Graduate Department of Nursing  
University of Toronto  

Course Outline

NUR1024: Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry  
Fall 2008, Tuesday 1:30 – 4:30 pm

Course Instructor  
Dr. Denise Gastaldo (Health Sciences Building, 155 College Street, phone 416.978.4953, denise.gastaldo@utoronto.ca)

Pre-requisites  
To be a PhD student developing a health-related research.

Course Context  
The history of qualitative research is one of confrontations between essential paradigmatic differences. Early preoccupation with a polemic bifurcation between qualitative/interpretive and quantitative/positivistic approaches to inquiry has given way to debates that denote powerful tensions within the field of qualitative research itself. The cross-disciplinary nature of current qualitative research has added distinctive elements to the academic debate and consensus on many issues is not forthcoming. Despite these tensions, qualitative research thrives, as evidenced by an abundance of books, journals and articles dealing with a vast range of themes and approaches to scientific inquiry.

Course Description  
This course examines the paradigmatic bases of qualitative research. In a series of seminars, instructor and students will explore the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of specific frameworks and consider the methodological implications that emanate from these foundations. Specific debates related to theories employed in the field of health, research questions, designs, the positionality of the researcher, epistemological rigour, and ethics will be discussed. This course addresses current debates which are relevant to students in all health science disciplines and includes examples of qualitative research developed in many countries.

Course Objectives  
- To introduce the theoretical frameworks currently employed in qualitative research  
- To critically analyse the paradigms and theoretical foundations that inform qualitative studies  
- To illustrate the influence of distinct theoretical frameworks on methodological choices  
- To explore qualitative strategies that address students’ research interests  
- To examine some well-established and some innovative qualitative designs in the field of health  
- To discuss key elements for rigour and ethics in qualitative research
Teaching and Learning Strategies
This course will involve lectures, seminars and group discussion. Learning will take place both inside and outside the classroom. Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate and contribute to the development of topics. Assignments are to be submitted on the specified dates; extensions must be negotiated with the course instructor one week prior to the due date. Written work should adhere to a particular bibliographic format (e.g. Vancouver, APA, etc) and the specified page length. Each student will be responsible for the work assigned in the following areas:

1. Class Seminar
Each student will plan and lead one presentation and group discussion that elaborates on one facet of the topic in a given week. This one and a half-hour discussion should be based on a critical analysis of a research article selected by the student and the discussion of class readings. The student leading the seminar should make the suggested article available to class members at least one week before the class and provide a brief outline of the topic including objectives and plan for discussion. If more than one student leads the seminar, this presentation will be assigned a group grade.

2. Major Paper Outline
In order to meet the School of Graduate Studies requirements that students receive a part of their grade before the course ‘drop date’ of October 31, 2008, an outline of the major paper is due October 21, 2008. The outline should contain an introduction to the topic of the paper, a brief literature review, the objective, central argument and key issues to be discussed, and a list of the most important references to the paper. The outline should be 4 pages long (references on additional pages, double spaced, font 11 or larger, Times New Roman font).

3. Major Paper
One major paper is required for the course. This paper will be on a specific area of qualitative health inquiry that is of interest to the student. Students should choose a particular paradigm and theoretical framework and discuss their methodological implications or facets of a particular methodological issue within this framework. The paper should include a critical discussion of the literature related to the topic. If a particular position is chosen, a clear argument should be provided to explain this choice. The paper should be 12 pages long (references on additional pages, double spaced, font 11 or larger, Times New Roman font), it is due on December 9, 2008 and should be submitted by email.

Grading
The criteria for evaluation in all three assignments include: argument or objective is stated; status of information is clearly addressed; theoretical orientation is explored; key concepts/themes are introduced and contextualized; critiques to the topic under study are raised; presentation is clear and stimulating or document is well-written; and, references go beyond course material. Grading of assignments will follow the School of Graduate Studies grading and evaluation policy (A+ to B- or FZ). The grading plan for the course is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Seminar</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Outline</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>55%</td>
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**NUR1024H: Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry**

**Class Schedule**  
Fall 2008, Tuesday 1:30 – 4:30 pm, Room 715, Health Sciences Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>09 Introduction to the course &amp; documentary “Window of the Soul”. Discussion of documentary as a metaphor for research.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I: Foundations</strong></td>
<td>16 Paradigms for knowledge production: What are the major approaches? What is qualitative research? Presentation on paradigms for knowledge production and discussions on students’ paradigm choices and definitions of qualitative research (students should apply for their class seminars)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Critical-social approaches: Which are feminist, emancipatory agendas and methodologies? (Group discussion: Research employing feminist and critical orientations in the health sciences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Critical-social approaches: Is there a poststructuralist/postmodern methodology? (Group discussion: Research employing postmodern theory in the health sciences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>07 Interpretivist approaches: Is phenomenology a theory and/or a methodology? (Group discussion: Research employing interpretivist orientations in the health sciences)</td>
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<td>14 No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Will this be a qualitative study? Creating a research question and developing a proposal (Group discussion: Analysing some research projects and their questions)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part II: Methodological and Design Issues</strong></td>
<td>28 Qualitative designs 1: Guidance or constrain? (Group discussion: Examining health studies with and without a particular design)</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>04 Qualitative designs 2: Well-established traditions (Group discussion: Traditional designs such as ethnography, case study, and grounded theory in health research)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Qualitative designs 3: Innovative approaches (Group discussion: Emerging trends such as community-based research, visual methodologies, and knowledge translation strategies in health research)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Epistemological and methodological rigour: Reflexivity, positionality and the quality qualitative research (Group discussion: The researcher as the main research tool)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Ethics as process (Group discussion: Thinking ethics from diverse theoretical perspectives)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>02 Revisiting research paradigms &amp; course evaluation</td>
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Required Readings

Sept 16 – Paradigms for knowledge production: What are the major approaches? What is qualitative research?


Sept 23 – Critical-social approaches: Which are feminist emancipatory agendas and methodologies?


Sept 30 – Critical-social approaches: Is there a poststructuralist/postmodern methodology?


Oct 07 – Interpretivist approaches: Is phenomenology a theory and/or a methodology?


needs to be? Qualitative Health Research, 11(2): 273-281.

Oct 14 – No class

Oct 21 – Will this be a qualitative study? Creating a research question and developing a proposal


Oct 28 – Qualitative designs 1: Guidance or constrain?


Nov 04 – Qualitative designs 2: Well-established traditions (Ethnography, case study, and grounded theory)


Nov 11 – Qualitative designs 3: Innovative approaches (Community-based research, visual methodologies, and knowledge translation)


Nov 18 – Epistemological and methodological rigour: Reflexivity, positionality and the quality qualitative research


Nov 25 – Ethics as process


