

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**Graduate School of Education**  
**Ph.D. Program**

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**EDRS 812-001 (3 credits)**  
***Qualitative Methods in Educational Research***  
**Spring 2016**  
**Mondays, 4:30-7:10, West 1007**

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Hours: by appointment

**PREREQUISITES**

Successful completion (with a grade of B or higher) of EDRS 810, or equivalent coursework or experience

**UNIVERSITY CATALOG 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.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION & STRUCTURE**

EDRS 812 is an introductory course covering the most important concepts and methods of qualitative research, including (a) conceptualizing and designing qualitative research, (b) interviewing and observation techniques, (c) analyzing qualitative data, and (d) reporting methods and results. In this course, students are expected to read and critique examples of qualitative research; participate in in-class demonstrations and activities; and design and implement a semester-long qualitative research project.

Class sessions will be structured in the following way: (a) lectures on key topics based on readings with demonstrations and class exercises, (b) student discussion leadership, and (c) individual and peer consultations on research projects.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, students should:

- be able to understand what qualitative research is, and how it differs from other intellectual and practical activities in education;
- be able to understand the major approaches to qualitative research, and the implications of the differences between these for doing and evaluating qualitative research in education;
- be able to read critically published qualitative research relevant to their field;
- be able to design and implement a small-scale qualitative research study that includes the following basic components
  - identifying a research problem
  - formulating the purposes of the study
  - developing a conceptual framework for the study
  - generating appropriate research questions
  - planning relevant and feasible methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis
  - anticipating plausible validity threats, and thinking of ways to deal with these
  - dealing appropriately with ethical issues in the research
- be able to write clearly and coherently about the conceptual framework, questions, methods, and analysis used in a research study;
- be able to use the writing style described in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) for writing term and research papers;
- be able to reflect on research results and how they might inform educational practice and policy;
- be able to present research clearly and coherently in speaking.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

\*The following course requirements will be explained in detail during class meetings.

### **1. Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects**

Students will be asked to complete Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects. Information is available online:

<http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-training/>

(Office of Research Integrity & Assurance). The training takes between two and three hours and can be accessed from: <http://www.citiprogram.org>. A copy of your completion certificate must be submitted to the professor for credit to be awarded. *If you have already completed the training you do not have to retake it; supply a valid certificate.*

## **2. Qualitative Research Article Discussion Leadership**

With a peer from class, identify a qualitative journal article from your major or minor area of study, and then present the article to the class and lead the class in discussion about it. The article should be analyzed for its purpose, methods, data analysis, findings, and overall significance to the field. Employ prompts for discussion that involve the class in critical dialog about the article. Send the article to the class at least one week in advance.

## **3. Qualitative Research Project**

This semester-long assignment involves the design and conduct of a small-scale qualitative study, a written research report, and a presentation of the report.

Conduct a small-scale qualitative study employing observational and interviewing techniques. The observations and interview should comprise a minimum of 4 hours and be spread out over at least 8 weeks. After each observation or interview, opportunities will be given for discussion with peers and the instructor about technique, what was learned, and what might be modified. ***This assignment-based study does not require IRB review/approval.***

The written part of the assignment will be organized in the following format:

1. Conceptual Framework and Research Questions, including discussion of 2-3 important and relevant research studies (2-3 pages)
2. Method (10-15 pages)
  - Research Design
  - Participants and Setting
  - Materials
  - Data Sources
  - Procedures (data collection process)
  - Data Analysis
  - Findings & Discussion
3. References (1 page)

Make a short power point presentation to the class over the research project. The presentation should be organized according to the written report. Include how conducting the research contributed to your knowledge and skills as a qualitative researcher. The slides will be submitted to the professor. These presentations will occur during the final class sessions.

**\*All assignments will be submitted electronically.**

## EVALUATION

<b>Human Subjects online training completion</b>	<b>5 pts</b>
<b>Article Discussion Leadership</b>	<b>20 pts</b>
<b>Qualitative Research Project</b>	<b>75 pts</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 pts</b>

Final grades are calculated as a percent of total points earned:

A	= 93% - 100%	93 -100 pts
A-	= 90% - 92%	90 – 92 pts
B+	= 87% - 89%	87 – 89 pts
B	= 80% - 86%	80 – 86 pts
C	= 79% and lower	79 – fewer pts

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK & READINGS

Ravitch, S.M., & Carl, N.M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

\*Qualitative research articles to accompany weekly topics are listed at the end of the syllabus. Each article will be analyzed according to a critical heuristic in order to determine the rigor, utility, and overall value of the research.

\*Discussion Leadership articles comprise another set of required readings. These will be sent to the class by the discussion leaders one week in advance of each discussion leadership.

### Recommended Text

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## 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/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- 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, as soon as possible. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor [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/>].

## PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

## 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/>]**

## PROPOSED CLASS SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNED READING DUE	CLASS ACTIVITIES
1. 1/25	<p><b>Review syllabus- Introduction to the Qualitative Educational Research</b></p> <p><b>Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative Research Project</b></p>	<p>Chapter 1 – Ravitch &amp; Carl</p> <p>Krauss (2005)</p>	<p><a href="http://www.citiprogram.org">http://www.citiprogram.org</a></p> <p><a href="http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-training/">http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-training/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.irbnet.org">www.irbnet.org</a></p>
2. 2/1	<p><b>Conceptual Frameworks in Qualitative Research</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative Research Project</b></p>	<p>Chapters 2 – Ravitch &amp; Carl</p> <p>Lather (2004)</p> <p>Maxwell (2004)</p>	<p><b>Lecture</b></p>
3. 2/8	<p><b>Designing Qualitative Research</b></p>	<p>Chapters 3 – Ravitch &amp; Carl</p> <p>McCaslin, &amp; Scott (2003)</p> <p>Groenewald (2004)</p>	<p><b>Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Leadership</b></p>
4. 2/15	<p><b>Designing Qualitative Research</b></p>	<p>Tracy (2010)</p> <p>Shenton (2004)</p>	<p><b>Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Leadership</b></p> <p><b>Individual/Peer Consultation</b></p> <p><b>Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects must be completed and certification document submitted</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Data Collection in Qualitative Research</b></p>	<p>Chapters 4 Ravitch &amp; Carl</p>	<p><b>Lecture/discussion</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Leadership</b></p>

2/22		Noor (2008) Elo & Kyngas (2008)	<b>Individual/Peer Consultation</b>
6. 3/7	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
7. 3/14	<b>Data Collection in Qualitative Research</b>	Chapters 5 – Ravitch & Carl  Morgan (1997)  Flyvbjerg (2006)	<b>Lecture</b> <b>Discussion Leadership</b> <b>Individual/Peer Consultation</b>
8. 3/21	<b>Increasing Validity in Qualitative Designs</b>	Chapter 6 – Ravitch & Carl  Cho & Trent (2006)  Maxwell (1992)  Johnson (1997)	<b>Lecture</b> <b>Discussion Leadership</b> <b>Individual/Peer Consultation</b>
9. 3/28	<b>Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data</b>	Chapter 7 Ravitch & Carl  Freeman et al.(2007)	<b>Lecture</b> <b>Discussion Leadership</b> <b>Individual/Peer Consultation</b>
10. 4/4	<b>TBA</b>	Chapter 8 Ravitch & Carl  Bullough,& Pinnegar (2001)	<b>TBA</b>
11. 4/11	<b>Individual Consultation on Qualitative Research Reports</b>		<b>Individual Conferencing</b>

<b>12. 4/18</b>	<b>Individual Consultation on Qualitative Research Reports</b>		<b>Individual Conferencing</b>
<b>13. 4/25</b>	<b>Qualitative Research Presentations</b>		<b>Class Presentations of Qualitative Research Reports</b>
<b>14. 5/2</b>	<b>Qualitative Research Presentations</b>		<b>Class Presentations of Qualitative Research Reports Qualitative Research Reports Due</b>
<b>15. 5/9</b>	<b>TBA</b>		<b>TBA</b>

### **ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READINGS**

Bullough, R.V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 13-21.

Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 319-340.

Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.

Freeman, M., deMarrais, K., Preissle, J., Roulston, K., & St. Pierre, E.A. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse. *Educational Researchers*, 36(1), 25-32.



- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1), 1-26.
- Johnson, R.B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282-292.
- Krauss, S.E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(4), 758-770.
- Lather, P. (2004). This is your father's paradigm: Government intrusion and the case of qualitative research in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(1), 15-34.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- Maxwell, J.A. (2004). Causal explanation, qualitative research, and scientific inquiry in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(2), 3-11.
- McCaslin, M.L., & Scott, K.W. (2003). The five-question method for framing a qualitative research study. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(3), 447-461.
- Morgan, D.L. (1997). Planning and research design for focus groups. Sage Research Methods. Retrieved from, [http://www.twu.edu/downloads/qualitative-inquiry/Morgan\\_1997\\_Focus\\_groups\\_as\\_qualitative\\_research.pdf](http://www.twu.edu/downloads/qualitative-inquiry/Morgan_1997_Focus_groups_as_qualitative_research.pdf)
- Noor, K.B.M. (2008). Case study: A strategic research methodology. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*. 5(11), 1602-1604.
- Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

Agar, M. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Corrine Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th edition). New York: Longman.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maxwell, J. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wolcott, H. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mears, C. (2009). *Interviewing for education and social science research: The gateway approach*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

The two most important journals specifically devoted to qualitative research in education are *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Many other educational research journals also publish the results of qualitative studies. The most important journals for papers dealing with qualitative methods in general are *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Qualitative Research*.