Advanced Qualitative Research Methods: Case Study (RMTD 470)

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Course Overview

Course Description
This course will be an in-depth study of a qualitative research methodology, case study research. Students will have an opportunity to consider the value of case study research within social science research, explore various approaches to doing case studies, and engage in doing a case study. Through the process of studying case study research methodology in-depth, various issues common across qualitative research methodologies will be addressed, such as the flexibility in research design and the ethical dimensions of qualitative research. Course content is applicable to research and evaluation contexts in education as well as other social and human service practices.

The outcomes of the course are the following:

- Understand the characteristics of various qualitative research methodologies, particularly case study research methodology (Conceptual Framework 1);
- Be able to conduct a qualitative research study, including developing research questions, designing a study, generating data, analyzing and interpreting data, and representing findings, using a particular methodology, such as case study (Conceptual Framework 2);
- Be able to critically self-reflection on actions as social inquirers, including the ways in which one does and does not promote social justice (Conceptual Framework 6—8)

Required Text

Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>86-89</td>
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<td>83-85</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
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<td>Below 80</td>
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Class participation is based on attendance, contributions to group discussion and small group activities, timeliness of assignments, and presentation of your final project.

Late assignments: I strongly discourage turning in assignments after the due date. The nature of the course is that the assignments build on one another. As a result, turning in one late assignment affects the appropriate completion of subsequent assignments. I will accept late assignments and do not reduce points for late assignments, but I will also provide less feedback and will not as rapidly return your graded assignment to you. If you know in advance that you will be gone when an assignment is due, please plan ahead and submit it early. If you have an unexpected personal circumstance, please talk to me about your concerns with completing course obligations.

Learning Community at Loyola University Chicago and School of Education

Academic Honesty
Academic honesty is an expression of interpersonal justice, responsibility and care, applicable to Loyola University faculty, students, and staff, which demands that the pursuit of knowledge in the university community be carried out with sincerity and integrity. The School of Education’s Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at: [http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml). For additional academic policies and procedures refer to: [http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_main.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_main.shtml)

Accessibility
Students who have disabilities which they believe entitle them to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office. To request accommodations, students must schedule an appointment with an SSWD coordinator. Students should contact SSWD at least four weeks before their first semester or term at Loyola. Returning students should schedule an appointment within the first two weeks of the semester or term. The University policy on accommodations and participation in courses is available at: [http://www.luc.edu/sswd/](http://www.luc.edu/sswd/)

Harassment (Bias Reporting)
It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University-- a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe
you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link: http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/

Diversity
A characteristic of qualitative research is an awareness of one's own values, beliefs, and biases. We will address diversity issues (gender, race, religion, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, methodological preferences, etc.) throughout the course in our readings and discussions as they relate to those biases and to engaging in ethical research. In order to foster a learning community in the classroom, openness to and respect of various perspectives and backgrounds is essential.

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework of Loyola's School of Education is "professionalism in service of social justice." This course contributes to the realization of this framework by engaging students in the knowledge of qualitative research, skills of inquiry, and ethics necessary to be professional and just qualitative researchers.

The following is the exact wording of the School of Education’s Conceptual Framework:

The School of Education at Loyola University Chicago, a Jesuit and Catholic urban university, supports the Jesuit ideal of knowledge in the service of humanity. We endeavor to advance professional education in the service of social justice, engaged with Chicago, the nation, and the world. To achieve this vision the School of Education participates in the discovery, development, demonstration, and dissemination of professional knowledge and practice within a context of ethics, service to others, and social justice. We fulfill this mission by preparing professionals to serve as teachers, administrators, psychologists, and researchers; by conducting research on issues of professional practice and social justice; and by partnering with schools and community agencies to enhance life-long learning in the Chicago area.

Technology
In recent decades, as computing technology has advanced so have computer software and other tools to assist with qualitative research. Based on interests of students in the course, such tools may be addressed.

Dispositions
This course will assess dispositions related to professionalism, fairness, and the belief that all students can learn. Refer to LIVETEXT for the rubric corresponding to these dispositions.

Electronic Communication Policies and Guidelines
The School of Education faculty, students and staff respect each other’s rights, privacy and access to electronic resources, services, and communications while in the pursuit of academic and professional growth, networking and research. All members of the university community are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of integrity, communication, and responsibility while accessing and utilizing technology, information resources, and computing facilities. A link to the Loyola University Chicago and School of Education official policies and guidelines can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/education/pdfs/SOE_Cyberbullying_Policy.pdf
Weekly Schedule with Course Readings & Assignments

Week 1 (Aug. 28): Introduction to Course, What is Case Study Research?
Stake, Ch. 10: Harper School (p. 137-160)

Week 2 (Sept. 4): Why? Purposes and Aims
Yin, Ch. 1: Getting Started (p. 2-25)
Stake, Ch. 3: The Nature of Qualitative Research (p. 35-48)

Week 3 (Sept. 11): “What is a case?” (Ragin & Becker, 1992); What is this a case of?*
Stake, Ch. 1: The Unique Case (p. 1-14) & Ch. 2: Research Questions
Yin, Ch. 2: Designing Case Studies (p. 27-45)

Case Ideas DUE

Week 4 (Sept. 18): FIELDWORK

Week 5 (Sept. 25): What is a case? Bounding Case and Context*

Case Description and Research Questions DUE

Week 6 (Oct. 2): How? Planning, Designing, and Data Gathering *
Stake, Ch. 4: Data Gathering (p. 49-70)
Yin, Ch. 2: Designing Case Studies (p. 49-69), Ch. 3: Preparing to Collect Case Study Evidence & Ch. 4: Collecting Case Study Evidence (p. 70-130)
Week 7 (Oct. 9): How? Researcher Role and Ethics*
Stake, Ch. 6: Case Researcher Roles (p. 91-106)
Clark, M.C., & Sharf, B.F. (2007). The dark side of truth(s): Ethical dilemmas in researching the personal. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 399—416.

Protocols DUE

Week 8 (Oct. 16): How? Analysis and Interpretation*
Stake, Ch. 5: Analysis and Interpretation & Ch. 7: Triangulation (p. 71-90, 107-120)
Yin, Ch. 5: Analyzing Case Study Evidence (p. 132-175)

Protocols DUE

Week 9 (Oct. 23): Individual Meetings (NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING)

ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE

Week 10 (Oct. 30): How? Analysis and Interpretation
To be determined based on research proposals.

Week 11 (Nov. 6): Representing Cases*
Stake, Ch. 8: Writing the Report (p. 121-132)
Yin, Ch. 6: Reporting Case Studies (p. 164-191)

Week 12 (Nov. 13): Evaluating Case Studies*
Revisit Stake p. 107-120
Revisit Yin p.45-49, 200-207

Week 13 (NOV. 20)— CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE

Nov. 27—NO CLASS; THANKSGIVING

Week 14 (Dec. 4): CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Week 15 (Dec. 11): Final Examination

FINAL PROJECT DUE (MUST BE UPLOADED ON BLACKBOARD BY 6:30PM)

*indicates a week that an example of a case study will be added to the reading list
Assignment Descriptions

Assignment Submission

Please submit all assignments electronically via Sakai. I will repost your assignments with grades and comments. If you have difficulties uploading the file, then please email it to me at lkallemeyn@luc.edu. To assist with file organization, please use the following naming conventions for your assignments if you email them to me: [Assignment Tag]_Firstname. For example, when submitting the first assignment, I would name it CI_Leanne.doc.

Two Article Critiques [AC]

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate an understanding of research design elements of case study research. Students are expected to include a 2—3 page critical review of an empirical research article that utilizes case study methodology and discuss at least one (and not more than four) of the following elements:

- Bounding of the case and context
- Research Problem/Question
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology, description and justification
- Case selection
- Data collection (generation) methods
- Analysis and interpretation
- Validity, including generalization

Be sure to address both strength(s) and weakness(es) of the article. If possible, summarize your critique in a thesis statement that can be the organizing argument for the paper. In the process of discussing and critiquing the research design elements of the article, be sure to provide evidence from the article to support your claim(s), as well as utilize course readings to describe the research design elements and substantiate your critique. Finally, keep in mind that what you choose NOT to write about also helps the reader focused on what you view as the major strength(s) and weakness(es) of the article.

Grading Guidelines

- Paper demonstrates an appropriate understanding of a limited number of research design elements for case study research (2 pt)
- Paper addresses both strength(s) and weakness(es) of the article (2 pt)
- Paper includes appropriate evidence from the article to support the critique (2 pt)
- Paper includes an integration of course readings to describe design elements and substantiate the critique (2 pt)
- Paper reflects appropriate discretion of which research design elements NOT to focus on in the paper (1 pt)
- Paper has a clear argument/thesis, good organization, and relatively no grammatical errors, typos, etc. (1 pt)
Group Discussion of a Case Study

With a partner, choose a research article or book that utilizes case study research methodology in your field or area of interest. Carefully review the study so that you will be prepared to lead a 30 minute discussion and/or activity on the article. Be sure to email lkallemeyn@luc.edu the article or book section at least one week prior to your assigned week, so that it can be posted in Sakai and your colleagues will have an opportunity to review it. For your discussion, consider doing some or all of the following:

- Provide a synopsis of the study
- Prepare discussion questions based on the case study that relate to topics for that particular week of the course (and prior topics in the course, as appropriate)
- Prepare discussion questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the study
- Develop a class activity related to the article

Be sure that all aspects of the discussion/activity focus on how the study was conducted, not what the study found.

When grading the discussion, I will be looking for the following:

- Article/Book section utilizes case study methodology (2 pt)
- Evidence of equitable collaboration between partners, and that both partners have a thorough understanding of the article/book section. (2 pt)
- Class discussion focuses on the study’s methodology, or aspects of how the study was conducted/reported (2 pt)
- Class discussion connects the article/book section to topics/ideas discussed in the course (2 pt)
- Evidence that discussion is engaging and relevant to other members in the class (2 pt)

Case Study Research Project

Throughout this course, you will develop a research proposal for a case study that includes a pilot study. I encourage you to use this opportunity to explore a topic you are interested in pursuing for a dissertation project, as it will be a means to further understand the topic, refine research questions and plans, and develop protocols. For assignments submitted in a timely manner, I will provide formative feedback. The final research paper will be graded. If you obtain IRB approval for your project, you may use this project as a pilot study for your dissertation.

Throughout the course, you will have an opportunity to receive feedback from your colleagues and myself on the following elements of your final project:

Case Ideas [TI]: Half-page to one-page summary of 1) description of potential cases you would like to study and/or 2) your research interests, including two or three research problems or issues you are interested in exploring in a case study. This assignment will not be graded.
Case Description and Research Questions [CD]: First, describe your case in as much detail as possible based on your current understandings of the case, including how you are bounding the case and context and why you selected this case. Next, list of 3 to 5 research questions and/or foreshadowing issues based on your case ideas and what you have learned in the class for developing a research question and identifying issues. Be sure that your questions: 1) can be addressed using case study research methodology; 2) Point to the case; 3) Point to the context; and 4) Point to the issue(s)

Protocols [P]: For each data source that you plan to use—interview, observations, document analysis—submit a draft of a protocol. An informed consent form should also be included, per guidelines by the Loyola University Institutional Review Board (http://www.luc.edu/irb/irb_XIX.shtml). As you develop the protocol(s), consider the following questions: How will you introduce the study to participants? What questions will you ask and/or what will you focus on observing to ensure you collect data that addresses your research question? How does your theoretical framework help inform your questions? Does the order of the questions matter? What will be your role or position?

Be sure your protocol includes the following characteristics:

- Informed consent contains necessary components outlined by LUC IRB guidelines, and is easily readable/understandable for the intended audience
- Protocol gives enough specificity to guide what data the researchers intend to generate, while also providing opportunity for emergent issues
- Protocol will likely generate data that provides a wholistic, coherent, complex understanding of the case
- Protocol will generate concrete data to address the research question
- Protocol is well-organized, easy to use, and uses language that is understandable for the participant

Presentation: Prepare a 15 minute presentation about your final project. Be sure to include an overview of your case study research design, including particular strengths of the design as well as limitations or questions you have about the design. This presentation will give you an opportunity to receive feedback on your final project from your colleagues. Please prepare a powerpoint presentation and/or handout to support your presentation.

Final Project [FP]:

Develop a research proposal that utilizes case study methodology. In a dissertation, the third chapter typically focuses on methodology, so you could also think of this project as the methodology chapter of a dissertation.

I have provided a detailed outline for qualitative research proposals adapted from Maxwell (2005) in Chapter 7 to fit case studies. This outline provides a common way of organizing your
research proposal; however, you are welcome to reorganize and amend this outline to fit your particular study. In the process, be sure the following are components are included:

- **Abstract** (2 pt)
- **Introduction** (1 pt)
- **Conceptual framework**
  - Brief literature review that frames the research topic, including
    - what is already known and (1 pt)
    - how this study makes a contribution (1 pt)
  - Theoretical framework (1 pt)
- **Case Description and Research Questions**
  - Introduce your case(s), including
    - How you are bounding the case (4 pt)
    - Context of the case (4 pt)
  - Research questions
    - State your question(s) (2 pt)
    - Demonstrate how research questions are consistent with your inquiry aims, conceptual framework, and case study methodology (2 pt)
    - Demonstrate how your research questions point to the case, context, and issue(s) (2 pt)
- **Research methods**
  - Overview of case study methodology—what is it and why did you choose it to address your research question(s) (2 pt)
  - Case selection process in detail (4 pt)
  - Researcher role/relationships with study participants (2 pt)
  - Data generation methods—what were they and how did you generate the data? (4 pt)
  - Description of procedures for data analysis and interpretation (3 pt)
- **Validity**
  - What particular validity concerns were central for you to consider in this study? (2 pt)
  - What strategies did you use to help ensure validity? (2 pt)
- **Preliminary finding and/or an outline for your findings section**
  - Addresses the research question(s) (2 pt)
  - Form and organization of the paper reflect the intentionality of representation (2 pt)
  - Appropriately addresses generalizability (2 pt)
  - Appropriately acknowledges the limitations of the study or findings (2 pt)
- **Appendices**
  - Data collection tools (2 pt)
  - Timeline—when will you complete elements of the study (2 pt)
  - Dissemination plan—how will you or have you shared study findings with study participants or local stakeholders? (1 pt)
NOTE: You do not need to append interview transcripts or fieldnotes.

Additional Grading Criteria

- Integrates course readings to justify research approach, describe methodology, and/or to discuss appropriate generalizability and acknowledge limitations of the study (2pt)
- Integrates researcher reflexivity, and recognizes that the researchers have biases (2pt)
- Utilizes headings and subheadings to organize the paper effectively (2pt)
- Well-written, relatively free of typos and grammatical errors (2 pt)

Be sure that you cite appropriate literature that informs the design of your research, in addition to what you may include in your literature review.