

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH METHODS: WORKING WITH THEORY

Dr. Will Brehm

Course Description

This course is designed to assist graduate students in developing diverse skills in qualitative data collection and analysis, primarily focused on education. The course is split into three sections. In the first section of the course, we will discuss different qualitative approaches to data collection. In the second section of the course, we will problematize the concept and practice of methods and introduce the value and use of theory. In the last section of the course, we will put into practice different theoretical lenses.

To work through the interconnections between methods and theory, students will conduct small research studies in groups. The goal of these research projects is to provide students hands-on experience with qualitative data collection and analysis.

Please note, the course syllabus might be adjusted based on students and instructor's emerging needs. Students carry the ultimate responsibility for their learning and class preparation.

This course will enable students to:

- Develop an understanding of qualitative methodology and theory;
- Explore different ways to conceptualize, adapt, and approach qualitative data analysis processes;
- Participate in small research projects; and
- Utilize theoretical concepts.

Mode of Instruction

The primary format for this course is a participatory seminar. Members of the seminar will be asked to read weekly materials and come to class prepared to discuss them. Class discussion, readings, presentations, and written assignments will be used. Students will have to conduct a small research study in groups. Although these groups will sometimes work together in class, it is expected that the groups will work outside of class.

Grading and assignments

Participation and Group Lecture (20%) - Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, ask questions about the readings, and engage your peers in informed discussion about the assigned readings/topic. Active participation in class discussions that reflect an understanding and synthesis of assigned readings is the goal. Come prepared with notes and questions from the readings. In addition, each group will be required to give one lecture during the course.

Class Notes (13%) – For 13 out of 15 weeks, you will have to hand in typed notes on the assigned

readings. These notes should be general reflections about the week's readings. What were the main points of the reading? Was there anything you did not understand? How do the readings inform your group research project? You will use the notes in class discuss and during in-class group work. These assignments must be submitted at the of class on designated weeks.

Research Group Assignment #1: Research Plan and Questions (15%) – During week 3 of the course (October 16th), each group will have to give a 10-15-minute presentation on its research plan and questions. The general theme of research is “teaching and learning at Waseda University.” This presentation will ensure each group is ready to plan data collection in subsequent weeks. The actual assignment to be turned in is (1) the PowerPoint presentation given in class and (2) a two-page summary of the research plan and questions.

Research Group Assignment #2: Findings (15%) – During week 11 of the course (January 15th), each group will have to give a 10-15-minute presentation on its initial findings. This presentation should cover (1) exact research techniques employed (e.g., how many interviews did your group conduct?), (2) details of data collected, (3) initial findings, and (4) lessons learned. The actual assignment to be turned in is (1) the PowerPoint presentation given in class and (2) a four-page summary of the data collection process.

Research Group Assignment #3: Theory (15%) – During week 15 (February 5th) of the course, each group will have to give a 10-15-minute presentation on data analysis. This presentation should detail (1) which analysis approach was used, (2) why, (3) the results of the analysis, and (4) lessons learned. The actual assignment to be turned in is (1) the PowerPoint presentation given in class and (2) a four-page summary of the data analysis process.

Individual Reflection Essay (22%) – By February 12th, students must electronically submit a 10-page (double-spaced) reflection essay. Students must individually reflect on the small research project they conducted. What did you learn? Which approach or technique was most valuable? Which was least valuable? If you could do the project again, what would you do differently? This essay is a chance for students to connect their research project to the literature read throughout the course, as well as think about how to apply the lessons learned in future studies.

Course Materials

All material is available electronically: <http://www.willbrehm.com/teaching/waseda/education-research-methods/>

Password: [methodwiththeory](#)

Course Outline

Class 1: Introduction (Monday, October 2)

Lecture: What is method? What is theory?
In Class Group Work: Brainstorm research topics

Podcast:

- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/tompopkewitz/>

Section 1: Qualitative Research Approaches

Class 2: Different approaches to research (Monday, October 9)

Lecture: Planning Your Research

Group Work: Finalize Research Questions

Readings:

- Kane, E. (1995). [Seeing for yourself. Research Handbook for girls' education in Africa](#). World Bank (pages 15-92).
- O'Donoghue, T. (2007). *Planning your qualitative research project: An introduction to interpretivist research in education*. Routledge. (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Assignment due in class: Class note on reading (1 page)

Class 3: Qualitative Research Ethics (Monday, October 23)

Lecture: Qualitative Research Ethics

Group presentations: Research questions [Research Group Assignment # 1 due]

Readings:

- Howe, K. & Moses, M. (1999). [Ethics in educational research](#). *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 21-60.
- Anfara, V. A., Jr., Brown, K. M., & Mangione, T. L. (2002). [Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public](#). *Educational Researcher*, 31(7), 28-38.

Assignment due: Class note on reading (1 page)

Class 4: Research Techniques (Monday, October 30)

Lecture: Research techniques overview – Interviews, observations, surveys, focus groups, and field notes

Group Work: Brainstorm research techniques

Reading:

- Kane, E. (1995). *Seeing for yourself. Research Handbook for girls' education in Africa*. World Bank (Pages 95-188)
- O'Donoghue, T. (2007). *Planning your qualitative research project: An introduction to interpretivist research in education*. Routledge. (Chapters 5 and 6)

Assignment due: Class note on reading (1 page)

Class 5: Comparative Case Study Approach (Monday, November 6)

Group Lecture on readings

Group Work: Finalize data collection tools

Reading:

- Bartlett, L., and Vavrus, F. (2017). *Rethinking Case Study Research: A comparative Approach*. Routledge (Chapters 1, 2, and 6).

Assignment due: Class note on reading (1 page)

Podcast:

- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/vavrus-bartlett/>

Class 6: Ethnographies new and old (Monday, November 13)

Group Lecture on readings

Readings:

- Masemann, V. L. (1982). Critical ethnography in the study of comparative education. *Comparative Education Review*, 26(1), 1-15.
- Kenway, J. (2015). "Ethnography 'is not what it used to be': Rethinking space, time, mobility, and multiplicity." In Bolling, S., Honig, M.S., Neumann, S., and Sele, C. (Eds). *Multipluritrans in Educational Ethnography: Approaching the multimodality, plurality and translocality of educational realities* (pp. 37-55). Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag

Recommended readings:

- Tsing, A. (2005). *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (pages 1-80)
- Kenway, J., Fahey, J. Epstein, D. Koh, A., McCarthy, C. and Rizvi, F. (2017). *Class Choreographies: Elite Schools and Globalization*. Palgrave. (pages 1-48)

Assignment due: Class note on reading (1 page)

Podcasts:

- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/janekenway/>
- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/debbieepstein/>

Out of Class Group work: Data Collection

Class 7: Visual methodologies and semiotics (Monday, November 20)

Group Lecture on readings

Readings:

- Magno, C. & Kirk, J. (2008). Imaging girls: Visual methodologies and messages for girls' education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, 38(3), 349-362.
- Fahey, J., Prosser, H. and Shaw, M. (2015). *In the realm of the senses: Social aesthetics and the sensory dynamics of privilege*. Springer. (Pages 1-26)
- Shank, G. (1995). Semiotics and qualitative research in education: The third crossroad. *The qualitative report*, 2(3).
- Rogers, R. (2017). Critical Discourse Analysis in Education. *Discourse and education, encyclopedia of language and education*.

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Podcast:

<http://www.freshedpodcast.com/howardprosser/>

Out of Class Group work: Data Collection

Section 2: Brining in Theory

Class 8: Data analysis after method (Monday, November 27)

Lecture: What is analysis?

Readings:

- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage. (Pages 1-31)
- Law, J. (2004) *After method: mess in social science research*. (pp. 1-17, 157-164) London: Routledge.

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Out of Class Group work: Data Collection

Class 9: Southern Theory (Monday, December 4)

Lecture: Bringing in theory; looking beyond the West

Reading:

- Connell, R.W. (2007). *Southern Theory: Social Science and the global dynamics of knowledge*. Allen & Unwin. (Pages 87-192)

Podcast:

- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/raewynconnell/>

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Out of Class Group work: Data Collection

Class 10: Asia as Method (Monday, December 18)

Lecture: Asia as Method?

Reading:

- Zhang, H., Chan, P.W.K, Kenway, J. (2015). *Asia as method in Education studies: a defiant research imagination*. Routledge. (Introduction, chapters 1 and 2)

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Class 11: Decolonizing methodology (Monday, January 15)

Lecture: Different ontologies?

Group presentations: Initial Findings [Research Group Assignment # 2]

Reading:

- Smith, L.T. (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. Zed Books. (Chapters 1,2, 7, 10)

Podcast:

- <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/arathisriprakash/>

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Section 3: Qualitative Research Analysis

Class 12: Working with Theory – Knowledge/Power (Monday, January 22)

In class group workshop: Analyzing your data based on the readings

Readings:

- Dussel, I. (2010). “Foucault and education.” *In The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education*. (pages 27-36)
- Said, E.W. (1978). The problem with textuality: Two exemplary positions. *Critical Inquiry*, 4(4), 673-714.
- Fejes, A. (2008). What’s the use of Foucault in research on lifelong learning and post-compulsory education? A review of four academic journals. *Studies in the education of adults*, 40(1).

Recommended reading:

- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of knowledge & the discourse of language*. Pantheon Books. (pages 3-77).

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Class 13: Working with Theory – Political Economy (Monday, January 29)

In class group workshop: Analyzing your data based on the readings

Readings:

- Johnson, R. (1982). “Reading for the best Marx: History-writing and historical abstraction.” *In Making Histories: Studies in History-writing and politics*. Hutchinson. (pages 153-201)
- Harvey, D. (2014). *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. Profile Books. (Prologue and Introduction)
- Wark, M. (2017). *General Intellects: Twenty-one Thinkers for the Twenty-first century*. Verso. (Introduction and chapter 14)
- Bowles and Gintis (2001). “*Schooling in Capitalist America Revisited*.”

Video:

- David Harvey: Visualizing Capital --
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqkc9Vh7bUo>

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Class 14: Working with Theory – Intersectionality (Friday, February 2)

In class group workshop: Analyzing your data based on the readings

Readings:

- Nunez, A.M. (2014). Employing multilevel intersectionality in educational research: Latino identities, context, and college access. *Educational Research*, 43(2), 85-92,
- Lykke, N. *Feminist studies: A guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing*. Routledge. (Chapters 8 and 9)
- Museus, S. and Griffin, K.A. (2011). Mapping the margins in higher education: on the promise of intersectionality frameworks in research and discourse. *New directions for institutional research*, 151.

Assignment due: Reflection note on reading (1 page)

Class 15: Back to the beginning (Monday, February 5)

Group presentations: Theorizing your research project [Research Group Assignment # 3]

Instructor Bio

Will Brehm is an Assistant Professor at the Waseda Institute for Advanced Study, Waseda University. His research interests include the intersection of comparative and international education with international relations and the political economy of development, focused primarily in Southeast Asia. He is currently conducting a comparative research project that explores historical memory and schooling across Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. He also consults for the World Bank in Cambodia and hosts a weekly podcast on education, globalization, and society called FreshEd.