DPLS 720 Principles of Research

Summer 2011 3 Credits
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Class Dates: Tuesdays: 6/21, 6/28, 7/5, 7/8 (Fri), 7/12, 7/19, 7/26

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

Theory and Methods in Social Research, 2nd edition
Editors: Somekh & Lewin
ISBN: 9781849200158 (paperback)
Publisher: SAGE
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 and will be completed in small workgroups in class. Failure to be in class will result in a proportional reduction in your grade. (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 July 26 (30% of Grade)

Late work will not be accepted. Failure to turn work in by the designated date will result in an automatic grade reduction.
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 1-2
Somekh & Lewin (S&L): Chapters 1-2; 23-24
Babbie: Chapters 1 - 3

First Meeting: Foundations of Science (Positivism) 6/21
Paradigms & Point of View: What is it to know?
Overview of Readings
Worksheets & Project Discussion
Reflection #1
Group Work - Worksheet 1 &2

Second Meeting: Beginnings of Unrest (Interpretivism) 6/28
Readings for 2nd Meeting:
Crotty: Chapter 3-5
Babbie: Chapters 3
S&L: Chapter 13-15
Reflection #2
Overview
Group Work (Respond to Questions - create Questions)

Third Meeting: Research for Change (Critical Paradigms) 7/5
Readings for 3rd Meeting:
Crotty (6-7)
S&L: 9-10
Overview
Reflection #2

Fourth Meeting: Foundations Unsettled (Feminism & Postmodernism) 7/8
Readings
S&L: 8, 33-36
Crotty: 8-9
Overview

Fifth Meeting: Research Design 7/12
Readings for 5th Meeting:
Babbie: Chapters 4, 8, 9,10, 11
Somekh & Lewin: Chapters 4-7, 28
Overview
Reflection #3
Paradigm Assignment Due
Group Work -- Worksheet discussions (3,4, 5)

Sixth Meeting: Data Analysis 7/19
Readings for 6th Meeting:
Babbie: Chapters 13-16
S&L: Chapters 25-27
Overview

Seventh Meeting: 7/26
Overview & Wrap Up
Project Presentations
Final Assignment Due
Reflection 4