

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Research Methods

EDRS 822.002 – ADVANCED APPLICATIONS OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

3 Credits, Spring 2017

Tuesdays, 7:20-10:00 pm, Thompson Hall L003 (Fairfax)

Faculty

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Prerequisites

EDRS 810 and 812 or equivalent coursework.

University Catalog Course Description

Advanced seminar devoted to study of current topics in qualitative research. Deals with cutting-edge information on selected advanced topics in qualitative research, and provides opportunities to apply new skills and knowledge to projects related to students' interests.

Expanded Course Description

Figured worlds rest upon people's abilities to form and be formed in collectively realized "as if" realms. What if gender relations were defined so that women had to worry about whether they were attractive? What if, as in the Trobrian Islands described by Weiner (1976), bundles of banana leaves were so important that older women spent much time and energy assembling them? What if there were a world called academia, where books were so significant that people would sit for hours on end, away from friends and family, writing them?

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*

Human beings' capacity to "figure" their worlds using the resources around them is boundless: there are as many "as if" realms as there are people on the planet. I see the craft of qualitative research as, at least in part, an exploration of these many realms. Through the long-standing tools of observation, interviews, and document analysis and newer tools like "mobile" interviews and experience sampling through texting, we seek to understand participants' worlds while simultaneously negotiating a *new* realm between participant and researcher.

Yet this negotiation is not without its risks, quandaries, and confusions—and its labor. Qualitative research, when done thoughtfully and rigorously, is a major undertaking. This course explores some of the many facets of this undertaking, from the philosophical foundations of qualitative research; to design, data collection, and data analysis; to questions of quality and credibility; to the complex and

ongoing ethical questions we generate in the research process. We proceed in this exploration via two overlapping strands of inquiry: (1) discussions of how other qualitative practitioners have wrestled and played with the theory and process of qualitative research and (2) discussions *and* application of our own wrestling and playing with the theory and process of qualitative research.

To this end, I ask all of you to come not only prepared to discuss the class readings and your own ongoing research, but to agentively negotiate *new* research realms with me and your peers through the semester. Moreover, I suggest you meet with your major advisor as we proceed throughout the class, making her or him a part of our explorations and negotiations. Finally, I ask you to wear your “play clothes” to class. Qualitative research is a serious pursuit with potentially serious implications for individuals, groups, and institutions. But it is also an opportunity for play: with language, with constructs, and with the methodologies of the research itself. I invite you to enter class ready to figure new worlds for yourself as a scholar and research practitioner.

Course Delivery Method

This course includes a variety of learning activities: discussions in seminar format, text-based/multi-media presentation of course materials, experiential learning activities including interactive assignments, cooperative learning group activities, online discussions and activities, and lecture.

Learner Outcomes

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

- Develop an awareness of alternative philosophies and methods of qualitative research in relation to general perspectives of inquiry.
- Develop alternative research designs for various forms of qualitative research.
- Develop and critique various methods of data collection and analysis, depending on emerging and changing research design.
- Critique data collection and analysis techniques in relation to relevant literature on qualitative research methods.
- Critique your research project and suggest areas for improvement.
- Critique empirical qualitative research according to standards for quality research.

Required Texts

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *Thinking qualitatively: Methods of mind*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Supplemental Texts (*just for your information—you do not need to purchase them!*)

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.) (2003). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Course Performance Evaluation

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

- **Attendance and Participation (25%)**

As an advanced methods class, active and engaged participation is critical. I also expect us all to work together to support each other's work through encouragement, feedback, and critique. The following criteria form the rubric for attendance and participation:

1. Attend classes, be on time, and let the instructor know *prior* to class if you have to be absent for any reason.
2. Be prepared for discussion and tasks. This includes reading course material, preparing any responses, responding to peers if that need arises, and making insightful contributions based on reading.
3. Listen attentively and offer constructive feedback. All contributions should be considered and negotiated. This means accepting diversity in viewpoints and negotiating differences. While we will not always agree with each other, I expect us to be respectful and professional.
4. Share leadership roles. While it is comfortable to let 'managers' and 'organizers' plan small-group strategy, this will result in a vision defined by one person.

Each of these criteria will be assessed on a 4-point scale:

- 4 = Student *consistently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 3 = Student *frequently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 2 = Student *intermittently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 1 = Student *rarely* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 0 = Student *did not* demonstrate the criterion throughout the semester.

- **Module Papers (3 papers—25% each)**

Using criteria discussed in class, you will write a critical essay for each of the three module areas: philosophy, design and methods, and quality. These papers will allow you to interact with the material based on your own research interests and dissertation development. I suggest you communicate directly with your major professor/dissertation advisor about these assignments, as they may be used in either your proposal or dissertation. I would be happy to discuss this with you and your advisor via e-mail.

Guidelines for Module Papers:

Papers will be evaluated according to the following areas (5 points each):

- *Clarity of purpose.* Whatever kind of essay you choose for these module papers, your purpose should be clear to the readers, both at its introduction and throughout the paper. You may have multiple purposes or simply a single major argument to make, but either way, you need to trace your *purpose* clearly throughout your paper.
- *Application to yourself as a researcher or to your own work.* These module papers offer you an opportunity to explore the theories and ideas with which we have been playing from your *own* perspective: how does this apply (or not!) to your own work?

What are the implications of this research for your approach to research? How might the design of your dissertation (or other) project shift in reaction to what you have read?

- *Argument and credibility.* While different writers take different approaches, these papers should all make a credible argument for something(s), drawing on evidence from course readings, other readings, or life and research experience.
- *Depth of engagement with readings.* In addition to simple reference to and citation of course texts, I expect you to engage with the readings, noting places of agreement and disagreement, possibly critiquing the authors' approaches, and starting a *conversation* with the reading by deeply considering its claims and the implications of those claims.
- *Mechanics and style.* As a scholarly assignment in an advanced doctoral methods course, I expect you to follow APA guidelines for writing and referencing and to make your arguments clearly and concisely.

Papers may not be longer than 10 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font (excluding title page, abstract, appendices, and works cited).

Due to the individualized nature of these papers and the different needs of students, I may provide additional guidance or make alterations to these general expectations.

- **Grading**

Assignment	Percentage
Attendance and participation	25%
Module One Paper	25%
Module Two Paper	25%
Module Three Paper	25%
Total 100%	

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following:

A+ = 98—100%	A = 93—97.99%	A- = 90—92.99%
B+ = 88—89.99%	A = 83—87.99%	A- = 80—82.99%
C = 70—79.99%	F < 70%	

Professional Dispositions

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

Tentative Class Schedule

(This schedule is *tentative*—please check Blackboard for latest schedule.)

Date	Topic/Learning Experiences	Readings and Assignments
MODULE ONE: HISTORY AND THEORY OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (QR)		
Week 1 1/24	Introduction to the course: syllabus, overview, and	No readings this week

	course expectations	
Week 2 1/31	Overview of QR Paradigms and Conceptual Frameworks	Patton (2015), ch 3, Qualitative Inquiry Frameworks Saldaña (2015), ch 1, Thinking about Thinking *Charmaz (2004) Premises, Principles, & Practices *Flick (2015) Developments, Trends, & Challenges *Willis (2007), ch 1, World Views and Paradigms <i>Bring in a “qualitative artifact”</i>
Week 3 2/7	The Ongoing Debate: The Value of QR Revisited	Saldaña (2015), chs 2-4, Thinking Analytically, Realistically, Symbolically *Demerath (2006), The Science of Context *Greene (2010), Knowledge Accumulation (in W. Luttrell) *Hammersley (2000), Relevance of QR
Week 4 2/14	Connecting Research Design with Theoretical Orientation	Saldaña (2015), ch 5, Thinking Ethically *Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) Methodological Ambiguity *Lareau (2003), Methodology: Enduring Dilemmas *Pascale (2010), Cartographies of Knowledge
Week 5 2/21	Module 1 Workshop: Contextualizing QR in Your Work	→ Bring in an outline/summary paragraph of one argument you plan on making in your paper
MODULE TWO: DESIGN AND METHODS OF QR		
Week 6 2/28	Selection: A Critique of Convenience	Patton (2015), ch 5, Designing Qualitative Studies *Freeman (2000), Constructing Culture *Ghaffar-Kuchar (2014), ‘Narrow-Minded and Oppressive’ or a ‘Superior Culture’ *Reybold et al. (2013), Selection as Thinking Forward MODULE PAPER ONE DUE
Week 7 3/7	Evaluating Qualitative Methods of Data Collection	Patton (2015), chs 6-7, Fieldwork Strategies and Qualitative Interviewing *Ball (2005), An Assessment of the Documentary Tradition *Brown & Durrheim (2009), Mobile Interviewing *Jones et al. (2010), Documenting Classroom Life * Kvale (2006), Dominance through Interviews
SPRING BREAK 3/14	Take a rest and have some fun!! ☺	
Week 8 3/21	Coding and Beyond: Interpreting and Generating Meaning	Patton (2015), ch 8, Analysis and Interpretation Saldaña (2015), chs 6-10 Thinking Multidisciplinarily, Artistically, Summarily, Interpretively, & Narratively

		<p>(choose 2) Saldaña (2016), chs 1-3, Introduction, Memos, & First-Cycle Coding (“tour” ch 3) *Adair & Pastori (2011) Developing Qualitative Coding Frameworks *Tobin et al. (1989), excerpt TBA</p>
Week 9 3/28	Codes as Diagnostic: Patterns and Meaning	<p>Saldaña (2016), chs 4-6, After First-Cycle, Second-Cycle, After Second-Cycle *Charmaz (2011), Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research *Konopasky & Sheridan (2016), Towards a Diagnostic Toolkit for Agency</p>
Week 10 4/4	Representing Analysis: Reports from the Field	<p>→ Choose an article in your field that uses qualitative methods; bring it in and be ready to report on and critique its analytic methods, using readings from last two weeks</p>
MODULE THREE: QUALITY ISSUES IN QR		
Week 11 4/11	Exploring Narratives of Quality in QR	<p>*Harrison et al. (2001), Regimes of Trustworthiness in QR: Reciprocity *Koro-Ljungburg & Barko (2012), “Answers,” Assemblages, and Qualitative Research *Maxwell (2012), Importance of QR for Causal Explanation in Education *Muccio, Reybold, & Kidd (2015), Portraiture, Aesthetics, and Quality MODULE PAPER TWO DUE</p>
Week 12 4/18	Quality and Credibility: Reporting Out	<p>Patton (2015), ch 9, Enhancing Quality and Credibility *Anfara et al. (2002), Making the Research Process more Public *Cho & Trent (2006), Validity in QR Revisited *Polkinghorne (2007), Validity in Narrative</p>
Week 13 4/25	Ethics and Representing the Other	<p>*Baily (2011), Contextualizing Women and Gatekeepers *Ghaffar-Kuchar (2014), Writing Culture, Inscribing Lives: Burden of Representation *Leigh (2014), Insider Dilemma *Nind et al. (2012), Methodological Innovation and Research Ethics</p>
Week 14 5/2	Quality and Ethicality: Reports from the Field	<p>→ Choose an article in your field that uses qualitative methods; bring it in and be ready to thoughtfully comment on its (written and/or unwritten) approach to quality and ethical commitments MODULE PAPER THREE DUE</p>

*Indicates a reading is available on Blackboard

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and 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/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The Writing Center 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 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 Student Support & Advocacy Center staff helps students develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through confidential one-on-one support as well as through interactive programs

and resources. Some of the topics they address are healthy relationships, stress management, nutrition, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, and sexual health (see <http://ssac.gmu.edu/>). Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone at 703-993-3686. 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://ssac.gmu.edu/make-a-referral/>.

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