

Interpretive Inquiry (EDCI 580)

Winter 2008: JAN 07 2008 to MAR 31 2008

Wolff-Michael Roth (Lansdowne Professor)

mailto:mroth@uvic.ca

The course outline is available here. The outline will be modified to meet the [changing] needs of students and instructor. Specific lesson outlines and additional information will be made available in an ongoing manner.

My Philosophy

Interpretive inquiry, as any other human practice, cannot be learned by talking or reading about it but requires that we participate in it. Thus, even the slightest description of how to collect data or interpret data inherently underdetermines just what you have to do. It is through your own doing that you find the relevance in and of the description.

Take a cookbook recipe as an example. However explicit the recipe, you will find yourself in situations where you do not know what a particular instruction means. It is only through cooking--and sometimes through your knowledge of what the end product is supposed to look like--that you know what an instruction means. Only when you actually are able to do the real thing does the description of it really become meaningful.

So throughout this course, we engage in two types of activities, doing interpretive inquiry and talking about it. These two activities stand in a dialectical and reflexive relation that together constitute each other, that is, interpretive inquiry as an accountable (rather than tacit) research practice.

My research has shown that human knowing is constituted in participation in authentic activity and changing participation is equivalent to learning. Thus, reading and participating in discussions prepares you to read scholarly articles and participate in scholarly discussions. Doing research prepares you to do research. Listening to lectures prepares you to listen to lectures. (Nevertheless, I may, as needed, use mini-lectures to share some of my experiences in doing research.) Central to your learning will therefore be active participation, so far as to propose activities or make changes to the course as I have prepared it. It is only when your learning is truly in your hands that the course can achieve its objective, helping you learn.

Process

In this course, we will discuss major forms of interpretive research, how to design it, how to produce data sources, how to produce data and analyses, and how to write research. The ultimate purpose is for students to experience the research process in all its facets write to the preparation of a manuscript.

Each meeting, I will take some time for brief summaries/ presentations, whole-class discussions of the readings for the day, and activities related to data analysis and development of project.

Periodically I would like to spend some time, to talk about our experience in and of this course and how we can improve what is going on--if and when this is necessary.

In this course, students will

- * engage in background reading to prepare research design,
- * engage in class discussions to design research, plan interview questions, practice interview skills
- * engage in interpretive data analysis both collectively (in class) and individually (or with partner, as per below),
- * receive feedback on draft interpretations of their data and draft versions of their paper
- * draw conclusions,
- * and write a final paper in which they present results.

Tentative Outline

A tentative outline is available online. The outline will be modified to meet the [changing] needs of students and instructor. Specific lesson outlines and additional information will be made available in an ongoing manner.

Text and Readings

Roth, W.-M. (2005). *Doing qualitative research: Praxis of method*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

(In their course assignment, students will show evidence that they are familiar with all aspects of doing research, analyzing data sources, and writing research that are presented in the text.)

Students should do additional readings as required by their research project. Students will be expected to make occasional presentations regard-

ing the readings they have done. To be able to participate in the conversations during our meetings, students (an professor) are expected to have read the selection for the day.

Resources

1. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum Qualitative Social Research* is an important bilingual e-journal on qualitative inquiry.
2. The *Qualitative Report*. An online journal dedicated to qualitative research and critical inquiry since 1990.
3. A comprehensive listing of Internet resources in and on phenomenology can be found here.
4. Resources for Social Researchers. These links provide you with avenues to sources of information that may prove very useful to sociologists and others interested in social issues or sociological activities.
5. The *University of Victoria* library allows you to access a number of educational journals via the internet. [Ejournals]

Assignment

1. The students will write a research paper based on the data collected as part of this course; students will use not only their own data (interviews) but also those collected by the other students. (For an example of an A+ paper see the one written by a student in a previous course [sample paper].)
2. To achieve an A or A+, students should be prepared to write a paper at near-publishable or publishable quality (see the sample paper), which includes description of research design, literature, etc. To achieve a B grade or less, students will have to show clear deficiencies (faking assignments, evidence of whole or partial plagiarism, etc.), clear evidence of not being prepared for class in terms of readings and assignments.
3. For the description of the assignment and materials go to ASSIGNMENT.
4. All text assignments are submitted electronically as ".doc" (WORD), ".rtf," or pdf files to my email address; all other files, including movie (mov), image (jpg), and audio files (aif) should be submitted on a CD. (Alternatively, you may make all of these available on a personal website.)
5. The assignment will consist of different parts, which students will accomplish as the course unfolds

Course Grade

The course grade is made up in the following way: 100% major assignment.

Contact

Appointments are made by special arrangement sufficiently in advance. You may find it more convenient to write an email, which in most cases, deals with many issues. Also email me at least a day or two advance for any special appointment (mailto:mroth@uvic.ca). You may also arrange for an iCHAT (AOL) video-mediated meeting, which means you do not even have to leave where you are working at the moment.

Assignment: Interpretive Inquiry (EDCI 580)

(Due date of complete version: last day of class, MAR 31, 2008)

Assignment Description

This assignment was designed both as a context for learning how to do interpretive inquiry and as an evaluation of what you know and can do.

General description of what you need to expect to do

The assignment requires you to

- * prepare a paper that is in the form of a published article, that is, contains the major sections of introduction, purpose, theory/background, methods, results, conclusions, and references -- though you may actually choose more descriptive titles appropriate for your paper;
- * search for, read, and submit abstracts of at least 4 articles (due dates see lesson-by-lesson outline) pertaining to the theme of your research;
- * do additional reading concerning the theme and research methods and include this in the final written piece;
- * collect data sources in the form of a recording of a televised event;
- * share transcripts with others in class through password-protected web-site;
- * participate in whole-class and small-group discussion and data analyses;
- * make sure that final paper conforms to APA 5th edition style; and
- * submit your paper electronically including scanned documents, transcribed text, video. Format should be WORD (doc), rtf, or pdf files for texts, jpg for images (scans), mov for movie files, aif for audio files.

Specific description

1. Collection of data sources (If you already have ethics approval and data sources, you may make special arrangements with the instructor. In any event, you need to have all the pieces with your assignment shown below.)
 - a. Record some televised event (Because it is public, no ethics approval is required)
 - b. Prepare a digitized version (320x240) (mov file)
 - c. Prepare a digitized audio file (aif)
2. Prepare a rough transcript
3. Prepare a transcript suitable for doing different forms of *discourse analysis*
4. Prepare a transcript suitable for doing *conversation analysis*
5. Prepare an ethnographic description
6. Conduct at least 2 forms of analyses that show you understand the method of discourse analysis
7. Conduct a conversation analysis
8. Prepare a report which contains the following elements
 - a. Introduction (bring the reader into the topic that you subsequently provide more data and understanding for)
 - b. Background (should contain some references to the literature on the kinds of phenomena your different analyses is revealing)
 - c. Methods section (provide details on the preparation of data sources and their analysis, as you would find it in good research journals, those listed in ISI Thompson Web of Science)
 - d. Results section (Here you will write [a] an ethnographic report [about 3 pages], [b] 2 different discourse analyses [content analysis, discourse], and [c] a conversation analysis.)
 - e. Discussion, conclusions, implications
 - f. Reflection (write about your experience of doing qualitative research for this assignment)
 - g. References
 - h. Appendices (video clip, full rough transcript, transcripts for discourse analytic purposes, full transcript for conversation analytic purposes [a few minutes, some 50 lines of transcript], any other relevant materials)

Collaborative Option

You may want to work with no more than one partner. If you choose to do a collaborative paper, the final product should provide evidence of the work of two people -- more data, double the amount of readings, more of everything. The advantage of collaborative work resides in the opportunities for critical analysis of your own work.

Evaluation

Scholarship is inherently difficult to evaluate -- a published article can be considered a published article. I therefore begin from the principle that all

students get an A-. A lower grade shall be assigned only if there is, for example, evidence that additional methodological and background readings have not been done, additional data have not been collected, writing is sloppy, APA style evidently not been followed, etc.

The grades A and A+ are reserved for exemplary and outstanding work, respectively (as per faculty evaluation policy). For example, to receive an A+, a student or student pair has to submit a paper that is at or near publishable quality. Similarly, to receive an A, the paper has to show clear promise to be, with further rounds of revisions, to come to or be near publishable quality.

A sample assignment submitted to a previous course is available online. (This particular paper was in fact subsequently published.)

Another sample assignment done by a six-student class was ultimately submitted for publication. You can see how the paper developed, its different versions, the reviewers' comments, and the final accepted version by following this link: [Senanus water problems](#).

For this assignment particularly, to achieve an A+, students have to show that they master one or more of such things as doing gesture analysis, producing video offprints, drawings, voice analysis.

Process

If you would like specific feedback, if you have questions, etc. please send request to mroth@uvic.ca and do not forget to attach your draft analyses (paper, texts) as WORD or rtf documents. If files are not in pdf format, then I generally convert them in such a format, mark up the file, and return to the student.

Additional Information

During the week of March 1–7, 2008, I am in Ottawa. SungWon Hwang assisted by Pei-Ling Hsu will lead the course.

On March 31, 2008, I am away. We recover the time in one of two ways: either go through each night without stop (students may eat as we go along) or we have a break and go 20 minutes longer, that is, until 7:50 P.M. rather than 7:30 P.M. This will be decided on the first night of class.