George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDRS 812
QUALITATIVE METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (3 credits)
Fall 2014
Meeting Day/time: Tuesdays 4:30 pm-7:10 pm Section 002
Class Location: West 1004

Professor: Anastasia P. Samaras, Ph.D.
Office hours: email or call 703-489-1663 for apt.
Office: Thompson 1403
Email: asamaras@gmu.edu
University Faculty Page: http://cehd.gmu.edu/people/faculty/asamaras/
Personal Web page: http://mason.gmu.edu/~asamaras

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. Prerequisites. Satisfactory completion of EDUC 810 or equivalent, or permission of instructor.

Course Goals and Objectives
This course is designed to enable students to:

- Understand the essential characteristics and purposes of qualitative research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies.
- Explore his/her researcher identity in relation to the topic selected for research.
- Situate a study in an appropriate beginning literature base and field of study.
- Develop and enact a small-scale study to practice data collection and analysis techniques, and validation measures.
- Communicate publically and in writing and with peer review on the design, process, and results of such a study.

EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2014
- Engage in peer review as a critical friend
- Critique one’s research project and suggest areas for improvement.
- Be able to use these understandings to evaluate published qualitative research.

**CEHD Core Values**
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/](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/](http://gse.gmu.edu/). In 2006, the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) adopted five core values on which to focus: collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. This course supports each of these values by providing multiple learning experiences that necessitate collaboration. Students are afforded opportunities to reflect on their leadership roles in their work and learning contexts; to design and engage in innovative research-based practice, and to analyze proceedings under the umbrella of a social justice conference theme. These Core Values are aligned with course goals:

**CEHD Professional Dispositions**
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

**GMU Policies and Resources for Students**
- 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/](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/](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/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/).
Emergency Procedures

You are encouraged to sign up for emergency alerts by visiting the website [https://alert.gmu.edu](https://alert.gmu.edu). There are emergency posters in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures exists on [http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert](http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert)

Required Course Texts


Required Articles & Chapters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY:</th>
<th>Blackboard (Bb)</th>
<th>e-journals (EJ) Available on Mason Library</th>
<th>E-reserves (ER) Course password = methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Recommended Readings


Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications, AERA. Educational Researcher (2006), 35, (6), 33-40. (Overview)

Course Structure
The major purpose of this course is for you to learn and practice qualitative research from conceptualizing your inquiry to data collection and analysis and then with a reflective turn to what you learned about your research question and the qualitative research experience. Throughout the course, you are completing a step with formative assessment that you insert into your final required paper. The course requires your active and collaborative participation with a consistent commitment and submission of each assignment in order to have a successful summative assessment.

Assignments & Evaluation
Assignments and Participation 50%
Descriptions of all assignments are posted in Assignments folder on Bb.
   a) Curiosity Memo with Research Artifact Photo (5%)
   b) Researcher Identity Memo (5%)
   c) Research Proposal (10%)
   d) Literature Review & oral critique of article (10%)
   e) Analytical Memo (5%)
   f) Check-coding (5%)
   g) Two Peer Reviews of Draft using tracking & rubric guide (5% each)

Research Project (Final Project Headings & Assessment on Bb) 50%

1. Weekly Class Dialogue ~ Being a good listener and open learner
This course utilizes a weekly seminar format that is collaborative, interactive, and dialogic, i.e., sociocultural and designed within my application of Neo-Vygotskian tenets of learning. Seminars will include professor and student-led discussions, and student presentations that will take place during class meetings. Each class will encourage discussing your developing understanding of qualitative theory and practice; less about the quantity of your talk, and more about your sharing of your ongoing, honest, deep and
critical analysis of your meaning making and your ability to listen to other’s thinking in a respectful and non-judgmental manner, and with an appreciation of the opportunity to learn about your research by participating in your peer’s struggles with making sense of qualitative research as well. You are expected to participate in class discussions with openness, consideration, and effort to “hear for” and “listen to” others as you also seek to be understood. Your active participation is a major requirement of this course. Please notify professor if you must miss a class. There is no way to "make up" for class time that is missed.

2. Assignments and Readings ~ Commitment and Support
High quality work (i.e., “A” work) is expected on all assignments and in class participation. Since the research project is a large-scale endeavor, I have designed a series of professor and peer supported assignments towards your successful project completion. In essence, these mini assignments allow you to build a stronger and higher quality report. If you do not complete the assignments on time, you will not be able to participate adequately in class discussions, and I will not be able to give you the timely feedback you need for the next step.

All assignments must be completed. For full consideration, all assignments are due posted electronically on the Blackboard discussion thread on Bb prior to the beginning of class on the day they are due, unless otherwise announced. You will see a note of POST on the schedule for the day due. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with the professor.

Reading assignments are listed on the class day on which they will be discussed. You are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue and sharing of insights. Go beyond "what the author said." Share ANY questions you have about the readings in class.

All written assignments are to be word-processed using Times Roman 12 pt font, double-spaced, and submitted electronically on our Bb Discussion Thread. Title each assignment with your last name and the name of the project/assignment, e.g., Smith.ResProp.09.23.13. It is required that you save your work in multiple places for safe keeping. Use APA style.

3. Peer Review ~ Embracing Critique
Virtually all research designs go through some type of peer review process in academia, including the dissertation proposal stage, requests for funding, or when a study is reviewed for publication. For this reason, I am having you involved in an iterative peer review process, designed to be supportive as well as constructive and to give you the opportunity to embrace the value of peer critique for improving the quality of your research. You will provide, and receive, constructive suggestions to assist you in improving your thinking and in looking at something familiar in a new way. Our work will involve mutual support, collaboration, and continuous peer review in a “critical friend team” which will be explained in class. In a collaborative relationship, you are expected to practice your best professional relationship skills in your discussions. This peer review will provide multiple opportunities for your ongoing professional development after our course has ended. It gives you practice.
4. Exit Memos
At the end of each class, please take 5 minutes to begin to write yourself an exit memo of the big ideas you took away from the class and burning questions that emerged for you. These memos can become a researcher log which will be useful to the development of your project and can be included in your report appendix.

5. Research Project
Specific guidelines for this project are provided on the My Mason portal at: 
https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_tab_group_id=_66_1

It is recommended that you get into the habit of writing analytical memos throughout the research process which will be useful in writing your discussion section. The research project is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding and application of qualitative research. Seize that opportunity to delve and dabble into your possible dissertation topic. Use this assignment to move you toward and forward in your Ph.D. path. You will develop and conduct a small-scale study of your methods based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper of roughly 6,000 words or 25 pages, not including references and appendix. 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. Almost any setting, or set of participants, is a potential source of data for your research. There are formative assignments (with less weight) designed to scaffold and build your final research project.

1. No covert research. This is 1) ethically problematic, 2) too difficult to manage for someone just beginning to learn qualitative research, 3) restricts your research options, and 4) doesn't allow you to learn the key skill of negotiation with those you study. You must have the informed consent of the participants in your research. We will discuss this in more detail gaining Human Subjects approval for your study (in most cases you will not need actual HSRB approval for your course project, unless you are collecting person-identifiable data from minors or plan to publish the results). Nonetheless, ethical considerations are paramount in any research you conduct and you must become familiar with completing an IRB form.

2. No primarily comparative studies. Your main research question cannot focus on a difference between two groups or settings or between two categories of people. While explicitly comparative studies are a valid and important form of qualitative research, they are not a useful way to learn how to do qualitative research. Comparison is likely to 1) push you toward more quantitative questions and modes of thinking, 2) reduce the depth of understanding you can gain of one group, setting, or category, and 3) make it more difficult for you to learn what is essential in qualitative research.

3. In addition to a pilot interview, a minimum of: 3 hours of interviews, or 3 hours of observations of a single setting, plus at least one hour of interview data with one or more participants in that setting. For an interview study, you will need to record your interviews and transcribe at least 3 hours of interview material. Normally, this will involve interviewing at least 3 different participants. Collect consent using university consent form. The hour interview may run between 45 minutes to one hour. You may
elect to also complete two interviews with a second follow-up interview with each participant which we will discuss in class.

**The Pilot Interview** is a very crucial step in refining your interview questions, gaining experience and confidence in interviewing, and reflecting with critical friends on “Valuable Mistakes Made.”

For an observational study, you will need to do at least 3 hours of observations of your setting, taking written notes, and to reorganize, rewrite, and expand your rough notes to make them usable for analysis. Normally, this will involve at least 3 separate observations. In most cases, a course project based primarily on observation should be limited to a single setting. The difference in the amount of material required for interview and observational studies is because interviews require more time to transcribe, and because they usually provide more material to work with for analysis. (Videotaped observations are a special case; if you plan to videotape some activity, talk to me about the amount of material required, which depends on the kind of analysis you'll be doing.)

You may decide to photograph significant scenes of your observation but be sure not to include any photos of minors or other identifying information.

*Copies of your interview transcripts and/or rewritten observational notes must be included in the appendix of your report, along with a transparency of your data analysis.

4. **Data collection must take place across the semester.** You cannot rely mainly on previously collected data, or conduct all of your observations or interviews in a brief period (one week or less). You need to be able to learn from your experiences, and to take time to contemplate and make corrections to your study design and techniques.

5. **You will need to share your work for peer review.** Any arrangements that you make with participants in your study must not prevent you from discussing your fieldnotes and interview transcripts (with pseudonyms used) with peers. *Class members will be required to respect the confidentiality of this information. Sharing your work in class is the only way that I can really assess the actual process of your research, and is also an important part of that process. You cannot do the work of this class in isolation.

If you are studying a setting where you have a prior role, or are interviewing people with whom you have a prior relationship, you need to **discuss the special issues that this raises**, and will need to address these issues in your final report. You are free to use as a setting for your research project the same site that you are using in work for another course or for an internship. However, if you do this, the amount of work involved must be appropriate for the total amount of credit—normally, you can't use the same work (e.g., turning in the same report) to get credit for two courses. In any case, if you are using the work to satisfy two different courses or requirements, you **must submit, both to me and to the other instructor or supervisor, a written description of how you will use your work in this setting to satisfy the requirements of both courses**, and get our signatures indicating our approval of your plans.
## Participation and Assignments Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary 50 pts.</th>
<th>Accomplished 47-49 pts</th>
<th>Developing 44-46 pts</th>
<th>Undeveloped Below 44 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments are central to the development of your project. Attendance and participation are critical components of this course. It gives you the opportunity to learn from and contribute to building a positive classroom experience and learning community. Participants contribute to each other’s learning by actively listening, exchanging ideas, sharing learning from reading and websites, peer view, and supporting each other’s efforts.</td>
<td>Successfully completes all assignments. Outstanding and consistent participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities. Promotes conversation focused on the topic. Comments demonstrate a high level of understanding from assigned readings. Listens actively to peers. Embraces peer review; Prompts peer feedback, critique, and input. Purposely shares leadership roles in group work.</td>
<td>Completes all assignments. Participates in f-t-f and online discussions and activities on a regular basis; questions and comments reveal thought and reflection and contribution from assigned readings. Frequently involves peers in discussion. Conducts peer review; Shares leadership roles in group work.</td>
<td>Does not complete some assignments. Does not contribute to f-t-f and online discussions or activities very often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection and some contribution from assigned readings. Follows rather than leads group activities. Solicits some peer discussion and peer review. Misses classes. Is late for class. Somewhat shares leadership roles in group work.</td>
<td>Few assignments completed. Few contributions to in f-t-f and online class discussions. Little evidence of participation and contribution. Shows little concern for peers’ learning or input or peer review. Misses many classes and is late often. Does not share leadership roles in group work.</td>
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</table>

### 5 pt. Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A+ Exemplary 5+ points</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A Excellent 5 – 4.7 points</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A- Approaching Excellence 4.65-4.5 points</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B+ Developing Less than 4.5 points</strong></td>
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</table>
Grading Scale for Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Graduate Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Exceeds Standard</td>
<td>100 +</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>90 – 92.9</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Approaches Standard</td>
<td>88 – 89.9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Approaches Standard</td>
<td>83 – 87.9</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Approaches Standard</td>
<td>80 – 82.9</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Raises Concern</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Research Resources

Websites

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR)
According to this web site, “AQR is an international organisation which aims to further the practice and study of qualitative research.”

International Center for Qualitative Inquiry
According to this web site, “The International Center for Qualitative Inquiry is a multidisciplinary institute at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.”
Web site: http://www.c4qi.org/iaqi/home.html

Qualpage
According to this web site, “QualPage was originally designed as a private repository of information for graduate students learning about qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). Originally a Gopher site, it evolved into a Web page around 1994.”
Web site: http://www.qualitativeresearch.uga.edu/QualPage/e_journals.htm

Qualitative Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association. *The SIG offers an Outstanding Qualitative Research Dissertation Award.
University of Georgia, College of Education, Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy This website lists journals focusing on qualitative research.
Web site: http://www.coe.uga.edu/leap/qual/research/journals.html

Additional Qualitative Research Resources


Additional Interviewing Resources

Writing Resources

Publishing Resources


**Websites on Publishing**


Tomorrow’s Professors Listserv [http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html](http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to Course and Qual Research</td>
<td>Introductory Note Emailed to Bring Research Artifact</td>
<td>During the first week read:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/26</td>
<td>Peer Review with Critical Friend Team</td>
<td>Post a picture of yourself on Discussion Thread</td>
<td>Establishing CF Team (Bb)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research/Writing as Process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Becker/Richards:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Recommended: Klein et al. (Bb)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>WoK and Qual Research</td>
<td>POST CURIOSITY MEMO &amp; RESEARCH ARTIFACT PHOTO</td>
<td>Maxwell Chapters 1, 2 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Design Matters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yin Chapter 1 &amp; pp. 26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site and Participant Selection</td>
<td></td>
<td>Corbin &amp; Strauss: Chapter 2 (ER)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Koro-Ljungberg et al. (EJ). <em>Only read Table 1, pp. 689-690</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Researcher Relationships</td>
<td>Start digging through the Literature</td>
<td>Maxwell Chapters 3 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>Research Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yin Chapter 5 &amp; pp. 38-47, 61-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual Framework and Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Samaras Chapters 7 &amp; 12 (Bb)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kennedy article (EJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Research Proposal as Argument</td>
<td>Oral article critique in CFT</td>
<td>Maxwell Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>Critique Design!</td>
<td>POST RESEARCHER IDENTITY MEMO</td>
<td>Overview Freedman (2007) (EJ)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-class consultations begin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Interviews and Observations</td>
<td>Watch a famous TV interviewer and come prepared to orally present key interviewer qualities</td>
<td>POST RESEARCH PROPOSAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>Overview of Analysis</td>
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**Week 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Work with CFT to draft interview questions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/30</td>
<td>Coding Workshop I</td>
<td>Schedule Pilot and Formal Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analytical Memoing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Yin Chapters 6 & 7
Mears Chapter 6 (Bb)
Saldana Chapter 1 (Bb)

**Week 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Online Work And Field Work</th>
<th>Revisit online data bases for Lit Review</th>
<th>No readings this week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Critique, refine, and polish interview questions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct Pilot Interview</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>POST DRAFT LIT REVIEW by 10/14</td>
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</tbody>
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**Week 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>No Class</th>
<th>Monday classes meet instead of Tuesday classes this day only</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/14</td>
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**Week 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Standards of Validation</th>
<th>Start research analysis</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Practice coding</td>
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Creswell, Chapter 10, Validation 2013 (Bb)
Maxwell Chapter 6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Transparency and Trustworthiness</th>
<th>POST ANALYTICAL MEMO</th>
<th>Yin Chapter 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Dialogical Validity</td>
<td>Bring data analysis piece one for check-coding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coding Workshop II</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Categories &amp; Connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Writing Your Analysis, Results, and Discussion</td>
<td>Continue check-coding</td>
<td>No readings this week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4</td>
<td></td>
<td>POST RESEARCH DRAFT for professor and peer review with tracking and comments</td>
<td>(Use Yin Chapters 10 &amp; 11 as a reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Online work</td>
<td>POST PEER REVIEW 1 with tracking and comments</td>
<td>No readings this week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work on Draft 2 and send for peer review by 11/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Abstract Workshop</td>
<td>Continue to polish final paper</td>
<td>No readings this week</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Presenting your Argument</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In class consultations with professor and peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Online Work</td>
<td>POST PEER REVIEW 2 using rubric with brief comments</td>
<td>No readings this week</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Class Presentation Briefs</td>
<td>POST FINAL PROJECT</td>
<td>No readings this week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>In 5 minutes:</td>
<td>Bring a printed copy clipped at corner. No binders or covers. Do not print appendix but include in posted e-copy on Bb</td>
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<td>Tell us:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Your argument</td>
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<td>2. Your RQ</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Key discoveries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Most valuable insight and mistake</td>
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