Winter 2010

ACL 546 Research Methodology

Rob Morrison, National-Louis University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/rob_morrison/22/
ACL 546
Research Methodologies in Adult Education

Winter 2010

Rob Morrison, Ed.D.
1-800-443-5522 x 3372
rob.morrison@nl.edu
http://works.bepress.com/rob_morrison/

Course Overview

Class Meeting Times: Online (BlackBoard) and Face to Face on four Saturdays at the Chicago campus, room 5015:

January 16: Noon-2pm
February 6: TBA
February 27: TBA
March 20: Noon-2pm

Research is the pursuit of knowledge. This process involves a close examination of a problem or issue you want to investigate. This course introduces research principles and practices in the field of adult education with an emphasis on qualitative methodologies. This course is designed to introduce students to a systematic process for identifying and investigating questions and issues that arise in life and from educational practice. Students will learn to develop and articulate research questions, critically assess appropriate research method(s), locate and analyze related research, and to critically think and reflect on the entire process. The ethical and critical use of research is an integral part of the course structure.

Research involves systematically, thoughtfully, ethically and creatively investigating a problem, concern, or issue. This process includes planning and implementing a research plan and analyzing data in order to test/develop theories, explore current knowledge, create new knowledge, and to gain a deeper and wider perspective of the world. You can use research to inform, persuade, communicate, and to develop new theories or understandings about the nature of the phenomenon you are investigating. Critical thinking and analyzing are a vital part of this process. This course will provide hands-on practice with collecting and analyzing data.

There are many different types of knowledge. Creating and disseminating knowledge is not limited to a few experts; this is one of the strengths of qualitative research. The Research Plan is the culmination of the learning activities in this
course where students will integrate everything they have learned into a completed proposal that will provide practice and a template for future research.

**Course Objectives**
- Develop a greater understanding of the research process and to articulate a focused proposal and research questions.
- To learn how to become an effective and critical researcher through evaluation, reading, and analysis.
- To develop an ethical framework to guide the research process.
- To reflect on one’s own experience as a creator, user, and evaluator of knowledge.
- To identify strategies for the creation and communication of knowledge.
- To understand research methodologies in relation to concrete problems to which they are applied.
- To create a research proposal.

**Student Responsibilities**
- Participation is a core part of this course. Every student is expected to actively contribute to weekly discussions, attend in-class sessions, and to interact with the instructor and with other students. Participation is the combination of thoughtful discussions, readings, and critically reflecting on all aspects of course content.
- Students will interact respectfully with the instructor and other students. A focus of any discussion is to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and others’ perspectives.
- Students will submit work according to the timeline in the syllabus.
- If a student is not able to submit their work on time or able to participate in a class session, he/she will notify the instructor ahead of time.

**Instructor Responsibilities**
- The instructor will be available on a regular basis to answer student questions, clarify course materials and assignments, and meet individually with students.
- The instructor will respond individually to all discussion and reflective posts from students as assigned in the syllabus.
- The instructor will provide guiding questions for the readings and will initiate discussions and will actively participate in the discussions.
- The instructor will provide timely feedback on all required assignments submitted by the due date.

**Required Readings**


**Articles**


Other required readings will be provided in-class

**Course Requirements**

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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>Article Critique</td>
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<td>Observation</td>
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<td>Practice Interview</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Plan</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic (research focus--)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationale/importance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<td>Data collection plan</td>
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<td>Bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical issues</td>
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**Class Participation  20 points**

Participate regularly in online discussions. Online classes are only effective when participants are fully involved. It is expected that you make substantial comments in each discussion thread. **A minimum of three time a week is required.** New discussions are posted on Monday of each week. In order to be prepared to engage in the discussion, you must complete the assigned reading by Monday of the week under which it is listed. Attendance at each face to face class is expected.

**Research Plan  40 points**

This is the major assignment for this class which brings together the various skills you are learning in the process of conducting research. Students will develop a
written plan for conducting research in an area that is of considerable interest to them or is an issue they feel passionate about. To break this assignment into manageable pieces, due dates are given for each section. Drafts will be posted in a discussion thread set up for this purpose on in the link to “Research Plans” on the homepage. Students will use this space to upload drafts for review, discussion, and to receive feedback. Specific drafts you will post in this space: Topic, Rationale/importance, and the Literature Review. The final document is due at the end of the course. Submit an electronic copy to the instructor at the last class session. At our final in-class meeting on March 20, each student will provide a brief report on their plan. The plan must include the following components:

**Topic (research focus--1-2 page draft due end of week 3)**
Introduce the problem or issue including the background or context and its relationship to your current or future practice. Include questions that are guiding your research. These questions should be posed broadly and inquire into what you hope to learn, discover, or change when the research is complete. Include your purpose for the study.

**Rationale/importance (1 page draft due end of week 3)**
Why is this research important? Answer the question: so what? Who would be interested in your findings? Why is this research meaningful to you personally? What contribution will this study make to the field of adult education? Make a strong case for the importance of this plan.

**Literature Review (3- 4 page draft due end of week 7)**
A literature review is an integrated discussion of the theoretical perspectives of various authors research as it relates to your research. In your own narrative essay, discuss how the authors’ ideas are similar and different from your own, how they agree or conflict with each other. You can also focus on what is missing from the literature as it relates to your topic. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Read from at least three sources that are related to your study (one article from a research journal, one book chapter, one conference paper). Synthesize the author’s findings as they relate to your own research as opposed to discussing each article individually. Cite in APA format.

**Data collection plan (2-4 page draft due end of week 8)**
Describe the design of your study. What are your primary or secondary data sources? Who are the participants and how will you select them? Discuss your method for collecting data. For example, if interviews will be used, what kinds of questions will you ask? Will you be doing observations, conducting a survey, etc.?
Include your rationale for selecting particular methods for collecting data. Include copies of questions or data collection tools you may be using.

**Bibliography (submit with final plan week 10)**
Conduct a literature search on your topic and cite at least 10 references including three for your literature review. *You do not have to read the final seven*, use the title, abstract and subject headings descriptors to help justify their inclusion.

**Ethical issues (1-2 page, submit with final plan week 10)**
Discuss ethical concerns related to your proposed research: anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, etc.

**Article Critique 15 points**
Write a critique of a research article (will be distributed). The critique should include: (1) a brief summary (3-4 paragraphs) that includes the nature of the problem or focus, methodology, sample or population, how data were collected and major findings; (2) A critical analysis of the article (3-4 pages) including clarity of focus, readability, appropriateness of methodology to answer the research questions, the findings (what supporting evidence is given, what is omitted, how has your knowledge of the topic been expanded, what questions do you have, has the author provided support for their assumptions—are they clear, what suggestions do you have for improving the report). These questions are meant to help guide your critique. **The critique should be written in a narrative form.**

Due: Monday of Week 5

**Observation 15 points**
Following our discussion on techniques of observation in research, conduct a 30 minute observation in a public location where a lot of activity is happening. Keep detailed field notes. Write up a brief (2 page) narrative report of your findings to be posted in BlackBoard in the Observation thread.

Due: Monday of Week 8

**Practice Interview 10 points**
Conduct a 30 minute interview related to your potential research plan topic. Audiotape the interview for your reference. Be prepared to discuss your experience in class in the online threaded discussion under this topic heading.

Due Monday of Week 9
Weekly Discussion Topics, Reading Assignments and Due Dates

This course meets in-person on January 16, February 6, February 27, and March 20. Attendance in class for these dates is necessary. All other coursework takes place online.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to Research</strong>&lt;br&gt;Your understanding of Research Ways of Knowing</td>
<td><strong>Role of the Researcher</strong>&lt;br&gt;Quantitative &amp; Qualitative research Choosing a Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Alessa article, Merriam &amp; Simpson (M&amp;S) Chapter 1</td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Atieno article, Merriam Chapter 4, and M&amp;S Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In-class January 16:</strong> Introductions, review syllabus, assignments, research plan (the final project), using BlackBoard, and discuss first week topics.</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
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<td><strong>Data collection</strong>&lt;br&gt;Critiquing research Practice critique Topic development continued</td>
<td><strong>Literature Review</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literature Review Tools (Library Research &amp; Search strategies)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduction to observation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Hayes article, Merriam pp. 76-83 and M&amp;S Chapter 8</td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Merriam pp. 71-76, M&amp;S Chapter 3 and pp. 154-160</td>
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<td><strong>Due:</strong> Topic draft</td>
<td><strong>In-class February 6:</strong> discuss/practice search strategies and article for critiquing.</td>
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
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<td><strong>Literature Review and Library research continued</strong>&lt;br&gt;Conduct observation</td>
<td><strong>Ethics</strong>&lt;br&gt;Critical reflection Observations debrief</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> Article critique</td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Merriam pp. 219-220, 228-234, M&amp;S Chapter 10, NLU IRRB web site</td>
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<td><strong>Due:</strong> Observation report</td>
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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Week 8</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to interviewing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Trustworthiness</strong>&lt;br&gt;Interviews (conduct interviews)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Merriam Chapter 5, M&amp;S pp. 106-107, 151-153</td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> Merriam Chapter 9, M&amp;S pp. 101-103</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In-class February 27:</strong> discuss interviewing</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> Data collection plan</td>
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<td><strong>Due:</strong> Lit Review draft</td>
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**Criteria for Evaluation**

Assignments are evaluated based on clarity of expression, completeness, timeliness, and relevance to course objectives. There are 100 points total. Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

- Article Critique: 15 points
- Observation: 15 points
- Practice Interview: 10 points
- Class Participation: 20 points
- Research Plan: 40 points

Points to Grades
- 90-100=A
- 80-89=B
- 70-79=C
- 60-69=D

In-progress grades are assigned at the discretion of the instructor and must be negotiated prior to the end of the course.

**Additional Bibliography**

http://www.nlc.edu/academics/cas/ace/facultypapers/StephenBrookfield_Wisdom.cfm


**Going Green**
In the interest of conserving precious resources, I will distribute all course materials and readings by email or post to the BlackBoard course. I will also limit the number of print copies handed out in class.

**ADA Statement**
National-Louis University seeks to ensure that its programs are accessible to all persons. Students in need of special assistance or an accommodation regarding any of the course requirements as outlined in this syllabus, the course objectives and/or course evaluation and assessment criteria, are advised to notify me within the first two weeks of class. We will meet privately to discuss resolution of your issue, which may or may not include an appropriate referral (e.g. a Writing specialist, the Academic Accommodations Coordinator, the Director of Diversity or the Office of Student Affairs). Confidentiality will be maintained regarding your special needs.

**Academic Policy Statement**
With respect to the academic honesty of students, it is expected that all material submitted as part of any class exercise, in or out of class, is the actual work of the student whose name appears on the material or is properly documented otherwise. The concept of academic honesty includes plagiarism as well as receiving and/or giving improper assistance and other forms of cheating on coursework. Faculty has the right to analyze and evaluate students’ course work. When evidence of academic dishonesty is discovered, an established procedure of resolution will be activated to bring the matter to closure.

The Policy on Academic Honesty is in the Student Guidebook at: [http://www.nl.edu/StudentServices/studentaffairs/StudentHandbook/](http://www.nl.edu/StudentServices/studentaffairs/StudentHandbook/).