"If all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail."

**Course Description and Goals:**

This course is specifically designed for advanced graduate students pursuing the doctoral program of studies in higher education. It offers an introduction to alternative paradigms of inquiry and research in higher education, with a particular focus on the tenets and methods of emergent, constructivist research. The processes of framing qualitative questions, designing appropriate methodologies, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data will be considered and applied in the context of problems and practices encountered in post secondary education.

Toward that end, course readings and assignments are designed to promote an understanding of the:

2. Assumptions and tenets of Emergent, Constructivist inquiry.
3. Nature of questions served by Constructivist qualitative methods.
4. Applications of Constructivist research designs and techniques.
6. Ethical and political issues associated with Constructivist inquiry.

**Requested Reading:** (....if you want to be smart.)


Internet Resources:

There are many listservs and websites that focus on various aspects and traditions of qualitative research. I recommend subscription to a broad-based listserv such as the one referenced here:

QUALRS-L@uga.cc.uga.edu: Qualitative Research for the Human Sciences; to subscribe, send this message to listserv@uga.cc.uga.edu: subscribe qualrs-l <your name>
For help contact Judith Preissle, jude@uga.cc.uga.edu

Course Assignments: (...if you want to show me how smart you are.)

Students will be expected to attend all classes, to read carefully and be prepared to discuss assigned readings relevant to the topics under consideration. A final course grade will be given upon timely completion of the following assignments: (Individual assignments submitted after the due date will be adjusted for credit toward the final course grade.)

a.) A report from the pilot observation experience using qualitative research techniques - due Sept. 6 (5%).

b.) Three selected, annotated reviews and critiques (3 - 5 pages each) of empirical research articles employing qualitative research methodologies – due Sept. 27, Oct. 18, Nov. 1 (5% each x 3 = 15%).

c.) An eight-to-ten page reflective essay highlighting the challenges, transformations, or adjustments to your thinking that have occurred on your intellectual and experiential journey through constructivist qualitative research this semester - due Nov. 29. (20%).

d.) A final case report employing data from interviews and at least one other method of qualitative data collection -- observation or document analysis - due Dec. 6 (25%).

e.) A case study field log containing the data (i.e., transcripts, observations) and reflections or insights related to your research case and course learnings - due Dec. 6 (25%).

f.) Active participation and contribution to class discussion groups, reflecting familiarity with the assigned readings - due every class (10%). Earning credit for this toward the final course grade necessitates attending and contributing to class discussions. More than two absences will diminish this credit.

NOTE: A grade of "Incomplete" is warranted only under unusual or extenuating circumstances. Any assignments received after December 6 cannot be considered in the computation of a final course grade, unless prior and explicit arrangements for a specific time extension or an Incomplete are negotiated. Please adhere to this professional courtesy.
A *guide* to what you might hear when you call this number (419-354-1000):

1. "**Hello...**" (polite and welcoming) - That's Dorothyann, my spouse of 32 years (our marriage, not her age!). She doesn't mind you calling me at home and is happy to find me or take a message. Don’t be surprised if she invites you over for dinner and a movie with us. Any tips for adjusting to an empty nest would be greatly appreciated.

2. "**Assalому Алікumu. Менин исмим, Юлія. Ісминиз нима?**." – (Simply state your name at this point). - That's a recording of Julia, my 26-year-old. A returned Peace Corps volunteer (Uzbekistan, 2003-2005), where her functional language was Uzbek, she now works in Washington, DC, for the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, and volunteers as a victim advocate for the DC police.

3. "**Lance Corporal Strange reporting, Sir!**" - That's Martin, my 23-year-old Marine Corps son (who just returned safely from a deployment to Iraq). Respond: “At ease, Marine.” He's lost a few social graces while living in desert khakis and swallowing MREs (meals ready-to-eat) for the past eight months. Once he understands that you don’t answer to the title, “Sergeant,” he will loosen-up a bit. Welcome him home.

4. "**Hey, What's-up?!**" - That's Clare, my 19-year-old, “I-am-independent-and-out-of-the-house-except-when-I-have-to-do-laundry” daughter. She's a Social Work (Social Life?) major, with a minor in Spanish, at BGSU and runs the campus student employment office in between academics and domestic violence volunteer work with the Bowling Green Behavioral Connections Office. She will be happy to offer an unsolicited critique of my limited qualities most any time.
### HIED 751: Qualitative Problems and Methods in Higher Education - Fall, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topical Outline and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>August 23</td>
<td>…if you want to see how smart others are.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Course Introductions, Objectives, Requirements</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Eatin' A Peg-Leg Pig&quot; and “Catchin’ Twice as Many”</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>Theories, Traditions, and Methodologies</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>&quot;Any News?&quot;</td>
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<td>[Read:]</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Ely, et al. Doing qualitative research:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Circles within circles</em> (pp. 1-39)</td>
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<td><strong>Jones, et al. Negotiating the Complexities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(pp. 1-61)</td>
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<td><strong>Creswell. Qualitative Inquiry</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(pp. 53-84)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(pp. 42-79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>September 6</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods (Generating Data)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>&quot;Let's Go Get Us a Drink!&quot;; &quot;How Do We Get To It?!&quot;; &quot;I Wanted Mustard on Mine!&quot;; “Write It Down, Dummy!”</td>
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<td><strong>Pilot Data &amp; Report due</strong></td>
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<td>[Read:]</td>
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<td><strong>Ely, et al. Doing qualitative research:</strong></td>
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<td><em>Circles within circles</em> (pp. 41-137)</td>
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<td>(pp. 20-41, 80-110)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Of Purviews and Paradigms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Napoleon Crossing the Rockies&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>Case Study Problem Statement Abstract due</strong></td>
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<td>[Read:]</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Lincoln &amp; Guba. Naturalistic inquiry</strong> (pp. 14-69). [BB]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(pp. ix-xv, 1-19)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Creswell. Qualitative Inquiry</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(pp. 15-34)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Five
September 20
Conventional vs. Emergent Models of Inquiry
"Speaking Algebra at the Corner Store";
“He Didn’t Look Good”

[Read:]
Guba & Lincoln. Fourth generation evaluation
(pp. 79-116, 156-183) [BB]

Six
September 27
Techniques and Methods

1st Article Critique due

Seven
October 4
NO CLASS (Fall Mini-Break)

[Read:]
Jones, et al. Negotiating the Complexities
Creswell. Qualitative Inquiry
[Use the above two texts to familiarize yourself
with two different traditions of qualitative
research.]

Eight
October 11
Constructivist Inquiry
"Brother Ain’t Never Seen a Train Wreck",
or "They Hit ‘Bout the Same Time!"

[Read:]
Lincoln & Guba. Naturalistic inquiry (pp. 221-288). [BB]

Nine
October 18
Qualitative Methods
"Describing a Cow"; “We Call It Bill”

2nd Article Critique due

[Read:]
Ely, et al. Doing qualitative research:
Circles within circles (pp. 139-178)

methods (pp. 111-130, 163-176)

Lincoln & Guba. Naturalistic inquiry (pp. 332-381) [BB]
Ten
October 25

Quality Control - Authenticity & Trustworthiness
"It Might Be Taller Than It Is Long"
“A Pickup Like That”

[Read:]
Lincoln & Guba. Naturalistic inquiry (pp. 289-331) [BB]

Guba & Lincoln. Fourth generation evaluation
(pp. 228-251) [BB]

Erlandson, et al. Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods (pp. 131-162)

Jones, et al. Negotiating the Complexities (pp. 117-134)

Eleven
November 1

Ethics & Politics of Inquiry
"Four Years in the Legislature"

3rd Article Critique

[Read:]
Guba & Lincoln. Fourth generation evaluation
(pp. 117-141) [BB]

Magolda & Weems. Doing harm: An unintended consequence of qualitative inquiry? (pp. 490-507) [BB]

Jones, et al. Negotiating the Complexities (pp. 153-173)

Twelve
November 8

Qualitative Proposals
"The Dog Ate the Sermon"

Thirteen
November 15

NO CLASS

[Read:]
Jones, et al. Negotiating the Complexities
Creswell. Qualitative Inquiry
[Use the above two texts to familiarize yourself with two additional traditions of qualitative research.]

Fourteen
November 22

NO CLASS (American Thanksgiving Holiday)
Fifteen  November 29
Applications I
Reflective Essay Due

Sixteen  December 6
Applications II
Final Case Report and Field Log Due

Seventeen  December 13
Reflections and Conclusions
"Whoa, Jack, I Think I’ll Surprise Maggie Tonight”
“Crunchy Granola and the Hegemony of the Narrative”; “The Qualitative Research Blues”

[Read:]
Ely, et al. *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles* (pp. 179-232)

Jones, et al. *Negotiating the Complexities* (pp. 175-191)

Plan your holiday shopping list here:

1. Carney -
2. SO, Partner, Spouse -
3. Family members -
4. Family pets -
5. Close relatives -
6. Lost relatives -
7. Unheard-of-relatives -
8. Former teachers -
9. People you met yesterday –
10. Extra gift for Carney –
HIED 751: Qualitative Problems and Methods in Higher Education - Fall, 2007

A Suggested Schedule for Those Who Want to Show Me How Smart They Are On Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Assignments/Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>Show up at class, look at the syllabus, and declare: &quot;This course is a piece of cake. All we do is talk to people and write it up!&quot; Browse through course books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Conduct pilot interview and observation. Transcribe pilot interview. Write pilot interview report. Reconsider first impressions of the course and conclude: &quot;Maybe I'll have to work at this a bit....&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Reconsider impressions once again: &quot;Maybe I'll just have to work at this a whole bunch!&quot; Identify case study topic and draft abstract. Keep current with readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Confirm case study topic. Organize case study field log. Prepare for first interview. Do assigned readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Conduct first interview and transcribe tape.</td>
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<td>Week Six</td>
<td>Analyze data from first interview. Update field log. Read, review, and submit 1st article critique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Seven</td>
<td>Catch-up on this and other courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Eight</td>
<td>Conduct second interview. Update field log and ask a colleague to review it. &quot;Am I doin' this right or what?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Nine</td>
<td>Transcribe second interview tape Read, review, and submit 2nd article critique. Continue revision and analysis of data, incorporating information from second interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Ten</td>
<td>Stay current with field log. Write first draft of case construction.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Week Eleven  Read, review, and submit 3rd article critique.

Week Twelve  Conduct third interview
              Transcribe tape
              Listen to and identify any additional themes

Week Thirteen  Draft reflective essay
               Update field log

Week Fourteen  Stuff yourself with turkey. Rest and relax
               ( . . . in between refining your reflective essay)

Week Fifteen  Draft case report and conduct member check.
               Revise case report incorporating results
               of member check.
               Complete final draft of case report
               and organize field log materials.
               Hand-in Reflective Essay and say: “Think about this!”

Week Sixteen  Submit final case report and field log, and say:
               "Strange, this is the best damn case report you'll never read!!"

Week Seventeen  Declare victory and sing: "I've Got a Case of the
                Qualitative Research Blues."
               Collapse and take a well-deserved break
               (after class is over).
A Sampling of Published Qualitative Research:
(...if you want to see some exemplars of what some smart people have done.)

Consult course materials on Blackboard for a sampling of published research using qualitative methods in recent issues of a range of educational journals. You may wish to review some of these or add to the list yourself. I think you'll find these interesting examples (not all good though); however, they will give you a good exposure to how qualitative research results are necessarily compressed into the standard professional journal format limitations. You don't exactly get "thick description," but it does give you an idea about how to present such research.

A Few (and hopefully helpful) Notes on Course Assignments

Pilot Observation Experience: The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to "get your feet wet" in qualitative research methods (interview, observation, and document analysis) before you start "swimming through" your case study. This task involves interviewing a faculty member, administrator, or student (whom you do not already know) in her or his office (in the case of a faculty member or administrator) or residence/room (in the case of a student) for purposes of finding out about them as individuals. The focus should be on who this person is, what sort of style he or she has, and what is important to him or her. Conduct an interview (about 30 minutes) around some general questions that will yield such information. Take note to observe the various artifacts and symbols often placed in conspicuous spots around the office or room as an expression of themselves. You might use one or two of these objects as a means for probing and understanding what this person values. In the case of a faculty member or administrator a current resume might lend itself to some helpful document analysis or, in the case of a student, possibly a completed paper or assignment might suffice.

Steps for completing this assignment include: (a) contact a willing interviewee; (b) inform that person of the purpose of this assignment (i.e., "to become initiated to the techniques of qualitative research") and secure signed, informed consent (c) conduct the interview-observation session; (d) assemble acquired data (interview transcripts and observation field notes); (e) complete a mini-case report (no more than five pages) with the purpose of giving the reader a vicarious experience of this person (i.e., seeing the world through this individual's eyes); (f) hand in your mini-case report attached to the interview transcript and any field observation notes.

Case Study: This assignment is designed to give you a significant and manageable experience in the techniques of constructivist qualitative research. It should be viewed as an "intensive probe in some limited context with some limited focus in mind in order to construct and communicate an emic (insider's) view of some situation or circumstance" (Egon Guba, 1988, class notes). For example, within the context of higher education: What is it like to return to school as an adult learner after a long absence? What is the experience of being a female faculty member in a traditionally male-dominated field? What is it like being an interim department chair? What is it like pursuing graduate studies in a second language? The final case report should present one person's constructions of the problem.

As you proceed with this case study, please attend to the following:
Focus: Select a focus - something problematic - for the study so that you have some basis for deciding what is relevant or irrelevant to it. This focus (for example, one of the questions above) might change and probably will evolve as you proceed, but you must have something to guide your initial efforts. Please prepare a short proposal for your case study to be turned in on the designated date. The proposal should indicate what you are going to do, why you want to do it, and how you think you will do it. The focus of the inquiry should be clearly stated (the problem you will look into). My interest in seeing a proposal before giving final consent to go ahead is to be reasonably sure that it is of manageable proportions, will not pose unusual methodological problems for you, and will put no one at risk. Your proposal abstract will be reviewed in class on the appropriate day.

Form: This case study will result in three written products: (a) transcripts of your three interviews; (b) your case study field log containing observations, insights, methodological descriptions, reflective comments, and analyses related to your project; and (c) a final case report presenting an *emic* view of your participant. The field log should present an accurate chronology of what you did and why, as well as a sequence of your judgments, insights, and reflective constructions of the inquiry process itself (see notes on Field Logs). The case report should be written in a fairly "novelesque" format; your effort should be directed toward giving the reader a vicarious experience. Do not strive for generalization but for understanding of that unique situation.

Trustworthiness/Authenticity: You must be able to demonstrate the trustworthiness and authenticity of your study. We will discuss many of these techniques in class although some of them will be impossible for you to do given the constraints under which you will be operating. You must, however, provide evidence of member checks, debriefings, and leave an audit trail.

Ethics: You must have fully informed consent of the participant in writing. Please use pseudonyms for all persons, organizations, and places.

Procedures: You may use any of the procedures discussed in class, but your case must include some interviewing and some field observations. These activities must be carefully and explicitly documented in the field log.

Tools of the Trade: I would highly recommend the use of a small, hand-held tape recorder for managing your interviews. This will allow you to present an accurate transcription of field observations and also free you up to make other observation notes. There are a number of inexpensive digital recorders on the market now, allowing you to download a sound file directly to a computer and use the keyboard to manage text while you prepare the transcript. Other than this, a good set of eyes and ears (you might have both checked out if there's any doubt), a field log book, and plenty of notepaper and pencils completes the equipment needed for conducting this kind of research.

Research Article Critiques: The more you are exposed to products of qualitative research the more you begin to understand its tenets and characteristics of quality. These 3-5 page critiques are designed to get you to "rummage" through the literature and to assess others' attempts at breaking into the circles of scholarship with a methodology that generally defies the parameters of "normal science" in higher education research. There is a growing number of such articles beginning to appear in our literature in recent years. You might spend some time paging through recent issues, for examples, from the Journal
of Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Change, Journal of College Student Development, American Educational Research Association Journal, and others related to the field. Each critique should accomplish two tasks: (a) provide a brief summary abstract of the study itself; and (b) offer your impressions and reactions to the study focusing on a review of the methodology and techniques reported, within the context of your growing understanding of qualitative research. Of these two parts, the latter is clearly the more important and should be given the most attention.

**Reflective Essay:** This may be one of the most significant products of the course. The materials we will examine and the class time we will spend together will hopefully challenge you to examine some of your own fundamental assumptions about the nature of inquiry and your notions of "good research." Developing a capacity for **reflexivity** is critical to succeeding at this type of inquiry. This essay asks you to capture those insights in a summative form as you come to terms with its various challenges. I am not expecting this essay to be a "testament of conversion" but rather an analysis of and conclusion to the intellectual and experiential journey you will have traversed this semester in the context of this course. I would highly recommend that you chronicle this journey by **documenting in your log** reflective notes as they occur to you, presumably at least after each class and at significant points in your readings. When you want to "speak to yourself," take the time to do so in your log, so that when you arrive at your destiny (wherever that may be) you will be able to retrace your steps and see the route, with all its twists and turns, that brought you to your current construction of inquiry. It's that construction of inquiry (always subject to change of course) that I'm looking for in this reflective essay at the end of the course. In it you may wish to declare challenges, conclusions, insights, objections, ambiguities, and perhaps even confusion about various points you have wrestled with over the course of your journey.

**Class Participation:** Needless to say, class participation is a must in this type of course. I expect you to arrive (on-time) having read the assigned materials and prepared to discuss and **challenge** them with your fellow inquirers (including me, who is on the same journey as you – to better understand the world around us!). We will also make frequent use of "qualitative support groups" during some class periods to examine the progress of your thinking as well as to share and receive feedback on the unfolding of your case study and other course assignments. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) alerts us to a dynamic of understanding, that "as the circle of knowledge increases, so too does the perimeter of ignorance." Our goal is to arrive at a respectful and profound sense of our own perimeter of ignorance about qualitative research in the company of friends. I expect that we all will have enjoyed each others' company as well as ideas by the end of this semester.

**Note:** I am forever indebted to Egon Guba, Professor Emeritus, Indiana University (and now retired in College Station, Texas) for the liberal use of his course notes in constructing some of these comments. I am sincerely grateful for having had the opportunity, in the fall of 1988, to participate in his naturalistic research seminar at Indiana University and to see the world through his eyes. His was a perspective I had not theretofore considered seriously. I haven't been the same since and I view things very differently now, due much to his insight and inspiration.