

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
PhD Program

EDRS 897 A01 – Special Topics: Digital Tools in Qualitative Inquiry
3 credits, Summer 2018, Session A (May 21-June 23, 2018)
MTWR, 7:20-9:25pm – Thompson Hall L018 – Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisite

None

University Catalog Course Description

Develops knowledge and skills of selected advanced research methods topic(s). Offered by the Graduate School of Education. May be repeated within the degree for a maximum of 6 credits.

Course Overview

This course will examine the theoretical assumptions that undergird the applications of digital tools within the qualitative research process, while also providing students with a hands-on, skills-based experience. Students will acquire experience using a variety of technologies to support the qualitative research process. The course will highlight how new technologies are changing the essence of what it means to engage in qualitative inquiry. “Phases” of the qualitative research process will be explored, such as conducting literature reviews, engaging in researcher reflexivity, collaboration and managing projects, generating data, transcribing data, analyzing textual data, analyzing video data, analyzing audio data, and representing findings. Throughout, we will also consider the ethical dilemmas associated with particular technologies.

Course Philosophy:

In our 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. Throughout the semester, I welcome feedback and encourage your participation in an informal mid-semester evaluation.

I will facilitate this class much like a seminar, moving between group discussions and hands-on demonstrations. While I will provide “mini-lectures” at some point during our class meeting, we will rely primarily on small group discussions to construct our understanding. Because we will be trying out various tools, collaboration will be central to our learning. We will all bring different levels of experience to the class. Some will be early adopters, others technophobic. Let’s agree to practice patience and support one another as we progress.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using lecture, seminar, and online formats.

Learner Objectives

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

1. Articulate the historical and theoretical foundations of digital tools in qualitative inquiry;
2. Describe some common digital tools used in qualitative inquiry;
3. Discuss common practices associated with designing qualitative studies that use digital tools;
4. Outline ethical considerations common to the use of digital tools in qualitative inquiry;
5. Use various digital tools to engage in literature review, reflexive practice, qualitative data collection, and analysis.

Professional Standards (that are met through this course):

Not applicable

Required Texts

There are three required texts for this course:

- Paulus, T. M., Lester, J. N., & Dempster, P. (2014). *Digital tools for qualitative research*. London, UK: Sage.

Other assigned readings will be shared on Blackboard.

Web Resources:

There are several web resources that you might find useful. These sites focus on sharing information related to the social inquiry process. Many of these sites have listservs that I encourage you to join, allowing you to stay up to date on recent methodological developments

- Methodspace (<http://www.methodspace.com/>)
- Open Data Foundation (<http://www.opendatafoundation.org/>)
- The Qualitative Report (<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>)
- Top Qualitative Research Blogs (<http://www.qualitative360.com/news-and-blogs/11-editor-s-pick-top-qualitative-research-blogs>)

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).

Letter grades will be given on all assignments. The following weights will be utilized to compose the course grade.

Assignments	Points (each point = 1% of final grade)
1. Participation	20
2. Skill Building Practice #1	15
3. Skill Building Practice #2	15
4. Skill Building Practice #3	15
5. Methodology Paper Outline	5
6. <u>Methodology Paper</u>	<u>30</u>
	100

The points/percentages above are intended to reflect the balance of priorities in the learning process.

Your work should be original, thoughtful, rigorous, and thorough. Plagiarism in any form is not acceptable. Please err on the side of documenting and citing sources.

Assignment Descriptions

Participation:

This class is based on a philosophy of learning that emphasizes the creation of a learning community. As a result, the class misses out on your contribution when you are not in class. Further, both face-to-face and online class discussions are dependent upon your reading of the course materials. You are therefore expected to come to class prepared and engage in all class activities. Participation indeed 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 outloud 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. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance and participation.

Skill Building Practices 1, 2, & 3:

These skill building practice assignments will give you an opportunity to apply the concepts and tools discussed in class to your own data, reflect on what you learn, and create a product that will help you remember the affordances/constraints of the tools as you learn them. Choose one tool for each skill building activity and learn how to use it in-depth. This might be a particular feature within a CAQDAS package or a stand-alone digital tool. To complete this activity, you will 1) introduce/describe the tool; 2) provide an example of how to use the tool with ‘real’ data; 3) provide screenshots of the steps and/or offer illustrative examples; 4) discuss what you will do next to continue developing your skill in relation to this particular tools and/or how you may use it within a particular research study; and 5) cite relevant readings.

- Transana, Cloud/Tagging Tools, or other tool mentioned in class
- Digital Research Tools:
<https://digitalresearchtools.pbworks.com/w/page/17801672/FrontPage>
- Top 100 Tools for Learning: <http://c4lpt.co.uk/top-100-tools-for-learning-2011/best-ofbreed-tools-2011/>

Methodology Paper:

The culminating project for this course is a “methods” section of a paper, which articulates both your methodological approach and your rationale for using technology to support your research practice.

You will develop a real (or hypothetical) study and then develop/write the “methods” section. Assume that your audience may not be familiar with the technologies that you plan to use. Thus,

your goal is to explain what the technologies can and cannot do and why you plan to use them in your proposed study. Therefore, provide a detailed description of your methodology, methods, and the “digital tools” that you plan to use. You can frame your discussion on the digital tools around affordances and constraints. One way to structure your paper is to include the following:

- Context for proposed study, including introductory statements that articulate the need for the study, purpose of the study, and primary research question(s);
- Name and appropriately cite the qualitative tradition that you will employ;
- Discuss how you will review the literature (including the digital tools and related rationale for why you have selected these tools);
- Discuss how you will gain entry into the research site, acquire human subjects approval, and recruit participants;
- Describe your data collection procedures (including the digital tools and related rationale for why you have selected these tools);
- Describe your transcription process (if you have one) (including the digital tools and related rationale for why you have selected these tools);
- Describe your data analysis process (including the digital tools and related rationale for why you have selected these tools);
- Describe how you will represent your findings (including the digital tools and related rationale for why you have selected these tools); and
- Discuss any ethical concerns related to particular digital tools.

Remember to format your paper using APA (6th edition) and that academic writing is about making an argument. Thus, spend time assuring that your paper is building a coherent argument.

Grading

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

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
May 21	Introducing the course		Come with questions about the syllabus Post self-introduction as a comment on the course blog before class time
May 22	Considering the history of technology in qualitative research	PLD 1 Paulus, Lester, Britt 2013 Kilbourn 2006 Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson 1996 Roberts and Wilson 2002	
May 23	Examining the affordances and diffusion of innovation theories	Straub 2009 Conole and Dyke 2004a, 2004b Boyle and Cook 2004	
May 24	Online meeting: Introduction to Atlas.TI		
May 28	<i>No class meeting (holiday)</i>		
May 29	Engaging in Reflexivity and Ethical Practice	PLD 2 Wakeford and Cohen 2008 Eynon, Fry, & Schroeder, 2008 Hardey 2011	Skill Builder #1 due
May 30	Reviewing the literature	PLD 4 Boote and Beile 2005 Kern 2011 Anderson and Kanuka 2003	
May 31	Online meeting: Introduction to MAXQDA		
June 4	Data collection	PLD 5 and Choose 3: Horan 2011 Gratton and O'Donnell 2011 Matthews and Cramer 2008 G, S, B, C, 2009 Carmichael 2008 Hine 2008 Hookway 2008 Williams 2007	Skill Builder #2 due
June 5	Transcription	PLD 6 Johnson 2011 Hammersley 2010 Markle West and Rich 2011	

		Watch Inqscribe tutorials on transcription	
June 6	Online meeting: Introduction to Dedoose		
June 7	<i>No class meeting</i>		
June 11	Analyzing textual data	Saldana 2009 Konopasek 2008 Watch any CAQDAS package tutorial(s) on text analysis	
June 12	Analyzing audio and video data	PLD 7 and 8 Cidell 2010 Woods and Dempster 2011 Watch any CAQDAS package tutorials on coding image and video data	
June 13	Online meeting: Introduction to NVIVO		Outline of methodology paper due
June 14	<i>No class meeting</i>		
June 18	Representation of findings	PLD 9 Watch overview of Scrivener Woo 2008 Weisgerber 2009 Review www.projectempowerment.com	Skill Builder #3 due
June 19	Collaboration and project management	PLD 3 Watch prior to class: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OTA5FiqISk Lee and Gregory 2008 M, K, W-S 2011 Sin 2008	
June 20	Future trends	PLD 10	
June 21	<i>Methodology paper due June 22 at midnight</i>		

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

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 <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off 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://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/> .