DPLS 720 Principles of Research

Fall 2010 3 Credits
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Course Description
This course is conceived as providing a foundation in the philosophy of research and an understanding and articulation of how meaning is made. The production of knowledge is always/already informed and constrained by the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions. It is through the course readings, discussions, and assignments that students will begin to articulate the differences in the various research paradigms and how she or he is located as both receiver and producer of knowledge.

Specific Objectives Include:
• Better understand how we learn (gain new meanings) from research;
• Describe various social science research paradigms, their underlying assumptions, and how they impact what we learn from research;
• Discuss and demonstrate general principles of making positivist, interpretivist, critical, etc. observations in research;
• Understand and practice sampling and the sampling procedures used for positivist, interpretivist, critical, etc., research designs;
• Think and write about the purpose and procedures of various research methods: survey, quantitative, experimental, qualitative, and unobtrusive;
• Survey and talk about the general methods of analyzing data for positivist, interpretivist, critical, etc., research designs; and
• Explore and discuss ethical issues associated with positivist, interpretivist, critical, etc., research designs.

Required Texts
Foundations of Social Research
Author: Crotty
Publisher: SAGE

Research Methods in the Social Sciences
Editors: Somekh & Lewin
ISBN: 0-761-94402-7 (paperback)
Publisher: SAGE
Other Readings will be provided via hardcopy and on Blackboard

Assessment

Class Participation - Students are expected to have read the assigned readings in preparation for each class and to identify questions/topics that warrant further discussion. Students who miss more than two class sessions will be required to repeat the course. (10% of grade)

Worksheets - Beginning with our second meeting we will meet in workgroups to discuss the structure and content of worksheet assignments that have been part of the Principles of Research course for many years. These worksheets represent a progressive template to build a research paper of doctoral level quality. The ultimate content of the worksheets is up to each individual and will be informed by course readings and discussions. Each worksheet will be available on the Blackboard site the day following each course meeting. Please navigate to the Course Documents > Meeting # Folder > Worksheet area of Blackboard. (20% of Grade)

Reflexive Journal (4) - Choose one topic from the required readings. Write a one-page critical reflection related to this topic. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Why is this issue of importance to social scientists engaging in research or those reading research manuscripts and reports? What are the questions and/or concerns that this topic raises for you. Journal will be posted on blackboard and will not exceed 500 words. Four entries due as indicated on course schedule. (20% of Grade)

Discussion of Research Paradigms - Based on our reading and discussions of paradigms, choose an article from a peer reviewed journal that focuses on a discussion of methodology: titles will be provided in class. Include the full bibliographic citation and the author's abstract on your first page. Discuss the author's paradigmatic assumptions and the implications for the following: epistemology (or how data is being defined and/or how meaning is being made), research design, subjectivity, and implications/learnings for yourself as a researcher. Assignment will be e-mailed to the instructor as an attachment and will not exceed 5 pages (excluding citation and abstract page). Be prepared to discuss this assignment with classmates. (20% of Grade)

Final Project - At the end of the course you will have completed numerous worksheets that serve as project templates. You are expected to integrate relevant elements from these worksheets, from the text, and/or from outside resources to complete a research proposal. Please see the Assignments > Research Proposal area on Blackboard for specific criteria. This proposal is due via email on December 6, 2010 (30% of Grade)
Late work will not be accepted unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

Point/Grade correspondence for Grades:

95-100%  = A
90-94.99%  = A-
85-90%  = B
80-84.99%  = B-

Course Structure

Pre-Class Reading:
Crotty: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-17)
Somekh & Lewin (S&L): Part 1 (pp. 1-15)
Babbie: Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-64)

First Meeting: Foundations  9/4
Paradigms & Point of View: What is it to know?
Overview of Readings
Worksheets & Project Discussion
Group Work - (Discuss Essays)
Readings for 2nd Meeting:
Crotty: Chapter 2-3 (pp. 18-65)
Babbie: Chapters 3 (pp. 64-91)
S&L: Chapter 6 (pp. 56-63)

Second Meeting: A World Upside Down  9/11
Overview
Worksheet #1 Due
Group Work (Respond to Questions - create Questions)
Readings for 3rd Meeting:
Babbie: Chapters 4-7 (pp. 92-245)

Note: We will not meet as a class on October 2nd -- students will use this time to begin work on paradigm assignment. Reflection #1 will be posted on Blackboard on this date.

Third Meeting: Research Design  10/16
Overview
Worksheet #2 Due
Reflection #2
Group Work (Worksheet discussions)
Readings for 4th Meeting:
Babbie: Chapters 8-12 (pp. 246-417)

Fourth Meeting: Design & Emergence  10/30
Overview
Reflection #3
Worksheet #3 Due
Group Work (Worksheet discussions)
Readings for 5th Meeting:
Crotty: Chapter 4-7 (pp. 65-159)
Babbie: Chapters 13 (pp. 418-446)
S&L Chapters 1 - 5; 7; 13 - 17

Fifth Meeting: More Emergence  11/13
Overview
Reflection #4 Due
Worksheet #4 Due
Group Work (Worksheet discussions)
Readings for 6th Meeting:
Crotty: Chapter 8-10 (pp. 160-217)
Babbie: Chapters 14 (pp. 448-473 )
S&L: Chapters 23-33 (pp.197-282)

Sixth Meeting: Making the Emergent Concrete  11/20
Overview
Paradigm Assignment Due
Worksheet #5 Due
Group Work (Worksheet discussions)
Readings for 7th Meeting:
Babbie: Chapters 15 (pp. 476-502)

Seventh Meeting:  12/3
Overview & Wrap Up
Worksheet #6 Due
Project Presentations