

**George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Research Methods**

**EDRS 826-001 - QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY METHODS
3 Credits, Fall 2019
Monday, 10am-12:40pm, TH1010 – Fairfax Campus**

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

EDRS 812 or permission of instructor; IRB approval REQUIRED for this course.

University Catalog Course Description

Advanced research seminar on qualitative case study design and application in educational research. Topics include descriptive, theoretical, evaluation, and policy case study design and methods. Students will conduct and critique a case study appropriate to their discipline.

Course Overview

As an advanced applied research methods seminar, course will require the design, implementation, and critique of a qualitative case study (pilot study for dissertation or small portion of research in progress, dissertation or other project). Assignments consist of a proposal or draft of the project (due midway through the semester) and a final qualitative case study report (due at the end of the semester). Keep in mind this is a METHODS course, so the focus of the assignments will be on support and critique of methods across the research process. I suggest you meet with your major professor (if applicable) to determine how these assignments might support your dissertation or proposal.

There are four main components of the course:

1. **Class meetings.** Each class will incorporate a blend of mini-lectures on key topics, demonstrations, class exercises, and/or discussion.
2. **Discussion.** We will dedicate a considerable amount of time to discussion; be prepared to connect your specific interests to the readings and to offer feedback to peer projects.

Assigned readings. These readings are an essential part of the course; they provide necessary preparation for class lectures, activities, and discussions, and they cover important aspects of qualitative case study research for further learning and understanding. Additional readings are provided to support individual exploration of case study research methods and application. Reading assignments are listed for the day on which they will be discussed. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments, and I encourage you to share with the class other readings and examples you have found that are relevant. Before beginning the readings I suggest that you ask yourself what your questions and concerns are about this issue and that you list them. After finishing a reading ask yourself how it related to your questions or concerns. Outline the author's main points and consider these questions:

- Did the reading answer your questions? Did it raise new issues?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author?
- If an example of a qualitative article is also assigned, analyze it in terms of the methodological readings: How do the ideas apply? How do they not apply? What are their implications for this study?

We will be reading texts that present different perspectives on the same topic. Think about each author's approach to qualitative research as you read, and how these differences contribute to or challenge your own understanding and use of qualitative case study.

3. **Case study project.** An individual (or collaborative) pilot qualitative case study research project. Guidelines for this project are provided in the section on rubrics and will be discussed in class.
4. **Participation.** This class will be collaborative and interactive—be prepared for discussion! Questions are encouraged and expected, and alternative viewpoints are welcome. I value contributions to our discussions and ask you to speak up! However, I do expect you to support your assertions. Also, I expect all of us to create an educational climate of open debate that is respectful and democratic. Further, be familiar with the GMU Honor System and Code. Your participation as a class member will be evaluated, not by the *quantity* of your contribution, but by the *quality* and *integrity* of your contribution.

NOTE: When printing non-graded materials, I encourage you to print front and back.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using a seminar format and requires completion of a research study.

Learner Outcomes & Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Understand the characteristics of qualitative case study research and the key ways in which this approach differs from other research strategies. Students will identify various forms of qualitative case study research, as well as appropriate methods of data collection and analysis, depending on purpose and design of their research project.
2. Design and conduct a qualitative case study. Students will apply their personal philosophies of qualitative research to the development and implementation of a case study project.
3. Understand the assumptions embodied in the major approaches to qualitative case study research, and the implications of these for doing and evaluating qualitative case studies. Students will situate their studies in an appropriate problem related to their field of study.
4. Communicate (both verbally and in writing) the design and process, and critique the process of the study. Students will identify appropriate avenues for dissemination of their research. Also, students will critique their own and peers' research projects, and they will suggest areas for improvement.

Professional Standards

Not applicable

Readings

✓ Required Texts

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Other readings as assigned.

✓ Suggested Texts

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **[NOTE: Strongly recommended if you need or want additional intermediate guidance on qualitative methods.]**

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **[NOTE: Strongly recommended if you need or want additional guidance on qualitative analysis. Every student who has invested in this text uses it in every class, dissertation, and other research projects.]**

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press. **[NOTE: Strongly recommended if are interested in multiple case study and/or updated version of Stake's (1995) text.]**

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **[NOTE: Strongly recommended for those who prefer a less constructivist approach to case study. Some of you might prefer this text to Stake (2006); we will discuss options our first meeting or you can email me.]**

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor. All assignments will be submitted as hard copy to the instructor at the beginning of class.

- **Assignments**

Participation

This is an advanced methods course, and engagement is expected and necessary. Everyone in the class is a learner, and everyone is a teacher. I want to emphasize our obligation to critical thinking, reasoned discussion, and self-critique. Participation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ✓ Prepared for discussion and tasks. This includes reading material and attending any team meetings.
- ✓ Maintains balance between speaking and listening roles. I do not expect you to ‘time’ yourself; be aware, though, ‘strong’ personalities overpower a discussion. Monitor your team and classroom interactions!
- ✓ Listens attentively and offers constructive feedback. All contributions should be considered and negotiated.
- ✓ Accepts diversity in viewpoints and negotiates differences. You are not expected to agree with one another at all times! However, we will be respectful and professional.
- ✓ Shares leadership roles. While it is comfortable to let ‘managers’ and ‘organizers’ plan team strategy, this will result in a vision defined by one person.

Research Proposal/Draft Report

You will develop a research proposal or draft report that communicates your design choices and rationale. We will discuss formats in class. However, if you want to use this as a part of your dissertation, I suggest strongly that you talk with your advisor about technical expectations. I want this to be a useful foundation for both your class research project and academic development. The assignment should not exceed 10 pages (double space, one-inch margins); this page limitation does not include title page, abstract, references, and appendices. (Be careful, though, about over-relying on appendices; if you cannot make the argument in the manuscript itself, appendices will not be useful.)

Research Project

You will develop and conduct a qualitative case study based on your research interests and program of study. This project results in a comprehensive paper that may be submitted for presentation and/or publication, and/or used toward your dissertation. The research project is a major part of the work of this course. The range of possible projects that you can conduct is extremely broad.

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.

As part of the project, you will write a research report. This final report should not exceed 20 pages (double space, one-inch margins): this page limitation does not include title page, abstract, references, and appendices. **The final project portfolio includes the original research proposal/draft and non-graded assignments (with my comments!) and final paper (including data collection guides).**

Other Assignments

Other non-graded assignments are expected during the course and contribute to your final project report. I will not accept late non-graded assignments.

Weighting for Assignments

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Participation	25
Proposal/Draft	25
Final Paper	50
Total	100

- **Other Requirements**

HSRB approval is required for this project. Since this project is expected to contribute directly to your dissertation or other project, your advisor should review and sign the paperwork. If you do not have an IRB-approved project, please discuss with me immediately.

YOU MAY NOT COLLECT DATA WITHOUT HSRB APPROVAL.

- **Grading**

A+	98-100%	B+	88-89%	C	70-79%
A	93-97%	B	83-87%	F	below 70%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%		

Other Policies

Grades on assignments turned in late will be reduced 10%, and assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Data collection and analysis assignments are required for completion of the research paper. These assignments are not graded, but they are the foundation of your research project. To receive timely feedback, assignments must be completed by due date. Following are the assessment guidelines for the project proposal/draft and final paper:

Project Proposal Guidelines

Quality research stems from a well-thought-out proposal. The research proposal includes three general areas: (1) what you are interested in studying—purpose and research focus, (2) why you should conduct the study—significance and benefits to practice and society, and (3) how you will go about doing the study—methodology.

- The purpose of the study should be a well-worded, concise statement of research intent. Keep in mind your resources, unit of analysis, and audience. Remember, your purpose guides the entire research process—keep it relevant, balanced, and doable!!!
- The significance of the study should include a statement of how your research will contribute to either your field of study or to practice. This section requires you to think ahead of your project and to envision the impact of the study.
- Your methodology is a statement of expected methods choices—this section will evolve during the research process. This section should address design, site and/or sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

A research proposal is written in narrative form, and departments/fields of practice usually have expectations/guidelines for research proposals. Please check with your program about proposal format. Also, please keep in mind the expectations for good writing. (Maximum length is 10 pages, not including title page, abstract, references, and appendices.)

Research Paper Guidelines

Assignment: You will conduct a case study based on your research interests. A minimum of three data collection event per person are required to complete the study and may include face-to-face depth interview, observation, and journal or document analysis. Data will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed according to criteria discussed in class.

Length: Suggested minimum length is 15 pages. Maximum length is 20 pages. (Title page, abstract, references, and appendices are not included in page count.)

Style Format: APA 6th edition

This assignment requires the integration of knowledge and application of basic data collection and analysis techniques for case study research projects. It is a research study and will be evaluated according to general standards of qualitative research criteria. The presentation and paper should address the following:

- Introduction (introduction to study, problem statement, purpose of study, research questions)
- Literature Review (conceptual/theoretical framework only)
- Methods (design, methods of data collection and analysis, sample selection, rigor)
- Findings (emerging themes/categories, supporting evidence)
- Discussion and Recommendations (critique of methods, limitations, further research)

The research paper will also include appendixes and references. (Appendixes should include a copy of your IRB approval page.)

Points are not based on the findings of the study—this assignment is to evaluate your knowledge and use and critique of qualitative case study methodology. However, the findings should be relevant, supporting the purpose of the study. The following areas will be evaluated:

- Logic—reasoning is rational, conclusive, and well supported
- Clarity—presentation is clear and concise
- Flow—material is arranged logically
- Support—evidence supports findings/arguments
- Defense—answers to questions are concise, direct, and well supported
- Fit—findings/discussion fit purpose/problem
- Rigor—attention to rigor in research design and project implementation
- Writing style—logic, clarity, flow, technical (grammar, spelling, punctuation)

Assignments: General Guidelines/Assessment Rubric

___	20%	Problem/Purpose Development	R/C ___	I/E ___	T ___
___	20%	Methodology	R/C ___	I/E ___	T ___
___	20%	Findings/Discussion	R/C ___	I/E ___	T ___
___	20%	Critique of Methodology	R/C ___	I/E ___	T ___
___	20%	Technical	R/C ___	I/E ___	T ___
___	100% Total Score: Final Paper				

Reflection and Critique: avoids surface presentation and summary of topic; identifies and meets relevant need; provides neutral presentation of strengths and weaknesses of topic; evaluates strengths and weaknesses; states and supports position.

- B- Reflective on experience and personal opinions; no critique
- B Reflective on experience; reflection of material and/or theory embedded
- B+ Reflective of material and/or theory
- A- Critique initiated; critique lacks validity and is not maintained
- A Critique initiated; critique is valid but not maintained
- A+ Critique initiated; critique is valid and well maintained

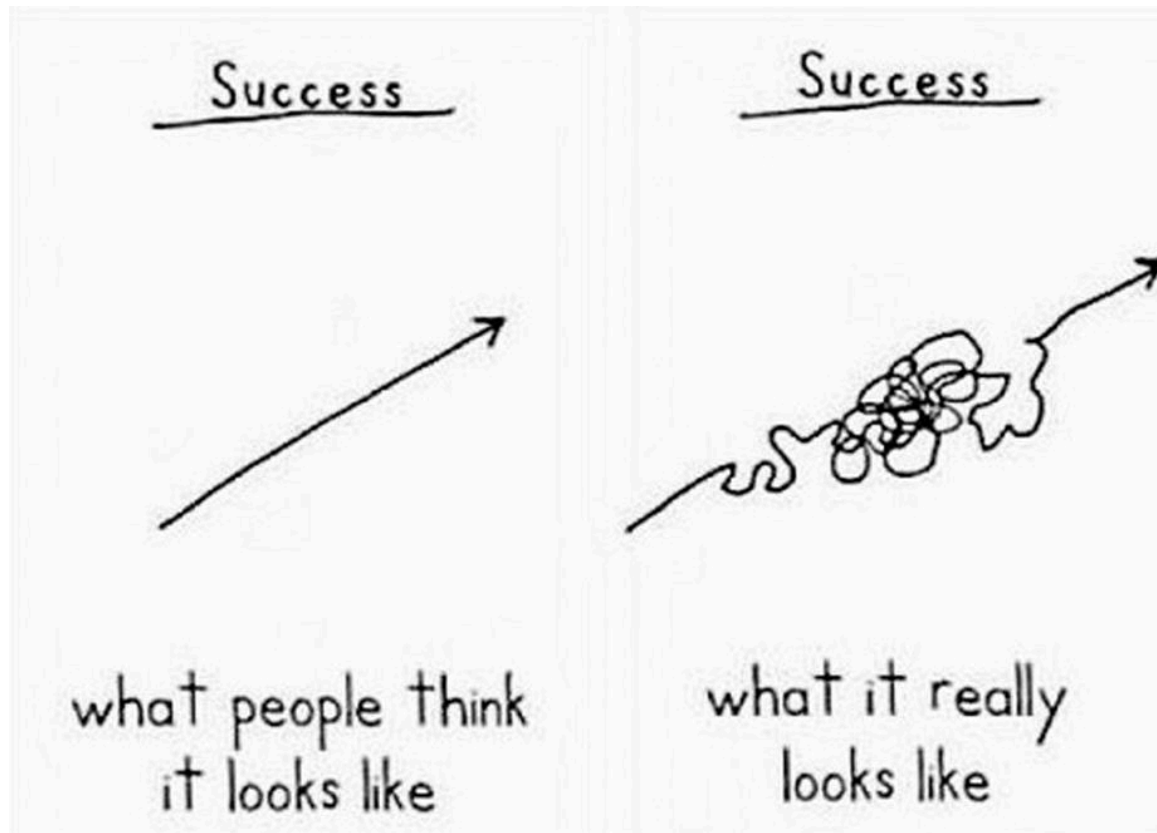
Integration and Evidence: provides comprehensive connections across course material (*i.e.*, readings, discussions, previous learning, and personal experiences); balances theory and practice; provides appropriate and adequate support for ideas, facts, and propositions.

- B- Material **OR** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B Material **AND** experience integrated to some degree; inadequate support
- B+ Material **AND** experience integrated well; inadequate support
- A- Material **OR** experience integrated well; limited support
- A Material **AND** experience integrated well; partial support is valid but not maintained
- A+ Material **AND** experience integrated well; conclusive support is valid and maintained

Technical Soundness: characterizes professionalism and scholarship; attends to audience composition and needs; exhibits drafting and editing appropriate for graduate-level work. Marked items require attention:

___ Grammar	___ Readability	___ APA Style
___ Punctuation	___ Tone/Voice	___ Cover page
___ Spelling	___ Language	___ Abstract
___ Agreement	___ Flow	___ Citations
___ Sentence structure	___ Transitions	___ Quotations
___ Paragraph structure	___ Preview/Summary	___ References

In other words....



Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and 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 <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 <https://ds.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 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>.

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

Class Schedule (*indicates non-required reading)

SECTION 1 PHILOSOPHY & DESIGN OF QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES

08/26 Introduction to Case Study ResearchRecommended

Yazan (2015) Three Approaches to Case Study Methods
(<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12/>)

09/02 NO CLASS: Labor Day**09/09 Principles of Case Study Research**Required

Baxter & Jack (2008) Qualitative Case Study
Flyvbjerg (2006) Case Study Misunderstandings
Stake (1995), Chpts. 1, 3, 10

09/16 Designing a Case StudyRequired

Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling (2013) Selection
Stake (1995), Chpts. 2, 6-7
Stake (2006), Chpts. 1-2

Recommended

Anaf et al. (2007) CS & Systems Theory
Reybold (2018) Reclaiming Triangulation

09/23 DIALOGUE: Philosophy & Design of Qualitative Case Study Research

Non-graded assignment. For discussion, prepare a one-page visual and/or narrative conceptual framework/design of your proposed qualitative case study. Be sure to identify the principles of your study that align with case study research, your unit of analysis, and general proposed methods. This is not graded! However, it is the foundation for your proposal/draft and final paper. **(We will discuss in class whether dialogue sessions will be in person or online.)**

SECTION 2 CASE STUDY DATA COLLECTION METHODS

09/30 Methods of Data Collection (Interviews)Required

Corbin & Morse (2003) Interviewing Sensitive Topics/Insider Status
Enosh & Buchbinder (2005) Narrative Styles in Sensitive Interviews
Kvale (2006) Interview
Stake (1995), Chpt. 4

Recommended

Caldwell (2013) Dyadic Interview
Goldring et al. (2003) CS Transitional Leadership

10/07 Methods of Data Collection (Observations, Documents)Required

Brown & Durrheim (2009) Mobile Interviewing
Leigh (2013) Insider Dilemma
Lipka et al. (2005) CS Math in Culture
Perry, Reybold, & Waters (2014) MM CS Occupational Choice

Recommended

Ramos (2007) CS FotoDialogo Method
Zembylas (2005) CS Emotions in Teaching
Reybold, et al. (2016) CS Policy Paradox

10/14 NO CLASS MEETING: In lieu of changing our meeting day to Tuesday (as noted in the GMU calendar), we will discuss individual projects via Blackboard Discussion. Post a brief description of your project (purpose/RQs) and 1-3 questions for peer feedback before our dialogue session next week.

10/21 DIALOGUE: Data Collection Methods

Prepare a one-page visual or narrative of your proposed data collection methods and connect them to your research questions.. Identify the rationale for each choice. This is not graded! However, this will become a part of your proposal/draft and final paper. **(We will discuss in class whether dialogue sessions will be in person or online.)**

SECTION 3 ANALYZING CASE STUDY RESEARCH DATA

10/28 Analysis: Topical, Thematic TechniquesRequired

Stake (1995) Chpt. 5
 Attride-Stirling (2001) Thematic Networks
 Konopasky & Reybold (2015) CS Accessing the World

Recommended

Adair & Pastori (2011) Coding Frameworks for Large-Scale Projects
 Ryan & Bernard (2003) Theme Identification

11/04 Analysis: Iterative, Theorizing TechniquesRequired

Stake (2006) Chpt. 3, 9
 Corbin & Strauss (1990) Grounded Theory Methods, CCA
 Reybold et al. (2014) CS Counselor Educators & Hurricane Katrina

Recommended

Reybold et al. (2008) CS SAE Ethics
 Reybold & Halx (2018) DRAMA SAE Ethics

DUE: Research Proposal/Draft (include HSRB approval page)

11/11 Analysis: Topical? Theoretical? Grounded Theory?Required

Reybold (2003) Pathways to the Professorate*
 Reybold et al. (2012) CS Dissertation Advising**

Recommended

*Choose at least one article from this list (articles are from my longitudinal GT study of faculty identity; we will discuss these in relation to the Pathways article).

1. Reybold (2005) Surrendering the Dream, Faculty Disillusionment
2. Reybold (2008) Practitioner-Faculty Dialectic
3. Reybold (2008) Social & Political Structuring of Faculty Ethics
4. Reybold & Alamia (2008) Academic Transitions
5. Reybold & Corda (2011) Service to the Academy

**Choose at least one article from this list (articles include institution-based analyses/evaluations).

1. Halx & Reybold (2005) CS Pedagogy of Force
2. Reybold & Halx (2012) CS Meaning of Interdisciplinarity
3. Halx & Reybold (2019) CS Undergraduate Critical Thinking

11/18 DIALOGUE: Qualitative Methods of Analysis

Prepare a one-page visual and/or narrative of your proposed data analysis methods and connect to your data collection choices. Be sure to identify the rationale for these connections and how each contributes to your research questions and goals of your study. This is not graded! However, it is integral to your paper. **(We will discuss in class whether dialogue sessions will be in person or online.)**

SECTION 4 DISSEMINATION OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

11/25 Writing a (Quality) Case StudyRequired

Ghaffar-Kucher (2014) Writing Culture
Nind et al. (2012) Methodological Innovation
Stake (1995) Chpts. 8-9
Stake (2006) Chpt. 5

Recommended

See student examples posted to Blackboard.

12/02 CASE STUDY REPORTS

Informal discussion of projects and case study readings; course evaluation.

DUE: Final project portfolio (paper and ALL original graded and non-graded assignments WITH MY COMMENTS).

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