

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

**EDRS 850-DL1 – GROUNDED THEORY
3 Credits, Spring 2024
Monday, 9am-11:40pm
SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE DISCUSSION via Zoom**

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

EDRS 812, EDRS 822 (or permission of instructor)

University Catalog Course Description

Prepares students to apply and critique grounded theory and related methods. Includes various approaches to design with particular attention to analysis techniques and theoretical selection, sensitivity, and saturation. Recommends students obtain IRB approval prior to beginning this course. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

Course Overview

As an advanced applied research methods seminar, this course will require the design, implementation, and critique of a qualitative grounded theory study (pilot study for dissertation or small portion of research in progress, dissertation or another project). Assignments consist of a proposal or draft of the project (due midway through the semester) and a final 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. There are two options to complete the assignments:

1. **HSRB-approved study** that can be used as a formal pilot study for your dissertation (your dissertation chair or lead research faculty approves your application). This option allows you to publish/present your work since you will have a small but complete project!
2. **Conceptual paper** that focuses more on methods development and critique across possibilities. You will still collect “data” to complete course assignments, but for piloting methods only! I must approve your data collection (participant criteria/data collection guides); these data MAY NOT be used beyond course assignments.

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. Your participation will be evaluated by the quality and integrity of your contribution, not the quantity! Please note reading and assignment due dates. Contact me if you have questions or concerns about this material.

There are five 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.
3. 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 the topic for further learning and understanding. Additional readings are provided to support individual exploration of methods and application.
4. Peer review. Each student in the class will provide peer review for at least two other student projects. This is not graded as a separate assignment, but it will count toward participation.
5. Data collection and analysis project. The final project will focus on methods of data collection/analysis, and critique of readings and application. Guidelines for this project are provided below; also, guidelines for the final project report will be discussed in class and posted on the course Blackboard site.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using a synchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on Mondays, 9am-11:40am. We will supplement course meetings with asynchronous Blackboard dialogue sessions at the end of each module.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers
- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Windows Media Player: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

- Course Week: Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes (MONDAYS).
- Log-in Frequency: Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least one time per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- Participation: Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence: Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload: Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet specific deadlines and due dates listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support: Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times. (All meetings this semester will be online!)
- Netiquette: The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words. Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- Accommodations: Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

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

- Review and critique development of grounded theory across disciplines
- Identify and critique opportunities for theoretical selection, sensitivity, and saturation
- Distinguish between grounded theory and “theorizing from qualitative data”
- Apply various analysis techniques appropriate to design and research questions
- Critique the literature and application of grounded theory related methods

Professional Standards (Not Applicable)

Required Texts

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Sage.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2014) *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Recommended Texts

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2007). *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Sage.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine de Gruyter.

Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. (Eds.). (2016). *Situational analysis in practice: Mapping research with grounded theory*. Routledge.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor. **All assignments will be submitted via email as WORD ATTACHMENT to the instructor before class begins on the due date.**

• Assignments

Draft Data Collection/Analysis Report. You will develop a 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.)

Final Data Collection/Analysis Report. Based on my comments and feedback from at least two peers (and your dissertation chair/methodologist, if applicable), you will finalize your report and critique the methods and related readings. The assignment should not exceed 20 pages (double space, one-inch margins); this page limitation does not include title page, abstract, references, and appendices. (Again, be careful about over-relying on appendices; if you cannot make the argument in the manuscript itself, appendices will not be useful.)

Related Non-Graded 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.

• Other Requirements

Participation is not equivalent to attendance! The following criteria are expected:

- ✓ Prepared for discussion and tasks.
- ✓ Maintains balance between speaking and listening roles.
- ✓ Listens attentively and offers constructive feedback.
- ✓ Accepts diversity in viewpoints and negotiates differences.
- ✓ Shares leadership roles.

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH approval is highly suggested for this project.

- **Grading**

Weighting

Assignment	Points
Draft Report	25
Final Report	50
Participation	25
Total Points	100

Grading Scale

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.



Assessment Rubrics

Participation

This is an advanced methods course, and engagement is expected and necessary. I want to emphasize our obligation to critical thinking, reasoned discussion, and self-critique. Participation is NOT ATTENDANCE! You will have opportunities to participate through synchronous in-class discussion, asynchronous Blackboard discussion, and providing feedback to peers as they develop their proposal and final paper.

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 (if applicable). While it is comfortable to let ‘managers’ and ‘organizers’ plan team strategy, this will result in a vision defined by one person.

Draft and Final Paper Guidelines

Quality research stems from a well-thought-out draft and serious attention to editing. The **draft** includes three general areas: (1) what you are interested in studying and how it fits into a grounded theory or related design (connect conceptual framework to purpose, research questions, and methods), (2) what methods are most appropriate for this project, and (3) your critique of readings and application of methods. The final paper revisits the draft in relation to continued reading, synthesizing, and data collection/analysis to include findings and a scholarly critique of design choices and application.

- 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.
- Methodology includes a conceptual framework for methods and is a statement of 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.
- Findings are usually presented as a set of themes or categories, but may also include narrative and other types of representation; we will discuss options in class. Keep in mind this course does NOT evaluate your themes. Instead, the goal is to explain and critique the process of identification and support of those themes.
- Critique of methods may be a separate section in the final paper, or critique may be

integrated across the final paper. This project requires you to be a scholar of your method!

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

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.

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.

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

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-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 <https://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 VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

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

CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings: *indicates non-required reading; EX indicates GT study example.

Dialogue Sessions: Dialogue sessions are via Blackboard. I will open a forum for each of the three sessions and students will initiate their own thread for discussion and peer feedback. **THIS IS YOUR SITE!** I will read and synthesize at our next class meeting. I suggest you prepare a one-page visual and/or narrative conceptual framework of your approach to GT. This is not graded! If you want my feedback in addition to peer feedback, please send to me by email as a Word or PDF attachment.

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

SECTION 1 GROUNDED THEORY VS. THEORIZING FROM OR DATA**01/22 The role of theory/theories in qualitative research**

Corbin & Strauss, chpt. 1
 Charmaz, chpt. 1
 *Glaser & Strauss, chpts. 1-4

01/29 The history of grounded theory... and why that matters

Corbin & Strauss, chpt. 2
 Charmaz, chpts. 2-4
 Clarke, Prologue, chpt. 1
 *Walker & Myrick (2006) GT Process & Procedure

02/05 When and why to theorize from your data, even if you're not doing GT

Corbin & Strauss, chpts. 3-4
 Charmaz, chpt. 5
 *Charmaz (2011) GT & Social Justice Research

(We will discuss data collection from a study of critical thinking that employed GT techniques but did not meet the criteria fully for GT.)

02/12 DIALOGUE 1: Identify your conceptual framework for GT/Theorizing

DUE: IRB approval or conceptual paper request.

SECTION 2 ANALYZING TOWARD THEORY**02/19 Traditional constant comparative analysis... and critique**

*Glaser & Strauss, chpts. 5-8
 Clarke, chpt. 2
 Corbin & Strauss (1990) GT Procedures, Criteria
 Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg (2005) Erosion of Method

02/26 Constructivist constant comparative analysis... and critique

Corbin & Strauss, chpts. 5-6 (12-13)

Charmaz, chpts. 6-7

Clarke, chpts. 3-7

CHOOSE 2

EX: Harry, Sturges, & Klinger (2005) Mapping the Process

EX: Kolb (2011) Sympathy Work

EX: Komives et al. (2005) Developing Leadership ID

EX: Leisenring (2011) ID Claims, Partner Violence

EX: McDowell (2000) Home Schooling

03/04 NO CLASS. Spring Break**03/11 Thematic network analysis, situational analysis and QR metasynthesis**

Attride-Stirling (2001) Thematic Networks

Pascale (2010) Analytic Induction

EX: Reybold (2003) Pathways to the Professorate (first publication from my longitudinal study of faculty epistemology and identity)

CHOOSE 2 (These works continued my longitudinal GT study)

EX: Reybold (2005) Surrendering the Dream (Faculty Dissatisfaction)

EX: Reybold (2008) Structuring of Faculty Ethicality

EX: Reybold & Alamia (2008) Academic Transitions

EX: Reybold & Corda (2011) Service to the Academy

EX: Reybold et al. (2014) Counselor Educators & Hurricane Katrina

03/18 DIALOGUE 2: Choosing and blending your analysis methods

DUE: Draft paper with peer feedback.

SECTION 3 RETURNING TO THE BASICS OF GROUNDED THEORY... AGAIN**03/25 Theoretical selection/sensitivity/saturation**

*Glaser & Strauss, chpts. 9-12

Corbin & Strauss, chpts. 7-8 (14)

Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling (2013) Selection as Thinking Forward

Adair & Pastori (2011) Coding Frameworks, Children Crossing Borders Project

04/01 Gaps and questions. Now what?

Corbin & Strauss, chpt. 9

Charmaz, chpt. 9

EX: Reybold (2014) Irony of Ethics

04/08 Pulling it all together: A core category? A model?

Corbin & Strauss, chpts. 15, 16

Charmaz, chpts. 11, 12

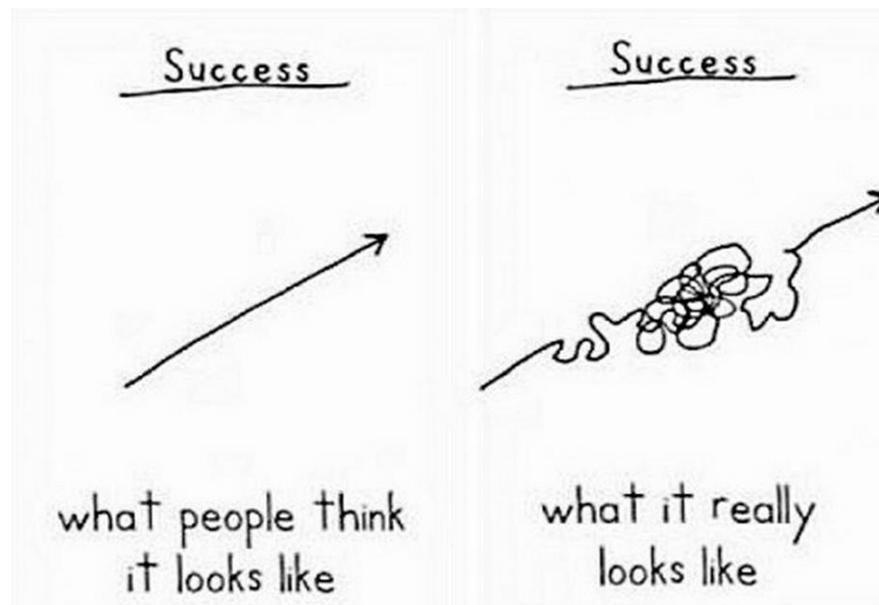
*Ryan & Bernard (2003) ID Themes

*Gerring (1999) "Good" Concept

EX: Sandelowski & Barroso (2003) Motherhood, HIV

04/15 DIALOGUE 3: Choosing and blending your methods**04/22 Individual meetings (Zoom or phone)**

04/29 FINAL PAPER DUE (9am, email) We will meet as a class by Zoom to critique the course and discuss how to move your paper forward to dissertation or publication.



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