

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

**EDRS 621
Qualitative Inquiry in Education
Fall 2009
Monday 7:20 pm – 10:00 pm
Science & Tech I 126**

PROFESSOR

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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)

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.

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 an understanding of basic grounded theory approaches to qualitative data interpretation, including the iterative processes of basic coding, category generation and identifying themes.
- gain experience with data collection techniques including participant observation and qualitative interviewing.
- find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field.
- thoughtfully consider ethical 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*. Retrieved August 24, 2005, from <http://www.apa.org>

COURSE MATERIALS

Notebook or laptop: Students should bring to **every** class session a notebook (or laptop) in which they can regularly write memos.

Required Text

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Additional resources:

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This is a useful and relatively inexpensive book for thinking through research design, but it is not required for the course.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

These are useful books for thinking about qualitative research design and methods, but they are not required for the course.

Recommended Readings in qualitative research:

- Becker, H.S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R. & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An Introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. (1998). *Reading and understanding research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1995). *Designing qualitative research*, (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reason P. (1994). Three approaches to participative inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 324-339). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. (1995). Notes on the nature and development of general theories. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1,7-18.
- Wolcott, H.F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1990). On seeking and rejecting validity in qualitative research. In E. W. Eisner & A.Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp. 121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation 10%

You will complete required readings and participate in class activities and discussions. In addition, there are a number of ungraded assignments that you will need to complete as part of your participation grade.

2. Article critique and share 25%

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

3. Participant observation project 25%

You will propose, conduct, and write fieldnotes and an analytic memo on a 1 -2 hour field observation of an educational setting. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

4. Interview and memo 25%

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.

5. Reflection paper 15%

You will write a 4-6 page critical reflection paper. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

RUBRIC FOR PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

	<i>LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE</i>			
<i>ELEMENT</i>	Distinguished (9-10 pts.)	Proficient (8 pts.)	Basic (7 pts.)	Unsatisfactory (6 or less pts.)
Attendance & Participation	The student attends all classes, is on time, is prepared and follows outlined procedures in case of absence, the student actively participates and supports the members of the learning group and the members of the class.	The student attends all classes, is on time, is prepared and follows outlined procedures in case of absence; the student makes active contributions to the learning group and class.	The student is on time, prepared for class, and participates in group and class discussions. The student attends all classes and if an absence occurs, the procedure outlined in this section of the syllabus is followed.	The student is late for class. Absences are not documented by following the procedures outlined in this section of the syllabus. The student is not prepared for class and does not actively participate in discussions.

EVALUATION SCHEMA

Article Critique and Share	25 pts.
Participant Observation Project	25 pts.
Interview and Memo	25 pts.
Reflection Paper	15 pts.
Class Participation and Attendance	10 pts.
TOTAL	100 pts.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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:

All students must abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.
 - 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., TurnItIn.com) 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 must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

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 the start of class on the assigned due date. If an assignment must be turned in late or outside of class, students may contact me by email about how to deliver the late assignment. Late assignments will be marked down by half a letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

Course Schedule*

NOTE: This is a tentative course schedule which may change.

Date	Class Topics/Activities	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 Aug 31	Reflective practice with an interpretive community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to qualitative research. • Overview of course and syllabus. • Making meaning • Constructing knowledge activity 	Review syllabus.
Week 2 Sept 7	Labor Day: University Closed	
Week 3 Sept 14	Foundations of qualitative research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative vs. quantitative research • 11 Common questions about qualitative research discussion • Basic vs. applied • Public observation discussion • Research question activity 	Fieldnotes of public observation guided by a question (bring to class to discuss, not turned in). Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 1 Foundations of Qualitative Research for Education
Week 4 Sept 21	Qualitative research design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing conceptual context. • Reflexivity • Research design activity 	Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 2 Research Design Find qualitative research article for critique & share.
Week 5 Sept 28	Getting a feel for participant observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation of research questions • Observations via media 	Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 4 p. 117-129 Bogdan & Biklen Appendices A & B
Week 6 October 5	Conducting Fieldwork <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Collection techniques: Fieldnotes and Observation • Discussion of proposed sites, workshop of observation protocols, cover memos 	Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 3 Fieldwork Post idea for field observation on-line before class, read others
Week 7 Tues. Oct 13 Due to Columbus Day	Early analysis of observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of validity • 	Wolcott, H.F. (1990). On seeking and rejecting validity in qualitative research
Week 8 Oct 19	Further data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis techniques. • Transcribing, coding, & identifying themes. • Revisit video analysis 	Bogdan & Biklen, ch 5 Maxwell, J.A. & Miller, B.A. (2008). Categorizing and connecting strategies in qualitative data analysis. In P. Leavy & S. Hesse-Biber (Eds.), <i>Handbook of emergent methods</i> . New York: Guilford Press.
Week 9 Oct 26	Using qualitative data analysis software	Do web search on qualitative data analysis software. Field observation and memo due

Course Schedule*

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Date	Class Topics/Activities	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 10 Nov 2	Reading qualitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article share session • Further discussion of reading & analyzing qualitative research 	Article Critique due Choose “popular” qualitative book to read for part of reflection paper.
Week 11 Nov 9	Qualitative Interviewing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Interview analysis • Guidelines for Interview case analysis handed out. 	Bogdan & Biklen, p. 103-112; p129-132,
Week 12 Nov 16	Writing about Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for Interview and Memo handed out. 	Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 6 Interview proposal idea (1 page) due.
Week 13 Nov 23	Applying qualitative research to educational issues and practice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research discussion. • Practitioner perspective. 	Bogdan & Biklen, Ch 7
Week 14 Nov 30	Applications of qualitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research. • Continuing learning in qualitative research: journals of interest, further coursework • Discussion of interviews 	Interview and Memo due Page, R. (2000). Future directions in qualitative research. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> , 70(1), 100-108.(on-line)
Week 15 Dec 7	Revisiting key concepts in qualitative research design and inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking in on misconceptions • Validity 	Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> , 62(3), 279-300 (on-line)
Week 16 Dec 14	Course review and reflection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of reflection papers 	Reflection paper due