

SYLLABUS

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Class/ individual meetings: Tuesdays 1-4
Education 124

Course aims

A seminar course for dissertators. Emphasis is on methods of data collection, data analysis, and writing, primarily but not exclusively within the paradigm of ethnographic research in language and education. Under the supervision of the instructor, students will present their own work to the seminar for discussion, critique, and advice. On occasion, students may also present brief summaries of articles or books from the reading list that they deem particularly relevant or useful for the ongoing discussion.

Course texts

There is no assigned course text, but there are many suggested references, posted on the Course Blackboard site, at <https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/>
A useful general reference is the 10-volume Springer *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, edited by N. H. Hornberger (2008), available in print and electronic form from Van Pelt Library.

Course outline

9/13 Introduction and scheduling
9/20
9/27
10/4
10/11 no meeting
10/18
10/25
11/1
11/8
11/15 (AAA week)
11/22 (Thanksgiving week)
11/29
12/6
12/13 ?

Upcoming presenters send their material or post it to Blackboard by 5pm the Saturday before their class presentation. This will usually be no more than 3-5 pages of data or interview transcript or 20-30 pages of written text. Presenters should include cover letter with instructions and framing questions for readers, to guide class discussion.

SOME POINTERS FOR DISSERTATORS

Guidelines on dissertation committee composition

Minimum of three members: chair, member, reader. In general, your chair plays a very active role in advising you, the second member plays a minor role in advising, and the reader reads final draft only. There may be variations on this pattern, particularly if your second member provides a complementary area of expertise important to your topic or method of research.

Other specifications:

Chair must be a member of the Graduate Group in Education and of the standing faculty.

Minimum of two must be Penn faculty (standing or associated, i.e. adjunct, clinical, research, visiting, or practice).

Minimum of one should be from outside your program specialization faculty.

You may have a fourth member as "outside reader."

External members (from outside Penn) must be approved via a special form from Student Records along with the c.v. of the external member. The student bears responsibility for transportation expenses for the external member.

Essential elements of the dissertation proposal

1. statement of problem / definition/delimitation of topic / statement of purpose
(conceptual framework / theoretical approach / literature review)
(personal motivation / interest in topic)
2. research design: questions and methodology
(setting, participants, methods of data collection & data analysis)
3. scholarly significance and implications / expected contribution to knowledge
4. research timeline
5. (optional) dissertation chapter outline

In writing the proposal and, eventually, the dissertation, use a standard style. APA style is the most usual in our field: see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Be consistent in your reference citation, giving specific page numbers (e.g. Hymes 1974: 101). Always include a complete list of references with any piece of writing you give your dissertation chair or committee.

Essential elements of the dissertation

There is no one and only format for a dissertation; this is particularly true in qualitative and ethnographic research. However, there are some essential elements, which can be boiled down to three: conceptual framework, findings, and implications. These elements fall out naturally when you consider that a dissertation is intended to show that (1) you are steeped in a body of theory and research in a particular academic area; (2) you have done some original research in that area; and (3) you can show how your research findings connect back to that body of theory and research. However you write up your dissertation, it should include all three of these elements and should also make clear which is which. A possible chapter by chapter organization is as follows:

- 1) Introduction (includes brief statement of purpose and research questions)
 - 2) Conceptual framework (theoretical and research literature in your area)
 - 3) Research setting, participants, methods of data collection and data analysis
 - 4) Findings
 - 5) Findings
 - 6) Findings
 - 7) Conclusions and implications
- References
Appendices

See also the section on Dissertations in the *GSE Student Handbook* for further information on guidelines and procedures.

Process for preparing dissertation proposal or complete dissertation draft

There are three basic principles for the most efficient process in working with your dissertation chair and committee in writing your dissertation proposal and later your dissertation:

- (1) Work with your chair first to produce a complete, approved draft BEFORE you give it to your other committee members. This allows for you to work with a consistent set of feedback and is also respectful of the time and effort of your committee members.
- (2) Allow sufficient time for your chair (and later your committee members) to read and comment on your work. It may be helpful to establish a pattern of giving your chair a set of chapters (or sections of your proposal) while you continue working on other chapters (or sections). Sufficient turnaround time usually means a minimum of 4 weeks. As a rule, faculty are not available for dissertation advising or reading during winter break (22 December - 15 January) nor during June, July, and August.
- (3) Allow sufficient time for yourself to revise and incorporate the feedback from your chair and committee members. This is also usually a minimum of 4 weeks for any substantial piece of writing, such as a proposal or a dissertation chapter(s).

Timeline for submitting final draft and graduating

The best approach is to project backwards from your hoped-for graduation date, using various GSE and university deadlines and draft review and revision turnaround times to construct a feasible schedule. Here is a sample timeline for graduation in May 2012 (but also check dates with relevant offices).

14 May 2012	Graduation
20 April 2012	submit final manuscript to Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
6 April 2012	submit final manuscript to Graduate Group Chair in Education
8 March 2012	submit final manuscript to Dissertation Chair
1 March 2012	Final oral defense
15 December 2011	submit full draft to Dissertation Committee (if Chair approves)
30 November 2011	submit full revised draft to Dissertation Chair
31 October 2011	Chair returns draft with comments
1 September 2011	submit full draft to Dissertation Chair (individual chapters will have already been submitted and commented on during AY 2010-2011)

**SELECTED REFERENCES ON
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION**

Lists are organized rather arbitrarily in the following categories and posted on the Blackboard course website:

Ethnographic research – methods and tools

- Participant observation and fieldnotes
- Interviewing and transcription
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Videotaping and microanalysis
- (Critical) discourse analysis
- Narrative inquiry/ oral history
- Ethnographic narrative and writing up qualitative research
- Qualitative data analysis tools on the computer

Genres of ethnographic research (in relation to language and education)

- Linguistic ethnography and linguistic anthropology of education
- Critical ethnography
- Collaborative and participatory (action) research
- Teacher research / practitioner research

Overviews and how-to's

- Encyclopedias and handbooks on language, literacy, and education
- Ethnographic / qualitative research methodology: Handbooks, overviews, how-to's
- Ethnographic / qualitative research methods in education
- Ethnographic / qualitative research methods in language and education

Epistemological issues & controversies

- Culture (as what ethnographers study)
- Reflexivity and emergence
- Qualitative-quantitative debates / mixed methods research
- Scientifically-based research
- Validity, reliability, typicality, etc.
- Research ethics and IRB review