

## QUALITATIVE INQUIRY (QI) RESEARCH SPECIALIZATION STATEMENT OF FOCUS & REQUIREMENTS

### FOCUS AND PURPOSE

The field of qualitative inquiry in education (also spoken of as ethnography, qualitative field study, case study, naturalistic inquiry, and interpretive inquiry) is extremely rich and diverse and encompasses several different versions of its aim and methods as influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology, the *Verstehen* tradition in sociology (including symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, ethnomusicology, the ethnography of communication, and other types of micro-ethnography), the ethnographic tradition in cultural anthropology and fieldwork sociology, and notions of educational connoisseurship and criticism. In addition, ideas drawn from philosophical hermeneutics, social constructionism, postmodern theory, feminist theory, and critical theory of society shape conceptions of qualitative inquiry as a way of studying the social world.

Some forms of qualitative inquiry involve empirical investigation of the social world by means of field study or fieldwork employing the approach of participant observation. Qualitative inquiry as field study emphasizes observation *in situ*—that is, learning by means of a (relatively) sustained presence in a situation or setting and observing the goings-on there. Moreover, participant observation is not merely a methodology but an epistemology: the inquirer-as-fieldworker assumes that immersion in, intimate familiarity with, or empathetic participation in the human action that he or she studies is necessary for grasping, understanding, and eventually portraying the meaning of social action. Not all qualitative studies, however, are fieldwork in this traditional sense (in fact some contemporary forms of qualitative inquiry are actually quite critical of the traditional approach to fieldwork as participant observation). Some qualitative studies employ life history methodologies, examine the constitution and meaning of cultural artifacts, or focus on the constitution and operation of various discourse practices.

Frameworks for qualitative research acquire a particular purchase when used to explore educational matters—for example, in examining the intersection of language, culture, and schooling; the relationship between schools and their communities; the formation and enactment of school and curricular reform and other policy initiatives, and so on. Therefore, students aiming to develop a special focus in qualitative inquiry *must seek out opportunities beyond the specialization in methodology* in which they explore the use of qualitative inquiry in investigating substantive issues in their particular field of interest (e.g., curriculum design, educational policy, language education, higher education, adolescent development).

The Qualitative Inquiry specialization (QI) is intended to help students prepare themselves in the broad arena of the epistemologies, methodologies, and methods comprising qualitative inquiry.

The QI specialization is intended to help students develop:

1. Competence in understanding and addressing methodological, epistemological, ethical, and political issues that cut across the field of qualitative inquiry (and across all of social science inquiry, more generally).
2. Competence in multiple means of generating, interpreting, and reporting qualitative data.
3. Competence in locating/situating/linking the understandings and skills comprising (1) and (2) within an interpretive frame of reference (cultural anthropology; traditional naturalistic, *Verstehen* sociology; feminist epistemology; post-structural theory; critical theory of society, etc.).

## REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Prior to beginning the QI specialization, students must seek out opportunities to develop a general understanding of issues and methodologies in educational research. This can be accomplished in many ways—for example, a student might enroll in CI 550, EPSY 573, SPED 550, EPS 515, or HRE 580.

*In addition to this initial understanding of educational research, a student must take 12 hours in the QI specialization. Please note that the specialization is viewed as an orienting framework. The number of hours required to meet the research specialization are considered the minimum for any graduate student who seeks to develop this specialization. A graduate student in consultation with her/his advisor should plan the specialization and advice may be solicited from members of the QI research specialization committee.*

Students should plan a sequence of courses that includes the following:

1. Introductory coursework that provides an overview of shared epistemological, methodological, ethical, and political issues that are engaged in various ways by different approaches to qualitative inquiry.
2. Coursework in the use of methods of generating and interpreting qualitative data via interviewing, observation, text analysis, and so on depending on the student's special methods interests.
3. More specialized/advanced coursework that focuses on particular varieties and applications of qualitative inquiry.

A list of courses in these three categories is provided below.

Successful completion of the QI research specialization requires that students follow a two-stage process:

### **Stage 1 - Preliminary Plan**

Before the completion of their third semester of graduate-level coursework, students must submit a preliminary written plan (1-2 typed pages) that explains the following:

1. The manner in which the student met the requirement for acquiring a broad understanding of issues in educational research methodologies;
2. The student's objectives in developing the QI specialization; and,
3. The coursework that the student plans to take to meet the 12-hour requirement and coursework that the student plans to take beyond the minimum requirement.

This plan should be developed by the student in consultation with her/his advisors (and with the assistance, where needed, of members of the QI research specialization committee). Three hard copies of the plan should be submitted to the QI research specialization committee for approval.

### **Stage 2 - Completed Plan**

Prior to taking the preliminary oral examination, a student must submit to the QI research specialization committee a completed plan in which the student *provides an argument and supporting evidence* demonstrating how the QI research specialization that he/she developed meets the following criteria:

1. Broad competence in understanding and addressing epistemological, methodological, ethical, and political issues that cut across the field of qualitative inquiry (and across all of social science inquiry, more generally).
2. Competence in multiple means of generating and interpreting qualitative data.
3. Competence in locating/situating/linking the understandings and skills comprising (1) and (2) within an interpretive frame of reference (e.g., feminist epistemology; traditional naturalistic, Verstehen sociology; post-structuralist theory, critical theory of society).

*The completed plan should consist of two parts:*

**Part One** is the written argument (5-6 pages typed) explaining how the three criteria listed above have been met.

**Part Two** is an appendix, which contains various kinds of evidence that the student provides to support the argument in Part One. Appropriate evidence that might be used includes a description (not simply a list) of courses taken and grades received, description of course projects involving empirical studies and/or analyses and critiques of methodologies, an annotated bibliography of relevant

books that were studied, pilot studies undertaken in preparation for the dissertation, description of empirical work undertaken as part of an assistantship, and so on. Part Two is limited to a maximum of 25 pages and the various kinds of evidence presented in Part Two should be referenced in the written argument. Students should expect that the QI specialization committee would require at least 30 days evaluating a completed plan.

## **COURSEWORK**

Courses appropriate for use in the QI specialization are listed below. Please note that this is not a list of the only courses a student might choose to meet the minimum course requirement. Other courses may be used subject to the approval of the QI specialization committee. If a student is considering using a course not on this list, the student's plan for completion of the specialization should include an argument for why the course should be used and include a copy of the syllabus. The courses listed below do not always neatly fit within a single category of the three-fold typology shown here, but this list reflects the primary emphasis of each course.

### **1. Introductory coursework**

EPSY 577	Foundations of Qual Methods
CI 509, Section QMR	Qualitative Methods in Research

### **2. Course work in methods**

EPSY 578	Qualitative Inquiry Methods (note: EPSY 577, CI 509, Section QMR or, consent of instructor is a prerequisite)
CI 509, Section AR	Action Research
CI 519	Methods of Child Study
CI 580	Qualitative Methods in Language & Literacy
EPSY 490, Section E	Case Sty Res Methods
ANTH 411	Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: Theory and Method
SOC 586	Field and Qualitative Methods
HCD 591	Qualitative Methods

### **3. Specialized/advanced courses**

ANTH 464/SOC 482	Ethnography of Local Cultures
ANTH 508	Theory and Ethnography in Feminist Anthropology
COMM 590/SPCM 538	Methods of Critical, Cultural Analysis
KIN 442/GWS 442	Body, Culture, and Society
SOC/COMM 580	Advanced Interpretive Methods
MUS/ANTH 523	Ethnomusicology and Improvisation
MUS/ANTH 523B	Social Theory and Problems in North American Ethnomusicology
CI 562	Linguistics and the School Curriculum

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**Note:** The following courses are suitable as well; the committee anticipates that these courses will be given permanent course numbers:

For advanced doctoral students:

CI 590	Advanced Issues in Qualitative Research (instructor permission);
CI 590	Research in progress

The committee anticipates that the following courses will be submitted with permanent course numbers:

EPS 590	Topic: Qualitative Research Writing & Analysis
CI 590 QRI	Qualitative Research in International Settings
CI 590	Qualitative Data Analysis