

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**EDRS 621
Qualitative Inquiry in Education
Fall 2010
Monday 7:20 pm – 10:00 pm
Robinson Hall A350**

PROFESSOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the study of basic application of naturalistic research methods. It examines major theoretical frameworks, and qualitative research techniques, which include participant observation, interviewing, coding, and interpretation of data.

(Prerequisite: EDRS 590 or equivalent)

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course is designed to be highly interactive as students are guided through the process of learning to use, conduct, and write about qualitative research in education. The course will be taught using lectures, class discussions, and individual and group activities. Technologies such as web-based discussion boards and qualitative research software may also serve as a medium for instruction. Students should be prepared to participate and lead discussions during each class meeting.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

This course is designed to enable students to:

- gain a basic understanding of current qualitative research methods and the theories and epistemologies that have influenced their development.
- gain an understanding of basic grounded theory approaches to qualitative data interpretation, including the iterative processes of basic coding, category generation and identifying themes.
- gain experience with data collection techniques including participant observation and qualitative interviewing.
- find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field.
- thoughtfully consider ethical issues in qualitative research

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

The program goals are consistent with the following Learner-centered psychological principles (APA Division 15) outlined by the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force in Education.

- Principle 1: The Nature of Learning Process
- Principle 2: Goals of the Learning Process
- Principle 3: Construction of Knowledge
- Principle 4: Strategic Thinking
- Principle 5: Thinking about Thinking
- Principle 6: Context of Learning
- Principle 7: Motivational and Emotional Influences on Learning
- Principle 8: Intrinsic Motivation to Learn
- Principle 9: Effects of Motivation on Affect
- Principle 10: Developmental Influences on Learning
- Principle 11: Social Influences on Learning
- Principle 12: Individual Differences on Learning
- Principle 13: Learning and Diversity
- Principle 14: Standards and Assessment

For more information please see:

American Psychological Association (1997). *Learner-centered psychological principles: A framework for school redesign and reform*. Retrieved August 24, 2005, from <http://www.apa.org>

COURSE MATERIALS

Notebook or laptop: Students should bring to **every** class session a notebook (or laptop) in which they can regularly write memos.

Required Text

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Additional resources:

Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., & Sheridan, K.M. (2007). Studio Thinking: The real benefits of visual arts education. I use this as an example of qualitative research in education. This book is also not required for the course, but may be of interest to some students.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation 15%

You will complete required readings and participate in class activities and discussions. In addition, there are a number of ungraded assignments that you will need to complete as part of your participation grade. The participation grade will be carefully computed based on your timeliness and thoughtfulness in completing this assignments and using them to discuss in class. In addition, absences detract from your grade. More than one absence in the class will result in a lower participation grade. Please discuss with me if

2. Article critique 25%

You will write a critical analysis of a qualitative research article on a topic related to your research proposal. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

3. Participant observation or Interview project 25%

a) You will propose, conduct, and write fieldnotes and an analytic memo on a 1 -2 hour field observation relevant to your research proposal . Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

Or

b) You will write an interview protocol, conduct a 1 to 1.5 hour interview, transcribe the interview and write an analytic memo. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

4. Research design proposal 35%

You will design and write a proposal for a qualitative research study. Details on the assignment and evaluation criteria will be handed out in class.

Grading Scale

A+ = 98 – 100%	A = 93 – 97.99%	A- = 90 – 92.99%
B+ = 88 – 89.99%	B = 83 – 87.99%	B- = 80 – 82.99%
C = 70 – 79.99%	F < 70%	

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:

All students must abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.

Please note that:

- “Plagiarism encompasses the following:
 1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
 2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.”

(from Mason Honor Code online at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>)
- Paraphrasing involves taking someone else’s ideas and putting them in your own words. When you paraphrase, you need to cite the source.

- When material is copied word for word from a source, it is a direct quotation. You must use quotation marks (or block indent the text) and cite the source.
 - Electronic tools (e.g., TurnItIn.com) may be used to detect plagiarism if necessary.
 - Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are treated seriously and may result in disciplinary actions.
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

Paper Format

- 1 inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Include the following information: title, name, date, professor, course number.
- All papers should be proofread for spelling, grammar, and clarity errors.
- Citation and references in APA format.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the start of class on the assigned due date. If an assignment must be turned in late or outside of class, students may contact me by email about how to deliver the late assignment. Late assignments will be marked down by half a letter grade for each day the assignment is late.