

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**Research Methods**

EDRS 826-001 - QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY METHODS

3 Credits, Fall 2017

Monday 10am-12:40pm TH1010 – Fairfax Campus

### **Faculty**

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### **Prerequisites/Corequisites**

EDRS 812 or permission of instructor; IRB approval REQUIRED for this course.

### **University Catalog Course Description**

This course is an advanced applied research seminar on qualitative case study design and application in educational research. Topics include descriptive, theoretical, evaluation, and policy case study design and methods. Students will conduct and critique a case study appropriate to their discipline.

### **Course Overview**

This class will be collaborative and interactive—be prepared for discussion! Questions are encouraged and expected, and alternative viewpoints are welcome. I value contributions to our discussions and ask you to speak up! However, I do expect you to support your assertions. Also, I expect all of us to create an educational climate of open debate that is respectful and democratic. Your participation as a team member and a class member will be evaluated, not by the *quantity* of your contribution, but by the *quality* and *integrity* of your contribution. (See participation rubrics.) Discussion threads will be posted to Blackboard.

I suggest that you keep a journal throughout this course to document questions and ideas about the process of qualitative research. Notes about class discussion should be included, but personal memos about methodology and questions for group-work are encouraged. This journal is for personal reflection only and will not be turned in or graded!

Reading assignments are listed for the day on which they will be discussed. Also note assignment due dates. Contact me if you have questions or concerns about this material. I am available via e-mail or scheduled appointments.

There are four main components of the course:

1. **Class meetings.** Each class will incorporate a blend of mini-lectures on key topics, demonstrations, class exercises, and/or discussion.
2. **Discussion.** We will dedicate a considerable amount of time to discussion; be prepared to connect your specific interests to the readings and to offer feedback to peer projects.
3. **Assigned readings.** These readings are an essential part of the course; they provide necessary preparation for class lectures, activities, and discussions, and they cover important aspects of qualitative case study research for further learning and understanding. Additional readings are provided to support individual exploration of case study research methods and application.
4. **Case study project.** An individual (or collaborative) pilot qualitative case study research project. Guidelines for this project are provided below; guidelines for the final project report will be given out in class and posted on the course Blackboard site.

### **Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered using a seminar format and requires completion of a research study.

### **Learner Outcomes & Objectives**

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

1. Understand the characteristics of qualitative case study research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies. Students will identify designs for various forms of qualitative case study research, as well as appropriate methods of data collection and analysis, depending on purpose and design of a qualitative case study research project.
2. Design and conduct a qualitative case study. Students will apply their personal philosophies of qualitative research to the development and implementation of a case study project.
3. Understand the assumptions embodied in the major approaches to qualitative case study research, and the implications of these for doing and evaluating qualitative case studies. Students will situate their studies in an appropriate problem related to their field of study.
4. Communicate (both verbally and in writing) the design and process, and critique the process of the study. Students will identify appropriate avenues for dissemination of their research. Also, students will critique their own and peers' research projects, and they will suggest areas for improvement.

### **Professional Standards**

Not applicable

## Readings

### ✓ Required Texts

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.

*Other readings as assigned; please check Blackboard for readings not included in the required texts. Suggested and Supplemental Texts are listed below; while not required reading, they might be quite useful depending on your level of experience and/or interests.*

### ✓ Suggested Texts

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [NOTE: Strongly recommended if you need or want additional intermediate guidance on qualitative methods. Don't bother with the older versions; there's a reason for the new edition!]

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [NOTE: Strongly recommended. Every student who has invested in this text uses it in every class, dissertation, and other research projects. It is THAT good.]

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [NOTE: Strongly recommended. Some of you might prefer this text to Stake (2006); we will discuss options our first meeting.]

### ✓ Supplemental Texts (These are FYI only! We will discuss in class which texts might be personally useful based on your interests. Let me know if you like particular texts and I can recommend similar readings.)

#### General/Comprehensive OR Texts

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

Gallagher, K. (Ed.). (2008). *Methodological dilemma: Creative, critical, and collaborative approaches to qualitative research*. London: Routledge.

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Emergent methods in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Voice in qualitative inquiry*. London: Routledge.

Luttrell, W. (Ed.). (2010). *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice*. New York: Routledge.

Miller, G., & Dingwall, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Context and method in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pascale, C. (2010). *Cartographies of knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Grounded Theory**

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Narrative and Phenomenology**

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Analyzing narrative reality*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Interview & Observation**

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.). (2008). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor. All assignments will be submitted as hard copy to the instructor at the beginning of class.

- **Assignments**

**Research Proposal/Draft Report.** You will develop a research proposal or draft report that communicates your design choices and rationale. We will discuss formats in class. However, if you want to use this as a part of your dissertation, I suggest strongly that you talk with your advisor about technical expectations. I want this to be a useful foundation for both your class research project and academic development. The assignment should not exceed 10 pages (double space, one-inch margins); this page limitation does not include title page, abstract, references, and appendices. (Be careful, though, about over-relying on appendices; if you cannot make the argument in the manuscript itself, appendices will not be useful.)

**Research Project.** You will develop and conduct a qualitative case study based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper that may be submitted for presentation and/or publication, and/or used toward your dissertation.

The research project is a major part of the work of this course. The range of possible projects that you can conduct is extremely broad.

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 with me 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.

As part of the project, you will write a research report. This final report should not exceed 20 pages (double space, one-inch margins): this page limitation does not include title page, abstract, references, and appendices. **The final project portfolio includes the original research proposal/draft and non-graded assignments (with my comments!) and final paper (including data collection guides).**

**Other Assignments.** Other non-graded assignments are expected during the course and contribute to your final project report. I will not accept late non-graded assignments.

- **Other Requirements**

**Participation Criteria.** Participation is not equivalent to attendance! The following criteria are expected:

- ✓ Prepared for discussion and tasks. This includes reading material and attending any team meetings.
- ✓ Maintains balance between speaking and listening roles. I do not expect you to ‘time’ yourself; be aware, though, ‘strong’ personalities overpower a discussion. Monitor your team and classroom interactions!
- ✓ Listens attentively and offers constructive feedback. All contributions should be considered and negotiated.
- ✓ Accepts diversity in viewpoints and negotiates differences. You are not expected to agree with one another at all times! However, we will be respectful and professional.
- ✓ Shares leadership roles. While it is comfortable to let ‘managers’ and ‘organizers’ plan team strategy, this will result in a vision defined by one person.

**HSRB approval** is required for this project. Since this project is expected to contribute directly to your dissertation or other project, your advisor should review and sign the paperwork. If you do not have an IRB-approved project, please discuss with me immediately. **YOU MAY NOT COLLECT DATA WITHOUT HSRB APPROVAL.**

- Course Performance Evaluation Weighting

Assignment	Points
Research Proposal/Draft	25
Research Paper/Portfolio	50
Participation	25
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100</b>

- Grading Policies

*Grading Scale*

A+	98-100%	B+	88-89%	C	70-79%
A	93-97%	B	83-87%	F	below 70%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%		

*Other Policies*

Grades on assignments turned in late will be reduced 10%, and assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Data collection and analysis assignments are required for completion of the research paper. These assignments are not graded, but they are the foundation of your research project. To receive timely feedback, assignments must be completed by due date.

### Professional Dispositions

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

### 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 turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.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 <http://cehd.gmu.edu/>.**

**Class Schedule****SECTION 1 PHILOSOPHY & DESIGN OF QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES**

**08/28      Introduction to Case Study Research**

**09/04      NO CLASS: Labor Day**

**09/11      Principles of Case Study Research**

**Required**

Baxter & Jack (2008) Qualitative Case Study  
Flyvbjerg (2006) Case Study Misunderstandings  
Stake (1995), Chpts. 1, 3, 10

**09/18      Designing a Case Study**

**Required**

Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling (2013) Selection  
Stake (1995), Chpts. 2, 6-7  
Stake (2006), Chpts. 1-2

**Recommended**

Anaf et al. (2007) CS & Systems Theory  
O'Reilly & Parker (2013) Saturation and Sample Size

**09/25      DIALOGUE: Philosophy & Design of Qualitative Case Study Research**

For in-class discussion, prepare a one-page visual and/or narrative conceptual framework/design of your proposed qualitative case study (10 copies). Be sure to identify the principles of your study that align with case study research, your unit of analysis, and general proposed methods. This is not graded! However, it is the foundation for your proposal/draft and final paper.

**SECTION 2 CASE STUDY DATA COLLECTION METHODS****10/02      Methods of Data Collection (Interviews)**Required

Corbin & Morse (2003) Interviewing Sensitive Topics/Insider Status  
Enosh & Buchbinder (2005) Narrative Styles in Sensitive Interviews  
Kvale (2006) Interview  
Stake (1995), Chpt. 4

Recommended

Caldwell (2013) Dyadic Interview  
Goldring et al. (2003) CS Transitional Leadership  
Focus Group/Group Interviews handout  
\*Holstein & Gubrium (2008) *Inside Interviewing* [Edited text has chapters that cover a lot of ground in interview research, including analysis!]

**10/09      NO CLASS: Columbus Day Recess****10/16      Methods of Data Collection (Observations, Documents)**Required

Brown & Durrheim (2009) Mobile Interviewing  
Lipka (2005) CS Math in Culture  
Perry, Reybold, & Waters (2014) MM CS Occupational Choice  
Zembylas (2005) CS Emotions in Teaching

Recommended

Leigh (2013) Insider Dilemma  
Ramos (2007) CS FotoDialogo Method

**10/23      DIALOGUE: Data Collection Methods**

For in-class discussion, prepare a one-page visual or narrative of your proposed data collection methods (10 copies). Identify the rationale for each choice. This is not graded! However, this will become a part of your proposal/draft and final paper.

**SECTION 3 ANALYZING CASE STUDY RESEARCH DATA****10/30 Analysis: Topical, Thematic Techniques**Required

- Stake (1995) Chpt. 5  
Attride-Stirling (2001) Thematic Networks  
Konopasky & Reybold (2015) CS Accessing the World  
Ryan & Bernard (2003) Theme Identification

Recommended

- Adair & Pastori (2011) Coding Frameworks for Large-Scale Projects  
Hsieh & Shannon (2005) Content Analysis in QR

**11/06 Analysis: Iterative, Theorizing Techniques**Required

- Stake (2006) Chpt. 3, 9  
Corbin & Strauss (1990) Grounded Theory methods, CCA  
Reybold et al. (2014) CS Counselor Educators & Hurricane Katrina

Recommended

- Hunt & Benford (1997) Dramaturgy  
Wolgemuth & Donohue (2006) Inquiry of Discomfort

**DUE: Research Proposal/Draft (include HSRB approval page)**

**11/13 Analysis: Topical? Theoretical? Grounded Theory?**Required

- Reybold (2003) Pathways to the Professorate\*  
Reybold et al. (2012) CS Dissertation Advising\*\*

Recommended

\*Choose at least one article from this list (articles are from my longitudinal GT study of faculty identity; we will discuss these in relation to the Pathways article).

1. Reybold (2005) Surrendering the Dream, Faculty Disillusionment
2. Reybold (2008) Practitioner-Faculty Dialectic

3. Reybold (2008) Social & Political Structuring of Faculty Ethics

\*\*Choose at least one article from this list (articles include institution-based analyses/evaluations).

1. Halx & Reybold (2005) CS Pedagogy of Force
2. Reybold & Halx (2012) CS Meaning of Interdisciplinarity

**11/20 DIALOGUE: Qualitative Methods of Analysis**

For in-class discussion, prepare a one-page visual and/or narrative of your proposed data analysis methods (10 copies). Be sure to identify the rationale for each choice and how each contributes to your research questions and goals of your study. This is not graded! However, it is integral to your paper.

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**SECTION 4 DISSEMINATION OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

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**11/27 Writing a (Quality) Case Study**Required

Ghaffar-Kucher (2014) Writing Culture  
Nind et al. (2012) Methodological Innovation  
Stake (1995) Chpts. 8-9  
Stake (2006) Chpt. 5

Recommended

See student examples posted to Blackboard.

**12/04 CASE STUDY REPORTS**

**Informal discussion of projects and case study readings; course evaluation.**

**DUE: Final project portfolio (paper and ALL original graded and non-graded assignments WITH MY COMMENTS).**

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

**Assessment Rubric(s)****Project Proposal Guidelines**

Quality research stems from a well-thought-out proposal. The research proposal includes three general areas: (1) what you are interested in studying—purpose and research focus, (2) why you should conduct the study—significance and benefits to practice and society, and (3) how you will go about doing the study—methodology.

- The purpose of the study should be a well-worded, concise statement of research intent. Keep in mind your resources, unit of analysis, and audience. Remember, your purpose guides the entire research process—keep it relevant, balanced, and doable!!!
- The significance of the study should include a statement of how your research will contribute to either your field of study or to practice. This section requires you to think ahead of your project and to envision the impact of the study.
- Your methodology is a statement of expected methods choices—this section will evolve during the research process. This section should address design, site and/or sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

A research proposal is written in narrative form, and departments/fields of practice usually have expectations/guidelines for research proposals. Please check with your program about proposal format. Also, please keep in mind the expectations for good writing. (Maximum length is 10 pages, not including title page, abstract, references, and appendices.)

### **Research Paper & Presentation Guidelines**

**Assignment:** You will conduct a case study based on your research interests. A minimum of three data collection event per person are required to complete the study and may include face-to-face depth interview, observation, and journal or document analysis. Data will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed according to criteria discussed in class.

**Length:** Suggested minimum length is 15 pages. Maximum length is 20 pages. (Title page, abstract, references, and appendices are not included in page count.)

**Style Format:** APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition

This assignment requires the integration of knowledge and application of basic data collection and analysis techniques for case study research projects. It is a research study and will be evaluated according to general standards of qualitative research criteria. The presentation and paper should address the following:

- Introduction (introduction to study, problem statement, purpose of study, research questions)
- Literature Review (conceptual/theoretical framework only)
- Methods (design, methods of data collection and analysis, sample selection, rigor)
- Findings (emerging themes/categories, supporting evidence)
- Discussion and Recommendations (critique of methods, limitations, further research)

The research paper will also include appendixes and references. (Appendixes should include a copy of your IRB approval page.)

Points are not based on the findings of the study—this assignment is to evaluate your knowledge and use and critique of qualitative case study methodology. However, the findings should be relevant, supporting the purpose of the study. The following areas will be evaluated:

- Logic—reasoning is rational, conclusive, and well supported
- Clarity—presentation is clear and concise
- Flow—material is arranged logically
- Support—evidence supports findings/arguments
- Defense—answers to questions are concise, direct, and well supported
- Fit—findings/discussion fit purpose/problem
- Rigor—attention to rigor in research design and project implementation
- Writing style—logic, clarity, flow, technical (grammar, spelling, punctuation)

**Assignments: General Guidelines/Assessment Rubric**

<input type="checkbox"/>	20%	Problem/Purpose Development	R/C____	I/E____	T____
<input type="checkbox"/>	20%	Methodology	R/C____	I/E____	T____
<input type="checkbox"/>	20%	Findings/Discussion	R/C____	I/E____	T____
<input type="checkbox"/>	20%	Critique of Methodology	R/C____	I/E____	T____
<input type="checkbox"/>	20%	Technical	R/C____	I/E____	T____

**100% Total Score: Final Paper**

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**Reflection and Critique:** avoids surface presentation and summary of topic; identifies and meets relevant need; provides neutral presentation of strengths and weaknesses of topic; evaluates strengths and weaknesses; states and supports position.

- B-** Reflective on experience and personal opinions; no critique
- B** Reflective on experience; reflection of material and/or theory embedded
- B+** Reflective of material and/or theory
- A-** Critique initiated; critique lacks validity and is not maintained
- A** Critique initiated; critique is valid but not maintained
- A+** Critique initiated; critique is valid and well maintained

**Integration and Evidence:** provides comprehensive connections across course material (*i.e.*, readings, discussions, previous learning, and personal experiences); balances theory and practice; provides appropriate and adequate support for ideas, facts, and propositions.

- B-** Material **OR** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B** Material **AND** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B+** Material **AND** experience integrated well; inadequate support
- A-** Material **OR** experience integrated well; limited support
- A** Material **AND** experience integrated well; partial support is valid but not maintained
- A+** Material **AND** experience integrated well; conclusive support is valid and maintained

**Technical Soundness:** characterizes professionalism and scholarship; attends to audience composition and needs; exhibits drafting and editing appropriate for graduate-level work.  
Marked items require attention:

<input type="checkbox"/> Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/> Readability	<input type="checkbox"/> APA Style
<input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation	<input type="checkbox"/> Tone/Voice	<input type="checkbox"/> Cover page
<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/> Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstract
<input type="checkbox"/> Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Flow	<input type="checkbox"/> Citations
<input type="checkbox"/> Sentence structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitions	<input type="checkbox"/> Quotations
<input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Preview/Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> References