The Use of Mixed Methods in Educational and Social Scientific Research

EDLDR 597
Syllabus for Spring 2007
Penn State University

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Meeting Place and Time: 2:00-5:00, Tuesdays
409 Rackley Building

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Within the social sciences interest in and the use of mixed methods has grown dramatically in the last 10-15 years. Whereas it used to be regarded, at best, as something of an impractical oddity and at worst a paradigmatic contradiction in terms, it has now increasingly begun to enter the mainstream of methodological acceptability. That this class even exists, to some extent is a direct reflection of the emergence of mixed methods research practices into broader use -- as well as the many questions and debates that this has raised.

This course is not intended to be a research methods course per se, but rather an exploration of these philosophical, epistemological, disciplinary, and design-related debates in relation to the rapidly expanding use of mixed methodologies in educational and social scientific research. Designed principally as a graduate seminar in which students will take a major responsibility for guiding the class discussion, we will read and discuss multiple examples of mixed methods studies, in addition to examining broader critiques of and commentaries on mixed methodological approaches. In part using peer review procedures, students will have the opportunity to develop a mixed methods research proposal or a critical review of existing work.

In sum, this course is intended to introduce students to different mixed methods research approaches, consider the epistemological and paradigmatic implications of mixed method designs, and help students think about, design, conduct and/or critique mixed methods research within educational and other social scientific research.
PREREQUISITES

Students enrolling in this course should have taken at least 2 of 3 of the following graduate-level courses: 1) a qualitative methods course; 2) a quantitative methods course, and; 3) a research design course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Readings**: A rigorous selection of readings will guide our discussion. Successfully completing the course will mean carefully working through and engaging with these selections both inside and outside of class, through written work and classroom discussion. Be aware that we may make some adjustments to the reading selections over the course of the semester as necessary.

B. **Reading Responses**: Students should prepare a brief written response (1 page maximum, typed, single-spaced) to the week’s readings for six weeks (of the student’s choosing) out of the thirteen weeks in which readings are assigned. The written responses are due at the beginning of the class meeting in which the readings are discussed. I’ll return them the following week with brief comments.

C. **Final Paper**: A final paper will be due at the end of the class. The final paper should reflect work done over the course of the semester, should be 15-20 pages in length (double–spaced, not including tables, figures and bibliography), and may take one of the following forms:

   a. A research proposal incorporating the use of mixed methods. This may be a hypothetical proposal, or the formulation of an actual piece of research you hope to complete;
   b. A review of the (emerging) use of mixed methods in a particular field of study, around a particular set of research questions, and/or within a discipline;
   c. An alternative to the two options above, jointly agreed upon by the student and instructor.

Note that I would be open to collaborative papers if there is interest in approaching the assignment in that way. Many mixed methods studies are by necessity collaborative in nature, and so it seems appropriate to offer the same option for the final paper.

One-page paper proposals, along with a working bibliography, will be due in class on **March 6**. At that class, students will have the chance to discuss their proposals and receive reactions, feedback and suggestions. At that time I would also require for authors working collaboratively that they include a proposal on how their individual efforts are to be evaluated.
The last two classes will in large part be devoted to student presentations of final papers. Student presentations will be modeled around the presentation format typically used at professional meetings. Student will be responsible for making a brief presentation of their papers. We’ll discuss these assignments in greater depth later in the semester.

Final papers in their written form will be due on May 1st, one week after the last class meeting. I’d like a hard copy of the paper by 5 PM on the due date. Papers can be dropped off at my office or in my mailbox, 2nd floor Rackley.

GRADING

My complete assumption is that everyone to do very well in this course. However, I will use the following breakdown to determine final grades.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Response Papers (6 total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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READINGS

There are two books ordered for this course. One, Creswell & Plano Clark (2007), is required. The other, Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003), is strongly recommended.


Other readings are available online within the PSU electronic reserve system (denoted “ERS” in reading assignments below).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

http://www.npi.ucla.edu/qualquant/ (recommended annotated bibliography of sources to use when mixing methods)

http://obssr.od.nih.gov/Documents/Publications/Qualitative.PDF (a useful guide for proposal writing with a section dedicated to mixed methods projects)
http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/start.htm (guide for conducting mixed methods in evaluation, with good background information on mixing methods in social science research)

http://mmr.sagepub.com/ (website for the new Journal of Mixed Methods Research)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

This course will be conducted in accordance with the principles of the educational and social science research professions and the University’s Faculty Senate Policy 49-20 as articulated in the College of Education’s Academic Integrity Policy statement. “Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner, serving as a basic guiding principle for all academic activity. Academic integrity requires a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others” (from the College of Education Academic Integrity Policy, available at http://www.ed.psu.edu/edservices/certification/academic_integrity_policy.pdf). See also: http://www.ed.psu.edu/edservices/certification/academic_integ.htm

The basic principles of academic integrity require that we give credit where it is due and take no credit for ideas or written passages that are not our own. Incorporating the ideas and work of others into one’s own work is a perfectly acceptable and legitimate scholarly practice, provided that recognition is given to the sources of those ideas or passages. Academic integrity problems arise when such reliance on the work of others is not properly acknowledged. In short, we are bound to use references wherever and whenever they are appropriate to acknowledge that an idea or passage has been borrowed from another source.
CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

PART I. Paradigmatic Debates, and the Emergence of Mixed Methods

WEEK ONE
Jan. 16: Course Introduction: Why Mixed Methods?

WEEK TWO
Jan. 23: Into the Fray of “The Paradigm Wars”


Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2007). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks: Sage. [Chapter 1: Understanding mixed methods research (pp. 1-19); Chapter 2, Examining preliminary considerations (pp. 20-37)]


Suggested for further reading:


Kuhn, T.S. (1970). The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-42] (each chapter is a separate entry in the ERS)

WEEK THREE
Jan. 30: Into the Fray Part II, plus Classifying Mixed Method Design Types
Guest Speaker: Ian Baptiste, Associate Professor, Adult Education Program, Penn State


Suggested for further reading:


PART II. Prominent Mixed Methods Design Types

WEEK FOUR   Feb. 6: The Triangulation Design


**WEEK FIVE**

**Feb. 13: The Embedded Design**


*Suggested for further reading:*


**WEEK SIX**  
*Feb. 20: The Explanatory Design*


**Suggested for further reading:**


**WEEK SEVEN**  
*Feb. 27: The Exploratory Design*


**WEEK EIGHT**  
**March 6: Introducing and Writing Up Mixed Methods Research**

*In-class presentation of proposals & paper proposals*


*Suggested for further reading:*


*~ March 13: SPRING BREAK ~*

Deadline for Jason Bedford to provide any written materials for discussion on 3/20.
PART III. Analytical Considerations, Methodological Concerns, and Practical Applications in Mixed Methods Research

WEEK NINE  March 20: Data, Sampling, and Inferential Quality in Mixed Methods

Guest Speaker: Leland Glenna, Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Penn State

Focus on Student Work: Jason Bedford (reading TBA)

Deadline for Jon Schreiner to provide any written materials for discussion on 3/27.

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Suggested for further reading:


**WEEK TEN**

**March 27: The Political & Ethical Implications of Mixed Method Inquiry**

*Focus on Student Work: Jon Sheider* (reading TBA)

Deadline for **Eric Jensen** to provide any written materials for discussion on 4/3.

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[class exercise: using software for collaborative qualitative data coding]

*Suggested for further reading:*

**WEEK ELEVEN**

**April 3: Longitudinal Approaches to Mixed Methods Studies**

*Focus on Student Work: Eric Jensen* (reading TBA)

Deadline for Ashley Frost to provide any written materials for discussion on 4/10.

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*Suggested for further reading:*


**WEEK TWELVE**

**April 10: Applications Across Disciplines (Part 1) -- Geographic and Demographic Approaches (AERA)**

*Focus on Student Work: Ashley Frost* (reading TBA)

Deadline for Mary Ann Demi and Alisha Coleman to provide any written materials for discussion on 3/20.
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Suggested for further reading:


WEEK THIRTEEN

**April 17: Applications Across Disciplines (Part 2) -- Mixed Methods in Evaluation Research**

Guest Speaker: Hobart Harmon, Ph.D., Educational Researcher and Consultant, and Adjunct Professor of Education, Penn State

Focus on Student Work: Mary Ann Demi, Alisha Coleman (reading TBA)

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*Suggested for further reading:*


**PART IV. Future Directions for Mixed Method Research & Course Wrap-Up**

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

**April 24: Bringing it All Together & Final Paper Presentations**


*Suggested for further reading:*

[Chapter 10, Future directions for mixed methods research (pp. 184-192)]

WEEK FIFTEEN

May 1: Final Paper Presentations & Course Wrap-Up