UBC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE & EPIDEMIOLOGY

Course Number: SPPH 519 Introduction to Qualitative Health Research Design

Instructor’s Name: Dr. P. Spittal
Class Dates: Mondays 1-4pm
Email: spittal@sm.hivnet.ubc.ca
Phone: 604 806 8779
Office hours: 1 hour after class at UBC or by arrangement at my office at St. Paul’s Hospital—1081 Burrard St., room 620 in the Comox Building, Vancouver, BC
TA: Theresa McElroy
Email: tree_mcelroy@yahoo.ca

A. **Purpose** Provide students with the opportunity of examining the purposes, context, procedures and relationships within qualitative health research and methodologies. Including the components and testability of research propositions, issues of measurement and research design, ethical considerations in research profiles and difficulties of multidisciplinary/community based research collaborations. The feasibility, rationale and implications of research problems relating to the students thesis are explored, as are relevant data collection and analytic procedures. Emphasis in the course is placed upon experiential learning.

B. **Objectives**

- To complete individually, or as a group a study design on a topic of individual or mutual interest and present to the class in poster presentation format
- To review published research studies
- To reflect on the issues and ethics of health social scientific research
- To appreciate and examine the range of mixed methods appropriate to a particular research focus
- Strengthen understanding of the research process

C. **Evaluation of Student**

Assignment 25% [Due February 21]
Mid Term Poster Presentation 50% [Due February 28]
Take-home Final Exam 25%

i) **Assignment**: Write an eight to ten page critical review of a published research study of your choice. The deadline for this assignment is February 7, 2011. The publication should be related to the topic chosen for your poster presentation (see below).

The critique is a description and an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of a study, using standards appropriate to the study’s design.

First, describe the background, the focus and question or hypothesis, theoretical base and assumptions, followed by analysis of the study’s logic and clarity. Be sure to identify the author’s propositions and attempts to validate them.

Next, present the methods design with comments on sampling (What is the procedure? Is it representative of the population? Is the sample size adequate?), data, and analytical procedures followed by an analysis using standards such as reliability and validity.
Lastly, review the key findings, interpretation and implications followed by an analysis of whether study purpose was achieved. Is the explanation well argued and convincing? Are alternative explanations or interpretations possible?

**Attach a copy of the article to your critique when you hand it in. The copy will be returned with your critique.**

ii) **Poster Presentation:** Each student will design a study of their choice. This study will be presented to the class on February 28, 2011. The assignment is graded out of 50 and is worth 50% of your grade. These presentations constitute an increasingly common method of offering technical reports and experimental results to an audience, most frequently at professional meetings and conferences.

An excellent presentation will be one that demonstrates thoughtful connections between research paradigm, methods and process of data analysis.

Be prepared to present on
a) Research focus and question: problem and hypothesis, reviews of relevant literature (what is known and not known, assumed and not assumed) background and rationale for the study;

b) Discuss decisions regarding study design, triangulation and be able to comment on how this design ensure reliability/validity perhaps more than other studies you have perused;

c) The feasibility of data collection procedures including what is necessary to gain access or to construct the inquiry in an ethic manner;

d) Cited literature;

e) Possible granting agencies to fund your work.

The presentation, like any other, must be carefully referenced for the literature cited are critical. **Failure to cite references will result in failure on the assignment.**

iii) **Take-home Final:** The final exam may be conducted individual or in a group. Students will be required to analyze a qualitative data set provided by Dr. Spittal. The data set and the final exam questions will be available to the class two weeks prior to the due date.

D. **Obligatory Course Materials:** Students are expected to purchase from the UBC Bookstore


Other supportive course materials have been provided in a Course Pack. The majority of works in the Course Pack come from Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. California: Sage Publications and Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*. California: Sage Publications. **Additional journal articles are also included in the Course Package.**

E. **Instruction format and study plan per week:**

**Note:** Readings from Denzin & Lincoln’s *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* is denoted by **LQR** and *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* is denoted by **SQI**
Week 1 [January 10]: Introduction

- Introduction to assignment, understanding of how the course will be run
- Using brainstorming: circle and a focus group to look at way we situate ourselves and value what we bring to the learning group.

Week 2 [January 17th]: The epistemological background to anthropological research in health:
Paradigm wars, epidemiology and the social sciences.

Readings:
Toolkit Book 1:
# Chapter 1 What is Ethnography;
# Chapter 2 When and Where is Ethnography Used?

Course Package:
# Chapter 1 from LQR: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research (pp.1-34)
# Chapter 2 from LQR: Qualitative Methods: Their History in Sociology and Anthropology (pp. 41-110)

Week 3 [January 24]: The importance of research paradigms: How do we find ways to establish what we want to know, what we want to test or what we do not know?

Readings:
Toolkit Book 1:
# Chapter 3 Paradigms for Thinking About Ethnographic Research

Course Package:
# Chapter 6 from LQR: Competing Paradigms in Quantitative Research (pp.195-220);

Guest speaker: Chief Wayne Christian (Splats’in First Nation) for the Cedar Project Partnership

Week 4 [January 31]: How to proceed with designing a qualitative health research project:
⇒ Discussion of student poster topics and articles for critique

Readings:
Toolkit Book 2 :
# Chapter 3 Operationalization
# Chapter 4 Entering the Field
# Chapter 5 Exploratory or Open-Ended Observation
Week 5 [February 7]: Exploratory Studies: Gender Issues in Anthropological Research in Health / The study of hidden Populations

Readings:
Toolkit Book 4
   # Chapter 3 Studying Hidden Populations

Course Package:
   # Chapter 9 from LQR Feminisms and Models of Qualitative Research

Guest Speaker: TBA: The Challenges of sensitive Inquiry with very vulnerable populations.

Week 6 [February 14-18] Reading week

Week 7 [February 21]: Ethical Issues in Research
   ⇒ Time for discussion questions regarding posters

Readings:
Course Package:
   # Chapter 5 from LQR Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research,


**Guest Speaker:** Theresa McElroy: Vulnerable children in Post Conflict Northern Uganda

**Week 8 [February 28]: Poster Presentations**

**Week 9 [March 7]: Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Health Research Results**

**Readings:**

**Course Package:**

- Chapter 7 from SQI Grounded Theory Methodology

**Week 10 [March 14] The Importance of Thinking through researcher roles and research partnership**

Using the data: The importance of data feedback as a platform for community and evidence based decision-making.

**Readings:**

**Toolkit Book 6:**

- Chapter 1 *Researcher Roles*
- Chapter 2 *Building Research Partnerships*

**Course Package:**

- Chapter 10 from SQI *Three Approaches to Participative Inquiry* (pp. 261-291).

**Guest Speaker:** Inspector Scott Thompson, Vancouver Police Department

**Week 11 [March 21]: Ethnography under fire: Conducting qualitative HIV/AIDS research in a war zone in Northern Uganda**

**Distribution of take-home exam and accompanying materials **
Week 12: [March 28] Take Home Exam Tutorial

Week 13: [April 4] Take Home Exam Due / Class Summary