

George Mason University
College of Education & Human Development (CEHD)
Graduate School of Education (GSE)

EDRS 812 001 CRN 72065
QUALITATIVE METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
3 Credits, Fall 2014
Mondays, 4:30 pm-7:10 pm - Innovation Hall 316

Professor

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Course Description

A. *University Catalog Course Description:* Teaches how to apply qualitative data collection and analysis procedures in educational research, including ethnographic and other field-based methods, and unobtrusive measures.

Prerequisite(s): Satisfactory completion of EDUC 810 or equivalent, or permission of instructor. Prerequisite enforced by registration system.

B. *Expanded Course Description:* EDRS 812 is an introductory course on key concepts and methods of qualitative research for students of educational research. The course focuses on the development of qualitative research in a distinct place and time in educational and social research. It emphasizes the key theories, paradigms, and methods that surround this mode of inquiry, while simultaneously entering into a process of studying about and dialoguing with communities to answer key questions. The course involves reading and discussion of presentations and examples of qualitative research, including development of a semester long qualitative research project. Students will be expected to develop critical conversations about the nature, challenges, and opportunities of qualitative research. The opportunity to practice qualitative research is intended to contribute to your dissertation research topic, questions, and various epistemological, methodological, and intellectual considerations in doing social and educational research.

Learner Outcomes

Through this course students should be able to:

- Understand the most important characteristics of qualitative research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies.
- Identify appropriate research designs for various forms of qualitative research.
- Identify appropriate methods of data collection and analysis, depending on purpose and design of a research project.
- Be able to use these understandings to evaluate published qualitative research.
- Design and carry out a small-scale qualitative study in order to practice data collection and analysis techniques.
- Situate your study in an appropriate literature base and field of study.
- Communicate publically and in writing on the design, process, and results of such a study.

Professional Standards

The course is a required course of the PhD in Education and is linked to the goals of the Graduate School of Education (GSE). Refer to the GSE website <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/> for more information about their goals, core values, and mission.

Required Texts

- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. NY: The Free Press.

Any two NON-GMU QUALITATIVE EDUCATION dissertations of your choice.
Other readings as assigned

Course Expectations and Assignments

This course demands active and engaged participation, thorough reading of assigned texts and articles, as well the willingness to be critical readers of research. While each student will have significantly different research interests, I expect students to be critical friends to each other and create safe spaces for dialogue, conversation and yes, even critique.

Attendance and Participation (15 points). Class participation is important not only for each individual student's learning, but for the learning and success of our class as a whole. Class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use absences, tardiness, or early departure in both on-line and campus class sessions as de facto evidence of non-participation and as a result lower a student's grade (Mason Catalog 2011-12).

Please note the following attendance and participation policies:

1. Two tardies are equal to one absence, and missing 30% or more of class sessions will result in automatic course failure. For each unexcused absence (a determination made by the instructor) one point will be deducted from your attendance and class participation points up to a total of 15 points.
2. Participants are expected to read the assigned materials, complete on-line activities including pre-session Blackboard assignments, arrive promptly, attend all class meetings for the entire session, and participate in on-line and face-to-face class discussions.
3. If, due to an emergency, you will not be able to participate during a given week of class, please contact the professor as soon as possible. Students are responsible for obtaining information given during class discussions/sessions despite attendance from a classmate.

Assignments. All Papers must follow APA Guidelines (6th Edition) with NO spelling or grammar mistakes.

1. **C4 Brief (15 points) Due October 6:** The C4 Brief is in an exercise to **Compare, Contrast, Critique and Comment** on the two dissertations you have selected. For the paper, you will be expected to write 3,000-4,000 words on the methodology of each paper. You will explore issues of ontology, epistemology, methods, data collection and analysis (3 points). What did you infer from reviewing these two dissertations (3

points)? What does this help you think about differently (3 points)? How do you compare, contrast, critique and comment on the two dissertations in synthesis with each other? (3 points). This paper should not address each dissertation separately. Finally, 3 points for grammar, APA and other general high quality work to be expected of a Ph.D. student.

2. Research Project: You will develop and conduct a pilot study of your methods based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper that may be used toward your dissertation. Or this can be a “side” project to explore additional interests. The range of possible projects that you can conduct is extremely broad. The main requirement is that the project has to be genuinely qualitative in nature. (We will discuss in detail what this means in the first class.) Almost any setting, or set of participants, is a potential source of data for your research, including a setting or topic with which you have a prior role or involvement. The project must be paced to fit the constraints of the semester and therefore you must plan your data collection in the midpoint of the semester occurring sometime between October 6- November 6. You will be asked to prepare the following memos at various stages in the semester.

a. Memo File (30 points – 6 points each). The Memo File will be something you will work on as the project progresses. Please note that these have to be done in order and in tune with the larger project. You will regularly add something to your Memo File and you will be working with a peer reviewer and the professor to ensure that you are on the right track. Each written assignment is between 750-1,000 words and you will be sharing in small critical friend groups on the due date.

- i. Due September 15** -Exercise 2.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
- ii. Due September 22** –Exercise 3.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
- iii. Due September 29** – Exercise 4.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
- iv. Due October 20** – Exercise 5.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
- v. Due November 10** – Exercise 6.1 (Maxwell, 2013)

Please be sure to always bring a hard copy of the whole file to every class. I will be conferencing and providing verbal feedback at some points and written at other, so you must have hard copies for both the conferences with your peers and with myself.

3. Final Paper - Due December 1 - The final written assignment for the course is a 6,000-7,000 word (24-28 page) *project report* that follows the model of a qualitative journal article. You will present your idea, literature to support, methods, themes and findings, implications and conclusions.

All assignments should be submitted at the start of class on the due dates indicated in the course outline.

Grading and Assessment

Participation	15
C4 Brief	15
Memo File	30
Final Paper	40
TOTAL	100

Grades on assignments turned in late (without prior permission from me) will be reduced 10%. Attendance is very important to class participation; one point will be deducted per class-hour absence.

All assignments will be evaluated holistically using a mastery grading system; the general rubric is described below. A student must demonstrate “mastery” of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a “B” level score. Only if a student additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through quality, quantity, or the creativity of her/his work—will she/he be assessed with an “A” level score. With a mastery grading system, students must *choose* to “go above and beyond” in order to earn “A” level scores.

- “A” level score = Student work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant component. Student supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified and extended to other contexts. Student work is exceptionally creative, includes additional artifacts, and/or intentionally supports peers’ efforts.
- “B” level score = Student work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Student supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified.
- “C” level score = Student provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is typically not provided.
- “F” level score = Student work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible

Grading Scale:

At George Mason University, course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	GRADING	Graduate Courses
A+	100	Satisfactory / Passing
A	94-99	Satisfactory / Passing
A-	90-93	Satisfactory / Passing
B+	85-89	Satisfactory / Passing
B	80-84	Satisfactory / Passing
C	70-79	Does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education
F	<69	Does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

PROPOSED CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic/Learning Experiences	Readings and Assignments
WEEK 1 August 25	Introduction to the Course and to Qualitative Research	Review of syllabus and course requirements, general philosophical and conceptual components of qualitative inquiry.

September 1	Labor Day Holiday	
WEEK 2 September 8	The Nature of Qualitative Research	Glesne (2011) Introduction and Chpts. 1 & 2 Maxwell (2013) Chpts. 1 & 2 Merriam Chpt 1
WEEK 3 September 15	Choosing a Design Framework	Maxwell (2013) Chpts. 3 & 4 Merriam Chpt 2 & 3 Charmaz (2004) QR Foundations (Blackboard) Agee (2010) Developing qualitative research questions (Blackboard) Due September 15 -Exercise 2.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
WEEK 4 September 22	Participant and Site selection	Merriam Chpt 4 Bogden & Biklen (2007) Fieldwork (Blackboard) Maxwell (2013) Chpt. 5 Weiss (1994) Chpt. 2 Due September 22 –Exercise 3.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
WEEK 5 September 29	Research Relationships and Ethics	Merriam Chpt 9 Fine (1998) Working the hyphens (Blackboard) Glesne (2011) Chpts. 5 & 6 McDermott & Madan (2012) Avoiding the Missionary (Dis)position (Blackboard) Due September 29 – Exercise 4.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
WEEK 6 October 6	Design Review & Observations/Documents	Merriam Chpt 6 & 7 Glesne (2011) Chpt. 3 Easton-Brooks (2012) The Conceptual Context of Knowledge (Blackboard) Koro-Ljungberg (2012) Methodology is Movement is Methodology (Blackboard) C4 Paper due in hard copy in class.
Week 7 October 13-17	Columbus Day Reschedule - MIDPOINT PEER TO PEER DIALOGUE SESSION – and BB Follow-up	Peer workshops Work on your Action Plan thus far
Week 8 October 20	Interviewing and Observations	Merriam Chpt 5 Weiss (1994) Chpts. 1, 3, & 4 Eder & Fingerson (2001) Interviewing children (Blackboard) Johnson (2001) In-depth interviewing (Blackboard) Due October 20 – Exercise 5.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
WEEK 9 October 27	Observations and Interviewing	NEED READINGS Kingsley (2009) Visual Methodology (Blackboard) Quinlan (2008) Shadowing (Blackboard)
WEEK 10 November 3	Initial Analysis and Interpretation	Merriam Chpt 8 Glesne (2011) Chpt. 7 Maxwell & Miller (2008) Categorizing and connecting strategies (Blackboard)

WEEK 11 November 10	More Analysis and Interpretation	Weiss (1994) Chpt. 6 Due November 10 – Exercise 6.1 (Maxwell, 2013)
WEEK 12 November 17	Working with themes	No class this week – time to work in working groups on theme development.
Week 13 November 24	Validity, Generalizability, and Quality Writing and Revising a Qualitative Study	Maxwell (2013) Chpt. 6
WEEK 14 December 1	Writing and Revising a Qualitative Study	Merriam Chpt 10 Maxwell (2013) Chpt. 7
Week 15 December 8	Next steps for a qualitative researcher	Course Evaluation Final Paper Due

GMU Policies and Resources for students

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/> For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].