Michigan School of Professional Psychology

PSYC 651: Foundations of Qualitative Research
Third Semester- 3 credit hours

Instructor: Diane Blau, PhD
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E-mail:dblau@mispp.edu

Date/Meeting Time: Mondays from 8:30-12:00

Official Course Description

This course provides essential knowledge on the development and understanding of scientific studies of persons, human behavior and experience. It is the first of two courses concentrating on human science and qualitative research. Through study and application of eight qualitative research models, the course serves as a basis for investigating problems and questions that challenge the scholar-practitioner. This course prepares the student for organized and rigorous scientific inquiry.

Program Competencies Addressed

Research, Evaluation, Relationship, and Diversity

Required Texts and Articles or Required Readings

Required Textbooks:


For a listing of qualitative studies:

Consult the following journals:

*Phenomenological Psychology* Journal in print  
*Qualitative Inquiry* Journal in print / E-journal 1999 - current  
*Qualitative Research in Psychology* Journal in print / ProQuest full text 2004 to current  
*Research in Phenomenology* Journal in print  
*Online Journal: Qualitative Report*  
www.nova.edu/ssss/QR  
*Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Journal in print / E-journal  
*The Humanistic Psychologist* Journal in print

**Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will have comprehensive knowledge of:  
(1) the roots of human science research;  
(2) criteria of qualitative research;  
(3) eight qualitative research models; and  
(4) an ability to integrate the concepts, processes and methods of human science into purposeful inquiry relevant to the role of scholar-practitioner.

Through course research folders, papers, presentations and class discussion:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry and the qualities of human science research.

2. Students will demonstrate understanding of the ethical and professional standards of socially sensitive research.

3. Students will demonstrate understanding of the existential and phenomenological roots of human science research.

4. Students will demonstrate understanding of the phenomenological research model.

5. Students will demonstrate understanding of the concepts, phases and processes of heuristic inquiry.

6. Students will demonstrate understanding of a preliminary understanding of narrative research, grounded theory, action research, ethnography, participant observation and case study inquiry.

7. Students will demonstrate understanding of clinical implementation and relevance of qualitative models.
Course Requirements

This course is the first in a series of four that precede the actual research and dissertation writing process. The ensuing courses are Quantitative and Integrative Research, Applications of Qualitative Research and Doctoral Candidacy Planning.

The following requirements have been developed to serve as foundational reference sources for qualitative research. They will also reflect your development as a human science researcher.

1. Students will prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all class meetings.

2. Students will be responsible for maintenance of a weekly reflective Research Folder on course assignments, class sessions and relevant reading.

3. Students are responsible for submission of Research Folder three times during semester to demonstrate weekly preparation for each seminar and grasp of major concepts.

4. Students are responsible for presentation of a foundational concept of human science research.

5. Students are responsible for critical reading of selected works on the philosophies, concepts, and processes of eight qualitative research models as evidenced in Research Folder, class discussion and application of models.

6. Students are responsible for comprehensive notes in Research Folder on selected qualitative research model demonstrating conceptual understanding, critical thinking and application of reading material.

7. Students will work collaboratively with chosen study group.

8. Students will apply qualitative research models to clinical practice.

9. Students will write a course paper and create a presentation integrating course concepts, model choice, relevance and applicability.

Evaluation System

Letter grades are awarded based on the point system outlined below. These grades identify the level of achievement of the course requirements. Narrative feedback is also provided regarding each student’s professional development.
Graded Activities

1. Research Folder #1: Due 05/11.
2. Research Folder #2: Due 06/15.
3. Research Model Presentation: (Refer to sign-up date).
5. Presentation of Question: (Refer to sign-up date).
6. Classroom participation: Students are expected to actively participate in all scheduled activities. Grades for the course will take participation into account.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Folder #1</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Folder #2</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Model Presentation</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Question</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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100% (100 points)

Assignment Description

(1) Research Folder #1:
Due Date: 5/11/
12%

(2) Research Folder #2:
Due Date: 6/15/
12%

(3) Research Model Presentation:
Due Date: Check assigned presentation dates
14%

(4) Course Paper:
Due Date: 6/29/
30%

(6) Presentation of Question
Due Date: Check assigned presentation dates
20%
RESEARCH FOLDER

In order to effectively prepare for each seminar, each student is to maintain a weekly folder of study that includes:

I  Responses to each week’s assignments as stated in the Course Assignment Packet

II Notes on required readings; references cited in APA format

III Personal and/or professional reactions to the weekly seminar topic

The Research Folder will be collected on May 11 and June 15*

*include preparation for class June 15

STUDY GROUPS

At the beginning of the semester, students will choose study groups in which to participate throughout the course. The purpose of each study group will be to focus on a particular research question, selected by the group. The question will then be utilized for application of each of the eight qualitative research models covered over the semester.

COURSE PAPER AND PRESENTATION: THE SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER

I  PAPER

Students will complete a final paper that addresses the following components:

1. Statement of a research question.
2. The results of a preliminary literature review and database search that establishes the question as addressing an original topic or aspect of a phenomenon.
3. Why this particular question would best be investigated via qualitative methods.
4. The selection of a qualitative research model, the rationale for selecting the model, and in particular, the clinical relevance of the question.
5. Specific ethical issues and methodological challenges or considerations that might arise in the course of investigating the question.
6. Personal reflections on the process of exploring this question and model and thoughts related to future research.

The paper is to be written in APA format with a minimum of 5 references and range from 5-8 pages in length. As a course paper it should reflect an integration and mastery of course concepts.

THE COURSE PAPER IS DUE NO LATER THAN JUNE 29

II  PRESENTATION

The presentation will reflect the work the student has done regarding the above research question, model and clinical relevance. As a professional presentation it is to be designed to convey information, while, at the same time, engage classmates in the learning process. Therefore, the course paper may be used solely as a reference and may not be read for the presentation.
PRESENTATIONS WILL OCCUR ON JUNE 22, 29, JULY 6 AND 13. A SIGN UP SHEET WILL BE CIRCULATED EARLY IN THE SEMESTER.

Class Timeline:

ALL REQUIRED READINGS ARE LISTED ON THIS SYLLABUS AND CAN BE ACCESSED IN THE ELECTRONIC COURSEPACK THROUGH THE STUDENT LOGIN PORTAL ON THE MISPP WEBSITE.

ASSIGNMENTS TO PREPARE FOR EACH SEMINAR ARE FOUND IN THE COURSE ASSIGNMENT PACKET DISTRIBUTED ADDITIONAL TO THIS SYLLABUS.

SUPPLEMENTARY REFERENCES RELEVANT TO EACH SEMINAR TOPIC ARE FOUND IN THE COURSE ASSIGNMENT PACKET.

April 20,
Note: Changes in weekly topics and assignments may occur.

Topic: Introduction to Doctoral Research: Ethical and Professional Standards

Readings:
Research and Publication Section of the APA Ethical Code

Hynson JL; Aroni R; Bauld C; Sawyer SM. (2006) Research with bereaved parents: a question of how not why. Victorian Pediatric Palliative Care Program, Royal Children's Hospital, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Palliative Medicine (PALLIAT MED), 2006 Dec; 20(8): 805-11

DOCTORAL RESEARCH

What is required is disciplined personal commitment, an approach that regards science as a process rather than a result, a thrust toward knowledge based on awareness and understanding rather than proof, a search for meaning rather than measurement, and a satisfaction with approximation rather than certainty. (Michael Polanyi)

SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER MODEL
The scholar-practitioner model forms the basis for the research conducted in the doctoral program. Professional psychologists systematically acquire and organize information about psychological phenomena and often engage in the general practice of science. This requires selection, modification, and construction of the most rigorous attainable methods for investigating the local conditions with which each inquiry is concerned.

….Reflexive professional psychology requires critical analysis of the theories that guide disciplined inquiry and the methods through which investigations are conducted. Study of the philosophical foundations of inquiry (including, for example, epistemological and theoretical assumptions and implicit values) and the associated ethical issues are therefore important in the education of professional psychologists.

…The epistemological basis of disciplined inquiry in psychology must be comprehensive; responsive to wide-ranging, diverse, and fluid social contexts; and cognizant of the invariably embedded values. This condition requires multiple ways of knowing that inform and enrich each other and that are appropriate and sensitive to the diverse populations to which they are applied.

(The National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology Educational Model by Roger L. Peterson, PhD, Donald R. Peterson, PhD, Jules C. Abrams, PhD & George Stricker, PhD NCSPP website)

ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

I In the course of conducting research with human beings, what specific ethical issues must be considered? Refer to the APA ethical code and list the elements to which researchers must adhere.

II What do you believe will be the most challenging aspect of ethical conduct in human science research?

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES ON ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS


April 27,

**Topic:** The Nature of Scientific Inquiry

**Readings:**


*Required
A. Develop a historical timeline noting the founders of qualitative research.

B. Next to each founder, write a brief statement about his or her major theory or idea.

C. Note which of the founders most resonates with your beliefs about human science research.

THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

A. Reflect on your own definition of scientific inquiry in general. What are the criteria that must comprise it? Provide one or two examples that illustrate your idea of what constitutes scientific inquiry. Record your findings in your Research Folder.

B. How would you differentiate your criteria above from inquiry specifically regarding human beings? What would human science inquiry involve? Provide an example or two for your criteria for this type of research. Include in your Research Folder.

C. The following concepts are important in understanding qualitative research. From your readings, establish the meaning of these concepts. Include preliminary definitions in your Research Folder. Each concept will also be discussed in class.

1. subjective-objective nature of discovery  
2. knowledge as transaction  
3. preparation - incubation - illumination – validation  
4. disciplined commitment  
5. science as process  
6. principles of uncertainty and unpredictability  
7. plausibility - purpose - value - meaning – originality  
8. description  
9. unity and synthesis  
10. intersubjective validity  
11. naturalism v. phenomenolism  
12. values of science

D. List the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

SOURCES ON HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS


**SOURCES OF THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY**


May 4,

**Topic:** Existential and Phenomenological Roots

**Readings:**

Chapter 3 “The Thesis of the National Standpoint and Its Suspension,” pp. 91-100


As a way of understanding key theoretical constructs, ideas and values relevant to human science research, knowledge of the foundational concepts is essential.

Significant existential-phenomenological concepts relevant to scientific inquiry include:

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<tr>
<th>Natural Attitude vs. Transcendental Attitude</th>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
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<td>Essence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
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<td>Holism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intentionality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reality v. Possibility</td>
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</table>

I Preparation  
Prior to this class, each student will select a significant existential-phenomenological concept to study in depth. It is expected that the student will gain expertise on the meaning of the concept and its application to qualitative research.

II Presentation  
Each student will make a presentation conveying the meaning of his or her chosen concept in a manner that is interesting to the class.

III Comprehensive Integration & Synthesizing of an Existential-Phenomenological Worldview  
This segment will be completed in class. Students are to take notes on each concept. This will serve as a foundation for later work in qualitative research. Discussion will synthesize the material.

**SUPLEMENTARY REFERENCES**


May 11,
Topic: Phenomenological Research
Submit Research Folder

Readings:

Chapter 3

PHENOMENOLOGY

Transcendental phenomenology is a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena, just as we see them and they appear to us in consciousness…The challenge is to explicate the phenomenon in terms of its constituents and possible meanings, thus discerning the features of consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essences of experience.
(Moustakas, 1994,p. 49)

I Address the following questions:

1. What is the underlying philosophy of phenomenology?
2. What are the central considerations in data collection?
3. What are the key steps in data handling?
4. What is the hoped for outcome of a phenomenological study?

II Explore one phenomenological study conducted at MiSPP in the past 3 years. Respond to questions 2-4 above regarding the specific study.

II In class, you will work with your study group in conducting a mini-phenomenological study on your selected question.
SUPPLEMENTARY REFERENCES


Husserl, E. (1977). Cartesian meditations (D. Cairns, Trans.). First Meditation: *The way to the transcendental ego*, (pp. 7-26); Fifth Meditation: *University of the sphere of transcendental being as monadological inter-subjectivity* (pp. 89-157). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.


Studies Graduate School, Farmington Hills, MI.


May 18,  
Topic: Heuristic Inquiry

Readings:

I Read the following book sections (required) and others on heuristic research as provided below:


A. Describe the purpose and major focus of heuristic research.
B. How is heuristic research different from phenomenological research?
C. How did Etherington apply Moustakas’ model?
D. How might you utilize heuristic research?

II Select a dissertation from the list below
A. Identify the steps the researcher utilized to collect data.
B. How did this researcher handle and present the data?
C. What stood out for you in reviewing this particular study?

III Mini-Study
In class, work with your study group and engage in heuristic inquiry on your chosen question.

SUPPLEMENTARY REFERENCES


May 25, Memorial Day
Class will be made up according to student and instructor planned session.

June 1,
**Topic:** Models of Inquiry: Narrative Research
Grounded Theory; Ethnography

**Readings:** Text

**MODELS OF INQUIRY**

No single model of human science research will satisfy the range of values, beliefs, interests, concerns, or styles of human science researchers and the complexity of human experience. The following models are representative frameworks of science. They characterize some of the major works of recent investigations and authors.

**MODEL STUDY AND APPLICATION**

Each student will select a model to study in depth. Notes on the model are to be included in the Research Folder. The student will join others who have selected the same model and prepare a small group presentation. The presentation should include:

I Model overview
II Origin/history
II Suitable types of research
IV Data Collection Processes
V Data Analysis Procedures and Representation
VI Validation and Evaluation Standards
June 8,  
**Topic:** Models of Inquiry: Participant-Observation Case Study; Action June Research

**Readings:**  
Text  

**REFERENCES**

**NARRATIVE:**  


**GROUNDED THEORY:**  


**ETHNOGRAPHY:**


**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION:**


**CASE STUDY:**


**ACTION RESEARCH:**


June 15,  
Topic: Forming a Question: Establishing Research and Clinical Relevance  
Submit Research Folder

Readings:  
Chapter I


FORMING A QUESTION: ESTABLISHING RESEARCH AND CLINICAL RELEVANCE

In order to design a research study that will reveal a particular human experience in deep, accurate, vital and novel ways, it is essential that the question be stated in clear and concrete terms and that all key words and phrases in the question be discussed and clarified so that the full meaning of the question itself will be evident. The position of each word in the question determines the focus and direction of the study and influences the data to be collected. The human science research question has definite characteristics:

1. It seeks to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience.
2. It seeks to uncover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative or external dimensions.
3. It engages one's total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement.
4. It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships.

It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores.

I Describe or list in your Research Folder the criteria required to determine clinical relevance for qualitative research.

II Considering the scholar-practitioner model, what criteria would be most important?

III Explore two dissertations in the MiSPP library for:  
A. Positioning of terms in the question  
B. Clinical relevance
Note the studies explored and comment on your findings in your Research Folder.

IV Given the four statements above regarding the research question and the criteria you have established for clinical relevance, formulate an initial research question.

V Exploration of Research

A. Use Fischer’s text, select one study to read from each of the three parts in which the book is divided.
B. Comment on each in your Research Notebook.

VI Reflections
Reflect on the studies that you reviewed and note what stands out for you regarding research and clinical relevance.

VIII How do these studies impact your thoughts about your research question?

SUPPLEMENTARY REFERENCES


June 22
**Topic:** Presentations: The Scholar-Practitioner

June 29
**Topic:** Presentations: The Scholar-Practitioner
COURSE PAPER DUE

July 6
**Topic:** Presentations: The Scholar-Practitioner
July 13  
Topic: Presentations: The Scholar-Practitioner  
Synthesis of Course Material

SYNTHESIS

I Review of Research Folders

Research Folders will be studied for major ideas and concepts. Foundational concepts will be distilled and identified. Readings that were most significant will be discussed.

II Scholar-Practitioner Model: Synthesis

III Clinical Relevance: Synthesis

IV Overall Course Evaluation

Classroom Behavioral Expectations

MiSPP students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to continued growth toward a professional career. Professional attire and demeanor with a high degree of ethical conduct is expected. Written and oral communications, including paper and electronic, should reflect professionalism. All students are expected to attend classes regularly and be fully prepared. Students are responsible for being knowledgeable and observing all school policies and procedures. Students should refer to the Academic Catalog & Student Handbook for further information.

Please Note: The syllabus is subject to change. The instructor reserves the right to adjust the course readings, assignments, and schedule in order to best meet course objectives and student needs. Schedule/assignment changes will be announced as early as possible.