THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 919
COURSE TITLE, SEMESTER & YEAR: Qualitative Research Methods, Spring 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Susan L. Parish, PhD, MSW
School of Social Work
Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building, Campus Box 3550
Phone: (919) 962-6434
E-mail: parish@unc.edu

OFFICE HOURS: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will introduce the application of qualitative research methods for social work research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. Distinguish qualitative research from other research paradigms and understand the utility of qualitative research methods in intervention research;
2. Define fundamental concepts of qualitative research including: interpretation, participant meaning, and context;
3. Understand sampling and recruitment of participants and the ethical issues involved in qualitative research with vulnerable participants;
4. Apply basic methods of study design, instrument development, data collection and data analysis, and writing qualitative research reports; and
5. Understand rigor in qualitative research methods and critically appraise the rigor of qualitative research studies.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION

The objective of this course is to provide an overview of the fundamentals of the use of qualitative research, particularly as it applies to intervention research. The focus of this class is on the development of skills used by qualitative researchers. Particular attention will also be paid to developing skill in the evaluation of qualitative research methods, designing rigorous, high quality studies, and the protection of vulnerable research participants in qualitative studies.
REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS


**NOTE: ADDITIONAL READINGS WILL BE ASSIGNED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.**

TEACHING METHODS

Class participation: This course is a seminar, and the contributions of all students are central to the success of the class. Class sessions will consist of a mix of lecture, discussion, and exercises. The participation of each student is essential, and responsibility for class discussion is shared. Class participation includes attendance, being prepared to discuss readings and assignments, sharing opinions on the topic at hand, facilitating the participation of other students, and engaging with guest speakers.

Attendance: Attendance is crucial to the learning experience of all students. **Students with more than one absence cannot earn an H. Students with more than two absences cannot earn a P.**

Reading assignments: Students are responsible for reading all assigned material before the class date for which the readings are assigned, with the exception of material assigned for Week 1.

GRADING SYSTEM

Grades are assigned pursuant to the grading system adopted by the UNC Graduate School, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Clear Excellence</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Entirely Satisfactory</td>
<td>80-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Low Passing</td>
<td>70-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>&lt;70</td>
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POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

To obtain disability-related academic accommodations, students with disabilities must contact the instructor and the Department of Disability Services as soon as possible. Students may reach the Department of Disability Services at 919-962-8300 (Voice/TDD) or http://disabilityservices.unc.edu. **Pursuant to UNC policy, instructors are not permitted to give accommodations without the permission and direction of the Department of Disability Services. Students must obtain such permission in advance of the due date for the first assignment.**
POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to complete assigned and independent readings, contribute to the development of a positive learning environment, and demonstrate learning through written assignments and class participation. Original written work is expected and required. The University of North Carolina has a rich and longstanding tradition of honor. Carefully read the Student Code of Honor. All submitted work must conform to the Honor Code of the University of North Carolina. For information on the Honor Code, including guidance on representing the words, thoughts, and ideas of others, please see: http://instrument.unc.edu

Please note that plagiarism is defined in the Code as “the intentional representation of another person’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own.” Violation of the Honor Code will result in a grade of F for the course and referral to the Honor Court.

From the Code: “It is the responsibility of every student to obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student or academic personnel acting in an official capacity. Students will conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in all academic processes.”

Students must submit written assignments electronically (by email) with only their PID number (NO NAMES) on them. However, I will provide an Honor Code statement for students to sign in class. Work will not be graded for which this affirmation is not submitted. The statement reads as follows: I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.

POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Written assignments are to be emailed to the instructor by 9am on the day they are due, without exception. Late papers, including those needing revisions to conform to APA style, will be reduced by 20% for each 24-hour period for which they are late, without exception. Paper copies of assignments will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Appraisal Paper</td>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Study – Introduction, Literature Review &amp; Research Questions</td>
<td>February 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Study – Method</td>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Study – Results</td>
<td>March 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Study – Discussion</td>
<td>March 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item Pool</td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Subjects Protection Plan</td>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>20%</td>
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A) **Critical Appraisal paper – 15% of grade**  
Due April 12

In this assignment, students will critically evaluate a qualitative research study in their own field of substantive interest. Students may choose any qualitative study published in a social work journal. Papers that employ mixed methods or quantitative designs are not appropriate. In evaluating the study, consider: sampling, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the findings, overall rigor of the study, and the significance of the likely contribution to social work knowledge made by the researcher(s).

B) **Qualitative Study – 25% of grade**  
Due in parts as noted below

In this assignment, students will conduct an abbreviated qualitative research study to understand a construct of interest from the perspective of a specific target population, with the intention of informing the design of future intervention studies. Examples of constructs include: work-family balance, social support, help-seeking behavior, compliance with health guidelines, attitudes toward caregiving or care receiving, role identity, and effective parenting. Target populations can be any population of interest to social work scholars, practitioners or policy makers.

Choose construct, conduct a literature review, develop semi-structured interview guide to gain understanding of the nature and scope and definition of the construct as perceived by members of target population, interview 4-5 (or more) members of target population, analyze interview data using Atlas.ti, and develop an appropriate item pool based on the data. The final product is a research paper describing the completed study and an item pool that will be used for cognitive testing of potential scale items, which will be conducted in the fall 2010 semester in SOWO 914 (Dr. Natasha Bowen’s course).

This ~12 page paper (excluding references) should include the following sections, which are due sequentially, as noted below.

**B.1) Introduction, Literature Review & Research Question**  
Due February 1

Introduction to the construct that is being studied --its importance to the profession, theoretical background for the construct, and existing measures of the construct and their shortcomings. The literature review must critically analyze >4 scholarly articles regarding the construct of interest.

**B.2) Method**  
Due February 15

Description of the qualitative methods used, following APA style guidelines for peer-reviewed manuscripts (e.g., sample, recruitment, procedures, analysis), expert feedback on interview questions; a description of the sampling strategy and obtained sample for interviews, data collection procedures, data management, and data analysis procedures for interview data. Attach as an appendix the final semi-structured interview guide. Label the appendix and put your PID number on it. Please note that when you submit this section, also include the previous section, revised to reflect instructor feedback.

**B.3) Results**  
Due March 15

Presentation of the findings--results of the analysis of interview data. Based on the analysis of interview data, how does the targeted population define the nature and scope of the construct? Attach as an appendix one coded interview transcript and the codebook. Label these appendices
and put your PID number on them. Please note that when you submit this section, also include all previous sections, revised to reflect instructor feedback.

**B.4) Discussion**

Due March 29

This section of the paper discusses the findings and their significance, links the findings to the existing research reviewed in the literature review, describes the limitations of the methods and design; and offers an assessment of the implications for theory, social work intervention, and future research. The discussion should be closely tied to points made in the introduction and to the results of the research. Please note that when you submit this section, also include all previous sections, revised to reflect instructor feedback.

**C) Item Pool – 5% of grade**

Due April 26

Based on the information obtained in the study conducted for Assignment B, students will develop a final pool of 10-15 items that measure the construct of interest. The item pool should be clearly related to what was learned about the construct from the interviews. This item pool will be used for the student’s future work in cognitive interviewing in SOWO 914 (Dr. Natasha Bowen’s class).

**D) Human Subjects Protection Plan – 10% of grade**

Due April 19

Students will develop a thoughtful and comprehensive plan that describes how vulnerable research participants will be protected during the course of the research. Be concise, but address each of the following points in turn. It is not necessary to craft a fancy narrative; address each point sequentially. Please do not exceed 5 pages. *(Note: these points are abridged from the version used by the US Department of Education)*.

1. **Human Subjects Involvement and Characteristics**: Provide a description of the proposed involvement of human subjects. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, including their anticipated number, age range, and health status. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of any subpopulation. Explain the rationale for the involvement of special classes of subjects, such as children, children with disabilities, adults with disabilities, persons with mental disabilities, pregnant women, prisoners, institutionalized individuals, or others who are likely to be vulnerable.

2. **Recruitment and Informed Consent**: Describe plans for the recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be sought and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of the information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the method of documenting consent. State if the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has authorized a modification or waiver of the elements of consent or the requirement for documentation of consent.

3. **Potential Risks**: Describe potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) and assess their likelihood and seriousness. Where appropriate, describe alternative treatments and procedures that might be advantageous to the subjects.
(4) **Protection Against Risk:** Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks, including risks to confidentiality, and assess their likely effectiveness. Where appropriate, discuss provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to the subjects. Also, where appropriate, describe the provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.

(5) **Importance of the Knowledge to be Gained:** Discuss the importance of the knowledge gained or to be gained as a result of the proposed research. Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits to subjects and in relation to the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result.

**E) Research Proposal – 25% of grade**

Due May 3

Write a research proposal, building on the overview you submitted for assignment B. This proposal should consist of a brief introduction and statement of the problem, literature review, delineation of the research questions, and a full specification of the method that will be used to execute the study. The method section should follow APA guidelines, and be divided into the appropriate sections to describe sampling, recruitment, data collection, data analysis. In addition to the standard sections specified by APA, please also include a section that explains how rigor will be ensured throughout the proposal. This proposal may not exceed 20 double-spaced pages, excluding references.

**Detailed Class Schedule**

**Week 1 – January 11, 2010**

**Topic:** Welcome and introduction; overview of the course  
**Readings:** Padgett chapter 1; Staller, Block & Horner

**January 18, 2010 – Holiday – No Class**

- To learn more about Dr. King’s birthday and National Day of Service: [http://www.mlkday.gov/](http://www.mlkday.gov/)
- To find volunteer opportunities: [http://www.serve.gov/](http://www.serve.gov/)
WEEK 2 – JANUARY 25, 2010

**Topic:** Qualitative research questions

**Readings:** Padgett chapter 15 (pp. 301-319);

**DUE:**
1) Be prepared to discuss your research question and your chosen construct. In <1 page, provide an overview of the definition of your construct and how it could be operationalized with your population of interest. Please bring 6 copies to class.

2) CITI certificate that you have been trained in the protection of human subjects; the online training is available at the following website: http://research.unc.edu/ohre/_browser_check.php

WEEK 3 – FEBRUARY 1, 2010

**Topic:** Interviewing, probing, active listening

**Readings:** Stiffman chapter 2; Nagy Hesse-Biber; Sands chapter in Padgett (pp. 48-78); Hydén & Överlien chapter in Padgett (pp. 254-272); Patton chapter 7 (pp. 339-427)

**DUE:**
1) Qualitative Study – Introduction, Literature Review & Research Question (*Assignment B.1*)
2) DRAFT of semi-structured interview guide (please bring 5 copies)

WEEK 4 – FEBRUARY 8, 2010

**Topic:** Sampling, Recruitment, Ethics and vulnerable populations

**Readings:** Waldrop in Padgett (pp. 240-253); Oktay chapter in Padgett (pp.23-47); Munn et al; Carder, Zimmerman & Schumacher

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 15, 2010

**Topic:** Sampling, Recruitment, Ethics and vulnerable populations

**Readings:** Shapiro Introduction & Chapter 7; Smokowski, Reynolds & Bezrucko; Stiffman chapter 6

**DUE:** Qualitative Study – Method (*Assignment B.2*)

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 22, 2010

**NOTE:** CLASS MEETS AT MANNING HALL ROOM 01 (BASEMENT) FOR ATLAS.ti WORKSHOP WITH PAUL MIHAS

**Topic:** Data analysis with Atlas/ti

**Readings:** Gibbs chapters 1-10

**DUE:** Paper copy of at least one transcript as well as an electronic copy (in Word) on a flash drive
WEEK 7 – MARCH 1, 2010

Topic: Data analysis, continued
Readings: Bradley, Curry & Devers; Drisko in Padgett (pp. 193-214); Shibusawa & Lukens in Padgett (pp. 179-192)
DUE: 1) 3 paper copies of one transcript and codebook

MARCH 8, 2010 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

PLEASE NOTE: INSTRUCTOR IS AVAILABLE THIS WEEK TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION AS NEEDED

WEEK 8 – MARCH 15, 2010

Topic: Focus groups
Readings: Morgan, Fellows & Guevara; Cote-Arsenault & Morrison-Beedy; Parish, Magaña & Cassiman
DUE: Qualitative Study – Results (Assignment B.3)

WEEK 9 – MARCH 22, 2010

Topic: Case studies
Readings: Drisko chapter in Padgett (pp. 100-121); Kamat; Pinto

WEEK 10 – MARCH 29, 2010

Topic: Qualitative methods in work to develop interventions for battered women and their children. Guest speaker: Dr. Rebecca Macy
Readings: Macy et al;
DUE: Qualitative Study – Discussion (Assignment B.4)

WEEK 11 – APRIL 5, 2010

Topic: Quality in qualitative methods
Readings: Flick chapters 1-10
WEEK 12 – APRIL 12, 2010

**Topic:** Community-based participatory research  
**Readings:** Horowitz, Robinson & Seifer; Jurkowski; Shannon et al; Yonas et al  
**DUE:** Critical Appraisal Paper *(Assignment A)*

WEEK 13 – APRIL 19, 2010

**Topic:** Presentation of qualitative research  
**Readings:** Padgett chapter 14 (pp. 289-300); Wood et al; Davey et al; Turnbull et al; Aujolat, Luminat & Deccache  
**DUE:** Human Subjects Protection Plan *(Assignment D)*

WEEK 14 – APRIL 26, 2010

**Topic:** Course wrap-up  
**Readings:** tbd  
**DUE:** Item Pool *(Assignment C)*

Remember: Research proposal is due May 3, emailed before 9am.
**Assigned Readings**


Kamat, V. 2006. ‘I thought it was only ordinary fever!’ cultural knowledge and the micropolitics of therapy seeking for childhood febrile illness in Tanzania. *Social Science and Medicine, 62*, 2945-2959.


