EDUC 5111
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION

Faculty of Education, Lakehead University
Winter 2012
Thursdays, 3:30pm – 6:30pm, BL 2034

Instructor: Dr. Greg Lowan
Office: BL 1022F
Phone: 807-343-8478
Email: gelowan@lakeheadu.ca
Office Hours: By appointment

A crucial component of a good researcher is the spark that happens when passion meets scholarship. (Brown and Foy, 2008)

The truth about stories is that that’s all we are. (Thomas King, 2003)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examination of the assumptions, characteristics, methods, and criteria for trustworthiness within a naturalistic paradigm (Lakehead University Calendar, 2011).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this course is for students to explore and engage with a range of methodologies (theories) and methods (practices) for qualitative research in education. Specifically, students will begin to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research paradigms
- Explore methodologies and methods relevant to their own interests in research and practice
- Study and apply research methods through reading, fieldwork, reflection and discussion
- Analyze and interpret research findings
- Reflect critically on the nature and applications of qualitative research in the conduct of inquiry in education

NB: We will be engaging with potentially sensitive and/or provocative issues through readings, discussions, and activities. One of the fundamental objectives of this course is to foster a safe and respectful physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual space for all participants. I expect all students to demonstrate awareness of and respect for this objective.
TEXTS/ READINGS

As master’s students beginning your research journey, I encourage you to explore and share resources pertinent to your individual and collective interests. Many comprehensive and theme-specific qualitative research texts are available through the Lakehead University Library and other sources. The one that will be used as a guide for this course is:


NB: This text is available in hard copy and electronically through several providers. One copy will also be placed on reserve (Call# EDBIB 370.72 L4 2010).

A selection of supplementary readings will also be delivered electronically or provided in paper copy throughout the semester. An introductory qualitative research bibliography is also attached.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING GUIDE

Week 1 (January 12th) *Course Overview and Introductions*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 1-3

Week 2 (January 19th) *Conceptualizing Qualitative Research*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 5-8

Week 3 (January 26th) *Conducting Qualitative Research*
- *Research Conceptualization Due*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 9 & 10
Week 4 (February 2nd) *Interpreting and Presenting Qualitative Research*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 11 & 12

Week 5 (February 9th) *Evaluating Qualitative Research*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 13

Week 6 (February 16th) *No Scheduled Class*
- *Complete online TCPS (2) Course on Research Ethics (CORE)*
- *Print off certificate and hand-in with final assignment*

Week 7 (February 23rd) *Student-Led Seminars*

Week 8 (March 1st) *Student-Led Seminars*

Week 9 (March 8th) *Student-Led Seminars*

Week 10 (March 15th) *March Break-No Class*

Week 11 (March 22nd) *Technology Workshop*

Week 12 (March 29th) *Research Ethics’ Board Workshop*
- Lichtman (2010): Ch. 4

Week 13 (April 5th) *Course Debrief and Sharing of Final Projects*
- *Mini Field Study Due*
ASSIGNMENTS

Guidelines:

- All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day in **paper copy** (please use recycled or 2-sided paper if possible). If there are genuine reasons why an assignment cannot be submitted on time, please see the instructor before the due date.
- Late assignments will lose 5%/day, should be placed in paper copy in the instructor’s drop-box (outside of BL1022 office block) and be **accompanied by an email notification**
- In-text citations and a reference list are expected for all written assignments following current **APA (6th) standards**. The APA manual is available through the Lakehead Library and the Alumni Bookstore. There are also a variety of easily accessible websites that provide basic APA guidelines such as: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)
- In order to present your ideas in the most lucid and succinct manner possible, please have your written assignments **peer-reviewed/edited prior to submission**.

Research Conceptualization (20%) Due January 26th

- This exercise is designed to assist you in exploring, articulating, and clarifying the relationship between a research topic, purpose, questions, methodology, and methods
- More information and a template will be provided in class

Methodology Seminar (30%) Due as scheduled

- With a partner and in consultation with the instructor, select a qualitative research methodology and theoretical lens/framework
- Plan and lead a **30-minute seminar** based on this methodology and lens for your peers
- Prepare a class handout (3 pages max) to accompany your seminar
- Your seminar and handout should address aspects such as:
  - A brief description of the lens and methodology
  - Key issues and assumptions informing/motivating this approach
  - What kinds of problems/questions would be suited to this approach?
  - What methods might you use to collect, interpret, and present your findings?
  - What are some ethical considerations related to this approach?
  - How might you assess the trustworthiness of a study employing this approach?
  - An example of a study that employed this methodology and/or lens
  - A bibliography of key literature (minimum 6 sources)
**Mini Field Study (50%) Due last day of class**

- Select a research topic, questions, methodology, lens, and appropriate methods to undertake a short data collection exercise and analysis.
- In accordance with university ethics requirements, data collected previously, by a third party, or for any other purpose, cannot be used.
- All data for this assignment must be personally collected by the student during the course and may not be used for any future purpose.
- In accordance with university research ethics, only family and/or class members are eligible to participate in your research.
- Please check with the instructor before beginning data collection.
- The structure for your written report should include the following components:
  - Background: How did you become interested in/concerned about your topic? What key literature informed your approach?
  - A statement of purpose for the research which includes your research question(s)
  - Your methodology and methods and justification for their use
  - Your tentative findings and interpretations:
    - What did you expect to find?
    - What surprised you?
    - How has your perspective been reframed, altered or redirected?
  - The data that you collected. Depending on your methods, the data could include artifacts such as interview transcripts, field notes or journal entries.
  - Please also be sure to complete the [TCPS 2 tutorial](#) online during Week 7 (no scheduled class) and attach the [certificate of completion](#) to your final assignment.
  - 15-20 pages double-spaced max
EVALUATION

Evaluation in this course will be based on the student’s depth of engagement with the course themes and readings, lucidity of thought, intellectual curiosity, exploration of ideas, modes of expression, clarity and acuity of oral and written language, and critical thinking.

All student work will be evaluated using the following rubric:

| Quality | 80% to 100% (A to A+) Indicates work that: Is exceptional, exemplary, complete, thorough, and comprehensive. | 70% to 79% (B to B+) Indicates work that: Is complete, thorough, and comprehensive. | 60% to 69% (C to C+) Indicates work that: Is mainly complete -- although not consistent in thoroughness and comprehensiveness, it is nonetheless satisfactory. | 50% to 59% (D to D+) Indicates work that: Is incomplete or inconsistent in thoroughness and comprehensiveness; only marginally satisfactory. | Below 50% (F) Indicates work that: Is in complete and, therefore, unsatisfactory. |
| Content | Demonstrates a superb and comprehensive understanding of content, literature, and research -- shows a consistent application of a high level of critical scrutiny to the subject matter, texts, and discussions. | Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of content, literature, and research -- shows a regular application of critical scrutiny to the subject matter, texts, and discussions. | Demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of content, literature, and research -- shows occasional critical scrutiny re subject matter, texts, and discussions. | Demonstrates limited understanding of the content, literature, research, subject matter, and texts. | Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the content, literature, and research, subject matter, and texts. |
| Expression | Demonstrates exceptional ability to integrate and articulate ideas persuasively and fluently; exceptional clarity in written and/or oral language. | Demonstrates ability to integrate and articulate ideas; shows a reasonable written and/or oral mastery of language. | Demonstrates some ability to integrate and express ideas; satisfactory written and/or oral language. | Demonstrates limited ability to integrate and express ideas; marginal written and/or oral language. | Demonstrates insufficient ability to integrate and express ideas; unsatisfactory written and/or oral language. |
| Expectation | Is so outstanding that it goes well beyond expectations. | Is good or very good -- of a high standard met by many Graduate students. | Is satisfactory -- of an acceptable standard met by many Graduate students. | Is barely acceptable-attained by a few Graduate students whose difficulties/distractions interrupted performance. | Does not meet even the basic requirements. |
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University takes a most serious view of offences against academic honesty such as plagiarism, cheating and impersonation. Penalties for dealing with such offences will be strictly enforced.

The following rules shall govern the treatment of candidates who have been found guilty of attempting to obtain academic credit dishonestly.

a) The minimum penalty for a candidate found guilty of plagiarism, or of cheating on any part of a course will be a zero for the work concerned.
b) A candidate found guilty of ... serious or repeated plagiarism ... will receive zero for the course and may be expelled from the University.

Note: “Plagiarism” shall be deemed to include:
1. Plagiarism of ideas as where an idea of an author or speaker is incorporated into the body of an assignment as though it were the writer’s idea, i.e. no credit is given the person through referencing or footnoting or endnoting.
2. Plagiarism of words occurs when phrases, sentences, tables or illustrations of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a writer’s own, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on the format followed) are present but referencing or footnoting or endnoting is given.
3. Plagiarism of ideas and words as where words and an idea(s) of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a written assignment as though they were the writer’s own words and ideas, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on the format followed) are present and no referencing or footnoting or endnoting is given. (Lakehead University Calendar)

INCOMPLETE STANDING

Incomplete Standing indicates that a student has not passed a course, but that the instructor is prepared to insert a grade upon the completion of required course work or the writing of an examination. The privilege of deferring part of the work in this way will be granted only when, in the opinion of the instructor and his/her department/school, the incomplete work is a separable part of the course. Where a grade of Incomplete is recommended by the instructor and approved by the chair/director of the department/school concerned and the Dean of the Faculty, the designation "Inc" shall be temporarily entered on the student's record by the Registrar. If a student wishes to clear a grade of Incomplete from his record, he must make application to the Registrar within one month after the publication of grades for the course, and pay the required fee (Lakehead University Calendar).
BACKWARDS PLANNING MODEL

MEd Thesis or Portfolio
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

• Projected Graduation Date:
  o Thesis: External Examiner (reading and editing) – 4-6 weeks
  o Thesis: Internal Examiner (reading and editing) – 4-6 weeks

• Graduate Chair (portfolio only) – 1 week

• Committee Member (multiple drafts – reading and editing) – 4-6 weeks

• Supervisor (multiple drafts – reading and editing) – minimum 4 weeks, often 8+ weeks

• First Full Draft to Supervisor

• Writing-

• Data Analysis-

• Data Collection-

• Ethics Approval – 3 weeks for University REB, considerably more if external organizations like school boards

• Proposal – minimum 8 weeks
  o Approval of Chair
  o Committee Member (multiple drafts)
  o Supervisor (multiple drafts)

• Selection of Topic, Supervisor and Committee Member

• Courses (6 for thesis, 8 for portfolio)
Inverted triangle structure

Big picture: What is the problem you are studying? Explain why it is (broadly) important.

Theoretical framework: In what body/bodies of theory is your problem situated?

Methodology: What is your underlying approach to your research?

Method: How will you undertake your research?

Details of fieldwork

Analysis of data

Dissemination of your research
INTRODUCTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

Qualitative Research Methods in Education 5111
Dr. Greg Lowan
Winter 2011

Qualitative Research Texts


Action Research


Case Studies

Grounded Theory


Ethnography

Ethnography (Journal)


Phenomenology


Oral History and Narrative Inquiry


Indigenous Research


**Arts-Based Research**


**Feminist Research**


**Critical Pedagogy**


Ecological/ Environmental Research

*The Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*

*The Journal of Environmental Education Research*

**Further Resources on Writing and Research**


