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ACL 546 Research Methodology

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ACL 546

Research Methodology

Summer 2011

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Course Description

Introduces principles and methods underlying the creation of knowledge. Develops a critical understanding of research and examines knowledge creation as a component of adult and education.

Course Overview

Class Meeting Times: Online (BlackBoard) and Face to Face on Thursdays June 30, July 21, August 11, and August 25 at the Chicago campus, room 307A (Annex) from 6pm-7:50pm.

Research is the pursuit of knowledge. This process involves a close examination of a problem or issue you want to investigate. This course introduces research principles and practices in the field of adult education with an emphasis on qualitative methodologies. This course is designed to introduce students to a systematic process for identifying and investigating questions and issues that arise in life and from educational practice. Students will learn to develop and articulate research questions, critically assess appropriate research method(s), locate and analyze related research, and to critically think and reflect on the entire process. The ethical and critical use of research is an integral part of the course structure.

Research involves systematically, thoughtfully, ethically and creatively investigating a problem, concern, or issue. This process includes developing and implementing a research plan and analyzing data in order to test/develop theories, explore current knowledge, create new knowledge, and to gain a deeper and wider perspective of the world. You can use research to inform, persuade, communicate, and to develop new theories or understandings about the nature of the phenomenon you are investigating. Critical thinking and analyzing are a vital part of this process. This course will provide hands-on practice with collecting data.

There are many different types of knowledge. Creating and disseminating knowledge is not limited to a few experts; this is one of the strengths of qualitative research. The Research Plan is the culmination of the learning activities in this course where students will integrate everything they have learned into a completed proposal that will provide practice and a template for future research.

Learning Objectives

- Develop a greater understanding of the research process and articulate a focused proposal and research questions.
- Become an effective and critical researcher through evaluation, reading, and analysis.

- Develop an ethical framework to guide the research process.
- Reflect on one's own experience as a creator, user, and evaluator of knowledge.
- Identify strategies for the creation and communication of knowledge.
- Understand research methodologies in relation to concrete problems to which they are applied.
- Create a research proposal.

Student Responsibilities

- Participation is a core part of this course. Every student is expected to actively contribute to online discussions, attend in-class sessions, and to interact with the instructor and with other students. Participation is the combination of thoughtful discussions, readings, and critically reflecting on all aspects of course content.
- Students will interact respectfully with the instructor and other students. A focus of any discussion is to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and others' perspectives.
- Students will submit work according to the timeline in the syllabus.
- If a student is not able to submit their work on time or able to participate in a class session, he/she will notify the instructor ahead of time.

Instructor Responsibilities

- The instructor will be available on a regular basis to answer student questions, clarify course materials and assignments, and meet individually with students.
- The instructor will respond individually to all discussions and assignments from students as assigned in the syllabus.
- The instructor will provide guiding questions for the readings and will initiate discussions and will actively participate in the discussions.
- The instructor will provide timely feedback on all required assignments submitted by the due date.

Required Texts

Merriam, Sharan. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Articles—provided in class

Alessa, "'Na'ia" Lilian. (Fall, 2009). The other way of knowing. *Cultural Survival* 33: 1.
<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/united-states/other-way-knowing>

Atieno, O. (2009). An analysis of the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 1313-18. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.

Hayes, Elisabeth R. (Fall 1991). A brief guide to critiquing research. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 51: 35-47.

Other required readings will be provided in-class

Course Requirements

| | |
|---|----|
| Article Critique | 15 |
| Observation | 15 |
| Practice Interview | 10 |
| Class Participation | 20 |
| Research Plan | 40 |
| Topic (research focus--draft due end of week 3) | |
| Rationale/importance (draft due end of week 3) | |
| Literature Review (draft due end of week 7) | |
| Data collection plan (draft due end of week 8) | |
| Bibliography (submit with final plan week 10) | |
| Ethical issues (submit with final plan week 10) | |

Class Participation 20 points

Assessment of the student's performance will be based on the frequency, relevance, and quality of his/her participation in online and face to face discussions; attendance at each face to face class is expected. It is also expected that you make substantial comments in each discussion thread.

Research Plan 40 points

This is the major assignment for this class which brings together the various skills you are learning in the process of conducting research. Students will develop a **written plan** for conducting research in an area that is of considerable interest to them or is an issue they feel passionate about. To break this assignment into manageable pieces, due dates are given for each section. Drafts will be posted in a discussion thread set up for this purpose on in the link to "Research Plans" on the homepage. Students will use this space to upload drafts for review, discussion, and to receive feedback. Specific drafts you will post in this space: Topic, Rationale/importance, and the Literature Review. The final document is due at the end of the course submit an electronic copy to the instructor. At our final in-class meeting on August 25, each student will provide a brief report on their plan. The plan must include the following components:

Topic (research focus--1-2 page draft due end of week 3)

Introduce the problem or issue including the background or context and its relationship to your current or future practice. Include questions that are guiding your research. These questions should be posed broadly and inquire into what you hope to learn, discover, or change when the research is complete. Include your purpose for the study.

Rationale/importance (1 page draft due end of week 3)

Why is this research important? Answer the question: so what? Who would be interested in your findings? Why is this research meaningful to you personally? What contribution will this study make to the field of adult education? Make a strong case for the importance of this plan.

Literature Review (3- 4 page draft due end of week 7)

A literature review is an integrated discussion of the theoretical perspectives of various authors' research as it relates to your research. In your own narrative essay, discuss how the authors' ideas are similar and different from your own, how they agree or conflict with each other. You can also focus on what is missing from the literature as it relates to your topic. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Read from at least three sources that are related to your study (one article from a research journal, one book chapter, and one conference paper). Synthesize the author's findings as they relate to your own research as opposed to discussing each article individually. Cite in APA format.

Data collection plan (2-4 page draft due end of week 8)

Describe the design of your study. What are your primary or secondary data sources? Who are the participants and how will you select them? Discuss your method for collecting data. For example, if interviews will be used, what kinds of questions will you ask? Will you be doing observations, conducting a survey, etc.? Include your rationale for selecting particular methods for collecting data. Include copies of questions or data collection tools you may be using.

Bibliography (submit with Research Plan)

Conduct a literature search on your topic and cite at least 10 references including three for your literature review. *You do not have to read the final seven*, use the title, abstract and subject headings/descriptors to help justify their inclusion.

Ethical issues (1-2 page, submit with Research Plan)

Discuss ethical concerns related to your proposed research: anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, etc.

Article Critique 15 points

Write a critique of a research article (will be distributed). The critique should include: (1) a brief summary (3-4 paragraphs) that includes the nature of the problem or focus, methodology, sample or population, how data were collected and major findings; (2) A critical analysis of the article (3-4 pages) including clarity of focus, readability, appropriateness of methodology to answer the research questions, the findings (what supporting evidence is given, what is omitted, how has your knowledge of the topic been expanded, what questions do you have, has the author provided support for their assumptions—are they clear, what suggestions do you have for improving the report). These questions are meant to help guide your critique. **The critique should be written in a narrative form.**

Due: Monday of Week 5

Observation 15 points

Following our discussion on techniques of observation in research, conduct a 30 minute observation in a public location where a lot of activity is happening. Keep detailed field notes. Write up a brief (2 page) narrative report of your findings to be posted in BlackBoard in the Observation thread. *The Observation debrief is also due on Monday of Week 6*

Due: Monday of Week 6

Practice Interview 10 points

Conduct a 30 minute interview related to your potential research plan topic. Audiotape the interview for your reference. Be prepared to discuss your experience in class in the online threaded discussion under this topic heading.

Due Monday of Week 9

Weekly Discussion Topics, Reading Assignments and Due Dates

This course meets in-person on June 30, July 21, August 11, and August 25. Attendance in class for these dates is necessary. All other coursework takes place online.

| Week | Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|---|--|---|--|
| Week1: June 27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Research • Your understanding of Research • Ways of Knowing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alessa article • Merriam Chapters 1-2 | <p style="text-align: center;">In-class June 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review syllabus, assignments, and the research plan (the final project); discuss first week topics. • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Your understanding of research b) Ways of knowing activity |
| Week2: July 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative & Qualitative research • Role of the Researcher • Choosing a Topic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atieno article • Merriam Chapter 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Your understanding of qualitative research b) Potential Topics |
| Week3: July 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Critiquing research • Practice critique • Topic development continued | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hayes article • Merriam pp. 76-83 | <p style="text-align: center;">Due: Topic draft Rationale/importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Data collection b) Practice critique |
| Week4: July 18 Combined with W5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Literature Review tools (Library Research & Search strategies) • Introduction to observation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merriam pp. 71-76 & 119-125 | <p style="text-align: center;">In-class July 21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Literature review |
| Week5: July 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review and Library research continued • Conduct observation | | Due: Article critique |
| Week6: Aug 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics • Critical reflection • Observations debrief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merriam pp. 219-220 & 228-234 • NLU IRRB web site | <p style="text-align: center;">Due: Observation report Observation debrief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ethics in Research b) Critical discussions |
| Week7: Aug 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to interviewing • Debriefing the interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merriam Chapter 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">In-class August 11</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Due: Lit Review draft</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Interview questions |
| Week8: Aug 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness • Interviews (conduct interviews) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merriam Chapter 9 | <p style="text-align: center;">Due: Data collection plan Post Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts • a) Establishing trustworthiness |
| Week9: Aug 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview reports debrief • Wrap up | <p style="text-align: center;">In class August 25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Due: Interview reports</p> | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Plans | Present Research Plans Final Research Plan due by August 29 |
|--|--|--|

Criteria for Evaluation

Assignments are evaluated based on clarity of expression, completeness, timeliness, and relevance to course objectives. There are 100 points total. Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Article Critique | 15 points |
| Observation | 15 points |
| Practice Interview | 10 points |
| Class Participation | 20 points |
| Research Plan | 40 points |

Points to Grades

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

In-progress grades are assigned at the discretion of the instructor and must be negotiated prior to the end of the course.

Additional Bibliography

Brookfield, Stephen. (1995). The getting of wisdom: What critically reflective teaching is and why it's important. In *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
http://www.nl.edu/academics/cas/ace/facultypapers/StephenBrookfield_Wisdom.cfm

Brookfield, Stephen (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, Stephen. (2005). *The power of Critical Theory*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, John W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, Norman K., & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hoggan, Chad, Simpson, Soni, & Stuckey, Heather. (2009). *Creative expression in transformative learning*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

Lawrence, Randee (2008). Syllabus for Research Methodologies course.

Lincoln, Yvonna S., & Guba, Egon G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications.

Marshall, Catherine, & Rossman, Gretchen B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Merriam, Sharan, & Simpson, Edwin (2000). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults*. Krieger: Melbourne, FL

Going Green

In the interest of conserving precious resources, I will distribute all course materials and readings by email or post to the BlackBoard course. I will also limit the number of print copies handed out in class.

ADA Statement

National-Louis University seeks to ensure that its programs are accessible to all persons. Students in need of special assistance or an accommodation regarding any of the course requirements as outlined in this syllabus, the course objectives and/or course evaluation and assessment criteria, are advised to notify me within the first two weeks of class. We will meet privately to discuss resolution of your issue, which may or may not include an appropriate referral (e.g. a Writing specialist, the Academic Accommodations Coordinator, the Director of Diversity or the Office of Student Affairs). Confidentiality will be maintained regarding your special needs.

Academic Policy Statement

With respect to the academic honesty of students, it is expected that all material submitted as part of any class exercise, in or out of class, is the actual work of the student whose name appears on the material or is properly documented otherwise. The concept of academic honesty includes plagiarism as well as receiving and/or giving improper assistance and other forms of cheating on coursework. Faculty has the right to analyze and evaluate students' course work. When evidence of academic dishonesty is discovered, an established procedure of resolution will be activated to bring the matter to closure.

The Policy on Academic Honesty is in the Student Guidebook at:

<http://www.nl.edu/StudentServices/studentaffairs/StudentHandbook/>.