

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
College of Education and Human Development

**EDRS 832.001: Document Analysis and Archival Research**  
**3 Credits**  
**Spring 2018**

**Monday 7:20-10:00**  
**Robinson Hall B 218**

Professor: Dr. Diana D'Amico  
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Office Hours: By Appointment

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**Course Description:**

Examines the methodological foundations of and analytical approaches to document-based research.

**Course Overview:**

In this advanced research seminar, students will learn about and conduct document analysis and archival research. Researchers across the academy employ document analysis and define “documents” in broad terms. Over the semester, students will examine these various approaches, learn about the value of documents and conduct their own research. During the first part of the semester, students will analyze a variety of documents including newspaper articles, policy documents, curriculum guides, speeches, fiction and images, among others. Students will simultaneously assemble their own “archive” of documents that pertains to their specific research interests (students should not enroll in this course if they do not yet have a specific topic to explore). Students will also learn about how to use computer-based resources to organize and analyze their data. During the second portion of the semester, students will examine a range of peer-reviewed articles that employ document analysis. Together, we will discuss the methodological approaches, findings and strengths and limitations of the texts. The goals of this portion of the course are twofold: 1) to expose students to the different ways scholars conduct document analysis and 2) to provide models which students may choose to emulate or adapt as they craft their own methodological approach. The final portion of the course will be devoted to research workshops in which students will discuss will refine their analyses supported by peers in a collaborative environment.

*Prerequisites/Corequisites:* EDRS 810, 811 and 812, or permission of the instructor.

### **Course Learning Outcomes:**

This course is designed to enable students to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the value and use of documents in rigorous research.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the various analytical approaches to document-based research.
3. Assemble a coherent and thoughtful collection of documents in an archive.
4. Create and conduct an original research project rooted in document analysis and based on their archival collection.

### **Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations:**

N/A

### **Nature of Course Delivery:**

This course is taught in a seminar style using lectures and discussions.

### **Required Readings:**

Altheide, D. (2012). *Qualitative media analysis* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. (\*)

Krippendorff, K. H. (2012). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

McCulloch, G. (2004). *Documentary research: In education, history and the social sciences* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rapley, T. (2008). *Doing conversation, discourse and document analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. (\*)

\* Available on-line via the GMU Library: <http://library.gmu.edu>

### **Course Requirements:**

I expect all students to come to this advanced methods doctoral seminar on time and prepared to engage in a lively, interactive and respectful discussion. Coming “prepared” entails a thorough reading of the assigned materials and bringing to class a list of discussion points and questions, the readings (either in e- or hard-copy) and your laptop, when asked. I expect that all assignments will be submitted on time. Students should email their completed assignments to me at [ddamico2@gmu.edu](mailto:ddamico2@gmu.edu). If a student foresees a conflict with either a particular class date or deadline, he or she should notify me in advance and make alternate arrangements. Unless prior arrangements are made, late work will be penalized by 2pts/day late.

### ***Assignment 1: Topic Proposal and Description of Archival Collection***

In this essay (6-8 pages), students will discuss the topic they wish to study over the course of the semester. Students will describe how the proposed research project fits into their larger research agenda and how and why documents make a valuable contribution. Students must offer a clear research question(s) that motivates the work. Students should engage in a topic that they already

have a working familiarity with (particularly in terms of the existing literature). In this brief essay, students do not have to offer a comprehensive literature review, but they must discuss in clear and explicit terms how the specific research questions and the methodological approach contribute to existing scholarship in the field. Students should also discuss the theoretical framework that will guide the inquiry.

Students will also identify the collection of documents they will work with (their archive). In the essay, students should discuss and describe the collection narratively, highlighting methodological issues including the selection process, reliability, representativeness, and strengths and limitations. Students must also include an appendix (not part of the page limit) that includes a list of all of the archival sources and their locations. (20 points)

***Assignment 2: Discussion of Methodology, Analytical Approaches and Article Critique***

In this two-part essay (10-12 pages), students will describe, discuss and reflect on the methodological and analytical approaches to document analysis, drawing upon assigned readings and class discussions, as well as any other sources. What is document analysis? What is its value? How does one engage in this methodological approach? Avoid jargon and make the discussion particular to your work. Rather than offering a generic textbook account, discuss how you will make use of the method and its value to your broader research interests.

In the second part of the essay, offer a critique of a published, peer-reviewed article that uses document analysis as the primary methodology. Discuss the author's analytical and methodological approach. What are the strengths and limitations? What aspects of the author's approach might you emulate in your own work? What would you do differently? Why? (20 points)

***Assignment 3: Presentation of Methodology, Analytical Approaches and Article Critique***

One week before your assigned presentation date, please make the article upon which Assignment 2 is based available for your classmates. On the evening of your presentation, please prepare to lead a 20 minute lesson of the article, highlighting the methodological approach. Because your classmates will have read the article, you do not need to offer more than 5 minutes worth of summary and background. Instead, devote the balance of your time to offering your analysis and critique and to generating a discussion based on the methodological approach. (10 points)

***Assignment 4: AERA Memo***

Attending and participating in academic conferences is part and parcel of being an education researcher. This year, the AERA conference is in New York City, NY from April 13-17, 2018 (<http://www.aera.net/EventsMeetings/tabid/10063/Default.aspx>). Please plan to attend at least

one session (if you are not going to travel to the conference, many sessions are available on-line). You have two options. (10 points)

- a. You may attend a session that pertains directly to your project but does not employ document analysis. Begin your brief essay (3-5 pages) with a discussion of the panel. What are the key contributions? How might document analysis contribute to what the authors offered? How might document analysis reveal a different story? Connect the work presented to your own study that is underway.
- b. You may attend a session in which the panel (or individual paper) employs document analysis. Begin your brief essay (3-5 pages) with a discussion of the panel. What are the key contributions? Discuss the authors' approaches and findings, as well as strengths and limitations. Connect the work presented to your own study that is underway.

### ***Assignment 5: Final Essay – Conference Proposal***

In this final written assignment, you will submit a conference proposal that adheres to AERA guidelines:

<http://www.aera.net/EventsMeetings/AnnualMeeting/2016AnnualMeetingCallforPaperandSessionSubmissions/tabid/15964/Default.aspx>

In 2,000 words (not including references, charts, tables, and appendices) you must discuss in clear, explicit and compelling terms the objective, theoretical framework, methods, data, results, conclusions and scholarly significance of your study. You should include tables and appendices that further explicate your findings and substantiate the rigor and significance of the project. Please refer to the rubric on the last page of the syllabus for more information. (30 points)

### ***Assignment 6: Conference Presentation***

In the last two classes of the semester, students will present their work as they would at an academic conference such as AERA. Students will have 15 minutes to speak and should prepare an accompanying PowerPoint presentation. Students should be prepared to field questions for another 5-10 minutes. (10 points)

All papers must be typed and formatted according to the APA Manual of Style, 6th ed., and emailed to me on the date stated in the syllabus.

### **Evaluation:**

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached to this syllabus. All papers must be typed and formatted according to the *APA Manual of Style, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.*

### **Grading Scale:**

A = 96-100	B = 80-88
A- = 92-95	C = 75-79
B+ = 89-91	F = 74 and below

## **GMU Policies and Resources for Students:**

### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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 with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

### **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/>]**

**Course Calendar:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments</b>
January 22	Course Introduction	
February 5	What are Documents; What Can We Learn from Them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altheide, Ch 3&amp;4</li> <li>• Krippendorff, Part 1</li> <li>• McCulloch, Ch. 1</li> <li>• Rapley, Ch. 9</li> </ul>
February 12	Creating an Archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Krippendorff, Ch. 5&amp;6</li> <li>• McCulloch, Ch. 4</li> <li>• Rapley, Ch. 2</li> </ul>
February 19	Computer-Based Resources to Organize and Analyze your Data (NVivo and Zotero) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop with University librarian.</li> <li>• Please bring your laptops to class</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Assignment 1: Topic Proposal and Description of Archival Collection Due</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Krippendorff, Ch. 11</li> <li>• Please install Zotero on your laptop.</li> </ul>
February 26	Analytical and Methodological Approaches, I. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical Underpinnings</li> <li>• Historical and Social Sciences Approaches</li> <li>• Content Analysis</li> <li>• Ethnographic Content Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altheide, Ch. 2</li> <li>• Bowen, G. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. <i>Qualitative Research Journal</i>, 9(2), 27–40. <a href="http://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027">http://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027</a></li> <li>• Krippendorff, Ch. 4&amp;9</li> <li>• McCulloch, Ch. 3</li> </ul>
March 5	Analytical and Methodological Approaches, II. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of Context</li> <li>• Discourse and Conversation Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altheide, Ch. 6</li> <li>• McCulloch, Ch. 5&amp;6</li> <li>• Rapley, Ch. 1, 6-8</li> </ul>
	<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>No Class</i>
March 19	Critiques of Existing Scholarship – Presentations, I	<p><b><i>Assignment 2 due for presenters</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles to be distributed by presenters at least 1 week in advance of class</li> </ul>
March 26	Critiques of Existing Scholarship – Presentations, II	<p><b><i>Assignment 2 due for presenters</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles to be distributed by presenters at least 1 week in advance of class</li> </ul>

April 2	Critiques of Existing Scholarship – Presentations, III	<i>Assignment 2 due for presenters</i>  • Articles to be distributed by presenters at least 1 week in advance of class
April 9	Research Workshop	
April 16	AERA / Writing Workshop	
April 23	Conference Presentations	
April 30	Conference Presentations	<i>Assignments 4 &amp; 5 Due</i>

**Rubric:**

**Assignment 5: Final Essay – Conference Proposal**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<b>Objective or purposes</b>	The author states in explicit terms the objective of the research project. The author provides a clear rationale for the study and offers succinct research questions.	The objective of the study is unclear or unstated. The author does not provide a rationale for the study or research questions.
<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	The author highlights and explains the theoretical framework that grounds the work. The connections between the theoretical framework and the research question are clear and compelling.	The author does not discuss or does not adequately explain the motivating theoretical framework. The connections between the framework and proposed study are unclear.
<b>Methods</b>	The author provides a precise and detailed discussion of document analysis, citing relevant sources. The author discusses the methodology with specific details that pertain to the study and avoids jargon.	The discussion of the methodology is absent, unclear, or jargon-laden.
<b>Data Sources</b>	The author discusses his or her archival collection and matters pertaining to the selection process, reliability, and representativeness. The author provides an appendix with the complete list of documents.	The author does not discuss his or her data sources with specificity. The discussion of selection process, reliability, and representativeness is vague or absent.
<b>Results and Conclusions</b>	The author discusses the results with clarity. The author provides tables and/or charts to highlight the primary findings. The author moves well beyond summary and offers an analysis of the data. The author uses this analysis to frame an argument. The author discusses the significance of these findings. This is the largest section of the proposal.	The results are presented partially or in vague terms. The author provides a summary but offers no substantive analysis. The author neither crafts an argument nor offers conclusions.
<b>Scholarly Significance</b>	The author places his or her study within the context of existing scholarship on the topic and is explicit and precise about the ways in which the study and findings contribute to existing work.	The author does not place his or her study within the context of existing scholarship. He or she does not consider how the findings contribute to existing scholarship.
<b>Writing</b>	The essay is 2,000 words long. The writing is clear, error-free, and adheres to proper APA guidelines.	The essay exceeds or falls far below the 2,000 word requirement. The writing is sloppy and/or grammatically incorrect. The author does not use correct proper APA guidelines.