

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDRS 797
CASE STUDY METHODS
Summer, 2011
MW; 4:30-7:10pm; Innovation Hall 139

Instructor: Earle Reybold
Office: West 2003
Office hours: By appointment
Email: ereybold@gmu.edu

COURSE OUTLINE

General Information

This class will be collaborative and interactive—be prepared for discussion! Questions are encouraged and expected, and alternative viewpoints are welcome. I value contributions to our discussions and ask you to speak up! However, I do expect you to support your assertions. Also, I expect all of us to create an educational climate of open debate that is respectful and democratic. Further, be familiar with the [GMU Honor System and Code](#).

Your participation as a team member and a class member will be evaluated, not by the *quantity* of your contribution, but by the *quality* and *integrity* of your contribution. (See participation rubrics.) Discussion threads will be posted to Blackboard

I suggest that you keep a journal throughout this course to document questions and ideas about the process of qualitative research. Notes about class discussion should be included, but personal memos about methodology and questions for group-work are encouraged. This journal is for personal reflection only and will not be turned in or graded!

Reading assignments are listed for the day on which they will be discussed. Also note assignment due dates. Contact me if you have questions or concerns about this material. I am available via e-mail or scheduled appointments.

NOTE: When printing non-graded assignments or reading material, you are encouraged to print front and back. Also, when printing reading materials, you are encouraged to print front and back OR use recycled materials from previous print jobs. Graded assignments must be printed on front only and conform to APA style requirements.

Course Goals & Objectives

1. Understand the essential characteristics of qualitative case study research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies. Students will identify designs for various forms of qualitative case study research, as well as appropriate methods of data collection and analysis, depending on purpose and design of a qualitative case study research project.
2. Be able to design and conduct a pilot qualitative case study. Students will apply their personal philosophies of qualitative research to the development and implementation of a case study project.
3. Understand the assumptions embodied in the major approaches to qualitative case study research, and the implications of these for doing and evaluating qualitative case studies. Students will situate their studies in an appropriate problem related to their field of study.
4. Be able to communicate (both verbally and in writing) the design and process, and critique the process of the study. Students will identify appropriate avenues for dissemination of their research. Also, students will critique their own and peers' research projects, and they will suggest areas for improvement.

Course Structure

There are five main components of the course:

1. A **class meeting** once a week. The first part of each class will be devoted to mini-lectures on key topics, demonstrations, class exercises, and discussions.
2. The final hour or so of each class will be structured as a **work group** for your research project, during which we will apply readings and discussions to your project. All participants will provide feedback to others on their projects.
3. **Assigned readings.** These readings are an essential part of the course; they provide necessary preparation for class lectures, activities, and discussions, and in addition they cover important aspects of qualitative case study research for further learning and understanding.
4. An individual (or collaborative) pilot qualitative case study **research project**. Guidelines for this project are provided below; guidelines for the final project report will be given out in class and posted on the course Blackboard site.
5. **Presentation** of case study design, implementation, and critique. These presentations will be in the form of a mock dissertation defense, giving students the opportunity to review and critique peer research. This format encourages connected scholarship and highlights the social nature of research. Students may opt to include their actual advisors in this process.

Assignments

Research Proposal. You will develop a research proposal that communicates your design choices and rationale. We will discuss proposal formats in class. However, if you want to use this as a part of your dissertation, I suggest strongly that you talk with your advisor about technical expectations. I want this to be a useful foundation for both your class research project and academic development. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages (double space, one-inch margins); this page limitation does not include cover page, abstract, references, and appendices.

Research Project. You will develop and conduct a pilot qualitative case study based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper that may be submitted for presentation or publication, or used toward your thesis/dissertation. The research project is a major part of the work of this course. The range of possible projects that you can conduct is extremely broad.

If you are studying a setting where you have a prior role, or are interviewing people with whom you have a prior relationship, you need to **discuss with me the special issues that this raises**, and will need to address these issues in your final report.

You are free to use as a setting for your research project the same site that you are using in work for another course or for an internship. However, if you do this, the amount of work involved must be appropriate for the total amount of credit--normally, you can't use the same work (e.g., turning in the same report) to get credit for two courses. In any case, if you are using the work to satisfy two different courses or requirements, you **must submit, both to me and to the other instructor or supervisor, a written description of how you will use your work in this setting to satisfy the requirements of both courses**, and get our signatures indicating our approval of your plans.

As part of the project, you will write a research report. This final report should not exceed 20 pages (double space, one-inch margins): this page limitation does not include cover page, abstract, references, and appendices.

The final project portfolio includes the research proposal and paper, data collection guides, data, and non-graded assignments.

Project Presentation. You will identify a mock committee of at least two members; all class members will "serve" on at least one committee. (I will "serve" on each committee, as well.) All members are expected to substantially review and critique the design and implementation of the project. Details will be discussed and negotiated in class.

Other Assignments. Other short non-graded assignments will be expected during the course. These assignments contribute to your final project report. If you don't complete the course assignments and project on time, you won't be able to participate adequately in class discussions, and you won't get as much out of the course.

Readings**✓ Required Texts**

- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Applications of case study research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Other readings as assigned! Some required readings are in supplemental texts; please check Blackboard or electronic reserves for additional readings not included in the required texts.

✓ Supplemental Texts

- Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon/Longman.
- Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2004). *The case study anthology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Evaluation

Assignment	Points
Research Proposal	ng
Research Paper	50
Presentation	25
Participation	25
Total 100	

Grades on assignments turned in late will be reduced 10%, and assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Attendance is very important to class participation; one point will be deducted per class-hour absence. Data collection and analysis assignments are required for completion of the research paper. These assignments are not graded, but they are the foundation of your research project. To receive feedback in a timely manner, assignments must be completed by due date.

NOTE: HSRB approval is required for this project. Since this project is expected to contribute directly to your dissertation, your advisor should review and sign the paperwork.

SECTION 1 PHILOSOPHY OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

06/06 Introduction to Case Study Research

Workshop: Coordinate committees

06/08 Principles of Case Study Research

Required

Flyvbjerg (2006) *Misunderstandings*

Merriam (1998), Chpts. 1-2

Stake (1995), Chpts. 1, 3, 10

Yin (2003), Part 1

Workshop: Identify purpose of study

06/13 Designing a Case Study

Required

Freeman (2000) *Constructing Culture*

Merriam (1998), Chpt. 3

Stake (1995), Chpt. 2, 6-7

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

LeCompte, M. D., Preissle, J., & Tesch, R. (1993). Selecting and sampling in qualitative research. In M. D. LeCompte, J. Preissle, & R. Tesch, *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 56-85). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Workshop: Sample/Site selection; HSRB

SECTION 2 CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHODS

06/15 Methods of Data Collection (Interviews)

Required

Merriam (1998), Chpt. 4

Stake (1995), Chpt. 4

Goldring et al. (2003) *CS Transitional Leadership*

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1998). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (47-78). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Workshop: Interview and focus group guides

06/20 Methods of Data Collection (Observations)

Required

Adler & Adler (1998) Observational Techniques
Merriam (1998), Chpt. 5
Zymbylas (2005) CS Emotions in Teaching

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

Workshop: Observation protocols

06/22 Methods of Data Collection (Documents)

Required

Banning (1997) Documents, Assessing Campus Climate
Merriam (1998), Chpt. 6
Ramos (2007) CS FotoDialogo Method

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

Workshop: Document analysis

06/27 Methods of Data Collection (Mixing Methods)

Required

Hearn et al. (2006) CS HE Planning & Budgeting
Lipka (2005) CS Math in Culture
Merriam (1998), Chpt. 7
Kezar & Kinzie (2006) MM CS Student Engagement

Recommended

Kidder & Fine (1987) Qual & Quan Converge

DUE: Proposal (not graded, include HSRB approval)

Workshop: Identifying appropriate method combinations

SECTION 3 ANALYZING CASE STUDY RESEARCH DATA

06/29 Single and Within Case Analysis Techniques

Required

Merriam (1998), Chpts. 8-9

Stake (1995), Chpt. 5

Stake (2005), Part 1

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

Corbin, A., & Strauss, J. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.

Workshop: Analysis within case

07/04 NO CLASS!

07/06 Multiple and Across Case Analysis

Required

Stake (2005), Parts 2-3

Yin (2003), Part 4

Recommended

Harnish, Reybold, & Weiner (1997) Middle Grades Evaluation Report

Workshop: Analysis across cases

07/11 Evaluation Case Analysis

Required

Patton (2002), chpt. 5

Reybold & Halx (2006) HHMI Interdisciplinarity Report (for example of edited report for journal publication, see Reybold & Halx, n.d.)

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

SECTION 4 DISSEMINATION OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

07/13 Quality and Ethics

Required

Merriam (1998), Chpt. 10
 Reybold & Herren (1999) Magnolia Community
 Reybold & Polacek (2006) Health Empowerment
 Stake (2005), Parts 5-6

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)
 Tillman (2007) Reflective Notes

DUE: One-page summary of analysis (not graded, submit to ereybold@gmu.edu by 4:30pm for feedback by next class.

Workshop: Article critiques

07/18 Writing Case Study Reports—Narrative, Ethnographic, Descriptive Studies

Required

Merriam (1998), Chpt. 11
 Stake (1995), Chpts. 8-9
 Stake (2005), Part 4
 Yin (2003), Part 2

Workshop: Description & Narrative

07/20 Writing Case Study Reports—Explanation, Theorizing, Evaluation Studies

Required

Mathiason (2005) CS Fraternity Moral Development
 Watanabe (2007) CS Detracking Reform
 Yin (2003), Part 3

Recommended

Review Patton (2002)

Workshop: Themes and Categories

07/25 NO CLASS!

07/27 Presentations of Research

DUE: Final project portfolio (paper and ALL original graded and non-graded assignments WITH MY COMMENTS).

Project Proposal Guidelines

Research begins with an idea, but it takes more than an interesting topic to plan and conduct quality research! All good researchers get advice—constantly—from colleagues and “experts” about their research projects. This advice helps define and shape the study. Please share your project proposal with your team members and welcome their input; your study will benefit from the many different perspectives about your research topic!

Quality research stems from a well-thought-out proposal. The research proposal includes three general areas: (1) what you are interested in studying—purpose and research focus, (2) why you should conduct the study—significance and benefits to practice and society, and (3) how you will go about doing the study—methodology.

- The purpose of the study should be a well-worded, concise statement of research intent. Keep in mind your resources, unit of analysis, and audience. Remember, your purpose guides the entire research process—keep it relevant, balanced, and doable!!!
- The significance of the study should include a statement of how your research will contribute to either your field of study or to practice. This section requires you to think ahead of your project and to envision the impact of the study.
- Your methodology is a statement of expected methods choices—this section will evolve during the research process. This section should address design, site and/or sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

A research proposal is written in narrative form, and departments/fields of practice usually have expectations/guidelines for research proposals. Please check with your department about proposal form. Also, please keep in mind the expectations for good writing. Although writing style will not be graded on this assignment, it will impact our understanding of your research project.

Research Paper & Presentation Guidelines

Assignment: You will conduct a case study based on your research interests. A minimum of three data collection event per person are required to complete the study and may include face-to-face depth interview, observation, and journal or document analysis. Data will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed according to criteria discussed in class.

Length: Suggested minimum length is 15 pages. Maximum length is 20 pages. (References and appendices are not included in page count.)

Style Format: APA 6th edition

This assignment requires the integration of knowledge and application of basic data collection and analysis techniques for case study research projects. It is a research study and will be evaluated according to general standards of qualitative research criteria. The presentation and paper should address the following:

- Introduction (introduction to study, problem statement, purpose of study, research questions)
- Literature Review (conceptual/theoretical framework only)
- Methods (design, methods of data collection and analysis, sample selection, rigor)
- Findings (emerging themes/categories, supporting evidence)
- Discussion and Recommendations (critique of findings, limitations, further research)

The research paper will also include appendixes and references. (Appendixes should include a copy of your IRB approval page, as well as a copy of interview transcripts and observation notes.)

Points are not based on the findings of the study—this assignment is to evaluate your knowledge and use of qualitative methodology. However, the findings should be relevant, supporting the purpose of the study. The following areas will be evaluated:

Oral Presentation

- Logic
- Clarity
- Flow
- Support
- Defense

Research Paper

- Writing style—logic, clarity, flow, technical (grammar, spelling, punctuation)
- Research style—logic, support, fit, rigor

Evaluation criteria:

- Logic—reasoning is rational, conclusive, and well supported
- Clarity—presentation is clear and concise
- Flow—material is arranged logically
- Support—evidence supports findings/arguments
- Defense—answers to questions are concise, direct, and well supported
- Fit—findings/discussion fit purpose/problem
- Rigor—attention to rigor in research design and project implementation

Assignments: General Guidelines/Assessment Rubric

Module Papers: General topics are identified in the syllabus. Papers should be no longer than 10 pages (not including title page, references, and appendices), double spaced, one-inch margins, APA 6th edition.

___	20%	Problem/Purpose Development	R/C___	I/E___	T___
___	20%	Methodology	R/C___	I/E___	T___
___	20%	Findings/Discussion	R/C___	I/E___	T___
___	20%	Critique of Methodology	R/C___	I/E___	T___
___	20%	Technical	R/C___	I/E___	T___
___	100% Total Score: Final Paper				

Reflection and Critique: avoids surface presentation and summary of topic; identifies and meets relevant need; provides neutral presentation of strengths and weaknesses of topic; evaluates strengths and weaknesses; states and supports position.

- B-** Reflective on experience and personal opinions; no critique
- B** Reflective on experience; reflection of material and/or theory embedded
- B+** Reflective of material and/or theory
- A-** Critique initiated; critique lacks validity and is not maintained
- A** Critique initiated; critique is valid but not maintained
- A+** Critique initiated; critique is valid and well maintained

Integration and Evidence: provides comprehensive connections across course material (*i.e.*, readings, discussions, previous learning, and personal experiences); balances theory and practice; provides appropriate and adequate support for ideas, facts, and propositions.

- B-** Material **OR** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B** Material **AND** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B+** Material **AND** experience integrated well; inadequate support
- A-** Material **OR** experience integrated well; limited support
- A** Material **AND** experience integrated well; partial support is valid but not maintained
- A+** Material **AND** experience integrated well; conclusive support is valid and maintained

Technical Soundness: characterizes professionalism and scholarship; attends to audience composition and needs; exhibits drafting and editing appropriate for graduate-level work. Marked items require attention:

___ Grammar	___ Readability	___ APA Style
___ Punctuation	___ Tone/Voice	___ Cover page
___ Spelling	___ Language	___ Abstract
___ Agreement	___ Flow	___ Citations
___ Sentence structure	___ Transitions	___ Quotations
___ Paragraph structure	___ Preview/Summary	___ References

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Student Expectations

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