

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
PhD Program

EDRS 810, Section 001 – Problems and Methods in Educational Research  
3 credits, Summer 2018  
Fairfax Campus

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisite:**

Admission to the Ph.D. program or permission of the instructor.

**University Catalog Course Description:**

Advanced course in interpreting and applying educational research methods. Emphasizes comparisons of alternative philosophies of research, ways of formulating questions and hypothesis, research plans, and analysis procedures. Students evaluate existing studies, and investigate a range of research approaches.

**Expanded Course Description:**

This is an introductory course that introduces graduate students to various purposes, means, and practices associated with educational and social inquiry. The course is intended for graduate students who are interested in consuming and engaging in educational inquiry, and its aim is to help students understand the language of and conceptualize social research. Students will explore generally accepted procedures for generating, analyzing, and interpreting data and will also develop the capacity to engage in dialogue about research using appropriate conceptualizations and vocabulary. A key element of this course is developing the ability to critique and evaluate published studies according to appropriate criteria.

**Course objectives:**

Upon successful completion of the course, student should:

- Be able to understand what research is, and how it differs from other intellectual and practical activities in education;
- Be able to understand the major approaches to educational research (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) and the implications for doing and evaluating research;
- Be able to identify different types of research designs;
- Be able to distinguish research design from methodological approach;
- Be able to find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field;
- Be able to design the basic components of small-scale research studies, both quantitative and qualitative, including:

- Identifying a research problem to study
- 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 coherently and clearly about the conceptual framework, questions, and methods used in a research study;
- Be able to use the writing style described in the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) for writing term and research papers;
- Be able to reflect on their actions and choices and use that reflection to inform practice;
- Be able to present clear and coherent written summary of research results from scholarship.

**Course Delivery Method:**

The class sessions will include both lecture and discussion as well as group work.

**Required Texts:**

Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2017). *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, & Mixed Approaches* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

**Note:** This text has a Companion Website <https://edge.sagepub.com/rbjohnson6e> with study materials, practice quizzes, and other resources.

**Other Required Readings (Available in Blackboard):**

Other articles will be used to supplement the text during various weeks during the course. These articles can be accessed through Blackboard under the “Course Content” tab found on the left hand side of the main course site.

An additional, useful resource on research methods can be found at this website:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/>

**My Approach/Commitment:**

In this course, my primary goal is to establish a safe and inclusive environment that will support your learning. Throughout the semester, I invite your questions and critiques, desiring thoughtful dialogue to be central to our learning experience. In this course, we will work to understand a variety of positions and practices associated with the qualitative inquiry process, pushing one another to question taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions. Throughout the course, we will remind each other that there is not “one right” way to carry out a qualitative research study. Rather, there are many theoretical and methodological positions from which to work when considering qualitative research. As such, we will work to understand a variety of positions. This does not mean that you may not disagree with one another or with me about these varied perspectives and approaches. Yet, in order to facilitate our learning environment, we will each work to cultivate a classroom space that generates respectful, thoughtful, and empathetic

understanding. What we come to learn is a shared experience; thus, we will all work to cultivate a community of learners.

In our learning community, I will position myself as a co-learner, as well as a teacher. Hence, if I am teaching and you are not learning, then I am not teaching. Please let me know! Throughout the semester, I welcome your feedback and will encourage your participation in an informal mid-semester evaluation. In addition, throughout the semester, you can expect feedback from me, with this feedback designed to support your growth as a qualitative researcher.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

As an 800-level course, this course requires a significant time commitment. This is a **reading intensive course**. Thus, please plan accordingly, as the readings have been carefully selected to support your growth as a researcher. Throughout the course, know that I will be here to support you and facilitate the learning process! My intent is to make this a truly meaningful learning (and growing) experience.

In addition: **please don't be discouraged or intimidated by the density or technical aspects of some of the reading.** A large part of what this course is about is learning how to wrestle with difficult material and extract something meaningful. Thus, I expect that you won't necessarily understand everything you read. You don't need to master everything I'll be covering in order to do well in the course. For example, I don't deduct any points from participation grades for misunderstanding the content of readings. However, it is necessary that you can demonstrate to me your engagement with the material by doing the reading, investigating on your own, and making an effort worthy of your status as a graduate student. You must do the assigned readings prior to the start of the day the readings are assigned. This way you can participate in the class discussions based on those readings and you can also complete assignments related to those readings. Please commit yourself to participating in ways that encourage the intellectual and emotional development of class members and refrain from engaging in any form of plagiarism (this includes not citing sources for your postings). If you have any questions about these expectations, please let me know.

### **Assignments**

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Class participation            | 30 points         |
| IRB test                       | 10 points         |
| In-class exam                  | 10 points         |
| Qualitative research proposal  | 25 points         |
| Quantitative research proposal | 25 points         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>100 points</b> |

**Class participation (30 points):** Participation may look different from person to person and class session to class session. However, in general, participation includes: 1) reading all assigned materials; 2) being prepared for class; 3) reflecting out loud or in another modality based on your

personal learning needs; 4) actively engaging in small and large group discussions; 5) asking questions; and 6) respectfully and reflectively building upon the ideas of others.

*Reading Groups:* Because of the very intensive nature of this specialized course, on the first day of class I will assign you to one of two reading groups. Every day of class your reading groups will be assigned different readings. You will be responsible for setting up a way to communicate with your group members prior to class meeting; this can be done face-to-face or virtually. You should discuss the reading as it relates to what we're discussing in class. You should also come prepared to share reading notes with the other group of students. These reading notes should be brought to class in hard copy format, but may also be posted on the class Blackboard site, on the Discussion Board. Note: It is not necessary to create reading notes for articles that are marked to review.

**IRB exam (10 points):** As part of this course, you must pass the IRB exam (based on the IRB tutorial). You must have this completed by the week we discuss research ethics **but should feel free to take it at any point in the semester**. 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>. You must pass the exam. You can take this exam as many times as you need to, but as soon as you pass it, you should email me your score and the verification email that you receive. (Note: you will receive all 10 points for any passing score on the exam).

**In-class exam (10 points):** One exam will cover the material from the class and readings and include multiple choice as well as short answer questions. This exam will occur in the middle of our time together to ensure that you are prepared to apply your knowledge as we move forward. The exam will focus on key research concepts and terms from class readings and discussions.

**Qualitative and quantitative research proposals (25 points each):** You may choose to do a written or oral presentation proposal for these but you must do one of each. For each of the proposals you must include: 1. Introduction and brief literature review (reference and synthesize a minimum of 5 peer-reviewed journal articles), including a statement of purpose and research questions; 2. Methods, including research design, participants, sampling and recruitment procedures; 3. Data sources; 4. Data collection procedures; 5. Data analysis; and 6. Ethical considerations. You should conclude by engaging in a thoughtful discussion around any limitations you see or concerns you might have about your design. All should follow APA style and formatting.

### **Grading Policy**

The following is the grading scale. As noted above, your final grade is based on the number of points you earn throughout the semester.

#### Grading Scale

|    |             |
|----|-------------|
| A  | 93%         |
| A- | 90 – 92.9%  |
| B+ | 87% - 89.9% |

|    |             |
|----|-------------|
| B  | 83% - 86.9% |
| B- | 80% - 82.9% |
| C+ | 77% - 79.9% |
| C  | 74% - 76.9% |

### **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/>

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

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- 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 silence all sound emitting devices 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://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/> .**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

| <b>Class Mtg</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Content</b>   | <b>Readings/materials to prepare</b>   |
|------------------|-------------|--|--|
| 1                | July 9      | <p>Introductions and assign reading groups</p> <p>Conceptualizing the research process</p>   | <p>Come to class having read the syllabus and JC 1, 2</p>  |
| 2                | July 10     | <p>Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Research, Ontology &amp; Epistemology</p> <p>Guest speaker: Beth Dalbec</p>  | <p>All: Research Methods Knowledge Base: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate – available at:<br/><a href="http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualdeb.php">http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualdeb.php</a></p> <p>Group 1: Ross 2014 and Allison and Pomeroy 2000<br/>Group 2: Ross 2017 and Grix 2002</p> |
| 3                | July 11     | <p>Developing Research Questions/ Interests &amp; Hypotheses; Conducting a literature review (begin discussions)</p> <p>Considering objectivity and subjectivity in research</p> <p><b>IRB Certification due uploaded to BB by July 11</b></p> | <p>All: JC 4, 5</p> <p>Group 1: Peshkin 1988<br/>Group 2: Carspecken 1996</p>  |
| 4                | July 12     | <p>Developing Research Questions/ Interests &amp; Hypotheses; Conducting a literature review (continued)</p> <p>Guest speakers: Adrienne Thompson and Christie Byers</p>   | <p>Group 1: North 2007<br/>Group 2: Crisp, Nora &amp; Taggart 2009</p>   |

|    |         |  |   |
|----|---------|--|---|
| 5  | July 16 | Collecting Data:<br>Quantitative and<br>Qualitative<br><br>Guest Speakers:<br>Angela Hattery and<br>Earl Smith     | All: Hattery 2014; Smith & Hattery 2011<br><br>Group 1: Goddard & Foster 2002<br>Group 2: Knoblauch & Hoy 2008<br><br><u>Optional:</u><br>Galasinski and Kozlowska 2010,<br>Polkinghorne 2005 |
| 6  | July 17 | Considering<br>Participants: Sampling<br>and Recruiting<br><br>Guest speaker:<br>Emily Ihara                       | Ihara, E. (TBD)<br>Schertz et al. 2018  |
| 7  | July 18 | Reliability & Validity<br><br><b>In-class exam</b>   | JC 7, 10<br><br>Group 1: Creswell & Miller 2000<br>Group 2: Golafshani 2003<br><br>ALL:<br>Crisp, Nora & Taggart (review)<br>Goddard & Foster (review)  |
| 8  | July 19 | Interpretation/<br>Analysis of<br>Quantitative Data<br><br>Guest speakers:<br>Sylvia Martinez and<br>Marvin Powell | All: JC 11 (18, 19)<br><br>Group 1: Crisp, Nora & Taggart (review)<br>Martinez & Cervera (2012)<br><br>Group 2: Knoblauch & Hoy (review)<br>Powell (TBD)                                      |
| 9  | July 23 | Interpretation/Analysis<br>of Qualitative Data   | Group 1:<br>Ross 2014 (review)<br>Ross 2017 (review)<br>Goddard & Foster (review)<br><br>Group 2:<br>North (review)<br>Creswell & Miller (review)<br>Schertz et al. (review)                  |
| 10 | July 24 | Designing Quantitative<br>and Qualitative Studies<br><br>Guest speaker: Terrie<br>Galanti                          | Group 1:<br>Crisp, Nora & Taggart (review)<br>Knoblauch & Hoy (review)<br>Hattery (review)  |

|    |         |   |   |
|----|---------|---|---|
|    |         |   | <p>Group 2:<br/>Goddard &amp; Foster (review)<br/>North (review)<br/>Smith and Hattery (review)</p> <p><u>All Skim:</u><br/>JC 12, 13, 14, 15, 16</p>   |
| 11 | July 25 | <p>Mixed Methodologies;<br/>Action Research</p> <p>Guest speakers:<br/>Melissa Hauber-Ozer<br/>and Kristien Zenkov</p>  | <p>ALL: JC 17 and Burke &amp; Onwuegbuzie 2004</p> <p>Group 1: Hauber-Ozer chapter<br/>Group 2: Zenkov 2014</p>   |
| 12 | July 26 | <p>Evaluating Research and Research Ethics</p> <p>Guest speaker: Karen Ross</p> <p>Oral presentation proposals due uploaded to BB by July 27</p> <p>Written proposals due uploaded to BB by July 27</p> | <p>Group 1: Ross 2014 (review)<br/>Hostetler 2005</p> <p>Group 2: Ross 2017 (review)<br/>Lehrer 2010 &amp; 2011</p> <p>AND ALL READ:<br/>Research Ethics from your respective professional organizations <u>and</u> minimally American Educational Research Association (AERA) or American Psychological Association (APA). Read through these and be ready to share and discuss.</p> |