George Mason University College of Education and Human Development

PhD Program

EDRS 812, Section B01 - Qualitative Methods in Educational Research 3 Credits, Summer 2020

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 to 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 'miniresearch' study. Finally, this course aims to prepare you for more advanced study of qualitative inquiry.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format (with some synchronous involvement) via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site is now available.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

 High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see:
 https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool. [Delete this sentence if not applicable.]
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download: [Add or delete options, as desire.]
 - o Adobe Acrobat Reader: https://get.adobe.com/reader/
 - Windows Media Player:
 https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player
 - o Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

• <u>Course Week:</u> [Include only the sentence below that is appropriate for the course. Delete the sentence that is not applicable.]

Because asynchronous courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will start on [Day], and finish on [Day].

Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes.

• Log-in Frequency:

Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least [#] times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings. [Include this sentence only if the course is synchronous. Delete the sentence if the course is asynchronous.]

• Participation:

Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.

• <u>Technical Competence:</u>

Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.

• Technical Issues:

Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.

• Workload:

Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

• <u>Instructor Support:</u>

Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

• Netiquette:

The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words*. Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

• Accommodations:

Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes or 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 online data collection;
- 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.

Professional Standards

Not applicable.

Required Texts

There is no required text for the course.

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

- 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.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd edition). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Paulus, T. M., Lester, J. N., & Dempster, P. (2014). *Digital tools in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

• Weiss, R. S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. Simon and Schuster.

Other Required Readings (Available in Blackboard)

Articles or chapters will be required readings. All of these readings can be found on Blackboard. In addition to these readings, we may assign videos, podcasts, or other multimedia. These are required as well.

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 Ouarterly*, 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

- Typically, I would recommend you gain access to an audio recorder with software that
 allows you to listen to a recording from your computer. However, because we are
 operating under special circumstances, I suggest that you sign up for Zoom, WebEx, or
 other online video conferencing software that allows you to record. Recording interviews
 will be crucial for your fieldwork.
- Because we are working during a compressed time frame, I suggest you consider finding
 a way to transcribe the data you collect rapidly. Otter is a free app that transcribes as it
 records. Of course you'll have to go back through the transcription to make sure it aligns
 with what was said, but it or something like it will save you lots of time and move you
 more quickly toward analysis.
- 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 your program. You are NOT required to have access to a CAQDAS package for this course. If you are interested in using or purchasing one of these products, please let us know and we will help you weigh pros and cons of each package.

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)

Our Approach/Commitment

In this course, our primary goal is to establish a safe and inclusive environment that will support your learning. During this summer, in particular, we are most dedicated to making sure we learn together but also that we stay safe, healthy, and sane, as well as emotionally available for the loved ones we are taking care of. Because we are in unprecedented times, we have sought to decrease the typical reading load for this course, while maintaining its integrity and your ability to proceed through your doctoral program with a sound understanding of qualitative inquiry and the necessary skills to engage in qualitative fieldwork.

Throughout the course, we 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. In order to facilitate our learning environment, we will each work to cultivate a (virtual) 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, we will position ourselves as co-learners, as well as teachers. Hence, if we are teaching and you are not learning, then we are not teaching. Please let us know! Throughout the course, we welcome your feedback and will encourage your participation in an informal mid-course evaluation. In addition, throughout the course, you can expect feedback from us, 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 class requires a significant time commitment. First, it is **reading intensive**. 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 we encourage you to pursue this assignment with care and thoughtful reflection. Throughout the course, know that we will be here to support you and facilitate the learning process! Our intent is to make this a truly meaningful learning (and growing) experience.

In all of your assignments, we are 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	30
2. Positionality Statement	20
3. Fieldwork Project	
a. Interview Protocol:	10
b. Virtual Observation:	10
c. Interview Report:	10
d. Analysis Report:	20
, 1	100 total points

Participation (30 points)

30% of your grade will be based on your familiarity with the assigned readings, videos, interviews, and other resources, and with your communication of that familiarity on weekly discussion boards. You do not need to display brilliance, but you do need to engage with the

authors, speakers, instructors, and your classmates and try to make sense of the ideas brought out. At the beginning of the course, you will be assigned to a small group (3-4 people/group) to participate in the weekly discussion boards, 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.

Each week, Dr. Call-Cummings will post a short video covering key points in the readings/videos or a longer video lecture, which will include direct instruction around that week's topic. This will be posted by Monday morning, Eastern Time. By Tuesday night, each student should make an initial discussion board posting, creating their own new "thread". These postings may be in the form of a short video (typically about 5 minutes long) or in writing. These postings should relate to the week's assigned readings and videos. Before Thursday night, each student should respond to three separate posts made by their peers. Before Friday night, each student should make a final response on their original post/thread. This means that each week students should complete a minimum of five discussion board posts related to the readings and tying in any fieldwork that is being done that week.

You may also choose to participate by attending synchronous office hours. These will be held each week by Melissa, and sometimes including Dr. Call-Cummings, on a day and at a time announced at the beginning of that week. You should email Melissa and/or Dr. Call-Cummings prior to the day if you plan to attend. Notes will be posted on Blackboard for all to access. Please note that twice during the summer session these synchronous office hours will be required - we will discuss those days and times closer to those weeks, but please note these are marked on the syllabus as required.

Positionality Statement (20 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 statement 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 and/or represent: 1) your epistemic and ontologic commitments and 2) the assumptions that you bring to the research process. An assignment guide will be posted in Blackboard.

Fieldwork Project (50 points)

This summer you will not simply read about qualitative research, but you will also carry out a session-long (8-week) research study. This summer we will engage in a full-class study related to the current global pandemic. The goal is for each student 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. 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.

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 our data for the purposes of publication or conference presentation. Regardless, you **must** collect data ethically and safely. We can discuss during the first few weeks of class if we think we should seek IRB approval for our project. If we decide to do so, we will work together to make that happen.

Each student will conduct **1-2 hours of virtual interviews** (with two different people, minimum) and will conduct **virtual ethnographic "observations"** related to the global pandemic.

- a. **Virtual Observation:** You will turn in at least two different types of <u>publicly available</u> data generated from the internet and will reflect on what you observed online. Data may include photographs, blog posts, social media posts, news coverage, interviews, etc. Several additional points need to be addressed, which are included in an assignment guide to be posted in Blackboard.
- b. **Interview Protocol:** You will: 1) briefly describe who you will be interviewing, 2) create a list of the questions that you will pose according to the protocol work we do in class. Your protocol must follow the approach covered in class. An assignment guide will be posted in Blackboard.
- c. **Interview Report:** In this report, you will describe the interview process and method. You will reflect on your first interview compared with your second, noting any improvements, changes, differences, etc. Several requirements are listed in the assignment guide, which will be posted in Blackboard.
- d. **Analysis Report:** You will carry out analysis of the data you collected online and through your interviews, and then share your preliminary findings with us. You will be required to engage in multiple analysis approaches across all of your data sources. The details of what should be included in this report are listed in the assignment guide to be posted in Blackboard.

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% - 100%

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

See https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/

Class Schedule

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

DATE	TOPIC/FOCUS	TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO CONTRIBUTING TO DISCUSSION BOARD	ASSIGNMENTS/TASKS DUE
Week of June 1	Introducing the course and qualitative research Considering research paradigms and perspectives	READ: Denzin & Lincoln Erickson Tuhiwai Smith, Introduction VIEW: Video from Dr. Call-Cummings and Melissa Interview with Giovanni Dazzo	DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. • Contribute on the discussion board • Create and share a video introducing yourself SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS: • Melissa will answer questions and provide guidance at a time to be announced. Notes will be posted. If you will attend, please email Melissa in advance.
Week of June 8	Examining the role of the researcher in qualitative research: Positionality, reflexivity; foregrounding ethics, responsibility, and accountability	JIGSAW READ: • Milner, 2007 • Watt, 2007 • Pillow, 2003 • Guillemin & Gillam, 2004 • Hauber-Özer, 2019 • Miled, 2019 • Henderson and Esposito 2017 • Patel 2014 • Fine 2017	DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. • Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS

Week of June 15 Week of June 22		 Maxwell, 2012 Carspecken Ch. 3 Choose one: Mawer 2014; Airoldi 2018; Beneito-Montagut 2011 Choose one: Losey; Reyes and Crawford VIEW: Video lecture from Dr. Call-Cummings Video from Melissa on MaxQDA READ: 	Positionality statement DUE DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS Virtual observation
Week of June 29	interview protocols and conducting interviews Data analysis: Data preparation,	 Davidson Myerhoff Carspecken Ch. 10 VIEW: Video lecture from Dr. Call-Cummings READ: Carspecken, Ch. 6 	report DUE Interview Protocol DUE DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three
	meaningfield analysis, Reconstructive Horizon Analysis	• Call-Cummings, Hauber-Ozer, and Ross, 2019	responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board

			HOURS (required this week)
Week of July 6	Data analysis: Coding, themes	READ: Schertz et al, 2018 Attride-Stirling Braun & Clarke, 2007 Optional: Saldana, Ch. 1-2 VIEW: Video lecture from Dr. Call-Cummings	 Interview Report DUE DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS (required this week)
Week of July 13	Pursuing quality and validity in qualitative research	READ: • Lather, 1986 • Cho & Trent, 2006 • Tracy, 2010 • Li and Ross, 2020 VIEW: • Video from Dr. Call-Cummings • Video from Dr. Li and Dr. Ross	 DRAFT Analysis Report DUE (Optional), July 19, 2020, 11:59pm DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS
Week of July 20	Writing up qualitative research and issues of representation; exiting the field	READ: • Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012 • Anders & Lester 2015 • Fine 1994 VIEW: • Video from Dr. Call-Cummings • Interview with Dr. Ghaffar-Kucher	 Analysis Report DUE by July 27, 2020, 11:59pm DISCUSSION BOARD: First post by Tuesday night; three responses by Thursday night; final wrap up by Saturday night. Contribute on the discussion board SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS

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 https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see https://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 or https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

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