

The Researcher's Guide to Qualitative Research Methods Courses

EDUC 200B: Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

Quarter: Autumn, Winter

Origin: This course exposes students to the basics behind qualitative research, so that they receive practice with the core skills via a group-based miniature qualitative inquiry.

Emphasis: The emphasis of the course is on getting real-world practice with observing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, and writing up the results of a quarter-long qualitative research inquiry, while reading materials to contextualize these skills in terms of theory.

EDUC 366X: Learning in Formal and Informal Environments

Quarter: Spring

Origin: The course combines two trends: getting practice with qualitative research methods and engaging with primarily informal learning environments.

Emphasis: The focus of the course is a quarter-long weekly observation of a specific learning environment, choosing a methodology to match a research question within that environment and then conducting the inquiry. The result is a paper and a presentation on the findings.

EDUC 292: Academic Writing for Clarity and Grace

Quarter: Spring

Origin: The purpose of this course is to provide students with space and support to reflect on their writing habits, develop new ones, and advance a piece of writing.

Emphasis: The primary purpose of this course is to become a better writer in the academic world, reading reference material to understand the mechanics of writing and then practicing them via feedback in a weekly writing group. The result is a better-crafted writing product.

CME 250: Introduction to Machine Learning

Quarter: Autumn, Winter, Spring

Origin: This course exists to expose students from all departments to the most common ways to analyze data via machine learning – a combination of statistical and computational methods.

Emphasis: This 1-unit course emphasizes two aspects of machine learning. First, explaining the benefits of machine learning algorithms and when certain algorithms are appropriate to use. Second, providing exercises to implement the main algorithms at least once.

EDUC 399A: Designing Surveys

Quarter: Winter

Origin: This course sets up a workshop-style environment for students to hone their skills around designing and deploying surveys thanks in part to weekly peer review.

Emphasis: This course invites students to select a topic/focus and environment/audience for a survey and then spend the quarter engaging with the survey design process. The students iterate on their questions, structure, and format by receiving feedback within a group of peers.

EDUC 391 / ENGR 391: Engineering Education and Online Learning

Quarter: Spring

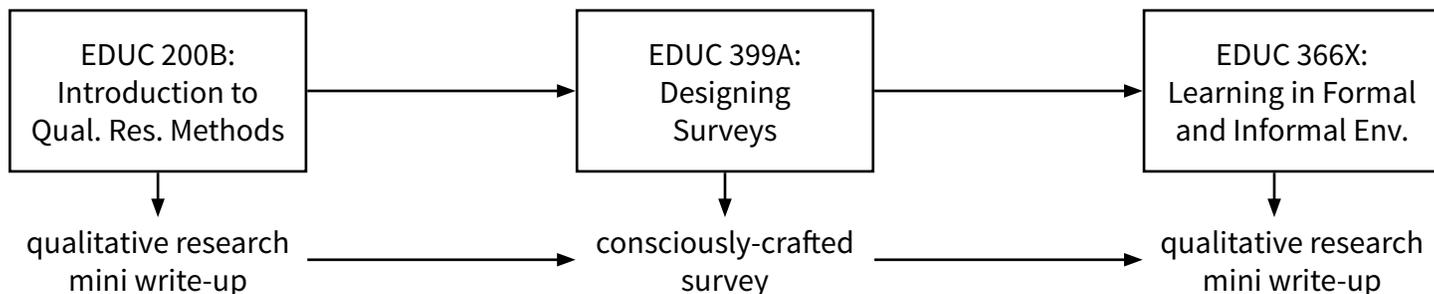
Origin: This course brings together engineering and education students and puts them on project-based teams to interact with and learn from each other.

Emphasis: The focus is on working with an interdisciplinary team to create a short online learning module from scratch. Along the way, students learn and apply principles from the science of learning and core game mechanics to their education technology design.

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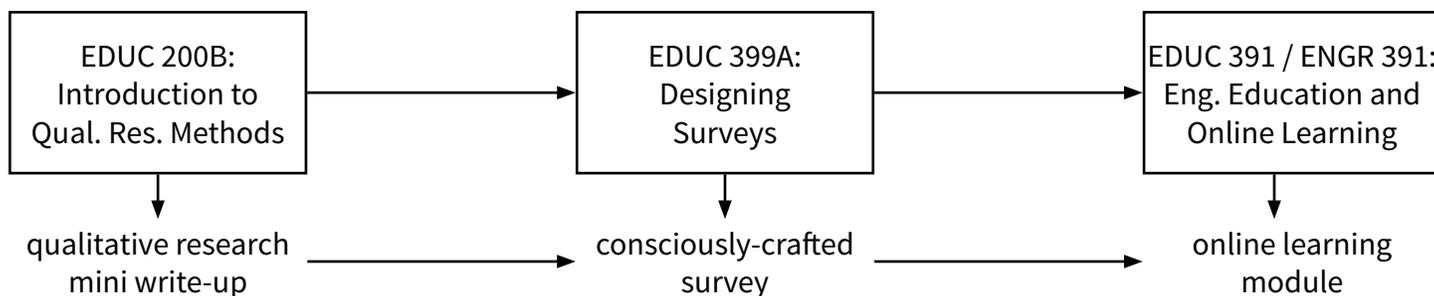
A lot goes into deciding which course to take when and below are a few sample course sequences organized by three intentions/desires. Other courses to look at include EDUC 250C, EDUC 331, and EDUC 408.

"I want to practice my skill set"



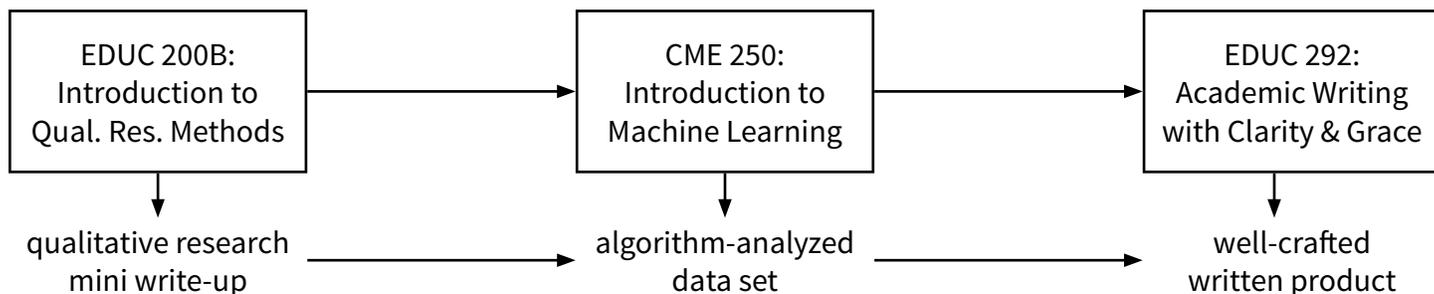
This sequence focuses on practicing the core skills of qualitative research, namely crafting questions and ethnographic observation. Getting initial exposure to the entire research process via EDUC 200B, students can then hone crafting clear, non-leading, understandable questions in a survey environment via EDUC 399A and can then hone observational, memo writing, and coding skills via EDUC 366X. You end the year with a solid core skill set in qualitative research.

"I want to extend my skill set"



This sequence emphasizes exposure to a variety of traditional, non-traditional, and novel uses of qualitative research. From traditional ethnography in EDUC 200B, students can apply the same core skills to designing surveys in EDUC 399A and then transfer those skills to a method called cognitive task analysis for the purposes of understanding a learning problem to design an online learning module in EE 306 / EDUC 391. By the end of the year, you have a portfolio of a written mini product, implementable survey, and learning module.

"I want to deepen my skill set"



The focus of this sequence is on deepening one's understanding of the research process from the perspective of data analysis and data presentation. In EDUC 200B, students engage in the entire qualitative research process via a compact project. CME 250 exposes students to machine learning methods to extend their data analysis and EDUC 292 helps students develop writing habits to improve their data presentation. You leave the year with a sense of how to conduct a qualitative inquiry, analyze data at scale, and write with style.