

Craft of Inquiry
Northern Arizona University
M.A. Program in Sustainable Communities

Course Description

This course introduces students to basic methodologies for doing interdisciplinary inquiry-based research. Students will learn how to develop significant research questions and will be exposed to multiple ways of collecting information to answer their research questions. The goal is to teach students the logic of inquiry so that they can collect, analyze, and critically interpret information. The course is also a practical guide to how to complete a thesis. Students will learn what a thesis entails, what a literature review is and why it is significant to the activity of research, and they will learn about and engage in writing strategies for completing a thesis. They will also learn what faculty expect of them and how best to negotiate a thesis committee.

Students will gain a basic introduction to debates in the field related to interdisciplinary research. Through guided exercises, they will identify their research topic and their research questions. Throughout the course, students will experiment with different approaches to their questions. Participatory exercises will enable students to examine different epistemological frames and different methods with the aim of exploring and reflecting critically and self-consciously on the relationship between the production of knowledge in the research process and these varying approaches (i.e. on the ways in which different approaches yield different answers). Collaborative work will be a key means to further these ends, and will also underscore the important point that research is essentially a *social* practice.

This course will give students the tools they need to become self-conscious and critical about their own research. Guest lecturers, paired with readings, will give students opportunity for real-time interrogation of the research process and experience, including how researchers decide on the methods best suited to carry forth their aims. Students will create a mock prospectus, learn the purpose, nature of, and process of creating a literature review, and develop their skill as writers.

Goals of course

- Introduce basic elements of interdisciplinary inquiry-based research and action at the graduate level.
- Provide a forum for the discussion of controversies about research, including debates about specific decisions on research design.
- Connect abstract, philosophical discussions to methods of inquiry.
- Become aware of the theoretical assumptions that guide inquiry.
- Develop research and analytical skills.
- Provide experience in working together to give and receive constructive criticism.
- Understand the elements and the process of thesis work.
- Develop writing skills

Guiding Questions

Inquiry-Based Research:

1. What is inquiry based research?
2. Who is research for?
3. What is rigorous research?
4. What is a good research question?

5. What is the importance of theory for guiding inquiry?
6. What are methods?

Thesis

7. What is a thesis? What are the components of a thesis?
8. What is a thesis proposal? What are the components of the proposal?
9. What is a “do-able” project?
10. How can students gain the appropriate methodological skills required for their project?
11. How can students gain the appropriate social action skills required for their project?
12. Why do a literature review and what is it anyway?
13. How do you select a committee? A chair?
14. What are the timelines?

Structure

The course will be very interactive, centered around discussions and classroom projects. For this reason every student will need to come to class with the readings read, assignments completed, and ready to engage the topics at hand. Because of this, attendance is required. Any missed classes will count against the attendance grade. If you have an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible.

Course Materials

- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*
- All other readings will be on Bblearn
- Writing and Research Journal

Course Assignments & Due Dates

Handouts will be provided in class or on Bblearn. They will give you additional information, requirements, and other background information for the assignments below.

Assignment #1 - Research Topic (5%)

Due 1/16 Bblearn

Assignment #2 - Who and What is Research For? (5%)

Due 1/21 Hard Copy in class

Assignment #3 - Problem Statement/Research Question/Bodies of Literature (5%)

Due 1/28 Hard Copy in class

Assignment #4 – Quantitative vs. Qualitative Approaches (5%)

Due 2/18 Hard Copy in class

Assignment #5 – Annotative bibliography (15%)

Starting week five you will begin compiling an annotated bibliography that will prepare you to write the literature review for your final paper. Each week you will add 2 new citations to your bibliography and for each citation you will write a 2-paragraph minimum overview of the articles/chapters you are adding to your bibliography. These citations are going to be central for you in developing your lit review and will help you further your understanding of the topic you are researching. You will hand in your annotated bibliography three times throughout the term. First, on **week six (February 18th)**, second on **week 9 (March 11th)**, and on **week 15 (April 22nd)**

Assignment #6 - Decolonizing Assignment #3 (5%)

Due 2/25 Hard copy in class

Assignment #7 – Narrative Inquiry (5%)

Due 3/4 Hard copy in class

Assignment #8 – Ethnography and Interviews (5%)

Due 3/25 Hard copy in class

Assignment #9 – Oral History Interview (5%)

Due 4/15 Hard copy in class

Assignment #10 – Presentation on Mock Prospectus (5%)

Due – either 4/22 or 4/29

Assignment #11 – 15 page Mock Prospectus (30%)

For this assignment you will construct a mock prospectus around the research question you develop throughout this term. This mock prospectus will include your research question, problem statement and justification for the question's importance, as well as a lit review developed out of your annotated bibliography, a theoretical framework section, and methodology section.

Due 5/6

Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

For your final grade assume: A=90-100%, B=80-89.9%, C=70-79.9%, D=60-69%, F=0-59.9%.

Course Schedule

January 14: Week One – Introduction: Sustainable Communities and the Craft of Inquiry

Questions: What is Inquiry? What is Research?

Assignments due in following week: #1 Research Topics (1/16)

#2 Who and What is Research For? (1/21)

January 21: Week Two - Research Topics & Questions

Questions: Where do questions come from? What is a good versus bad question? How can you know?

Readings:

Booth, Colomb and Williams, *The Craft of Research*,
ch. 1 “Thinking in Print: The Use of Research”
ch. 2 “Connecting with Your Reader”
ch. 3 “From Topics to Questions”
ch. 4 “From Questions to a Problem”
ch. 5 “From Problems to Sources”

Assignment due following week: #3 Problem Statement/Research Question/Bodies of Literature

Ungraded Assignment due following week: Bring in two short (couple of paragraphs) pieces of writing: one piece of writing that exemplifies the writing style you love to read; the other the kind of writing you aspire to do for your thesis.

January 28: Week Three: Writing Workshop (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Writers on Their Writing Process and Challenges

Questions: all kinds

Readings:

Listen to Audio Lecture (Bblearn) William Zinzer, *On Writing Well* (Bblearn)

February 4: Week Four – Epistemological Debates & The Thesis Prospectus, Defense and Forming a Thesis Committee

Questions: What is the difference between positivism and post positivism? What is objectivity?

Questions: Why write a prospectus? What are the necessary elements of a prospectus?

Readings:

Creswell, "Philosophical, Paradigm and Interpretive Frameworks"

Reinharz, "Action Research"

Reinharz, "The Involvement of the Researcher as a Person"

Sandra Harding "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong objectivity"?"

Clark, ch 3 "The Proposal as an Argument"

Clark, ch 8 "Advisor and Thesis Committee"

Sample Prospectus 1 & 2

February 11: Week Five – Quantitative and Qualitative Social Science Research & Literature Review (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Dr. Fred Solop

Question: How does your question influence your methodology?

Reading:

Fred Solop, tba

Clark, ch 6 "Writing the Literature Review"

Cone, ch 6 "Reviewing the Literature"

Assignment #4 due following week – Quantitative vs Qualitative Approaches

Assignment #5 first bibliographic citation due following week as well as week 9 and week 15

February 18: Week Six – Decolonizing Methods – Positionality & Theoretical Assumptions and Framework

Question: In what way does western bias impact your analysis of the world? What would it mean to decolonize your research question and methodology?

Reading: Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, Intro, ch. 1-5, 11- conclusion

Reading: tba

Assignment #6 due following week – Decolonizing Assignment #3: Reframing your question, problem statement and methodological approach

February 25: Week Seven – Narrative inquiry (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Dr. Nora Timmerman

Question: What are narrative approaches to research?

Readings:

Nora Timmerman, "Sketching Stories of People and Place" Timmerman (2013)

Pushor & Clandinin, "The Interconnections Between Narrative Inquiry and Action Research"

Assignment #7 due following week – Narrative Inquiry

March 4: Week Eight - Experiment with Narrative Inquiry**Readings:**

TBA

March 11: Week Nine - Ethnographic Research (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Dr. Nancy Wonders

Question: What is an ethnographic approach to research?

Readings:

Meghan G. McDowell and Nancy A. Wonders, "Keeping Migrants in Their Place: Technologies of Control and Racialized Public Space in Arizona"

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description." In the *Interpretation of Cultures*."

Assignment #8 due following week – Short Interview on research question

* * * **March 18: Week Ten – Spring Break** * * *

March 25: Week 11: Ethnography/Meaning Making/In the Land of Interpretation

Readings:

Schensul and LaCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*, ch. 2 to 7

April 1: Week 12 – Grounded Theory & IRB (JOINT WITH OTHER SECTION 1:00-2:00)

Guest: Dr. Janine Schipper

Readings:

Janine Schipper, "Cultural Productions of Space and Time: Development in the Sonoran Desert"

Charmaz, Kathy, "The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation."

Assignment #9 due following week – Applying grounded theory

April 8: Week 13 – Oral History and Public Discourse (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Peter Friedrici

Question: What is Oral History?

Readings:

Friederici, "Private Memories of Public Precipitation: Gathering and Assessing Ecological Oral Histories in an Era of Climate Change"

Other TBA

Assignment #10 due following week – Oral history interview

April 15: Week 14 - Experiment with Oral History, & Doing Public Presentations (JOIN WITH OTHER SECTION 2:00-3:00)

Guest: Dr. Paul Lenze

Readings:

TBA

April 22: Week 15 – Short Mock Thesis Presentations

Reading: Week 16 presenters comment on week 15 presenters' rough 5 - page prospectus draft

Draft due to partner Sunday night

April 29: Week 16 – Short Mock Thesis Presentations

Readings: Week 15 presenters comment on week 16 presenters' rough 5 – page prospectus draft

Draft due to partner Sunday night

Final Paper Due May 6