The University of Texas at San Antonio
Department of Bicultural Bilingual Studies

BBL 7023 Qualitative Research Methods

Note: This Syllabus is provided for informational purposes regarding the anticipated course content and schedule of this course. It is based upon the most recent information available on the date of its issuance and is as accurate and complete as possible. We reserve the right to make any changes deemed necessary and/or appropriate. We will make our best efforts to communicate any changes in the syllabus in a timely manner. Students are responsible for being aware of these changes.

Course Description:
3 hours of credit.
The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of qualitative research methodologies and applied social science techniques for conducting research in both educational and non-educational settings. While the disciplinary focus will be in the areas of culture, literacy, and language, this course will also draw from the larger body of qualitative research. Students will be given the opportunity to study, practice, and reflect upon how research is conducted so that they can identify and analyze qualitative studies, and design and conduct their own research. In addition, the course is designed to deepen students’ thinking about their research topic, questions, and various epistemological and intellectual conflicts in undertaking social science research. Students will be expected to grapple with basic questions about how knowledge is constructed; what counts as evidence; how their own presumptions, “ontological blind spots,” and preoccupations influence both the kinds of data they collect and ultimately the way in which they analyze this data.

Required Texts (3):


Course Readings on WebCT.

Course Objectives:
This course has two sets of objectives. The first set deals with the general learning objectives a graduate student is expected to demonstrate at UTSA, while the second set is specific to your intellectual and conceptual development.
General Learning Objectives:
1. Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.
2. Develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course.
3. Learn to apply course material to improve thinking, problems solving, and decisions.

Specific Course Learning Goals:
1. Understand the fundamentals of qualitative research, including epistemological claims.
2. Develop a researchable question and identify how this question is linked to theory, policy and/or practice.
3. Understand how research design can effectively (or ineffectively) answer research questions in qualitative research, including mixed methods design.
4. Become familiar with strategies of inquiry/design options, such as ethnography, case studies, participatory research, narrative and discourse analysis.
5. Conduct effective interviews and participant observations.
7. Discuss the elements of a “good” qualitative study.
8. Understand the important political and ethical issues in qualitative research.
9. Create an effective presentation of qualitative data.

Course Requirements:

10% Readings/Participation
Your grade in this area is based on your in-class participation as well as your “cyber” participation in discussion board assignments. These include the weekly posting of one quote from our reading with a short response to this quote AS WELL AS a response on your part to a classmate’s post. You must post a response by Saturday at midnight so that others can respond sometime the following two days. Please come prepared to class, having completed all weekly reading assignments. In addition, class sessions will include short lectures, partner or small-group conversations, and whole-class discussions based in part on the readings. It is important to not only have good oral participation in class, but also to not dominate discussions but rather demonstrate active listening skills toward others.

10% Epistemological Statement
An epistemological statement describes how you view knowledge and its acquisition. In more day-to-day terms, “How do people know what they know?” In this brief statement (no more than 5 double-spaced pages), you are to describe who you are in relation to what and who you are studying. You are to include the following influential factors: your personal history, your previous experiences (especially those pertinent to your study topic), your disciplinary training, and your cultural worldview. The emphasis is on you in relation to your research topic/participants. An epistemological statement should (a) help you figure out how your personal features, experiences, beliefs, or feelings may affect your research, and (b) permit you to communicate this to others. Our subjectivities play a large role in framing our epistemologies, which may bias, unbalance, and limit us, but they also motivate us and permit us to notice what others may miss when carrying out research studies.
15%  **Research Site Proposal**
Your research site proposal in some ways is similar to a dissertation proposal. (Gasp! Don’t worry, this is good practice.) It describes the research site you have chosen for this semester, the amount of time you will be spending at the site each week, the research questions you hope to get answered by collecting data at this site. Included in your rationale is a brief literature review that relates to your proposed research questions. This mini-proposal should be 7 DS pages.

20%  **Observational Fieldnotes (Set 1 and Set 2)**
You will observe and take fieldnotes in a natural setting to see how clearly you can describe the setting, participants, and interactions. You are expected to describe your process of observing, including decisions about what you chose to include/exclude, points of focus, transcription style, etc. Describe what you added when you expanded the notes with your observer’s comments, keeping in mind the theoretical issues associated with note-taking. These fieldnotes will be collected twice during the semester for instructor comments. When you turn in your second set of fieldnotes, both sets will be coded. On the same date that you turn in your 2 coded sets of fieldnotes, you will include a brief analysis paper that develops 1 to 3 of the themes that you coded in all of your fieldnotes. This brief analysis paper should be about 5 DS pages.

10%  **Artifact Collection and Brief Analysis**
At your research site, consider which documents or items could be considered a valuable artifact for your study. These can include leaflets, fliers, syllabi, bulletins, prayer sheets, handbooks, student work, printed meeting agendas, items from a website, photos, videos, etc. Artifacts help researchers triangulate data. For a semester-long project such as the one required for this class, you are expected to collect at least 3 artifacts. You will also present at least 1 artifact in class and turn in a 1-2 page analysis of it.

20%  **30-minute Structured Interview (Transcribed, Coded, and Analyzed)**
You will construct an appropriate interview protocol for your research project (to be turned in for feedback PRIOR to your interview), interview a participant in your study, audiotape the interview, and transcribe it. You will then code the interview and provide a summary of the major themes that emerged from the overall interview. [You must also take field notes of the actual interview that are separate from the interview itself. These should include the setting of the interview, how you felt you did in carrying out the interview, and if there was general rapport with your participant. These may help you in your analysis write-up.] Using the codes/themes and sub-themes you find in your transcribed interview, you are to write an analysis of the interview (3-5 pages). Thus, you will turn in the interview protocol, the transcribed and coded interview as well as the analysis of it. Guidelines will be distributed in class.

15%  **Field Notebook**
Students will be required to keep a 3-ring binder that organizes their qualitative research projects. These binders will include both items turned in for grades as well as others that were not. However, all items in the binder ultimately contribute to the final research paper and to students’ development into qualitative researchers. The field notebook/binder will contain the following items: Epistemological Statement; Research Site Proposal; IRB Training Completion Certificate; Fieldnotes (raw ones and well-written ones, but all coded); Analysis of Fieldnotes; Interview; Fieldnotes about the Interview; Transcribed and Coded Interview; Analysis of
Interview; Artifacts from the Field (documents, photographs, other); Analysis of Artifacts; Memos Journal (at least 5 entries); Key to Codes; Oral Report Presentation Notes, Handout, or PowerPoint; Human Subjects Protocol (if sought).

**Grading System**

A = 90-100    B = 80-89    C = 70-79    D = 60-69    F = below 60

A. GREAT EXPECTATIONS

**Reading Assignments**

Students are expected to prepare for classroom discussions and activities by completing assigned readings PRIOR to coming to class. Such preparation will help them understand the content matter more effectively and prepare them for in-class discussions, activities, and assignments. Therefore, if a student does not read the required readings, s/he will not be able to participate in class and points will be deducted from the final grade for repeated lack of preparedness.

**Attendance**

Attendance of scheduled classes are essential for the completion of this course. Activities designed for class participation cannot be replicated apart from class sessions. Attendance will be checked at the beginning of each class period. In order to be considered present for the class, the student must arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. No absences are allowed in this course except for those due to official university business, a conflict with the practice or celebration of a student’s religion, or extreme emergencies. Upon the second unexcused absence of a student, the student will be asked to drop the course. If the drop period has expired, the student will receive a reduction in the final grade by one letter grade. Each additional absence will result in a subsequent reduction of the final grade by an additional letter grade. Tardiness will be considered as absences by the total minutes missed in each class period. Each 30 minutes of class time that are missed due to tardiness will be equivalent to one unexcused absence. The university professor will then apply the consequences for absences explained above.

**Quality of Assigned Work**

A standard of written English appropriate for doctoral level students will be expected. All written work submitted must be of professional quality, neatly presented, grammatically correct, and free of spelling and punctuation errors. All written assignments should be prepared on a computer with appropriate word processing software. Facilities are available on both campuses for this purpose. To improve readability of assignments, standard print styles should be used (e.g. Times New Roman, Arial, Times, New York). **Font size must be 12 point.** Title pages, including your name, course, assignment topic, and date are required for ALL written assignments. Pages should be stapled together and numbered. **Full credit cannot be earned for work that does not meet these professional standards.**

**Submission of Assignments**

Assignments must be submitted on or before the specified due date. No late work will be accepted unless delay is unavoidable and the student has discussed the situation with the instructor PRIOR to the due date. (Legitimate printing problems do not apply.) If you are absent
on the day an assignment is due, you should make arrangements to submit the assignment. Assignments must be complete upon submission. No incomplete assignments will be accepted. No resubmission will be allowed unless the professor requests the student to do so.

**In-class Student Behavior**
Students are expected to demonstrate professional conduct during class sessions. In addition, in order to minimize distractions, students should not leave the room during class unless an emergency arises. We will have a ten-minute break during the middle of each class session, helping with restroom and hydration issues. Students should also refrain from engaging in individual conversations during lectures or class discussions. **PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES** unless this is a “baby phone” and you are the only caregiver that can be reached during class time. Any other discipline issues will be managed as specified by the *UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures* (the “HOP”), available online at [http://www.utsa.edu/hop/](http://www.utsa.edu/hop/).