George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDRS 812
QUALITATIVE METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (3 credits)
Spring 2013

Meeting Day/time: Tuesdays 4:30 pm-7:10pm Section 002
Class Location: Thompson 1017

Professor: Anastasia P. Samaras, Ph.D.
Office hours: email or call 703-489-1663 for apt.
Office: Thompson 1403
Email: asamaras@gmu.edu
University Faculty Page: http://cehd.gmu.edu/people/faculty/asamaras/
Personal Web page: http://mason.gmu.edu/~asamaras
Blog: teaching-insideout.com

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. Prerequisites. Satisfactory completion of EDUC 810 or equivalent, or permission of instructor.

CEHD Core Values
In 2006, the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) adopted five core values on which to focus: collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. This course supports each of these values by providing multiple learning experiences that necessitate collaboration. Students are afforded
opportunities to reflect on their leadership roles in their work and learning contexts; to design and engage in innovative research-based practice, and to analyze proceedings under the umbrella of a social justice conference theme. These Core Values are aligned with course goals:

**Course Goals and Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- Understand the essential characteristics and purposes of qualitative research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies.
- Explore one researcher’s identity in relation to the topic selected for research.
- Situate a study in an appropriate beginning literature base and field of study.
- Develop and enact a small-scale study to practice data collection and analysis techniques, and validation measures.
- Communicate publically and in writing and with peer review on the design, process, and results of such a study.
- Critique one’s research project and suggest areas for improvement.
- Be able to use these understandings to evaluate published qualitative research.

**GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

c. 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.

d. 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/].

e. 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/].

f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

g. 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/].
CEHD PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CEHD CORE VALUES COMMITMENT
The College of Education & 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/ For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].

Emergency Procedures
You are encouraged to sign up for emergency alerts by visiting the website https://alert.gmu.edu. There are emergency posters in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures exists on http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert .

Required Course Texts

Other Required Readings *Available through My Mason Blackboard (Bb) or E-reserves (ER) password =“methods” EJ = e-journals available on Mason Library

(E)pistemological awareness, instantiation of methods, and uninformed methodological ambiguity in qualitative research reports. *Educational Researcher, 38* (9), 687-699. (EJ). **Only read Table 1, pp. 689-690.**


Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications, AERA. *Educational Researcher* (2006), 35, (6), 33-40. (Overview)

**Recommended Books**


**Recommended Readings**


**Course Structure**

The major purpose of this course is for you to learn and apply qualitative data collection and analysis procedures in educational research. Throughout the course, you are completing a step informally that you later insert into your final formal paper. If you are an active member of our learning community and build your project with commitment all along, and it comes together. Our work together involves:

1. **Weekly Class Dialogue ~ Being a good listener and open learner**

This course utilizes a weekly seminar format that is collaborative, interactive, and dialogic, i.e., sociocultural and designed within Vygotskian tenets of pedagogy and learning. Seminars will include professor and student-led discussions, and student presentations that will take place during class meetings. Each class will encourage discussing your developing understanding of qualitative theory and practice; less about the quantity of your talk, and more about your sharing of your ongoing, honest, deep and critical analysis of your meaning making and your ability to listen to other’s thinking in a respectful and non-judgmental manner, and with an appreciation of the opportunity to learn about your research by participating in your peer’s struggles with making sense of...
qualitative research as well. You are expected to participate in class discussions with openness, consideration, and effort to “hear for” and “listen to” others as you also seek to be understood. Your active participation is a major requirement of this course. Please notify professor if you must miss a class. There is no way to "make up" for class time that is missed.

2. Assignments and Readings ~ Commitment and Support
Since the research project is a large-scale endeavor, I have designed a series of professor and peer supported assignments towards your successful project completion. You are required to complete the assignments, POST them on the respective Discussion Thread by the class date. In essence these mini assignments allow you to build a stronger and higher quality report. If you do not complete the assignments on time, you will not be able to participate adequately in class discussions, and I will not be able to give you timely feedback.

You are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue and sharing of ideas. To be successful in the course, you will need to read to become familiar with qualitative research to conduct your research and participate in our class discussions in an informed manner. Reading assignments are listed for the day on which they will be discussed. My expectation is for you to read and apply the readings to your research project. Come to class prepared to share important concepts in the readings and the connections you are able to make from the readings to your learning and research experiences. Go beyond "what the author said." Share the questions you have about the reading in class.

High quality work (i.e., “A” work) is expected on all assignments and in class participation. All assignments must be completed. For full consideration, all assignments are due posted electronically on the My Mason Bb discussion thread prior to the beginning of class on the day they are due, unless otherwise announced. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with the professor.

All written assignments are to be word-processed using Times Roman 12 pt font, double-spaced, and submitted electronically. Title each assignment with your last name and the name of the project/assignment, e.g., Smith.ResProp.06.14.12. It is required that you save your work in multiple places for safe keeping. Use APA style.

3. Peer Review ~ Embracing Critique
Virtually all research designs go through some type of peer review process in academia, including the dissertation proposal stage, requests for funding, or when a study is reviewed for publication. For this reason, I am having you involved in an ongoing collaborative peer review process, designed to be supportive as well as constructive and to give you the opportunity to embrace the value of peer critique for improving the quality of your research. You will provide, and receive, constructive suggestions to assist you in improving your thinking and in looking at something familiar in a new way. Our work will involve mutual support, collaboration, and continuous peer review in a “critical friend team” which will be explained in class. In a collaborative relationship, you are expected to practice your best professional relationship skills in your discussions. This
collaboration/peer review will provide us with opportunities to see the value of collaborating as well as the challenges. It gives us practice.

4. Communicate
At the end of each class, please take a minute and reflect on the class session and email me if you have question(s) that remain unanswered. Your comments will provide feedback to help me be responsive to your ongoing learning needs. Turn your folder in at the end of each class.

5. Research Project
Specific guidelines for this project are provided on Bb on MyMason site. It is recommended that you get into the habit of writing analytical memos to yourself throughout the research process. You will find it useful in writing your discussion section.

The research project is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding and application of qualitative research. Seize that opportunity to delve and dabble into your possible dissertation topic. Use this assignment to move you toward and forward in your Ph.D. journey. You will develop and conduct a small-scale study of your methods based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper of roughly 6,000 words or 25 pages, not including references and appendix. The range of possible projects that you can conduct is extremely broad. The main requirement is that the project has to be genuinely qualitative in nature. Almost any setting, or set of participants, is a potential source of data for your research. There are formative assignments (with less weight) designed to scaffold and build your final research project.

1. No covert research. This is 1) ethically problematic, 2) too difficult to manage for someone just beginning to learn qualitative research, 3) restricts your research options, and 4) doesn't allow you to learn the key skill of negotiation with those you study. You must have the informed consent of the participants in your research. We will discuss this in more detail gaining Human Subjects approval for your study (in most cases you will not need actual HSRB approval for your course project, unless you are collecting person-identifiable data from minors or plan to publish the results). Nonetheless, ethical considerations are paramount in any research you conduct.

2. No primarily comparative studies. Your main research question cannot focus on a difference between two groups or settings or between two categories of people. While explicitly comparative studies are a valid and important form of qualitative research, they are not a useful way to learn how to do qualitative research. Comparison is likely to 1) push you toward more quantitative questions and modes of thinking, 2) reduce the depth of understanding you can gain of one group, setting, or category, and 3) make it more difficult for you to learn what is essential in qualitative research.

3. In addition to a pilot interview, a minimum of 1) 3 hours of interviews, or 2) 2 hours of observations of a single setting, plus at least two interviews with one participant in that setting. For an interview study, you will need to record your interviews and transcribe at least 3 hours of interview material. Normally, this will involve interviewing at least 2 different participants with 45 minute interviews. Collect consent using university consent form.
1. Pilot interview to refine interview questions, gain experience interviewing, and reflect with critical friends on “Valuable Mistakes Made.”

2. First Interview: with participant one and participant two

3. Second follow up interview with participant one and participant two

For an observational study, you will need to do at least 3 hours of observations of your setting, taking written notes, and to reorganize, rewrite, and expand your rough notes to make them usable for analysis. Normally, this will involve at least 3 separate observations. In most cases, a course project based primarily on observation should be limited to a single setting. The difference in the amount of material required for interview and observational studies is because interviews require more time to transcribe, and because they usually provide more material to work with for analysis. (Videotaped observations are a special case; if you plan to videotape some activity, talk to me about the amount of material required, which depends on the kind of analysis you'll be doing.)

Copies of your interview transcripts and/or rewritten observational notes must be included in the appendix of report, along with a transparency of your data analysis.

4. Data collection must take place across the semester. You cannot rely mainly on previously collected data, or conduct all of your observations or interviews in a brief period (one week or less). You need to be able to learn from your experiences, and to take time to contemplate and make corrections to your study design and techniques.

5. You will need to share your work for peer review. Any arrangements that you make with participants in your study must not prevent you from discussing your fieldnotes and interview transcripts (with pseudonyms used) with peers. *Class members will be required to respect the confidentiality of this information. Sharing your work in class is the only way that I can really assess the actual process of your research, and is also an important part of that process. You cannot do the work of this class in isolation.

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.
Evaluation

1. Assignments and Participation (Readings and participation are integrated into assignments)
   Descriptions of projects are posted on Bb.
   a) Curiosity Memo and Research Artifact Photo (5%)
   b) Researcher Identity Memo (5%)
   c) Research Proposal (5%)
   d) Literature Review & Critique methods section of an article (5%)
   e) Pilot Interview & CF WebChat (5%)
   f) Analytical Memo (5%)

2. Research Project Draft (5%)

3. Peer Review of Research Project Draft using rubric & tracking (5%)

4. Research Project (Headings and Rubric posted on Bb) 60%

Assignment and Participation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary 40 pts.</th>
<th>Accomplished 37-39pts</th>
<th>Developing 34-36pts</th>
<th>Undeveloped Below 34 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments are central to the development of your project. Attendance and participation are critical components of this course. It gives you the opportunity to learn from and contribute to building a positive classroom experience and learning community. Participants contribute to each others’ learning by actively listening, exchanging ideas, sharing learning from reading and websites, peer view, and supporting each other’s efforts.</td>
<td>Successfully completes all assignments. Outstanding and consistent participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities. Promotes conversation focused on the topic. Comments demonstrate a high level of understanding from assigned readings. Listens actively to peers. Embraces peer review; Prompts peer feedback, critique, and input. Purposely shares leadership roles in group work.</td>
<td>Completes all assignments. Participates in f-t-f and online discussions and activities on a regular basis; questions and comments reveal thought and reflection and contribution from assigned readings.</td>
<td>Does not complete some assignments. Does not contribute to f-t-f and online discussions or activities very often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection and some contribution from assigned readings.Ἀ</td>
<td>Few assignments completed. Few contributions to in f-t-f and online class discussions. Little evidence of participation and contribution. Shows little concern for peers’ learning or input or peer review. Misses many classes and is late often. Does not share leadership roles in group work.</td>
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Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Graduate Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>90 – 92.9</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Approaches Standard</td>
<td>88 – 89.9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Research Resources

Websites

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR)
According to this web site, “AQR is an international organisation which aims to further the practice and study of qualitative research.”

International Center for Qualitative Inquiry
According to this web site, “The International Center for Qualitative Inquiry is a multidisciplinary institute at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.”
Web site: http://www.c4qi.org/iaqi/home.html

Qualpage
According to this web site, “QualPage was originally designed as a private repository of information for graduate students learning about qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). Originally a Gopher site, it evolved into a Web page around 1994.”
Web site: http://www.qualitativeresearch.uga.edu/QualPage/e_journals.htm

Qualitative Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association. *The SIG offers and Outstanding Qualitative Research Dissertation Award.

University of Georgia, College of Education, Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy This website lists journals focusing on qualitative research.
Web site: http://www.coe.uga.edu/leap/qual/research/journals.html

Qualitative Research and Analysis (in addition to required and recommended books)

EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2012

**Interviewing**

*EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2012*


**Writing**


**Publishing**


**Websites on Publishing**


Tomorrow’s Professors Listserv [http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html](http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html)

**Resources for Publishing Your Dissertation**


- See Chapter 2: The Dissertation’s Deadly Sins
- See Chapter 4: Avoiding the Warmed-Over Dissertation
- See Chapter 5: Thesis to Book: What to Get Rid of and What to Do with What is Left

# Tentative Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignment Due</th>
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</table>
| 1/22 | Introduction to the Course and Qualitative Research  
Peer Review with Critical Friends  
Qualitative Research and Ways of Knowing | Bring Research Artifacts  
During the first week, read Establishing CF Team (Bb)  
Read Becker/Richards, Chapter 6  
Recommended: Klein et al. (Bb)  
Choose several exemplar projects on Bb to read and refer to during the course. |
| 1/29 | Researcher Relationships  
Research/writing Process  
Designing Your Study | Read Glesne Chapters 1 and pp. 272-275  
Read Maxwell Chapters 1, 2 & 6  
Read Corbin & Strauss: Chapter 2 (ER)  
Read Koro-Ljungberg et al. (EJ). Only read Table 1, pp. 689-690.  
Read Samaras only pp. 2-10 in Chapter 12 (Bb) |
| 2/5 | Research Ethics  
Selecting Site and Participants | Read Glesne Chapters 2 & 6  
Read Maxwell Chapters 4 & 5  
Read Samaras Chapter 7 on Bb  
Read Kvale & Brinkmann Chapter 4 |
| 2/12 | Conceptual Framework and Literature Review  
The Research Proposal  
Critiquing Qualitative Research | Read Glesne Appendix  
Read Maxwell Chapters 3 & 7  
Read Kennedy article  
Read Amundsen & Wilson, only pp. 96-97  
Read Freedman & overview Standards, AERA  
Start Literature Review |
| 5 2/19 | Conducting Effective Interviews | Read Glesne Chapter 4  
Read Mears Chapter 6  
Read Kvale & Brinkmann Chapter 7  
*Watch a famous TV interviewer* and discuss key qualities in class, e.g., http://www.dailytop10.net/top-10-best-interviewers-of-all-time/  

**POST RESEARCH PROPOSAL** |
|---|---|---|
| 6 2/26 | Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL) Online Work | **Conduct Library Electronic Database Search for Literature Review**  
**WebChat with CF on draft interview questions.**  
Critique, refine, and polish questions.  
**Start reading** Kvale & Brinkmann Chs.11-16 |
| 7 3/5 | Data Analysis  
Coding Techniques  
Analytical Memoing | **Begin reading:**  
Read Glesne Chapter 7  
Read Butler-Kisber (ER)  
Read Samaras Chapter 10 (Bb)  

*Recommended Braun & Clarke (Bb)  
Recommended: Mears Chapter 7 (ER)*  
**POST DRAFT LIT REVIEW**  
**PILOT INTERVIEW WEBCHAT WITH CF ON**  
*“Valuable Mistakes Made”*  
Share oral critique of methods section of article from your lit review in class.  
**Start conducting interviews** |
| 3/11-3/17 | *Have a wonderful Spring Break!* |  

*EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2012*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>Coding Workshop</td>
<td><strong>Start research analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10   | 3/26 | Standards of Validation  
Transparency and  
Trustworthiness  
Dialogical Validity | Read Glesne Chapter 8-10  
Read Creswell, Ch. 10, Validation 2013 (Bb)  
Re-Read Maxwell Chapter 6  
Read Kvale & Brinkman Chapter 15  
*Recommended: Samaras Chapter 11 & 13 (Bb)*  
Bring data analysis for critical friend check-coding |
| 11   | 4/2  | Writing Your Analysis | **POST ANALYTICAL MEMO** |
| 12   | 4/9  | Writing your Findings,  
Limitations, and  
Discussion | **POST RESEARCH DRAFT**  
Bring laptop and your abstract to class. |
| 13   | 4/16 | Abstract Workshop  
Presenting & Publishing | **POST PEER REVIEW USING RUBRIC** |
| 14   | 4/23 | Class Presentation Briefs | In 5 minutes:  
1. Tell us your RQ.  
2. Tell us your key discoveries.  
3. Tell us a valuable mistake. |
| 15   | 4/30 | TEL Online Work  
One more edit and finalize report | **POST FINAL PROJECT by 5/1**  
*Drop a printed final copy of research project.* |