CONF 610

Research Methods (or Cultures of Inquiry)

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Office Hours: Tuesday 5:00-7:00

Overview

Research methods are not a set of "tools" to be deployed for a give purpose, mixed and matched as though they do not have their own history, epistemology or trajectory. Rather, they are, each one, an approach to *knowing*, arising from a given culture of inquiry, and "inventing" the researcher through the practice of that method. From this perspective, research methods are political---how we approach knowing, arises from, and feeds back into the way we understand ourselves and the world.

This course is intended to provide students an opportunity to explore research methods for conflict analysis and resolution, analytically and experientially. It is an introduction and a survey course and thus not aimed at generating competence in a range of statistical or qualitative methods. The course is designed, however, to provide students with enough knowledge of research methods that they know where to go for more information or resources, whether for their thesis, or for their professional interests.

The course divides research methods into three cultures of inquiry; each one has a set of associated set of assumptions, analytic tools, and data collection procedures. We will examine these cultures of inquiry, explore their strengths and weaknesses, and design a study on the basis of each one.

Learning Goals

- Knowledge of three distinct cultures of inquiry, including associated assumptions, analytic tools and design issues.

- Familiarity with the critique of each of these cultures of inquiry

- Experience in the design of a research study in each culture of inquiry

- Understanding of how to make a scholarly argument, within each of these traditions

Materials

There are a set of required textbooks and a set of articles on Blackboard. *Required Texts*:

Robson, Colin. 2011. Real World Research. 3rd Edition. John Wiley & Sons Ltd. ISBN-13978-1405182409

Hacker, Karen A. 2013. *Community-Based Participatory Research*. 1 edition. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc.

O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. *Ethnographic Methods*. 2 edition. London ; New York: Routledge.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2007. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Swadener, Beth Blue. 2011. *Decolonizing Research in Cross-Cultural Contexts: Critical Personal Narratives*. Edited by Kagendo Mutua. Albany, N.Y.; Bristol: State University of New York Press.

Bents, V & Shapiro, J. (1998). *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Assignment for/Structure of the Portfolio

Students will be required to submit a portfolio, as the class assignment. There are multiple components to the Portfolio:

1. The description of a Topical Research Area that will be the domain for your exploration across all cultures of inquiry, over the course of the semester. (1 page)

2. One research project that included a research question, a literature review that provides the warrant for the proposed research, in a given culture of inquiry, a description of the method, data collection, data analysis, and discussion. This study will be of these will be approximately 25-30 pages long.

3. A reflection paper (5 pages) that explores your experience of conducting the research project.

Evaluation/ Grading

Students will create an electronic portfolio in which they put their reflections, research designs, and reflection papers. Materials will be evaluated by a) completion; b) range of resources for literature review; c) adequacy of data collected (to meet the goals of the project); d) creativity and engagement with the project.

There will be three grades possible (other than failing): A= Excellence B= Good in all portions of the project, or a combination of excellent and poor sections and C= Poor sections, or a combination of good and poor sections.

Participation in class: 25% of the final grade

"Participation" in this class not only refers to attendance and engagement in class, but also to the presentation of your research project to the class. A rubric will be provided for this presentation, which will take place the last two class periods.

Portfolio :   75% of the final grade

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, ed. 2013. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. Second Edition edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second Edition, Revised edition. London: Zed Books.

Milestones

February 13th

Research topic area identified; preliminary problem statement formulated.

March 26th

Literature Review completed

May 8

Portfolio Completed

Data Collection

Once your research topic and literature review has been completed, data collection can begin. At this point in the semester, we will have covered the basics of all three cultures of inquiry, and be focused on developing your argument, linking the problem statement to the research question, to the method, to the nature of the data collection.

You will not be required to submit application for Human Subjects Review unless you intend to publish this research, at any point in the future. See Human Subject Review at Mason at http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/

Topic/Reading List