

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**EDRS 621  
Qualitative Inquiry in Education  
Fall 2011  
Monday 7:20 pm – 10:00 pm  
Robinson Hall A350**

**PROFESSOR**

**Name:** Dr. Kimberly Sheridan

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**Office location:** West 2204

**Office hours:** By appointment

**Virtual Office hours:** Thursday 10 AM-12 Noon

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\*email is the best way to contact me

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

**621 Qualitative Inquiry in Education (3:3:0)** *Prerequisite: EDRS 590 or equivalent experience.* Focuses on the study of basic application of naturalistic research methods. Examines major theoretical frameworks and qualitative research techniques, which include content analysis, coding, and interpretation of data.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course is designed to be highly interactive as students are guided through the process of learning to use, conduct, and write about qualitative research in education. The course will be taught using lectures, class discussions, and individual and group activities. Technologies such as web-based discussion boards and qualitative research software may also serve as a medium for instruction. Students should be prepared to participate and lead discussions during each class meeting.

**VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS:**

Given the number of students in this course, the amount of email correspondence can quickly overwhelm my ability to give thoughtful responses. I have designated Thursday between 10AM-12 noon each week as my time to read and respond to emails for this course. I ask you to hold your messages and send them to me either Wednesday evening or Thursday morning so I know that I will be responding to your most current questions. I find this approach gives students time to formulate their questions clearly and know that they will receive a prompt response from me.

**STUDENT OUTCOMES**

**This course is designed to enable students to:**

- gain a basic understanding of current qualitative research methods and the theories and epistemologies that have influenced their development.
- gain experience with data collection techniques including participant observation and qualitative interviewing.
- gain an understanding of basic approaches to qualitative data analysis and interpretation, including categorization strategies such as coding and matrices, and connecting strategies such as case studies
- find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field.
- thoughtfully consider ethical issues in qualitative research
- thoughtfully consider validity issues in qualitative research

**RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION**

The program goals are consistent with the following Learner-centered psychological principles (APA Division 15) outlined by the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force in Education.

- Principle 1: The Nature of Learning Process
- Principle 2: Goals of the Learning Process
- Principle 3: Construction of Knowledge
- Principle 4: Strategic Thinking
- Principle 5: Thinking about Thinking
- Principle 6: Context of Learning
- Principle 7: Motivational and Emotional Influences on Learning
- Principle 8: Intrinsic Motivation to Learn
- Principle 9: Effects of Motivation on Affect
- Principle 10: Developmental Influences on Learning
- Principle 11: Social Influences on Learning
- Principle 12: Individual Differences on Learning
- Principle 13: Learning and Diversity
- Principle 14: Standards and Assessment

For more information please see:

American Psychological Association (1997). *Learner-centered psychological principles: A framework for school redesign and reform.*

<http://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/learner-centered.pdf>

Retrieved August 25, 2011.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

***Required Readings:***

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.  
Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Additional required articles will be drawn from the GMU electronic databases or available on Blackboard.

***Recommended resources:***

Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interviewing*. New York: Free Press.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**1. Participation 10%**

During class sessions in this course, we work on learning concepts, practicing the craft of qualitative research, and reflecting and analyzing research. It is essential to your learning that you come prepared to thoughtfully participate. Please complete required readings and participate thoughtfully in class activities and discussions. More than one absence, except under extenuating circumstances, will automatically lower your participation grade.

**2. Article critique 30% (PBA)**

You will write a critical analysis of a qualitative research article on a topic related to your research proposal. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

**3. Research Memos 30%**

You will be regularly writing memos in response to prompts, both during class and as outside assignments that you will turn as a collection. Details on the assignments and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

**4. Participant observation project 30%**

You will propose, conduct, and write field notes and an analytic memo on a 1 -2 hour field observation relevant to your research proposal. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

**Or**

**Interview project 30%**

You will write an interview protocol, conduct a 1 to 1.5 hour interview, transcribe the interview and write an analytic memo. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

**Grading Scale**

|                  |                 |                  |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| A+ = 98 – 100%   | A = 93 – 97.99% | A- = 90 – 92.99% |
| B+ = 88 – 89.99% | B = 83 – 87.99% | B- = 80 – 82.99% |

C = 70 – 79.99%      F < 70%

## **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:**

### *Student Expectations*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].

Please note that:

- Plagiarism encompasses the following:
    1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
    2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.(from Mason Honor Code online at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>)
  - Paraphrasing involves taking someone else's ideas and putting them in your own words. When you paraphrase, you need to cite the source.
  - When material is copied word for word from a source, it is a direct quotation. You must use quotation marks (or block indent the text) and cite the source.
  - Electronic tools (e.g., SafeAssign) may be used to detect plagiarism if necessary.
  - Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are treated seriously and may result in disciplinary actions.
- 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/>].
  - Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
  - 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.

- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### *Campus Resources*

- 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 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/>].
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

## **ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES**

### **Paper Format**

- 1 inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Include the following information: title, name, date, professor, course number.
- All papers should be proofread for spelling, grammar, and clarity errors.
- Citation and references in APA format.

### Late Assignments

Assignments are due at or before the start of class on the assigned due date. Late assignments will be marked down by half a letter grade for each day the assignment is late. If there are questions or concerns about a particular situation, please contact me via email in advance of the deadline.

## PERFORMANCE BASED ASSESSMENT

### RUBRIC FOR EDRS 621 ARTICLE CRITIQUE

Total Possible points 36

#### 1. Writing and Mechanics (6 points)

|  | <b>2 points</b>  | <b>1 point</b>  | <b>0 points</b>   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Selection of article</b>              | Article uses qualitative research methods, has a clear description of its methods and is from a peer-reviewed journal* | Article uses qualitative research methods, but may not have a clear account of methods or is not from a peer-reviewed source. | Article does not use qualitative research methods or does not have an account of its methods. |
| <b>APA Style and grammar</b>             | Paper adheres to the guidelines of APA style with minimal or no errors. There are few or no grammatical errors         | Paper adheres to the guidelines of APA style but there are multiple errors.   | Paper does not follow APA style.  |
| <b>Writing: Organization and Clarity</b> | Writing is clear, coherent and concise. Overall paper is well-organized.   | Writing is generally clear but there may be lack of coherence, conciseness, or organization                                   | Writing is unclear and disorganized.  |

\*Scholarly articles not from peer-reviewed journals (e.g. edited book chapters, monographs) can be submitted to the professor for consideration *prior* to completing the assignment.

**2. Paper addresses 5 components of research design: Purposes, Conceptual Context, Research Questions, Methods, and Validity. 1 point is awarded for each component addressed** (1 point assigned per component, .5 given if treatment is limited or shows misunderstandings, 0 if absent) **5 points possible**

#### 3. Analysis and reflection components (25 points possible)

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
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|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Analysis of relationships among design elements</b>       | Insightful and thorough discussion of how all the design elements are related in the study.                         | Insightful discussion on the relatedness of most of the design elements.                                | Relationships among elements are discussed, but treatment is not thorough.   | Some discussion of the relationship among design elements  | Minimal discussion of the relationship among design elements                                | There is no discussion of the relationship among design elements. |
| <b>Analysis of presentation of findings</b>                  | Findings of the study are thoughtfully analyzed in terms of both content of the findings and style of presentation. | Findings of the study are thoughtfully analyzed in terms of content or style                            | Findings are discussed but analysis is somewhat cursory.   | Findings are discussed but analysis is cursory and contains misunderstandings or unsupported claims. | Findings are minimally discussed and contain many misunderstandings or unsupported claims.  | Findings are not discussed.                                       |
| <b>Analysis of validity issues in the paper.</b>             | Issues related to validity are thoroughly discussed and show independent analysis.                                  | Validity issues are thoroughly discussed, but may over-rely on article's authors claims about validity. | Validity issues are discussed but lack thoughtfulness <i>or</i> reflect misunderstandings.                         | Validity issues are discussed but lack thoughtfulness <i>and</i> reflect misunderstandings.          | Validity issues are minimally discussed and reflect significant misunderstandings.          | There is no discussion of validity issues.                        |
| <b>Use of evidence to support explanations and judgments</b> | Evidence is consistently well-chosen to support claims.   | Evidence is usually well-chosen to support claims.  | Evidence is well-chosen to support some claims, but others are unsupported or poorly supported by the evidence.    | Many claims are poorly or unsupported by evidence.   | There is minimal use of evidence to support claims and instances used provide poor support. | There is no use of evidence to support claims.                    |
| <b>Reflection component</b>                                  | Candidate identifies original and insightful questions and connections to other coursework or experiences.          | Candidate identifies generally insightful questions and connections to coursework/experiences.          | Candidate identifies questions or connections to coursework/experiences, but some may seem superficial or cursory. | Candidate identifies few questions or connections, and those seem superficial or cursory.            | There are minimal questions or connections made.  | There are no questions or connections made.                       |

**Course Schedule\***

\*This is a tentative course schedule which may change. The most current schedule will be available on the Blackboard site.

|      |                         |                          |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Date | Class Topics/Activities | Readings/Assignments Due |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|

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| <p>Week 1<br/>Aug 29</p>  | <p><b>Introduction to qualitative research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create concept map</li> <li>• Introduction to qualitative research.</li> <li>• Overview of course and syllabus</li> <li>• Discussion of texts, assignments</li> <li>• Discussion of major goals for the class</li> </ul> <p><b>Diving Into Participant Observation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant observation activity</li> <li>• Assign informed concept map activity</li> </ul> | <p>Review syllabus.</p> <p>*BEFORE October 17<sup>th</sup>'s class session you will need to have completed the HSRB tutorial and submit the certificate of completion to me—so plan accordingly.</p>  |
| <p>Week 2<br/>Sept 5</p>  | <p>Labor Day: University Closed</p>   |   |
| <p>Week 3<br/>Sept 12</p> | <p><b>The Logic of Qualitative Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative vs. quantitative research</li> <li>• Concept map discussion</li> </ul> <p><b>Diving Into Interviewing</b><br/>Educational history pilot interview<br/>*Note: people who have laptops it would be helpful to bring them in for this session so we can have recorders of interviews.</p> <p>Assign 1 page memo on goals/purposes</p>   | <p>Bogdan &amp; Biklen, Ch 1<br/><i>Foundations of Qualitative Research for Education</i></p> <p>Maxwell 2005, Ch 1<br/><i>A Model for Qualitative Research Design</i></p> <p>Create a concept map/visual representation that helps you understand and remember Bogdan &amp; Biklen's 5 key characteristics of Qualitative Research what you see as the key ideas in the 11 common questions.</p> |
| <p>Week 4<br/>Sept 19</p> | <p><b>Coming to Questions</b><br/>Discuss research goals<br/>Pair swap of memo, discuss</p> <p><b>Getting a feel for participant observation</b><br/>In-class observation and memos:<br/>Anton examples<br/>(open play and developmental pretend play series)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studio Thinking video example<br/>(open and with framework)</li> </ul>   | <p>Bogdan &amp; Biklen, Ch 4 p. 117-129<br/>Bogdan &amp; Biklen Appendix B</p> <p>Read Maxwell, Ch 2<br/><i>Goals</i></p> <p>1 page memo on goals/purposes due</p>  |



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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulation of research questions for video cases</li> </ul>  |   |
| Week 5<br>Sept 26   | <p><b>Qualitative research design:<br/>Locating your goals/purposes in a broader conceptual context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of qualitative research designs</li> <li>• Establishing conceptual context.</li> <li>• Designing research questions</li> <li>• Discuss Studio thinking example</li> <li>• Discuss sources for finding qualitative research articles.</li> </ul> | <p>Bogdan &amp; Biklen, Ch 2<br/><i>Research Design</i></p> <p>Maxwell, Chapter Ch 3<br/><i>Conceptual Framework</i>, Ch 4, <i>Research Questions</i></p> <p>Memo due on Studio Thinking Ch 1 p 1-4 (available on-line) Identify goals/purposes, conceptual context, and research questions</p> |
| Week 6<br>Oct 3   | <p><b>Qualitative Research Design:<br/>Aligning Purposes, Conceptual Context and Questions</b></p> <p>Discuss elements of a proposal, Dr. Sheridan review articles<br/>Discuss choice of participant observation and/or interview, review guidelines</p>   | <p>Bring in copy of article you would like to use for article critique (can bring in multiple possibilities if you want help selecting).</p> <p>Read Stevens et al. for critique workshop (article will be posted on Bb).</p>   |
| Week 7<br>Tues Oct 11<br>*Mon Oct 10<br>no class,<br>Columbus day | <p><b>Reading Qualitative Research from a Design Perspective</b></p> <p>Initial discussion of validity</p> <p>Workshop and discussion on articles for <i>article critique</i> assignment: Focus on validity threats</p> <p>Discussion on key factors in understanding and evaluating qualitative studies.</p>  | <p>Review Maxwell, Ch 1 and Read Maxwell, Ch 6<br/><i>Validity</i></p> <p>Bring in your qualitative research article and initial memo on it for the article critique assignment for workshop session.</p>   |
| Week 8<br>Oct 17  | <p><b>Qualitative Research Design:<br/>Methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical issues (Informed consent, confidentiality, HSRB course)</li> <li>• Data Collection techniques: Interviews and Participant</li> </ul>   | <p>Bogdan &amp; Biklen, Ch 3<br/><i>Fieldwork</i>, Ch 4, <i>Qualitative Data</i></p> <p>Maxwell, Ch 5, <i>Methods</i></p>   |

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|                           | <p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting Questions and Methods</li> <li>• Discussion of proposed sites, workshop on informed consent, observation/interview protocols, cover memos.</li> <li>• Discuss assignment guidelines</li> </ul>  | <p>Memo describing the site or participant you plan to use for your observation/interview assignment and explaining why you made that choice.</p> <p>*Bring in certification of completion of HSRB course (see Blackboard for information)</p> |
| <p>Week 9<br/>Oct 24</p>  | <p><b>Qualitative Research Design: Data Analysis and Iterative Process (Design→Analysis→Re-Design...)</b><br/>Discussion of article critique assignments—critique from a design perspective.</p> <p>Writing Informed Consent<br/>Designing Interview Protocol</p> <p>(If time, begin this)<br/>Revisiting research questions guiding educational background pilot interviews<br/>Open-coding of pilot educational interviews<br/>Discussion of key ideas, revisiting and reframing research questions.<br/>Development of a code list.</p> | <p>Bogdan &amp; Biklen, Ch 5<br/><i>Data Analysis and Interpretation</i></p> <p>Revisit section on Data Analysis (p. 95-103) in Maxwell, Ch 5 <i>Methods</i></p> <p><b>Article Critique Due</b></p>  |
| <p>Week 10<br/>Oct 31</p> | <p><b>Qualitative Research Design: Data Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the analysis in data collection/documentation</li> <li>• Further discussion of data analysis techniques.</li> <li>• Comparing methods</li> <li>• Connecting methods</li> </ul>   | <p>Revisit Bogdan &amp; Biklen, ch 5, <i>Data Analysis and Interpretation</i></p> <p>Maxwell: Comparing and Connecting (on blackboard)</p> <p>Memo Due</p>   |
| <p>Week 11<br/>Nov 7</p>  | <p><b>Validity Strategies</b><br/>Identifying the “validity threats” specific to your research study</p>   | <p>Revisit Maxwell, Ch 6<br/><i>Validity</i></p>   |

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|                           | <p>Proposing strategies to address validity issues.<br/>Carrying out, assessing the effectiveness and revising validity strategies.</p>  | Memo Due  |
| <p>Week 12<br/>Nov 14</p> | <p><b>Validity, Reliability and Generalizability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might you be wrong?</li> </ul> <p>Revisiting Validity: Identifying and managing validity threats in your study, Anticipating and planning for potential <i>specific</i> validity threats</p>               | <p>Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i>, 62(3), 279-300 (on-line)</p> <p><b>Participant Observation or Interview Assignment Due.</b></p> |
| <p>Week 13<br/>Nov 21</p> | <p><b>Delving in Deeper to Participant Observation and Interview Assignments—Data Analysis</b></p>   |   |
| <p>Week 14<br/>Nov 28</p> | <p><b>Computer-Aided Data Storage And Analysis and Team Research</b></p> <p>Using qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO, ATLAS.ti). Tutorial and sample project.</p> <p>Conducting research in teams: Studio Thinking Project example: Interpretive Community, Inter-rater reliability, Writing in teams</p> | <p><b>Complete set of memos due; Identify 2 to be evaluated for content (1 will be randomly selected).</b></p>  |
| <p>Week 15<br/>Dec 5</p>  | <p><b>Course review and Reflection</b></p>   |   |