DPLS 720 Principles of Research

Summer 2012, 3 Credit Hours

Instructor: Lisa A. Mazzei, Ph.D.
Office: Tilford 224
Office Phone: 509.313.3630
e-mail: mazzei@gonzaga.edu
Office hours: Please e-mail for an appointment

NOTE: Draft syllabus subject to change

Class Dates
Tuesdays: 6/19, 6/26, 7/3, 7/6 (Fri), 7/10, 7/17, 7/24

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
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. Failure to be present for all class sessions will result in reduction of the final grade. Students who miss more than two class sessions will be required to repeat the course. (10% 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. Journals 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. (30% of Grade)

Final Project - At the end of the course you will have encountered numerous philosophical and theoretical frameworks that are embedded within a set of epistemological and ontological assumptions. Evaluative criteria for the final project is based on the degree to which responses:

1. Concisely synthesize central ideas from reading and class discussion, and
2. Demonstrate some hard thought and creativity on your part in regards to wrestling with questions that have no definitive answers.

I am looking for a demonstration of your ability to negotiate various discourses about postpositivist inquiry that recognizes paradigms as conceptual frames within which are continuums of practice and beliefs.

Based on our survey of the many ways of conceptualizing research in the human sciences, develop a graphic display of the differences in research traditions (you may use the positivist, interpretivist, and critical categories or develop other categories that you feel better capture the differences) and their assumptions, methodologies and purposes. Append to your display a
rationale for why you feel it captures your thinking. You are expected to discuss how the researcher, data, and analysis are conceptualized differently according to the three categories that you choose. More details on this assignment will be provided in class. (40% 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

First Meeting: Foundations of Science (Positivism) 6/19
Paradigms & Point of View: What is it to know?
Overview of Readings
Worksheets & Project Discussion
Reflection #1

Second Meeting: Beginnings of Unrest (Interpretivism) 6/26
Readings for 2nd Meeting:
- Crotty: Chapter 3-5
- S&L: Chapter 13-15
Reflection #2
Overview
Group Work (Respond to Questions - create Questions)

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

Fourth Meeting: Foundations Unsettled (Feminism & Postmodernism) 7/6
Readings
- S&L: 8, 33-36
- Crotty: 8-9
Overview
Fifth Meeting: Research Design  7/10
Readings for 5th Meeting:
  • Somekh & Lewin: Chapters 4-7, 28
Overview
Reflection #3
Paradigm Assignment Due

Sixth Meeting: Data Analysis 7/17
Readings for 6th Meeting:
  • S&L: Chapters 25-27
Overview

Seventh Meeting:  7/24
Overview & Wrap Up
Project Presentations
Final Assignment Due
Reflection 4