaches to data organization included under the umbrella of grounded theory. Then the students learn the Auerbach-Silverstein approach because this particular model is relatively easy to master for inexperienced researchers, and appropriate for a Psy.D doctoral research project.

c. Are there particular challenges to teaching qualitative inquiry as an undergraduate psychology course that you try to address in your course? How do you do so?

A special challenge in teaching inexperienced researchers is the need to be meticulous in reporting data: not to paraphrase or suppress data, regardless of how unimportant it might seem at first glance. Another important task for all researchers using qualitative inquiry is the relationship between researcher and participants, and the need to examine their own preconceived ideas and biases. For this reason, the course begins and ends with a discussion of the complex issues involved in learning about both cultural differences and one’s own subjectivity.

d. What is the rationale for the assignments, exams, etc.?

The reading assignments address naïve researchers who are embedded in a culture that teaches primarily quantitative methods. Therefore, the course begins with an examination of the similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative
methods. Before beginning to address data organization and analysis within the qualitative approach, the readings then turn to the challenge of achieving cultural humility and to the importance of researcher subjectivity. Finally, segments of raw data are presented to students, and the instructor presents the Auerbach/Silverstein approach to data organization and theory construction. Students attempt coding on their own and then compared with coding of other students in small group discussion. Finally, student coding is compared with publication of the same data (student publications), illustrating how theory is constructed.

The rationale for the PowerPoint presentations is two fold. The student is given a chance to choose a reading that interests them. The need to make an active choice of content changes the student’s relationship to the course material. Rather than remaining a passive recipient of reading assignments from an authority figure, they must take ownership of a topic, and use their initiative and creativity to generate a professional presentation. It also provides them with an opportunity to learn how to organize and deliver a PowerPoint presentation, an important professional skill.

Finally, the written description of their Research Question and the Literature Review associated with that question is the first phase of their research project. Students can then work with their primary research mentor to create a proposal for review by the Institutional Review Board. For undergraduate students, completing this requirement could be helpful in their application to graduate school.
Introduction to Qualitative Research
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Spring 2014

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Course Description

This course is geared to students training to be practicing clinical, school, or health psychologists, who want to learn how to do qualitative research.

Course Objectives/Goals

Theoretical Goals.

Describe the differences between the quantitative and the qualitative research paradigms.

Develop a beginning understanding of the complex issues involved in studying cultural differences, with an emphasis on the challenges of insider/outsider power and status, and researcher subjectivity.

Describe how qualitative research can be included in Evidence-Based Practice.

Describe the participatory action research paradigm and several examples of PAR projects.

Practical Goals.

Develop a preliminary research question in the student’s area of interest.

Develop and conduct a qualitative research interview and/or focus group.

Develop an understanding of multiple approaches to qualitative inquiry, and with an emphasis on the Auerbach/Silverstein approach to organizing data and generating theory.

Course Requirements

READINGS


[www.guineapigzero.com](http://www.guineapigzero.com) - Readings from this zine.


**Published Articles Based on Student Research**


Silverstein, L. B., Dowd, S., & Golash, K. (2015). Expanding Evidence-Based Practice to include
qualitative research. Manuscript in preparation.


**Course Processes**

The course objectives will be accomplished using lectures, class discussion, and student presentations. Examples of articles that have been published using previous students’ research will also be used to illustrate data organization, theory construction, publication process, and to inspire current students.

**Requirements: Student Presentations**
1. Each student will choose one chapter in any of the assigned readings to present as a power point in class. (35%) of grade
2. Each student will complete a description of their proposed doctoral research question and a literature review relevant to that question. (45% of grade)
3. Class participation (20% of grade)

**Course Sequence**

**UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION: [2 classes]**

**Student Introductions.**
**What is qualitative research?**
**What is hypothesis-generating research?**
**A brief overview of different types of qualitative inquiry/**
Readings:
1. Auerbach, C. F. (unpublished paper) 6 FAQ’s about Qualitative research.
2. Auerbach & Silverstein (2003). (Chapter 1)
3. Wertz, et al. (2011) (Chapters 2 & 3)

**Why is qualitative research especially suited to multicultural humility and sensitivity?**
Readings.
in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9*(2), 117-125.

What are some of the power and privilege dilemmas that researchers face in qualitative i.e. bottom up research?

Readings.


UNIT 2:

THINKING ABOUT CULTURE: LEARNING TO LISTEN, AND LISTENING TO LEARN (1 class)

Readings:


UNIT 3. WHY IS CONFRONTING OUR OWN SUBJECTIVITY IMPORTANT? (1 class)

Readings.


2. Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (Eds.). (2014). Merging culture and personal experience in
critical autoethnography. In R. M. Boylorn, & M. P. Orbe., (Eds.),
Critical autoethnography. Intersecting cultural identities in everyday life
(pp. 9-26). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

3. Student publication.

UNIT 4. PLANNING A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY: {2
classes]

Steps in planning a qualitative study.
Readings.
to
coding and analysis. NY: NYU Press (Chapters 2 & 3).

and
   regaining a valued self. In F. Wertz, et al. (Eds.), Five ways of doing
qualitative analysis (pp. 165-205). NY: The Guilford Press.

Student presentations.

UNIT 4: CONSTRUCTING AND CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE
RESEARCH INTERVIEW [3 classes]

Basic principles
Class demonstration research interview
Student Practice Interviews
Class demonstration focus group
Reading.
to coding and analysis. NY: NYU Press (Chapter 4, 5, 6, 7)

Student presentation.

UNIT 5: ORGANIZING QUALITATIVE DATA: CONSTRUCTING
QUALITATIVE THEORY [3 classes]

The coding process: relevant text, repeating ideas, themes, constructs,
and Theoretical Narrative
Bottom up coding for emergent theory
Top down coding for elaborating and refining theory
Illustrations

1. Using data from student publications.


UNIT 6: CODING QUALITATIVE DATA: RELEVANCE TO EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE [1 class] USING QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AS HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESEARCH

Readings.


2. [www.guineapigzero.com](http://www.guineapigzero.com) - Readings from this zine.


Student presentations

UNIT 7: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH. (1 class)

Readings.


EPILOGUE: FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION ABOUT CLASS PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS. (1 Class)