George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

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

Meeting Day/time: Mondays 4:30 pm-7:10 pm Section 002
Class Location: Innovation Hall 205

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

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.
- Engage in peer review as a critical friend
- 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. [See 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/].

EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2013
**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**

**Recommended Text**

**Other Required Readings**
*Available through My Mason Blackboard (Bb) or E-reserves (ER) password =“methods” EJ = e-journals* available on Mason Library
Chapter 6: Fieldwork strategies and observation methods (pp. 259-322). (ER)


Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications,

**Recommended Readings**


**Course Structure**
The major purpose of this course is for you to learn and practice qualitative research from conceptualizing your inquiry to data collection and analysis and then with a reflective turn to what you learned about your research question and the qualitative research experience. Throughout the course, you are completing a step informally that you later insert into your final required paper. If you are an active member of our learning community and build your project with commitment all along, your final paper 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 my application of Neo-Vygotskian tenets of 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
High quality work (i.e., “A” work) is expected on all assignments and in class participation. 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. 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 the timely feedback you need for the next step.

Reading assignments are listed on the class day on which they will be discussed. You are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue and sharing of insights. Go beyond "what the author said." Share ANY questions you have about the readings in class.

All assignments must be completed. For full consideration, all assignments are due posted electronically on the Bb discussion thread prior to the beginning of class on the day they are due, unless otherwise announced. You will see a note of POST on the schedule for the day due. 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.09.23.13. 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 iterative 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 peer review will provide multiple opportunities for your ongoing professional development after our course has ended. It gives you practice.

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

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 throughout the research process which will be 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 and you must become familiar with completing an IRB form.

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) 3 hours of observations of a single setting, plus at least one hour of interview data with one or more participants 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 3 different participants. Collect consent using university consent form. The hour interview may run between 45 minutes to one hour. You may elect to also complete a second follow-up interview with each participant which we will discuss in class.

The Pilot Interview is a very crucial step in refining your interview questions, gaining experience and confidence in interviewing, and reflecting with critical friends on “Valuable Mistakes Made.”

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**

   Descriptions of all assignments are posted on Bb.
   - a) Curiosity Memo with Research Artifact Photo (5%)
   - b) Researcher Identity Memo (5%)
   - c) Literature Review & oral critique of an article (15%)
   - d) Research Proposal (5%)
   - e) Pilot Interview & CF WebChat (5%)
   - f) Analytical Memo (5%)
   - g) Two Peer Reviews of Draft using tracking & rubric guide (10%)

2. **Research Project** (Headings and Rubric posted on Bb)

   50%

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*EDRS 812 SYLLABUS/SAMARAS/FALL 2013*
### Participation and Assignments Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary 50 pts.</th>
<th>Accomplished 47-49 pts</th>
<th>Developing 44-46 pts</th>
<th>Undeveloped Below 44 pts</th>
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<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. Frequently involves peers in discussion. Conducts peer review; Shares leadership roles in group work.</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. Follows rather than leads group activities. Solicits some peer discussion and peer review. Misses classes. Is late for class. Somewhat shares leadership roles in group work.</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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#### 5 pt. Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Rubric Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A+ Exemplary 5+ points</strong> Establishes an exemplary narrative with thoughtful and relevant detail which demonstrates a very high level of understanding and application from assigned readings. Submission reflects outstanding participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities and active listening and serious feedback with peers. Submitted on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Excellent 5 – 4.7 points</strong> Provides a very adequate narrative with thoughtful and relevant detail which demonstrates a high level of understanding and application from assigned readings. Submission reflects excellent participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities and active listening and a high level feedback with peers. Submitted on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A- Approaching Excellence 4.65-4.5 points</strong> Provides an adequate narrative with thoughtful and relevant detail which demonstrates a good level of understanding and application from assigned readings. Submission reflects good participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities and active listening and serious feedback with peers. Submitted on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B+ Developing Less than 4.5 points</strong> Provides a fair narrative with thoughtful and relevant detail which demonstrates an average level of understanding and application from assigned readings. Submission reflects average level of participation in f-t-f and online discussions and class activities and active listening and serious feedback with peers. Needs more work. Submitted late.</td>
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<td>Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**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.qualitative.research.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](http://www.coe.uga.edu/leap/qual/research/journals.html)

**Additional Qualitative Research Resources**


**Additional Interviewing Resources**

Kosnik, C., Cleovoulou, Y, & Fletcher, R. (2009). The use of interviews in self-study research (pp. 53-69). In C. A. Lassonde, S. Galman, & Kosnik, C. (Eds.). *Self-


**Writing Resources**


**Publishing Resources**


Websites on Publishing

Getting published as a graduate student in the sciences, Richard Reis see archives http://chronicle.com/jobs/2000/11/2000112402c.htm
Tomorrow’s Professors Listserv http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html

Note: EDUC 797: Methods for Publishing Research is a one credit course offered in Summer Session A
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tentative Class Schedule</th>
<th>Readings/Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/26</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to Course and Qual Research</strong>&lt;br&gt;Peer Review with Critical Friend Team (CFT)&lt;br&gt;Research/Writing as Process</td>
<td>(Introductory Note Emailed to Bring Research Artifact&lt;br&gt;During the first week read:&lt;br&gt;Establishing CF Team (Bb)&lt;br&gt;Read Becker/Richards, Chapter 6 (ER)&lt;br&gt;<em>Recommended: Klein et al. (Bb)</em></td>
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<td>9/2</td>
<td>NO Class</td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
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<td>9/9</td>
<td><strong>Design!</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Big Picture: WoK and Qual Research&lt;br&gt;Intro to Methods of Qual Research&lt;br&gt;Start writing and don’t stop</td>
<td>Read Glesne Chapter 1 (Bb)&lt;br&gt;Read Maxwell Chapters 1, 2 &amp; 4&lt;br&gt;Read Corbin &amp; Strauss: Chapter 2 (ER)&lt;br&gt;Read Koro-Ljungberg et al. (EJ). Only read Table 1, pp. 689-690.&lt;br&gt;Read Samaras Chapter 12 (Bb)&lt;br&gt;<em>POST CURIOSITY MEMO &amp; RESEARCH ARTIFACT PHOTO on Whole Class Discussion Thread</em></td>
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<td>9/16</td>
<td><strong>Site and Participant Selection</strong>&lt;br&gt;Researcher Relationship &amp; Ethics&lt;br&gt;Conceptual Framework and Literature Review</td>
<td>Read Maxwell Chapters 3 &amp; 5&lt;br&gt;Read Samaras Chapter 7 (Bb)&lt;br&gt;Read Kvale &amp; Brinkmann Chapter 4&lt;br&gt;<em>Start Digging through Literature</em></td>
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<td>9/23</td>
<td><strong>Research Proposal as Argument</strong>&lt;br&gt;Critique Design!</td>
<td>Read Maxwell Chapter 7&lt;br&gt;Read Kennedy article (ER)&lt;br&gt;Read Amundsen &amp; Wilson, <em>only pp. 96-97</em> (ER)&lt;br&gt;Read Freedman &amp; overview Standards, AERA (ER)&lt;br&gt;Share oral critique from lit rev in CFTs&lt;br&gt;<em>POST RESEARCHER IDENTITY MEMO</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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| 9/30  | Interviews and Observations       | Read Mears Chapter 6  
Read Kvale & Brinkmann Chapter 7, 11-12  
Read Patton, Chapter 6 (ER)  
Read Saldana Chapter 1  
Watch a famous TV interviewer and come prepared to orally present key interviewer qualities in class, e.g., [http://www.dailytop10.net/top-10-best-interviewers-of-all-time/](http://www.dailytop10.net/top-10-best-interviewers-of-all-time/)  |
| 10/7  | Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL) Online Work | WebChat with CFT on draft interview questions  
Critique, refine, and polish interview questions  
Schedule Pilot and Formal Interviews  
Skype consultations with professor as needed  
Read Kvale & Brinkmann Chapters 13-16  |
| 10/14 | NO Class                          | Columbus Day Recess  
Mon classes meet instead of Tues classes this day only  |
| 10/15 | Data Analysis Coding Workshop I  | Read Saladna Chapters 2-4  
Read Butler-Kisber (ER)  
*Recommended Braun & Clarke (Bb)*  
*Recommended: Mears Chapter 7 (ER)*  |
| 10/21 | Standards of Validation Analytical Memoing | Read Creswell, Chapter 10, Validation 2013 (Bb)  
Read Maxwell Chapter 6  
Read Saldana Chapter 2  
Start research analysis  |
<table>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Transparency and Trustworthiness, Dialogical Validity, Coding Workshop II</td>
<td>Read Saldana Chapters 5 &amp; 6, Read Kvale &amp; Brinkman Chapter 15, Bring data analysis piece for CFT check-coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>Writing Your Analysis</td>
<td>POST ANALYTICAL MEMO</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>Writing your Findings, Limitations, and Discussion</td>
<td>POST RESEARCH DRAFT for professor &amp; peer review</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Abstract Workshop, Presenting your Argument</td>
<td>POST PEER REVIEW 1 with tracking and comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/25</td>
<td>Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL) Online Work</td>
<td>POST PEER REVIEW 2 with rubric as guide for comments, Skype consultations with professor for red flag papers</td>
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<td>Have a Happy Thanksgiving!</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>Class Presentation Briefs</td>
<td>POST FINAL PROJECT on Bb</td>
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<td>In 5 minutes: Tell us: Your RQ, Key discoveries, Most valuable insight and mistake</td>
<td>Bring a printed final copy of research project. Appendixes need not be printed but include in e-copy on Bb.</td>
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