George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
PhD Program

EDRS 812, Section 72511 - Qualitative Methods in Educational Research
3 credits, Fall 2016
Tuesdays, 4:30-7:10pm, Aquia Hall, Room 213 - Fairfax Campus

Faculty
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Prerequisite:
Successful completion (with a grade of B or higher) of EDRS 810, or equivalent coursework or experience.

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.

Course Overview:
This course is an introduction to the field and practice of qualitative inquiry. 'Qualitative research' is an umbrella term that encompasses many methodologies and methods, many of which aim to understand everyday social life as it occurs in its natural environment. In this course, you will be introduced to some of the varied perspectives related to qualitative inquiry, as well as the theoretical and historical foundations of qualitative research. Further, you will have an opportunity learn about and practice some of the research methods that are common to qualitative research. As such, this course is also practical in scope, as you will complete a 'mini-research' study. Finally, this course aims to prepare you for more advanced study of qualitative inquiry.

Course Delivery Method:
This course will be delivered using lecture, seminar, and fieldwork formats. Some online work will be included.

Learner Objectives:
This course is designed to enable students to do the following:
1. Articulate the historical and theoretical foundations of qualitative inquiry;
2. Describe the common characteristics of qualitative research;
3. Discuss common practices associated with designing qualitative research studies;
4. Outline ethical considerations common to the qualitative research process;
5. Describe the various types of data collected in qualitative research studies;

6. Create an interview protocol;
7. Carry out fieldwork, including making observations;
8. Carry out interviews;
9. Discuss the basic characteristics commonly associated with case study, participatory action research, grounded theory, and ethnography.
10. Discuss the process of preparing qualitative data for analysis;
11. Describe the qualitative data analysis process (specifically associated with 'coding' and 'thematic analysis');
12. Discuss the ways in which digital tools might support the qualitative research process;
13. Outline the arguments associated with establishing quality in qualitative research studies; and
14. Describe issues related to representation and writing up findings in qualitative research.

Required Texts:
There are two required texts for the course. These include:

- Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd edition). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd edition). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Recommended texts (you can order these online if you so choose; I will provide a few chapters of each on pdf)**:**

- Boellstorff, T. (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton University Press.
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Paulus, T. M., Lester, J. N., & Dempter, P. (2014). *Digital tools in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Other Required Readings (Available in Blackboard):
In addition to the two required texts, many articles or chapters will be required readings. All of these readings can be found on Blackboard.

Supplemental References and Other Resources:
While the following resources are not required, they may be useful as you progress through the course.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Barone, T., & Eisner, E. (2006). Arts-based educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research.* Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davis, C. A. (2014). Unraveled, untold stories: An ethnodrama. *Adult Education Quarterly, 64*(3), 240-259.
- Hart, C. (1999*). Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination.* London: Sage.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic observation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Noblit, G. W. (1999). *Particularities: Collected essays on ethnography and education.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Norum, K. E. (2000). School patterns: A sextet. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 13*(3), 239-250.
- Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.

Recommended Equipment:
- I recommend you gain access to an audio recorder with software that allows you to listen to a recording from your computer. This will be important for the fieldwork project. There are a variety of ways that you can securely and safely record your interview and subsequently transcribe it.
- InqScribe (https://www.inqscribe.com/) is a great tool to support the transcription process. There is a free, trial version that will likely suffice for the purposes of the course.
- Some of you may be interested in exploring computer assisted qualitative data analysis software packages (CAQDAS) (e.g., NVivo, ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA, Dedoose) at some point during the semester. If you are on the Bloomington campus, I can help you gain access to a computer lab with several CAQDAS packages. If you are not on campus, I encourage you to download the free, trial versions of the CAQDAS package you are interested in exploring prior to investing time and resources into learning and purchasing a package. You are NOT required to have access to a CAQDAS package for this course. However, we will be reading about the possibilities and limitations that are inherent to many of these packages – all designed to support the analysis process NOT 'do' or 'complete' qualitative data analysis.

Web Resources and Networks:
There are several web resources that you may find useful. Many of these sites have listservs that you can join if you are interested in receiving regular updates and information regarding

qualitative research methodologies and methods. I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these useful resources.

- The International Institute for Qualitative Methodology's Webinar series: http://www.iiqm.ualberta.ca/WebinarSeries/MasterClassWebinarSeries.aspx
- Methodspace (http://www.methodspace.com/)
- The Qualitative Report (http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html
- Top Qualitative Research Blogs (http://www.qualitative360.com/news-and-blogs/11-editor-s-pick-top-qualitative-research-blogs)

My Approach/Commitment:
In this course, my primary goal is to establish a safe and inclusive environment that will support your learning. Throughout the semester, I invite your questions and critiques, desiring thoughtful dialogue to be central to our learning experience. In this course, we will work to understand a variety of positions and practices associated with the qualitative inquiry process, pushing one another to question taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions. Throughout the course, we will remind each other that there is not "one right" way to carry out a qualitative research study. Rather, there are many theoretical and methodological positions from which to work when considering qualitative research. As such, we will work to understand a variety of positions. This does not mean that you may not disagree with one another or with me about these varied perspectives and approaches. Yet, in order to facilitate our learning environment, we will each work to cultivate a classroom space that generates respectful, thoughtful, and empathetic understanding. What we come to learn is a shared experience; thus, we will all work to cultivate a community of learners.

In our learning community, I will position myself as a co-learner, as well as a teacher. Hence, if I am teaching and you are not learning, then I am not teaching. Please let me know! Throughout the semester, I welcome your feedback and will encourage your participation in an informal mid-semester evaluation. In addition, throughout the semester, you can expect feedback from me, with this feedback designed to support your growth as a qualitative researcher.

Course Performance Evaluation
Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

As an 800-level course, this course requires a significant time commitment. First, this is a **reading intensive course.** Thus, please plan accordingly, as the readings have been carefully selected to support your growth as a qualitative researcher. Second, the **fieldwork project does require a significant amount of time**, particularly as I encourage you to pursue this assignment with care and thoughtful reflection. Throughout the course, know that I will be here to support you and facilitate the learning process! My intent is to make this a truly meaningful learning (and growing) experience.

In all of your assignments, I am looking for evidence of: (1) understanding and the application of the concepts and processes learned and discussed in class and online; (2) critical reflection and responses to issues and concepts; (3) clarity of expression; (4) explicit connections among ideas; and (5) complete work with no grammatical or spelling errors. All assignments are due on the

date listed in the Schedule table below. Incompletes and Withdrawals are strongly discouraged and are only given when the conditions of the university are met and after a conference with the instructor at the initiation of the student.

Assignments	Points
1. Participation	25
2. Fieldwork Project	50
a. CITI Research Training:	5
b. Site Description:	5
c. Interview Protocol:	10
d. Initial Observation Report:	10
e. Initial Interview Report:	10
f. Initial Data Analysis Report:	10
3. Positionality Paper	15
4. Final Fieldwork Presentation	10
	100 total points

Participation (25 POINTS):

Each week one or two people from the class will lead the discussion of that week's readings. As a discussion leader you will:

- Be responsible for being particularly familiar with that week's readings;
- be required to disseminate 3-5 guiding questions at least 24 hours before the class meeting to your peers;
- lead the first 30 minutes of class time in a discussion that brings together the assigned readings for that week. (Please note, these discussions should *not* be centered on a PowerPoint or other "formal" presentation medium. Rather, this time should be focused on teasing out central themes, questions, and critiques of the readings assigned for each week in an informal, yet scholarly, way with your peers.)

25% of your grade will be based on your familiarity with the weekly texts and on your participation as a discussion leader. You do not need to display brilliance but you do need to engage with the authors and your classmates and try to make sense of the ideas brought out.

At the beginning of the semester you will be assigned to a small group (3-4 people/group) to participate in the weekly discussions, allowing for mini learning communities to grow within the class, and for richer and more meaningful discussions to unfold. These groups will be designed to include individuals from a range of disciplines and substantive focal points.

Positionality Paper (15 POINTS):

A central aspect of the qualitative research process is becoming (continually) aware of your own position as a researcher and the ways in which your position shapes and informs the research process (often referred to as 'researcher positionality'). Being 'reflexive' is indeed a key aspect of engaging in qualitative research. Thus, in this paper you will have an opportunity to 'unpack' your own positions as a researcher, including your epistemic (views on knowledge construction) and ontologic (views on reality construction) orientations to the research process. Specifically, you will discuss: 1) your epistemic and ontologic commitments and 2) the assumptions that you bring to the research process. An assignment guideline is posted in Blackboard.

Fieldwork Project (50 POINTS):
This semester you will not simply read about qualitative research, but you will also carry out a semester-long research study. You will identify a research site, preferably a site in which you can be a **complete observer** (not a participant). The goal is for you to 'try out' the qualitative research process in an environment where you can acquire extensive feedback and support, thereby preparing you for future qualitative research. As you organize your study around questions of interest, your first-hand experience engaging in fieldwork will allow you to learn from how people experience and understand the world. It is often helpful to 'practice' in a context that you are a bit unfamiliar with, while still being aligned with your research interests. I strongly encourage you to design your study around something of interest to you, as you will be spending an extensive amount of time completing this project. I do request that you select an ethical/safe environment for your research site (e.g., mixing alcohol and observations is not wise) and do not include vulnerable populations (including minors) in the study, as this requires IRB protections that this class does not afford you. Please do not select a research site that puts you or your participants at risk.

Please note that IRB approval is not required when data is being collected and analyzed for the purposes of a class. This means, however, that you are **not allowed** to use your data for the purposes of publication or conference presentation. Regardless, you **must** collect data ethically and safely.

You will then make a total of **2 – 3 hours of observations** (two separate observations, minimum) at the selected research site and conduct **1 – 2 hours of interviews** (with two different people, minimum).

a. **CITI Research Compliance Training:** You will be asked to complete Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects. Information is available online: http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-training/ (Office of Research Integrity & Assurance). The training takes between two and three hours and can be accessed from: http://www.citiprogram.org. You are required to complete the certification prior to collecting data/completing your fieldwork project. *If you have already completed the training you do not have to retake it; supply a valid certificate.*

b. **Site Description:** You will submit a thick, rich description of your research site. Write a 1-2 paragraph statement that indicates where you will make your observation, who the gatekeepers/stakeholders are, whether you have been granted permission to observe at this site, and why you are interested in investigating this particular site. After you receive feedback from me on your site description, you will be able to begin making your observations. An assignment guideline is posted in Blackboard.

c. **Interview Protocol and Procedure:** You will: 1) briefly describe who you will be interviewing, 2) create a list of the questions that you will pose, and 3) include the informed consent statement that you will use with your participants prior to beginning the interview. An assignment guideline is posted in Blackboard.

d. **Initial Observation Report:** This report will focus on the first one-hour observation wherein you will describe the methods used to gain permission to access the observation site and reflect upon the process. Several additional points need to be addressed, which are included in an assignment guideline posted in Blackboard.

e. **Initial Interview Report:** Only the first interview should be included in the initial interview report wherein you will describe the interview process and method. You should also include at least 5 pages of your interview transcript. Several other requirements are listed in the assignment guideline, which is posted in Blackboard.

f. **Initial Data Analysis:** You will carry out an initial data analysis of your observation and/or interview data, and then share your preliminary findings with me and your colleagues in class. You will be required to code an excerpt of your observation or interview transcript AND choose one other type of analysis to conduct on a portion of your data. The details of what should be included in this report are listed in the assignment guideline posted in Blackboard.

Fieldwork Final Presentation (10 POINTS):
This presentation will allow you to bring together your data collection, analysis, and reflections within a mini-conference setting. The goal of this presentation is to offer a brief description of your research process, including your data collection and analysis. You will also offer initial 'findings', as you 'practice' the process of presenting a qualitative research study. You will be required to invite at least two of your participants, colleagues, peers, advisors, mentors, or other academic contacts to attend this conference. These attendees' feedback will be solicited and provided to you as a way to strengthen your work.

Grading Policy
The following is the grading scale. As noted above, your final grade is based on the number of points you earn throughout the semester.

Grading Scale
A   93%
A-   90 – 92.9%
B+   87% - 89.9%
B   83% - 86.9%
B-   80% - 82.9%
C+   77% - 79.9%
C   74% - 76.9%

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/**

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-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 Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see http://ods.gmu.edu/).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/.
- 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/).
- 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/).
- The George Mason University Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website https://cehd.gmu.edu/.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

WEEK	TOPIC/FOCUS	READINGS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO CLASS	ASSIGNMENTS/TASKS DUE
Aug 30	Introducing the course and qualitative research	• Yin, Chapter 1 • Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 • Erickson, 2011 • Boelstorff et al, Chapter 3	
Sept 6	Considering research paradigms and perspectives Designing qualitative research	• Yin, Chapters 2-4 • Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011 • Willis, 2007	• **CITI Research Compliance Training DUE** send certificate of completion to me via email • Discussion Leader(s):
Sept 13	Examining the role of the researcher in qualitative research: Positionality and reflexivity Considering ethics and rapport in qualitative research	• Guillemin & Gillam, 2004 • Milner, 2007 • Watt, 2007 Plus, choose one: • Kopenawaa, 2014 • Brock Johnson, 2007 • Pillow, 2003	• **Site Description DUE** • Discussion Leaders:
Sept 20	Engaging in fieldwork and generating data	• Yin, Chapter 5 • Emerson et al., Chapters 1-3	• Discussion Leader(s):
Sept 27	Generating qualitative data: Conducting observations	• Emerson, Chapter 4 • Carspecken, 1996, Chapters 3-5 • Narayan, Ch. 2	• **Positionality paper DUE** • Discussion Leaders:
Oct 4	Generating qualitative data: Conducting observations (2)	• Losey • Reyes and Crawford • Boellstorff et al, Chapter 5	• Discussion Leader(s):
Oct 11	Generating	• Yin, Chapters 6-7	• Discussion Leader(s):

	qualitative data: Conducting interviews	• Carspecken, 1996, Chapter 10 • Roulston, 2010 • Turner, 2010	
Oct 18	Generating qualitative data: Conducting interviews (2)	• Weiss, Ch. 1 and 4 • Davidson, Ch. 7 • Boelstorff et al, Chapter 6 • Myerhoff	• **Initial Observation Assignment DUE** • Discussion Leader(s):
Oct 25	Varied approaches to qualitative research	Choose three: • Langness & Frank • Nazario, Chapter 4 • Boyd, 2012 • Flyvberg, 2011 • Charmaz, 2011 • Hamera, 2011 • McIntyre • Hammersley & Atkinson, Ch. 1 • Jorgenson & Phillips	• **Interview Protocol DUE** • Discussion Leaders:
Nov 1	Focus groups and other creative approaches to data collection	• TBD	• Discussion Leader(s):
Nov 8	Data analysis: Data preparation, memoing, meaningfields and horizons	• Yin, Ch. 8 • Merriam, Ch. 8 • Carspecken, Ch. 6	• **Initial Interview Assignment DUE** • Discussion Leader(s):
Nov 15	Data analysis: Coding and interpretation Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)	• Emerson et al., Ch. 5-6 • Saldana, 2013, Ch. 1-2 • Paulus et al., Ch. 7	• Discussion Leader(s):
Nov 22	Data analysis: Coding and interpretation (cont.); thematic analysis	• Braun & Clarke, 2007 • Anfara et al., 2002 • Anders & Lester • Boelstorff et al, Ch. 10	• Discussion Leader(s):
Nov 29	Pursuing quality	• Lather, 1986	• **Initial Analysis**

	and validity in qualitative research Writing up qualitative research and issues of representation Examining future directions in qualitative inquiry	• Cho & Trent, 2006 • Koro-Ljungberg, 2010 • Dennis, 2015 ------------------- • Yin, Ch. 10-12 • Emerson et al., Ch. 7 • Paulus et al., Ch. 9 Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012	**Assignment DUE** • Discussion Leaders:
Dec 6	Presentation of findings: mini conference		• Prepare 10-12 minute conference presentation • Invite at least 2 people to attend