

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
PhD Program

EDRS 822, Section 001 – Advanced Applications of Qualitative Methods  
3 credits, Fall 2018  
Thursdays, 4:30-7:10pm, DK 2054 - Fairfax Campus

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisite:**

Successful completion (with a grade of B- or higher) of EDRS 810 and EDRS 812, or equivalent coursework or experience.

**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.

**Course Overview:**

What are the theoretical and practical implications that undergird approaches to qualitative methodology? What are the innate meanings, hidden challenges, and critical juxtapositions that inform the ways in which we “do” research? This course is an advanced seminar that will try to answer these questions and focus on current and emerging issues in qualitative research. In this course, students will explore the philosophical underpinnings of design and application, as well as various analytical techniques. This course consists of three modules, each on a particular aspect of qualitative research including design and theories of qualitative research, methods and analysis and finally quality issues and ethics in conducting qualitative research. This advanced course offers students flexibility to pursue methodological interests as they build towards their dissertation and the instructor will expect students to work closely with their major advisor in developing the questions and research focus that they will subsequently build on during this course.

**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 Objectives:**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- 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:**

Kuntz, A. M. (2016). *The responsible methodologist: Inquiry, truth-telling, and social justice*. London: Routledge.

Fine, M. (2017). *Just research in contentious times: Widening the methodological imagination*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Other readings will be posted on the class Blackboard site.

### **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).

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

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.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Points</b>
1. Participation	25
2. Module 1 Paper	20
3. Module 2 Project	35
a. Annotated Bibliography	15
b. Class presentation	20
4. Module 3 Paper	20
	100 total points

### **Participation (25 points)**

#### **Module Assignments (75 points total):**

Over the course of the semester, you will complete three scholarly assignments.

The assignment for the **first module** will be a paper that will address the topics covered during the first third of the course. You should include the following in 8-10 pages, APA formatted:

- Positionality statement – no more than 2 pages
- Connect positionality to “methodological positioning” AND discipline/field theory
- Connect to potential research topic/site/participants/design
- Conclude with methodological concerns, wonderings, etc.

For this paper, you should definitely bring in the class readings, but should also incorporate other course readings as well as readings you have done on your own. There should be strong evidence of your own independent reading and methodological considerations and thought.

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The **second assignment** will be a group project. You will self-select into groups of 2 students. Your group will then choose a qualitative methodological approach to explore. You may choose from the following list, or if you have another idea, you may make a case to me as to why that approach would be important for your group to explore.

- Arts-based qualitative inquiry
- Autoethnography
- Case study

- Critical ethnography
- Decolonizing and/or Feminist qualitative inquiry
- Grounded Theory
- Narrative Inquiry
- Participatory action research or action research
- Phenomenological inquiry

Each approach may only be investigated by one group. Once you have chosen your group and have settled on a qualitative methodological approach, you will create an annotated bibliography. This annotated bibliography will include at least three books and at least 10 articles. You should include an introduction that details your reasoning in choosing the sources you did as well as a conclusion that locates points of intersection as well as points of departure, similarities, differences, aspects missing from the literature, etc. Details regarding the expectations for this portion of the assignment will be discussed thoroughly in class.

Your group will also sign up to host half of one of our classes. This amounts to approximately 75 minutes of instructional time per group. You will take this time to teach us about your chosen approach. You should include creative activities, assigned readings, and other pedagogical approaches to engage us in this learning experience. Readings should be assigned the week before the class you will teach and you should make them available to all class members in some way.

During this class you should “teach” us about the methodological approach, its epistemological and ontological underpinnings, reasons to engage with the approach, examples of the approach being used in educational research, data collection and analysis that would be in keeping with the approach, and any other important information, as students may very well take this approach up for their dissertation or other work.

The **third assignment** will be a paper that will address the topics covered during the last third of the course, including validity and ethics. This paper should address the following in 8-10 pages, APA formatted:

- Introduce study (current, future, or hypothetical)
  - Problem statement
  - Research question/interest
- Brief discussion of theoretical underpinnings that links to methodological approach
- Brief discussion of research design, including methodology, participants, site, data collection, and analysis
  - Explicitly connect to theoretical section
- Discussion of validity that connects to theory and methodological approach
  - Conceptualization of validity
  - Validity techniques – detailed, with examples
- Discussion of ethical considerations and implications that connects to theory and methodological approach
  - Conceptualization of ethics
  - Ethical limitations/concerns – might connect to reflexivity literature

## **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 <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).
- 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices 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/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

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

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Date	Topic/Learning Experiences	Readings and Assignments
<b>MODULE ONE: Considerations <i>before</i> we design our research</b>		
Aug 30	Course Introduction	
Sep 6	What are we doing? What should we be doing? Why choose qualitative inquiry?	Kuntz  <i>Optional:</i> Hatch 2006 Knoblauch 2013
Sep 13	Considering “paradigms” and thinking about what gets in the way of doing what we should be doing?	Lather 2006a Lather 2006b
Sep 20	The politics of evidence and connecting positionality with our research.  Making maps of our own methodological positioning.	Fine  <i>Optional:</i> Morse Denzin and Giardina
Sep 27	No class meeting; time to meet with MCC, time to meet with groups to prepare for module 2, time to take a break, etc.	May read outside of class: Peshkin 1988 Lynch 2000 Breuer and Roth 2003
<b>MODULE TWO: Qualitative research design</b>		
Oct 4	An overview of how we design qualitative research and thinking with theory - Guest presenters: Jessica Lester (Indiana University), Payal Shah (Univ. of South Carolina), Kaz Stuart (Univ. of Cumbria, UK)	Listen before class: <a href="https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2018-05-28T05_45_01-07_00">https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2018-05-28T05_45_01-07_00</a> Lester 2014 Morse 2003 Agee Duggleby and Williams 2016 Mantzoukas  <b>MODULE ONE PAPER DUE</b>
Oct 11	Group presentations:	Readings TBD
Oct 18	Group presentations:	Readings TBD
Oct 25	<i>No class meeting – Meagan at a conference</i>	
Nov 1	Group presentations:	Readings TBD

Nov 8	Group presentations:	Readings TBD  <b>MODULE TWO ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</b>
<b>MODULE THREE: What is “good” qualitative inquiry?</b>		
Nov 15	Validity and quality	Moss et al McCabe and Holmes 2009 Tracy 2010 Bochner 2000
Nov 29	Ethics: The Researcher’s Role in Qualitative Inquiry	Probst 2016 Leigh 2013 Ellis 2007
Dec 6	Moving forward, issues of writing, representation, and dissemination in qualitative inquiry - Guest presenters: Jen Rainey (GMU), Una Shannon (Boston College), Pengfei Zhao (Indiana University), Jeong-Hee Kim (Texas Tech University)	<b>MODULE THREE PAPER DUE BY 12/8 AT MIDNIGHT ON BLACKBOARD</b>