

# CONF 610

## Research Methods: Exploring Cultures of Inquiry

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### 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. Note: O'Reilly may be either required or recommended. Please check syllabus by Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, prior to purchase.

#### *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.

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

## Assignment for/Structure of the Portfolio

Students will be required to submit a portfolio, as the class assignment. The purpose of an electronic portfolio is to allow you to “curate” a description of your learning. It is useful as a way to present yourself to potential employers as well as a mechanism for archiving your work, both the writing, the presentations, cv, reflections on your experience.

For this class, you do NOT need to write a final paper. You need to create a final presentation, and you will be required to write a reflection paper on the experience of doing the research. You can load the topic, reflections on your topic, and its connection to your professional development.

Here is a partial list of the things that you can mount in your portfolio:

- Your research topic, and any materials which help you elaborate it;
- Your literature review which can take the form of a presentation or a short ted talk or?
- A description of your research design. This can take the form of an infographic, a slide, a page of text or?
- A final presentation on your research. This can take the form of a ted talk, a presentation, a narrated graphic cartoon, etc.
- A reflection on your experience of conducting your research;
- Your cv.

## 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. You can use **Pathbrite** or any other portfolio program.

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*

## Milestones

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**February 8th**

Research topic area identified; preliminary problem statement formulated.

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**March 14th**

Literature Review completed

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**March 21**

Draft Research Design Due

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**March 21 – April 11**

Data Collection and Analysis

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Once your research topic and literature review has been completed, data collection can begin. You will not be required to submit application for HSRB approval unless you intend to publish this research. See Human Subject Review at Mason at <http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/>

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**May 6th**

**Final Portfolio Due**

## Class Structure and Semester Timeframe

Classes #1-#9 will have both a lecture/discussion, as well as small group work in which we work research design exercises. In these exercises, students will have ample opportunity to discuss their projects.

Class ends on April 25, as I am scheduled to teach on Malta on May 2. However, I will “host” a discussion on Blackboard related to research design issues to be discussed and debated, in lieu of the May 2 class.

## Topic/Reading List

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| January 25: Week #1 Cultures of Inquiry                             | #1: Read Bentz & Shapiro’s <i>Mindful Inquiry in Social Research</i>                      |
| February 1: Week #2 Argumentation and the Art of Research           | #2: Read (3 articles on Blackboard)   |
| February 8: Week #3 Culture of Empiricism: Experimental Design      | #3 Guest Lecture: Thomas Flores<br>Reading TBD <b>Topics Due</b>                          |
| February 15: Week #4 Survey Design: Quantitative                    | #4 Guest Lecture: Jim Witte (paper on Blackboard)   |
| February 22: Week #5 Culture of Interpretation / Ethnography        | #5 Guest Lecture: Leslie Dwyer Readings<br>TBD  |
| February 29: Week #6 Culture of Interpretation / Narrative Analysis | #6 Riessman: <i>Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences</i>                              |
| March 14: Week # 7 Culture of Reflexivity: Feminist Analysis        | #7 Hess-Biber: <i>Feminist Research Practice</i><br><i>Draft of Literature Review Due</i> |
| March 21: Week #8 Culture of Reflexivity: Decolonizing Research     | #8 Swadener: <i>Decolonizing Research</i><br><i>Research Design Due</i>                   |
| March 28: Week #9 Participatory Action Research (Critical Pedagogy) | #9 Hacker: <i>Community Based Participatory Research</i>                                  |
| April 4 Week #10 Human Subjects Review and the Ethics of Research   | #10 No reading required   |
| April 11: Week #11 Presentations                                    | #11 No required reading   |

April 18: Week #12 Presentations

#12 No Reading Requires

April 25 & online Week #13/14: Reflection

#13 No Reading Required