

EDS 102: Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Education Research

Spring 2025

Lecture – Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50pm, PCYNH 120

Discussion Section with TA (optional; 0.5pt extra credit) - Fridays @ 10:30 AM via Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Megan Hopkins
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Office hours: Thurs. 10:30am-12:00pm (in person RWAC 0711 or Zoom) - [Sign up here!](#)
By appointment

Teaching Assistant: John Diaz
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Office hours: Fridays @ 11:30 AM via Zoom

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to topics in qualitative research methods and analytic approaches, including methods such as case studies, video analysis, interviews, observations, and ethnography. Concepts explore the practice and philosophical underpinnings of specified qualitative research approach and examples of qualitative studies. If taken for EDS major, must be taken for a letter grade. *Prerequisites:* ED25 major and upper-division standing.

Course Credit

This is a 4-unit upper-division undergraduate course. Per UCSD policy, students should expect to spend three hours in class and engage in 6-8 hours of outside preparation each week.

Instructor Introduction

Welcome to EDS 102! I'm excited to engage in this learning experience with all of you. I am a professor in the Department of Education Studies, and I use qualitative research to explore how educators implement policies for bilingual and immigrant students. I first came to this line of work as a bilingual teacher who observed systemwide, persistent inequities and wanted to understand how educational leaders could advance more equity-minded policies and practices. Although you may not yet consider yourself a "researcher," I've learned that we are all inherently researchers conducting studies in our daily lives. My hope is that this class will provide a foundation to support you on a path of scholarly creativity that can meaningfully benefit you and the communities you engage with.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

- Describe the purpose and role of qualitative research in education.
- Design the fundamental components of a qualitative research study.
- Apply the basics of qualitative data collection and analysis.
- Evaluate the challenges of qualitative research design, including ethics.

Course Expectations

What I expect of you	What you can expect of me
Be informed. Read the syllabus carefully and completely so you understand the course structure and expectations.	Enthusiasm. To bring my enthusiasm for teaching to each class and interaction.
Be present. Attend all class sessions. There is no substitute for in-class engagement, and you will receive credit for activities completed in-class. If you must miss a class, please email me in advance.	Preparation. To be prepared for each class session and to communicate any changes to the syllabus in advance. Lecture slides and other materials will be posted to Canvas before each class meeting.
Be attuned. Keep up with the course content and assignments, and communicate with me if you have questions, concerns, or need adaptations.	Responsiveness. To respond to emails within 24 hours and be available for one-on-one meetings. Emails received on weekends or evenings may take longer.
Be mindful. Listen to others' perspectives and ask questions to understand their position. Show respect for ideas and views even when you disagree. Be willing to have your thinking challenged; it's okay to change your mind.	Care. To be committed to fostering a collaborative learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identities. To listen attentively and encourage open dialogue.
Be ethical. Maintain honest and ethical principles towards me, your classmates, and the execution of the course. Please read UC San Diego's Principles of Community and Standards of Conduct .	Timely feedback. To make every effort to provide written or oral feedback on assignments within one week of the submission date.
Exhibit integrity. An honest, fair, responsible, respectful, trustworthy, and courageous effort on all academic work and collaboration. Please read UC San Diego's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship .	Exhibit integrity. To uphold integrity standards and create an atmosphere that fosters active learning, creativity, critical thinking, and honest collaboration.
Be flexible. Sometimes our schedules change due to illness, family emergencies, or other unexpected events, which may necessitate some rescheduling.	Adaptability. To adjust as needed if some expectations or objectives become impossible to meet. Adjustments for one person will not be made that are not available to every other person in the course.

Readings

We will use one main text:

- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation, 4th edition*. John Wiley & Sons.

You can access a free [online version](#) of the text through the UCSD library/EBSCO host. Alternatively, you may wish to purchase the book from [Amazon](#) or your preferred vendor. Be sure to purchase the 4th edition.

All other materials will be posted on the [Canvas](#) course website.

Land Acknowledgement

The UC San Diego community holds great respect for the land and the original people of the area where our campus is located. The university is built on the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. Today, the Kumeyaay people continue to maintain their political sovereignty and cultural traditions as vital members of the San Diego community. We acknowledge their tremendous contributions to the region and thank them for their stewardship.

Accommodations

I am more than happy to provide accommodations to the extent possible to meet students' learning needs. Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to faculty and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Please make arrangements to contact me privately. You may contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone); osd@ucsd.edu (email); <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu> (website).

Use of AI Tools

Please make sure that the work you submit for this class is your own. The written assignments for this class involve you developing your own creative ideas for a research study and showing your learning. You are not permitted to use AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to generate text for you on the written assignments. Such actions can undermine honesty and fairness, violate the trust of me and your peers, and result in an academic integrity violation. An acceptable usage of these tools could be to seek clarification of qualitative research concepts (e.g., What is ethnography?) or to edit text you generated for clarity. If you have questions about what might be acceptable on this front, please contact me. You may also find this campus [guidance on Chat GPT](#) to be useful.

Basic Needs Support for Students

If you are skipping and stretching meals, or having difficulties affording or accessing food, you may be eligible for [CalFresh](#), California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, that can provide up to \$292 a month on a debit card to buy food. The [Hub Basic Needs Center](#) empowers students by connecting them to resources for food, housing, and financial literacy.

Assignments

Reading (Weekly): Each week you will be assigned between 30-50 pages of reading. Readings are essential to the completion of assignments. You are expected to complete readings before the class session in which they will be discussed.

Group Activities (In class): Most weeks we will be doing small group activities in class that relate to the readings. Your grade for these assignments will be based on participation or completion (0=not completed; 2 pts=fully completed/fully participated). Each student will be allowed one “free pass” on one missed in-class activity due to absence. If you miss another activity, you can make up the written assignment on your own by Friday of that week’s class for a maximum of 0.5 points. You can make up a maximum of two missed activities. You must email me regarding the makeup option within 24 hours of the class you missed.

Reading Quizzes (4/15 and 5/13): We will have an in-class reading quiz at the beginning of class on April 15 and May 13. The format will be multiple choice and true/false. If you are keeping up with the readings, you should find the quizzes to be manageable. You may bring a 3” x 5” notecard with your notes (on front and back) if you wish. If you miss class due to illness, please make arrangements with me to make up the quiz within 24 hours of the missed class.

Research proposal (Part 1 due on 4/27; Part 2 due on 5/25, but can be submitted sooner): You will develop a brief proposal for a qualitative study on an *education* topic of your choice. You will not be conducting the study; you will just be developing some elements of a proposal for a study.

Part 1 of the proposal (due 4/27 at 11:59 p.m. on Canvas) must have the following components. Please also consult the rubric that is posted with the assignment on Canvas.

- (1) **Title page:** Include your name, student ID number, and a title of your proposed study. Feel free to come up with something creative that reflects the focus of your study.
- (2) **Topic and problem statement:** Describe in approximately 500-1000 words what education topic you would like to study, what problem your study will address, and why it is important to you and to the field. The topic needs to be one that can be pursued through a qualitative study, and it needs to focus on some aspect of education. In class we will discuss what topics might fit these parameters, and the textbook will also be helpful. If you want to get a sense of current national and local topics in education, you may wish to look at [Education Week](#) or the [Voice of San Diego](#), but the topic can also evolve from your own experience in high school, community college, at UCSD, etc. or it might reflect a topic that came to your attention in another course. In explaining why the topic is important, consult at least three sources (2 of which must be research sources, e.g., use Google

Scholar). Be sure to cite the outside sources and include a reference list with links to the sources.

- (3) **Research question:** What research question or questions will guide your study? In class, we will discuss how to write a good research question, and the Merriam and Tisdell book will also be helpful.
- (4) **Type of qualitative study and rationale:** Explain in approximately 200-400 words what type of qualitative study you plan to undertake (e.g., ethnography, narrative analysis, basic qualitative study, etc.) and why. Provide sufficient detail so that the reader will understand what characterizes that type of study. Cite the Merriam and Tisdell book to help support your rationale for choosing that type of study.

Part 2 of the proposal (due 5/25 at 11:59 p.m. on Canvas) must have the following components. Please also consult the rubric that is posted with the assignment on Canvas.

- (1) **Include all of the elements from Part 1:** If you wish to revise any aspects of Part 1 based on feedback you received, feel free to do so. While your grade from Part 1 won't change, if the suggestions were extensive, clarifying the foundational elements of your study could help your grade for Part 2.
- (2) **Sampling and data collection plan:** Describe in approximately 300-500 words what site/whom you plan to study and provide a rationale and what kinds of data you will collect. For example, you might decide to examine the experiences of students in schools that recently adopted the International Baccalaureate program. Your study will need to include schools that have implemented this change, and you will need to explain how you will select students to inform you about their experience, but you don't need to refer to a specific school. Your study must involve at least interviews and observations, and you may choose to use other qualitative methods (e.g., document review) as well if you wish. Please refer to the text and lectures in providing support for your plan.
- (3) **Interview protocol and observation plans/protocol:** (a) Develop a list of approximately 10 high-quality interview questions for interviewees who will participate in the study. (b) Describe in approximately 200-300 words what you could observe in a setting, describe what you will be looking for in those observations and, if applicable, develop an observation protocol. We will examine examples in class. (c) If your study also involves examining documents or other types of qualitative data, please explain what you will look for. Please refer to the text and lectures for guidance. Be sure that the interview questions, observation plans, and document review plans (if applicable) help inform your research questions.
- (4) **Positionality statement:** In approximately 300-400 words reflect on your own identity, experiences, and beliefs in relation to the topic. Writing such a statement

can help researchers become aware of how their own lenses, biases, and assumptions shape how they undertake a study and examine the data they gather. We will discuss and begin to draft positionality statements in class.

Parts 1 and 2 of the research proposal must be submitted on Canvas by the due dates. Your proposal elements will be evaluated according to (1) whether they meet the criteria; (2) the extent to which your research plan is coherent and plausible; (3) the quality, clarity, and organization of your writing; and (4) your ability to integrate readings/concepts from the course. Please note that word length guidelines are approximate. Use the space you need to address the prompts. Please also consult the rubrics posted on Canvas.

Reading Analysis (Due 6/6, but can be submitted sooner): Draw on 2 or 3 of the following readings (Yoon - week 1; Martinez - week 6; Paris - week 9) to write an analysis on *the role of the qualitative researcher in relation to their research participants*. Be sure to reference the readings to support your points. Length: Approx. 500-800 words. You do not need to include a reference list. Your writing will be evaluated according to: (1) whether it addresses the prompt; (2) the extent to which your writing is analytical and reflective; (3) the quality, clarity, and organization of your writing; and (4) your ability to integrate readings/concepts from the course. A rubric is posted with the assignment on Canvas.

Grading

Your grade for this class will be based on the following:

- Reading checks (two quizzes): 20% (each is worth 10 points)
- In-class activities: 14% (each in class activity is worth 2 points)
- Research proposal: 50%
 - Part 1 (25%) (25 points)
 - Part 2 (25%) (25 points)
- Reading analysis: 16% (16 points)

There is no final exam for this course.

Extra credit (3 points): Complete [The Social and Behavioral Educational Foundations CITI certification](#) and upload your completion certificate on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on June 6. To access the course, click the “register” button in the upper right and type “University of California, San Diego” when it asks for your organizational affiliation. The course will then be free. *Note:* You can also earn 0.5 extra credit point for attending a weekly section or Dr. Hopkins’ office hours. The maximum extra credit you may earn over the course of the quarter is 5 points.

Late submission of assignments: Up to 10% of the assignment points will be deducted per day. The lowest grade possible for late submission will be 50% of the assignment points. If you have extenuating circumstances affecting your ability to submit an on-time assignment you must email the instructor at least 24 hours before it is due and propose a new deadline.

Early submission of assignments: I find that some students like to get ahead. It is perfectly fine to submit your assignments early, and we will grade them as they are turned in. Part 2 of the research proposal and the reading analysis could be submitted in advance of when they are due, as you will have the background needed to complete them earlier.

Grading scale (based on points out of 100):

- A+ 98-100
- A 93-97
- A- 90-92
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- C- 70-72
- D 60-69
- F 59 or below

*I will use common rounding rules and will round up if your percentage is followed by .5 to .9.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Activities to Complete Before Class
Week 1		
April 1	Introduction to the class & course expectations	
April 3	“Field trip” to gather data and debrief	
Week 2		
April 8	Understanding basics of qualitative research	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Intro to Part 1 (pp. 1-2) & Chapter 1 (pp. 3-21)

April 10	Understanding the role of the qualitative researcher	Read: Yoon, I. (2019). Hauntings of Korean American woman researcher in the field. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , 32(5), 446-464.
Week 3		
April 15	Different types of qualitative research approaches	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 2 Study: There will be a reading quiz at the beginning of class on Chapters 1-2 of the text.
April 17		Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 3 (pp. 43-72) Prepare: Think about an educational issue/topic you may wish to study.
Week 4		
April 22	Designing a qualitative research study	Read: First part of Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 4 (pp. 73-82)
April 24		Read: Remainder of Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 4 (pp. 82-103)
Week 5		
<i>Due Sunday, April 27 at 11:59 pm: Part 1 of Research Proposal</i>		
April 29	Collecting qualitative data through interviews	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Intro to Part 2 (p. 105-106) & Chapter 5 (p. 107-136)
May 1		Review: Merriam & Tisdell, Intro to Part 2 (p. 105-106) & Chapter 5 (p. 107-136) Prepare: Jot down ideas of interview questions you could ask regarding your topic of interest.
Week 6		
May 6	Collecting qualitative data through observations & positionality statements	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 6 (p. 137- 161)
May 8		Read: Martinez, D. C. (2016). ‘This ‘ain’t the projects’’: A researcher’s reflections on the local appropriateness of our research tools. <i>Anthropology and Education Quarterly</i> , 47(1), 59-77.

Week 7		
May 13	Gathering and analyzing data from documents and artifacts	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 7 (p. 162- 189) Study: There will be an in-class quiz on Chapters 5-6.
May 15	NO CLASS	Work on Part 2 of Research Proposal!
Week 8		
May 20	Qualitative data analysis	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Intro to Part 3 (p. 191- 193) & Chapter 8 (p. 195- 236)
May 22		Read: If you already read Chapter 8, you are caught up.
Week 9		
<i>Due Monday, May 26 at 11:59 pm: Part 2 of Research Proposal</i>		
May 27	Validity, reliability, and ethics in qualitative research	Read: Merriam & Tisdell, Chapter 9 (pp. 237-266)
May 29		CLASS IS ASYNCHRONOUS! Read: Paris, D. (2011) “A friend who understand fully”: Notes on humanizing research in a multiethnic youth community. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , 24(2), 137-149.
Week 10		
June 3	Exploring a range of published qualitative studies – Classroom ethnography	Read: Aragón, M. J. (2022). “I think they’re Hispanic”: Agency and meaning-making in Latinx students’ discussion about text. <i>Linguistics and Education</i> , 69, 101045. Prepare: Prof. Aragón will join us for part of class. Think of a question to ask her and post it here .
June 5	Exploring a range of published qualitative studies – Participatory methods	Read: Weddle, H. & Hopkins, M. (2025). Defending against challenges to equity: The role of state education agency leaders. Manuscript under review. Read: Breeden, R. L., Smith, T. L., & Willis, A. L. (2025). “Strained relationships”: A participatory action research study examining relationships between Black

		communities and historically White institutions. <i>Journal of Diversity in Higher Education</i> , 18(1), 1–15.
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Due Friday, June 6 at 11:59 pm: Reading Analysis