

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Educational Psychology Program
EDRS 621, Section 002: Qualitative Inquiry in Education
3 Credits, Fall 2022
Mondays 4:30-7:10 pm, Hybrid, Innovation Hall | Room 203
August 22nd – December 5th

Faculty

Name: Elizabeth Levine Brown, PhD

Office Hours: Virtual, by Appointment (please use Mason email to arrange)

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Teaching Intern

Name: Naomi Brown, MA, LCSW

Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment (please use Mason email to arrange)

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- Ms. Naomi Brown will be assisting with teaching activities as a part of a doctoral teaching internship. She is pursuing a PhD in Education at George Mason. She has been a high school English teacher and a school social worker.

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prerequisites/Corequisites

EDRS 590 or equivalent experience.

University Catalog Course Description

This course focuses on the study of basic application of naturalistic research methods. It examines major theoretical frameworks, and qualitative research techniques, which include participant observation, interviewing, coding, and interpretation of data. (Prerequisite: EDRS 590 or equivalent)

Course Overview

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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

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

1. Gain a basic understanding of current qualitative research methods and the theories and epistemologies that have influenced their development.
2. Gain experience with data collection techniques including participant observation and qualitative interviewing.
3. 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.

4. Gain experience using computer-aided qualitative analysis software (e.g. MaxQDA)
5. Find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field.
6. Thoughtfully consider ethical issues in qualitative research
7. Thoughtfully consider validity issues in qualitative research

Professional Standards

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.

Relationship to Program Standards

In this course, the following Educational Psychology program standards will be addressed:

- **Standard 2.** Candidates will apply their knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including basic concepts, principles, techniques, and ethical issues, to read and critique relevant products of research.
- **Standard 3.** Candidates will apply their knowledge and skills of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including basic concepts, principles, techniques, and ethical issues, to conduct research and/or inform practice in diverse applied settings.
- **Standard 4.** Candidates will demonstrate oral and written communication relevant to educational psychology, including knowledge and use of APA style and professional formats (e.g., oral presentations, poster presentations, article abstracts, literature reviews, research proposals, reports).
- **Standard 5.** Candidates will demonstrate professional dispositions relevant to educational psychology such as critical thinking, collaboration, interpersonal communication, intercultural competence, ethical leadership, professionalism, and

technological skills.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

Course Delivery Method

This course is structured to use multiple instructional formats. Instruction will be delivered via face-to-face, synchronous and asynchronous class sessions with large group, small group and individual activities. We will use Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal, Google Drive, and Zoom (see “Class Schedule” for details). GMU’s Blackboard course framework will be used regularly throughout the course. To access our Blackboard site, please use Mozilla Firefox (a free downloadable browser that is most compatible with the Blackboard software). Then go to mymasonportal.gmu.edu and log on using your GMU ID and password. For help logging onto Blackboard, contact Teaching and Learning with Technology [see <http://itusupport.gmu.edu> or call 703-993-8870]. **The instructor cannot assist you with log-on problems.**

Your GMU email address is required for communication with the course instructor and must be active by the first week of class. Please inform me of any accessibility problems the first day of class. Please note that because you have much to learn from each other and because research is often a collaborative effort, you will frequently work in groups. This will give you a chance to share ideas, be exposed to a range of perspectives and experiences, and support each other as you continue to develop your research skills.

*Under no circumstances, may students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Participation in an online class session requires your undivided attention.

Technical Requirements

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

1. 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
2. To get a list of supported operating systems on different devices see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems
3. Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard accounts, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
4. We will be using the software MaxQDA for data analysis. You will have access to a free student trial version for the duration of the class and you will need a computer on which you can run this software. MaxQDA is also available in the CEHD computer lab. See Blackboard for information on how to install MaxQDA on your computer.
5. Students may need a headset microphone for use with Zoom or other required web conferencing tools.
6. 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.

7. The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - **Adobe Acrobat Reader:** <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - **Windows Media Player:** <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
 - **Apple Quick Time Player:** www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

1. Course Week: Our course week will end on the day that our class meetings take place as indicated on the “Class Schedule.”
2. 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 **3 times per week**.
3. 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.
4. Technical Competence: 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Instructor Communication: Instructor will try to respond to emails within 48 hours during business hours. If you have not received a response from me in that time, please send a reminder. Conversely, if you send a question that you resolve before hearing from me, please let me know.
8. Instructor Support: Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content, or other course-related issues. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session.
9. 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; rather, you are sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
10. Accommodations: Online learners who require effective accommodations to ensure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

COURSE READINGS

Required Texts

- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). Sage publications. (*2nd edition also acceptable)
- Saldaña, J. & Omasta, M. (2017). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life* (1st ed). Sage publications.

Recommended Texts

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage publications.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage publications.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage publications.

Additional selected readings may be posted on Blackboard. [Please note: You are expected to take responsibility for obtaining copies of all required reading in time to prepare for class each week.]

You can purchase the book(s) at the bookstore or online (i.e., Amazon).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATIONS

1. Assignment Descriptions

Weekly

a. Attendance and Participation (60 points total)

This course operates with the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, and the most meaningful learning opportunities are those where you have the opportunity to offer and explore diverse perspectives with peers. To do this **it is expected that you attend all scheduled classes and asynchronous/synchronous online meetings** outlined within the syllabus. This is especially important given the short timeframe of these courses. Absence from class to observe a religious holiday, to serve jury duty, or to participate in required military service, and medical emergencies are exceptions to the above policy. If you anticipate being absent for any of these reasons, please make arrangements at least 48 hours in advance. In addition, **you are expected to be on time to class** each week. More than one absence, except under extenuating circumstances, will automatically lower your attendance and participation grade.

Students are expected to contribute to both class and online discussion and activities as well as genuinely listen to peers as they do the same. The instructor will also call on students in order to maximize classroom opportunities to hear from ALL of the students enrolled in the course. Remember, participation is more than just talking. Participation should raise the level of

academic discourse, which may include asking questions and encouraging exploration, consideration, and learning.

During class sessions, we work on learning concepts to practice the craft of qualitative research and analyze and reflect upon research. It is essential to your learning that you come prepared to thoughtfully participate. Please complete required readings and course activities, view video lectures and participate thoughtfully in class activities and discussions.

Additionally, cell phones are for emergency use only and it is expected that you will not use cell phones in class for purposes such as texting, social media, or phone calls.

Over the Semester

b. Researcher Reflection Log (100 points total; 7 Maxwell exercises; 4 analytic memos)

Your Researcher Reflection Log is a compilation of exercises and memos developed across the semester to engage with and apply course content. These assignments will be completed both during and outside class. You will post these on the identified due date on the course calendar within your Bb journal. At the end of the semester, you will submit the full Researcher Reflection Log in one document under Bb Assignments.

c. Observation Exercises (30 points total)

To get some field experiences collecting data you will conduct two observations in a physical space. Each observation will last about 30-45 minutes. You will take detailed field notes during your observations. You will upload your field notes to MaxQDA and you will write an analytic memo about your findings and your process. Your focus for this project should be related to your research interests and research questions developed earlier in the course. (See Blackboard for more details on the assignment.)

d. Interview Exercises (30 points total)

You will identify a research question, select interview participant(s), write an interview protocol, and conduct at least two 20-30 minute interviews (virtually or f2f). You will transcribe and code your data using MaxQDA. You will write an analytic memo about your findings and your process. Your focus for this project should be related to your research interests and research questions developed earlier in the course. (See Blackboard for more details on the assignment.)

e. Article Critique Written Review & Presentation (30 points total)

You conduct a critical analysis of a qualitative research article on a topic you choose. The article critique will involve a written review and presentation of this analysis. It satisfies the performance-based assessment for students in the Educational Psychology master's program. The assignment requires candidates: (1) to carefully and critically read a study using qualitative methods, (2) to analyze and critique the author's methods and (3) to present the analysis and critique. (See Blackboard for more details on the assignment.)

ARTICLE CRITIQUE UPLOAD REQUIREMENT (Important!): Every student registered for any Educational Psychology course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment to Blackboard (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course, or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based

assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Blackboard will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Blackboard submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

Assignment Points and Due Dates

| <i>Assignments</i> | <i>Total Points</i> | <i>Due Date</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Attendance and Participation | 60 points | Weekly |
| Researcher Reflection Log | 100 points | Weekly Monday, December 5 - Final Submission |
| Observation Exercise | 30 points | Monday, September 19 Tuesday, October 11 |
| Interview Exercise | 30 points | Monday, October 17 Monday, November 7 |
| Article Critique Presentation | 30 points | Monday, November 28 |
| | 250 points | |

2. Assignment Expectations, Points and Grading

Assignment Expectations

All assignments are to be submitted **through the assignment folder on Blackboard Assignments**. All assignments are to be submitted **by 4:30 PM on the date listed in the syllabus**. **Written work will not be accepted after the due date unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor and may 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. All assignments must be submitted on the due date stated within the syllabus (see below) and should be submitted in the format indicated by the instructor in class. ***Please note that assignments submitted in PDF format will not be accepted.***

Assignments should be saved with your Last Name and Assignment Title (e.g., **Brown ArticleCritiquePresentation**). All written papers are expected to be double-spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12-point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial). APA (7th) format is expected. All work should be proofread for spelling, grammar, and clarity errors; citation and references in APA format. If you do not have a 7th Edition APA manual, the OWL at Purdue is an excellent resource. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Please Note: The GMU Writing Center offers online support via email. They will provide feedback on your writing within one hour. Graduate and professional writing can be difficult; I encourage you to take advantage of this service. http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page_id=177

Note: I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester. You will always receive advanced notice of any modifications.

Grading Policy

At George Mason University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

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

| Grade | GRADING | Grade Points | Interpretation |
|-------|------------|--------------|--|
| A+ | 98-100 % | 4.00 | Represents mastery of the subject through effort beyond basic requirements |
| A | 93-97.99 % | 4.00 | |
| A- | 90-92.99 % | 3.67 | |
| B+ | 88-89.99 % | 3.33 | Reflects an understanding of and the ability to apply theories and principles at a basic level |
| B | 83-87.99 % | 3.00 | |
| B- | 80-82.99 % | 3.00 | |
| C* | 70-79 | 2.00 | Denotes an unacceptable level of understanding and application of the basic elements of the course |
| F* | <69 | 0.00 | |

All CEHD undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>.

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Policies

1. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
2. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
3. 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.
4. 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/>).

5. Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

1. Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
2. 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, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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 or support measures 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/> .

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/>.

Emergency Procedures

You are encouraged to sign up for emergency alerts by visiting the website <http://alert.gmu.edu>. Further information about emergency procedures exists on emergency.gmu.edu.

Professional Dispositions

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

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: Calendar is tentative and may be modified in line with course needs.

Note: We will begin with the assumption that all class sessions are synchronous and meet for the full class period. However, due to the need for a lot of hands-on exercises in qualitative research we may hold occasional asynchronous “lab” style meetings for some where instructor is available for questions/individual responses during a class session but there is no formal group session. These will always be announced in class and through Bb announcements).

| Date | Guiding Questions/Topics | Readings Due | Assignments Due |
|---|--|--|---|
| Monday, August 22 (f2f) | Course Introduction: What is Qualitative Research? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review syllabus | |
| Monday, August 29 (synch) | Qualitative Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maxwell Chapter 1 Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 1 Glesne Chapter 1 - Meeting Qualitative Inquiry (will read in class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ex. 2.1: Researcher Identity Memo (in class)</i> |
| Monday, September 5 – Labor Day (No Class) | MaxQDA tutorials and activities Complete CITI Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maxwell Chapter 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete between August 30th and September 11th |
| Monday, Sept 12 (synch) | Using Prior Theory & Knowledge Philosophical Paradigms Purposeful Design: Research Goals Approaches to Qualitative Research (Field Sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maxwell Chapter 2 Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex. 3.1: Concept Map |
| Monday, Sept 19 (f2f) | Approaches to Qualitative Research (Field Sites, Artifacts, and Interviews) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maxwell Chapter 4 Wolcott - <i>Fieldwork the Basic Arts</i> (on Blackboard) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex. 4.1: RQs Observation 1 Complete (Analytic Memo 1 Due) <i>Ex. 4.2: Revising RQs (in class)</i> |
| Monday, Sept 26 (synch) | Research Relationships Nuts & Bolts of Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maxwell Chapter 5, stop at p. 103 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex. 5.1: Research Relationships <i>Ex. 5.2: Questions and Methods Matrix (in class)</i> |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Monday, Oct 3 (synch) | Approaches to Qualitative Research (Preparing, Conducting, and Transcribing Interviews) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Exercise 1 (Draft Interview Protocol/Review in class) |
| Tuesday, Oct 11 (asynch) | Conduct Interview #1 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation 2 Complete (Analytic Memo 2 Due) |
| Monday, Oct 17 (synch) | Qualitative Data Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 5 • Maxwell Chapter 5, p. 104-120 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 1 Completed (Transcribe Interview and Upload to MaxQDA) • Analytic Memo 3 Due |
| Monday, Oct 24 (f2f) | Revisiting Qualitative Methodologies and Introducing Analytic Synthesis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 6 • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Interview Protocol |
| Monday, Oct 31 (asynch) | Conduct Interview #2 | | |
| Monday, Nov 7 (synch) | Validity and Ethics in Qualitative Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maxwell Chapter 6 • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 2 Completed (Transcribe Interview and Upload to MaxQDA) • Analytic Memo 4 Due • Bring potential qualitative research articles for article critique to class. |
| Monday, Nov 14 (f2f) | Evaluating Qualitative Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 10 • Tracy - Eight “Big Tent” Criteria (on Blackboard) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex 6.1: Validity threats |
| Monday, Nov 21 (synch) | Presenting Qualitative Findings Student Conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saldaña & Omasta Chapter 11 | |
| Monday, Nov 28 (f2f/synch TBD) | Article Critique Presentations Course Evaluations | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Critique Written Review & Presentation Due |
| Monday, December 5 by 4:30 PM | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher Reflection Log Due |