

**PAX 521: Research: Qualitative Evaluation  
Fall 2008: COURSE SYLLABUS**

**INSTRUCTOR**

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**MEETING TIME & PLACE**

Thursday morning, 8:30-11:30 AM in the University Commons, Room 209A.

**PRIMARY TEXT**

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Sage Publications, 2002.

**SECONDARY READINGS**

Slim, Hugo and Paul Thomson. *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Community Development*. New Society Publishers. 1999.

Monitoring and Evaluation: *Some Tools, Methods, and Approaches*. The World Bank. 2002.

Kvale, Steinar. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage Publications. 1996.

Weiss, Carol. *Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families in New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives*. Aspen Institute. 1999.

Jantzi, Terrence. *Evaluation Paradigms and Peacebuilding: A Conceptual Discussion*. American Evaluation Association Conference Paper. Denver, CO. 2008.

Austin, Alex and Martina Fischer and Oliver Wils. *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment: Critical Views on Theory and Practice*. Berghof Handbook

Dialogue Series. Berghof Research Center. 2003.

Church, Cheyanne and Julie Shouldice. *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions, Part I: Framing the State of Play* and *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions, Part II: Emerging Practice & Theory*. INCORE, 2001 and 2003. Website: [www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/policy/Publication.html](http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/policy/Publication.html)

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course is designed to introduce you to the field of qualitative inquiry and its application in such areas as conflict transformation, restorative justice, development, community organizing and organizational problem solving. The principle focus of the course will be in using qualitative inquiry methods in the evaluation of programs. However, qualitative inquiry as research will also be covered.

Sociological, anthropological and ethnographic approaches will provide the theoretical and philosophical background for our work, but the focus will be on practical applications of qualitative methodology in evaluation. Our focus will be interdisciplinary in that we will draw on experiences from a number of areas as examples of qualitative research. Each participant will form part of a team that will to work on an actual evaluation. However, even though you will work in teams it will be import to do individual reflection on your work. Ideally then, there should be individual, team and class levels of reflection on our work.

The course format will be participatory and experiential. Effective *communication* will be emphasized including alternative forms of presentation. The work schedule will be rather intense throughout, but the nature of the work will change as we progress through the evaluation(s) we have contracted to undertake. There will be a significant amount of group work, so each participant should weigh that in relation to personal obligations distant from campus, ease of gathering with other students and individual willingness to participate in a work team.

This course is an evaluation course so it will reflect a dynamic common to all evaluation and planning initiatives. It will be iterative and self-correcting, especially since we will be working with an actual evaluation case or cases. Keeping that in mind, the course objectives are to:

- acquaint you with the philosophy, methods and issues in the contemporary field of qualitative research and evaluation;
- introduce you to various types of qualitative research that can be useful in restorative justice and peacebuilding evaluation practice, but with a primary focus on interview-based methods;
- prepare you to design and implement a practical evaluation research project using interview-based qualitative methods of data collection and analysis;
- provide special training in interview-based research design and practice;
- enable you to understand both practical and philosophical issues and challenge in relation to qualitative inquiry/evaluation and community processes including the fields of conflict transformation, restorative justice and development.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

You will be expected to complete the following assignments in addition to activities performed in class. However, given the dynamic nature of the class due to our involvement in actual evaluations/research the following may need to be altered after due consultation with the principal parties involved. This will not be that much different from what one would find in practice wherever that may be. There are three types of assignments that will comprise part of the overall grade: Analytic or Reflective essays, A Final Evaluation report and an Audit Trail.

### **ANALYTIC OR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS**

Four times throughout the semester, there will be an opportunity to analyze a scenario, document, speaker, or oneself. These reflective essays are intended to provide the student with the opportunity to work the ideas, concepts, and readings covered in class through analysis and reflection. Analytic essays will be short (500-1000 words) but serve as an important component of critical reflection and thinking.

### **SEMESTER PROJECT**

The course is intended to be practical in nature. For this reason, students will have the opportunity to work in groups on one of several evaluation and research projects. Each group will take ownership of carrying out the evaluation using the methods covered in class (interview, observation, and document analysis). Your team will be responsible to analyze the data gathered through the interviews, compile your analysis with the analysis from the other teams on the project and present your findings in a single document. The final report will summarize the findings complete with analysis and recommendations, if appropriate. There will be a mixture of individual, paired, and group work assignments to be completed throughout the semester as incremental steps to completing the overall evaluation. However, the only graded element will be the final report (including appendices containing interview, observation and document transcripts and analysis). This will be a group grade and will comprise the bulk of the semester grade. There will be high expectations that the final evaluation report be consistent with the standards of a professional, contracted researcher or evaluator and should include appendices containing raw data, discussions of verification, validation, and interpretation as well as analysis and recommendations for the client agency. Separate handouts will contain descriptions of the three evaluation projects and the expectations for the format of the final report. The types of projects are intended to run the gamut of qualitative research and evaluation typologies from program evaluation to ethnography to situational assessment/research.

### **AUDIT TRAIL**

Throughout the project, each student will keep their own audit trail. This is a qualitative validation device that essentially consists of a weekly personal journal of reflections, impressions, observations, frustrations and insights that the evaluator experiences over the course of the project. The purpose of the audit trail is to provide transparency to the process by allowing others to “see into the mind” of the evaluator as they construct their understanding of the context. You will keep such a journal and should begin as soon as we begin working on the actual evaluations (following the conceptual introductions. Entries will be on a weekly basis and will demonstrate thoughtful reflection worthy of a “reflective practitioner.” You will find the entries useful as you summarize the work for the final project.

## ASSESSMENT

Analytical Reflection Essays (25 points each)	100 points
Evaluation Project Final Report (group)	225 points
Audit Trail (Individual)	75 points
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Total:	400 points

In general, you are expected to follow the guidelines for the various the assignments and prior to turning in your work to check deviations from the guidelines with the instructor in charge of that particular aspect of the class. In evaluating your work, quality is more important than quantity, emphasizing creativity, clear and engaging expression of ideas, sensitivity to subjects and the larger community.

Grades will be based on an accumulation of numerical points that will be converted to a letter grade with plus or minus at the end of the course. An “A” grade is reserved for truly exceptional work. Most of us do not function at that level without significant effort and attention to detail. The scale may be altered for special reasons and points deducted for missed deadlines.

A=94-100%

B=85-93%

C=75-84%

F=74 or less

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If the pedagogical style or class assignments cause difficulties for you due to your cultural or personal experience or because of a particular disability you may have, please raise these issues in class or with principal instructor privately.

## Semester Schedule – Fall 2008

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
9/4	Introduction and Overview	
<b>Section I: Conceptual Frameworks and Case Studies</b>		
9/11	Beginning the Qualitative Evaluation Journey	<i>Patton (1, 2), Slim (1, 2)</i> ( <b>Reflective Essay #1</b> )
9/18	Philosophical & Theoretical Orientations and Implications for You	<i>Patton (3, 4)</i> ( <b>Reflective Essay #2</b> )
9/25	Stories from the Field – Qualitative Evaluation	Guest Speaker
<b>Section II: The Evaluation Project and Practical Applications</b>		
10/2	Designing Studies	<i>Patton (5), Slim (3), and M&amp;E Booklet</i> ( <b>Reflective Essay #3</b> )
10/9	Fieldwork & Observation	<i>Patton 6, Slim 5</i>
10/16	Stories From the Field - Research	Guest Speaker
10/23	Interviewing & Focus Groups	<i>Patton 7, Slim 4, Kvale 1</i>
10/30	Analysis and Interpretation	<i>Patton 8, Slim 6, Kvale 11</i>
11/6	Analysis and Interpretation	<i>Patton 9, Kvale 12, 13</i>
<b>11/13</b>	Synthesis: Developing the Final Report	No Readings
<b>Section III: Evaluation and Peacebuilding</b>		
11/20	Evaluation and Peacebuilding - Readings	<i>Church, Austin, Jantzi</i> <b>Reflective Essay #4</b>
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>		
12/4	Evaluation and Peacebuilding – Voices from the Field	Guest Speaker
12/11	Wrap-Up, Year in Review.	<b>Final Evaluation Report Due</b>

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

### *Methodological Questions*

- Robson, Colin. *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*. Blackwell, 1993. An excellent reference with introductions and applications of many types of qualitative (and even quantitative) research methods.
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Sage, 1995. This contains more extensive how-to information.
- Smith, Carolyn and William Kornblum (eds), *In the Field: Readings on the Field Experience*. Praeger, 1996. Anecdotal accounts of field issues. We will use about half of the book, so you may buy or borrow it.
- Stringer, Ernest. *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Sage, 1996. Guide to subject-oriented, problem-solving action research.
- Weiss, Robert S. *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. A basic text with a focus on the how-to of interviewing.
- Zehr, Howard. *Doing Life: Reflections of Men and Women Serving Life Sentences and Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims*. Good Books, 1996 & 2001.

### *Ethical and "Ways of Knowing" Issues*

- Bishop, Russell. *Collaborative Research Stories: Whakawhanaugatanga*. The Dunmore Press, 1996.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene, Christina Gilmartin, and Robin Lydenberg. *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, Inc. and the University of Otago Press, 1999.

**Evaluation, writing guidelines, miscellaneous**

*Writing* will be a factor in evaluation: EMU has recently adopted a set of writing guidelines for graduate programs that include four sets of criteria: content, structure, conventions and style (see 2<sup>nd</sup> page). It is expected that graduates will be able to write at least a “good” level with 60% writing at an “excellent” level.

For the course papers, please follow the APA style described in CJP’s *GUIDELINES for GRADUATE PAPERS* (see *student handbook* or request a copy from the academic program coordinator)

In your papers, be sure to avoid any form of *plagiarism*. If you have doubts about what is appropriate, a useful website is <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>. See also the EMU Graduate Catalog <http://www.emu.edu/catalog/graduate/general/academics> under “Honesty” for the university policy.

*Grades* will be based on an accumulation of numerical points that will be converted to a letter grade at the end of the course. Each assignment will receive a score expressed as a fraction, with the points received over the total points possible (e.g. 18/20). The following is the basic scale used for evaluation. *Points may be subtracted for missed deadlines.*

95-100 = A outstanding	90-94 = A- excellent	85-89 = B+ very good
80-84 = B good	75-79 = B- satisfactory	70-74 = C passing
Below 70 = F failing		

Graduate students are expected to earn A’s and B’s. A GPA of 3 is the minimum requirement for graduation.

If you have received services in the past related to a *learning disability* or attention deficit disorder and/or you feel you may have such a problem in this course, please make an appointment to speak with the faculty member or with the Coordinator of Student Disability Support Services in the Academic Support Center, Roselawn Ground Floor (432-4233).

*Course extensions and outstanding grades*

The following is CJP policy on course extensions: For Fall and Spring semesters, all coursework is due by the end of the semester. If a student will not be able to complete a course on time, the student must submit a request one week before the end of the semester for an extension (up to 6 months) using a course extension form provided by the academic program coordinator. If the request is granted the student will receive an “I (incomplete) for the course which will later be replaced by a final grade when the work has been turned in on the agreed upon date. If a student does not fill out a course extension form in the agreed upon time a ½ grade will be docked for all coursework that was not completed by the end of the semester (regardless of whether or not an extension is subsequently approved). If the request for an extension is denied, the student will receive a grade for the work that has been completed up until the time the course was expected to have been completed. If no work has been submitted, the final grade will be an F (or W under certain circumstances).

Extensions will be given only for legitimate and unusual situations. Extensions are contracted by the student with the program for up to a maximum of 6 months after the deadline for the course work. PLEASE NOTE: If the outstanding course work is received within the first 6 weeks of the extension, no grade reduction will be imposed; after 6 weeks any outstanding coursework will be reduced by ½ letter grade. If the extension deadline is not met, the student will receive a final grade for the work completed.

Under exceptional circumstances, an additional 6-month extension may be granted by special petition to the CJP academic committee. To receive this additional extension, a letter of petition is expected with full

rationale for the reason unable to finish to this point and a practical plan on how the student will actually finish if this extension is permitted. This must be submitted at least 1 week before the end of the first extension. A student is encouraged to use this only when absolutely necessary.

**Writing Standards – Graduate Level (Grid Version)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>A <i>excellent</i></b>	<b>B <i>competent</i></b>	<b>C <i>below expectations</i></b>
<b>Content</b> <i>(quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them)</i>	- has clarity of purpose - has depth of content - displays insight or originality of thought -demonstrates quality and breadth of resources	- has clarity of purpose - has substantial information and sufficient support - contains some originality of thought -uses quality resources	- has clarity of purpose -lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace - has little originality of thought -uses mostly quality resources
<b>Structure</b> <i>(logical order or sequence of the writing)</i>	- is coherent and logically developed -uses very effective transitions	- is coherent and logically developed -uses smooth transitions	- is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed -has some awkward transitions
<b>Conventions</b> <i>(appearance of the writing: sentence structure, usage, mechanics, documentation)</i>	- has virtually no errors of conventions	- has minimal errors of conventions	- is understandable <u>but</u> has noticeable problems of sentence structure, usage, mechanics or documentation
<b>Style</b> <i>(personality of the writing: word choice, sentence variety, voice, attention to audience)</i>	- is concise, eloquent and rhetorically effective -has nicely varied sentence structure -is engaging throughout and enjoyable to read	- displays concern for careful expression -has some variation in sentence structure -is generally enjoyable to read	- has some personality <u>but</u> lacks imagination and may be stilted and may rely on clichés -has little variation in sentence structure -is not very interesting to read
The weighting of each of the four areas is dependent on the specific written assignment and the teacher’s preference.			