

# Course Change Request

## New Course Proposal

Date Submitted: 12/03/19 10:31 am

Viewing: **CONS 360 : Qualitative Research and Inquiry**

Last edit: 12/03/19 10:31 am

Changes proposed by: atriple2

Are you completing this form on someone else's behalf?

Yes

Requestor:

### In Workflow

1. **CONS Director**
2. **LA Associate Dean**
3. **SC Associate Dean**
4. UN Academic Affairs  
Dean
5. SINT Chair
6. Assoc Provost-  
Undergraduate
7. Registrar-Courses
8. Banner

### Approval Path

1. 12/03/19 10:51 am  
Cody Edwards  
(cedward7):  
Approved for CONS  
Director
2. 01/15/20 10:37 am  
Marcy Glover  
(mglover2):  
Approved for LA  
Associate Dean

Name	Extension	Email
Elizabeth Freeman	3-9272	efreeman@gmu.edu

Effective Term: Fall 2021

Subject Code: CONS - Conservation Studies

Course Number: 360

Bundled Courses:

Is this course replacing another course? No

Equivalent Courses:

Catalog Title: Qualitative Research and Inquiry

Banner Title: Qualitative Research and Inqui

Will section titles vary by semester? No

**Credits:** 3

**Schedule Type:** Lecture

**Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week:** 3

**Repeatable:** May be only taken once for credit, limited to 3 attempts (N3) **Max Allowable Credits:** 3

**Default Grade Mode:** Undergraduate Regular

**Recommended Prerequisite(s):**

**Recommended Corequisite(s):**

**Required Prerequisite(s) / Corequisite(s) (Updates only):**  
BIOL 214 or STAT 250

**Registrar's Office Use Only - Required Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s):**

And/Or	(	Course/Test Code	Min Grade/Score	Academic Level	)	Concurrency?

**Registration Restrictions (Updates only):**

**Registrar's Office Use Only - Registration Restrictions:**

- Field(s) of Study:**
- Class(es):**
- Level(s):**
- Degree(s):**
- School(s):**

**Catalog Description:**

This course introduces students to research and inquiry related to the social and biological aspects of biodiversity conservation. Students will develop understanding of methodology and data collection through case studies of empirical research about contemporary issues. Students will examine the diverse foundational assumptions, project designs, methods of acquiring data, analytical techniques, interpretive

strategies, and ethical and political considerations that characterize contemporary research in this field today.

**Justification:**

Provides students with an understanding of qualitative research design and methodology employed by conservationists studying the social and biological aspects of conservation.

**Does this course cover material which crosses into another department?** Yes

**Impacted Departments:**

Department
SINT - School of Integrative Studies

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Engage in critical reflection on the goals of research and inquiry and the production of knowledge.
2. Integrate researching with theorizing and practicing conservation principles.
3. Examine the strengths, limitations and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative and qualitative research.
4. Learn how to frame relevant, researchable questions about a problem or concern.
5. Connect questions with research strategies that are systematic, sensitive to contexts and respectful of participants.
6. Identify, locate, and evaluate appropriate information sources, both primary and secondary.

**Attach Syllabus**

[CONS 360 syllabus.pdf](#)

**Additional Attachments**

**Additional Comments:**

**Reviewer Comments**

# CONS 360 Qualitative Research and Inquiry

Fall or Spring 2020:  
Online: [mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu)

## Course Description

Questions are at the heart of any research effort. Under what conditions do different kinds and conservation issues emerge, and why? How do these challenges develop and transform over time? Did the intervention have the desired effect? Our focus this semester will be both curiosity, as well as the systematic exploration of questions.

This course introduces students to research and inquiry in the field of conservation, understanding the methods used to understand both the social and biological aspects of conservation topics and the types and sources of data that can be gathered. Throughout the semester, students develop their critical understanding of the research process in dialogue with case studies of empirical research that raise central questions about contemporary issues and about methodology and data collection. During the course we will survey and examine the diverse foundational assumptions, project designs, methods of acquiring data, analytical techniques, interpretive strategies, and ethical and political considerations that characterize contemporary research in this field today.

While developing an understanding of conservation research, students will also hone critical thinking and skills of research that can be used to analyze many types of topics. Students will learn to conceptualize sound research questions, work with primary and secondary sources, and how to evaluate scholarly and non-scholarly literature. Finally, students will develop their own research proposal on an individually identified research problem situated within the conservation literature.

## Course Objectives

1. Engage in critical reflection on the goals of research and inquiry and the production of knowledge.
2. Integrate *researching* with *theorizing* and *practicing* conservation principles.
3. Examine the strengths, limitations and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative and qualitative research.
4. Learn how to frame relevant, researchable questions about a problem or concern.
5. Connect questions with research strategies that are systematic, sensitive to contexts and respectful of participants.
6. Identify, locate, and evaluate appropriate information sources, both primary and secondary.

## Course Expectations

*Consistent attendance:* Barring exceptional circumstances, you will be expected to attend class.

*Effective preparation:* Students are expected to have read all weekly reading assignments prior to class and come prepared to discuss, question, and engage – the course involves discussion and activities that depend on advance preparation.

*Classroom climate:* Come to class on time and prepared. Turn off cell phones and computers unless used for an in-class exercise or note-taking. Remain in class unless you have an emergency. Allow others and yourself to learn by refraining from side conversations, passing notes, texting, reading e-mail, browsing websites, etc. Open discussion and dialogue are class goals but please be mindful of the sensitivities of others.

*Incomplete grades:* In keeping with departmental policy, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of illness, either personal or in an immediate family member. Class assignments that are submitted late will be penalized. If a student has a documented emergency, special arrangements may be made with the instructor.

*Paper format:* Some assignments will be submitted in electronic format only, others in electronic format as well as paper format. You will be notified in advance of the due date how papers should be submitted. Papers should be double-spaced, have 1” margins, be numbered and use 12-point font. Make sure that your name, course number, and paper title is on the first page. Edit your papers carefully as spelling and grammatical errors will lower your overall score. APA citation style is preferred.

## **Course Reading and Resources**

### ***Required Texts and Readings***

Newing, Helen, 2010. *Conducting Research In Conservation*. New York: Rutledge.

Wisker, Gina. 2009. *The Undergraduate Research Handbook*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In addition to the texts, there are required research articles about research studies and issues in research throughout the semester. These will be available on the course Blackboard page and via e-reserves. In order to respond to student interests and topics developed during the course, readings may be changed, with advance notice, from those listed in the text. I cannot stress enough how important it is to not only do the reading, but engage with the readings. Take notes, write questions, summarize points, look up references—prompts will be provided.

### ***Blackboard***

This course will utilize Blackboard to house readings and documents pertinent to the course, to submit assignments, and to provide a space for discussion and collaboration. Students are expected to check the site regularly. [mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu)

### ***E-Reserves***

Readings for this course will also be available through the university’s electronic reserves system.

To access e-reserves:

1. Go to <http://oscr.gmu.edu>
2. Click on the green box “e-reserves”
3. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course (CONF 301-002) and instructor (XXX)
4. Enter the password (To be announced) and click “submit” to view items. It is case sensitive.

## Assignments

1. Active Engagement: (15%) Attendance is extremely important as the course is interactive and participation is critical to your learning. Students will be expected to engage each other in discussions about the assigned readings and research proposals. You can contribute to class discussions by sharing your viewpoints about the material we discuss, which helps to make class discussions more meaningful, as well as asking questions about the material, which helps class members to understand it more effectively. You will also be asked to participate in peer reviews and short research exercises.
2. Critical Thinking and Reflection:
  - a. Current research: (5%) During the semester, we will discuss current conservation research and challenges and apply concepts, theories, and frameworks we have learned in class. To generate these discussions, each student will locate an example of conservation and frame a brief discussion. Appropriate examples may come from research reports or peer reviewed journals; while a news story may draw your attention to the research, you should locate the original source. Due: sign-up for dates throughout the semester, before April 3.
  - b. I, Researcher: (10%) Prompts will be given for a 3-4 page in-depth reflection telling the “stories” of your own research efforts (see assigned research article by Magolda). Due date TBD.
3. Mid-term: (15%) Online, available on the course web page. Due March 3, available February 27<sup>th</sup>.
4. Group Project: (30%) Case study of a conservation effort. Student groups of 3 to 4 students will identify a relevant case and then plan and implement a focused case study. You are expected to use multiple sources of data, from existing sources to newly generated data. The group will produce both a written report and a class presentation. Though some class time will be allowed, please plan for additional group time outside of class. Both an individual and a group grade will be given. Additional details will be provided regarding potential topics, assignment steps and components. ***Presentations and papers due Week 13 (April 22 and 24).***
5. Research Proposal: (25%) You will develop a focused research proposal on a topic relevant to peace and conflict resolution and of interest to you. This assignment builds on the course material and we will spend time throughout the semester drafting, discussing and revising the different components of your research proposal. Due: May 8.

## Academic Policies and Information

### *Academic Honesty and Collaboration*

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at <http://oai.gmu.edu/understanding-the-honor-code/>. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental principles to follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions (paraphrases as well as direct quotations), please talk with the professor and consult some of the many resources available, including:

- [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page\\_id=1240](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page_id=1240)
- <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/>

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. For this course, some assignments will be submitted in print, as well as electronic form, with advance notice. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

For individual class assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, you are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. You may not submit papers or presentations from other courses to fulfill assignments for this class. While it is fine for groups to divide project work among team members, the final product submitted should represent a single, conceptually linked piece of work. Group members are expected to be in class as the projects are completed. Absences during group work affect individual group members' scores. *If a group is having trouble with a member not fulfilling their work obligation, then the group needs to bring the problem to the instructor's attention immediately.*

## Student Resources

### **Assistance**

*Writing Center:* The ability to write papers that are clear, analytical and your own work is essential. If you aren't already good at this, you can learn. The Writing Center offers free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer. Free services include: One-on-one 45 minute sessions with a writing specialist; online writing lab; one-on-one sessions with an ESL specialist; workshops on such topics as documenting sources, grammar and punctuation; writing handouts on a variety of subjects; a library of handbooks and writing manuals; [and an] online chat with a tutor about papers submitted to the Online Writing Lab" (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>). Each Mason campus has a location. You can find them on the Fairfax Campus in Robinson Hall A114, Enterprise Hall and

the Johnson Center, as well as online. They can get busy, so make appointments in person, by phone at (703) 993-4491, by email at [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu) or online at: [writingcenter.gmu.edu/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)

The English Language Institute also offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact, please see me for a referral.

*Disability Support Services:* Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Support Services (993-2474) to determine the possible accommodations you might need; and 2) contact her or his instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations. George Mason University is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations that allow self-identified students with disabilities to access programs and activities at the university as stated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To achieve this goal, the university maintains and supports the Disability Resource Center Office, which is responsible for assuring that students receive the services and accommodations to which they are entitled. The professional staff of the Disability Resource Center Office coordinate services for students with disabilities, determine reasonable services and accommodations on the basis of disability, and act as a liaison between students and faculty/administration on concerns relating to services and accommodations” (<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/advising/dss.html>).

#### *Useful Contact Information*

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu/>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

## Course Outline

### Part I: Research Questions in Peace and Conflict Resolution

**Week 1: Introduction to the course, the class, research and inquiry, research as awareness and observation.**

January 23 (first class)

**Week 2: Conservation research problems, questions, insights (classic and emerging)**

January 28

- Newing, Chapter 1 (text)

January 30

- Newing Chapter 2 (text)

In-class exercise: Topics and question framing

**Week 3: The research process—from problems to questions to design**

February 4

- Wisker, Chapter 1
- **Conservation Article**

February 6

- Newing Chapter 3 (text)

**Week 4: Research purpose, paradigms and approaches**

February 11

- Wisker, Chapter 5

February 13

- Research studies: **Conservation Articles**

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*Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with purpose.*  
-Zora Neale Hurston-

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### Part II: Evaluating Information

**Week 5: Primary and secondary sources, types of data, objectivity and subjectivity**

February 18

- Wisker, Chapter 9

February 20

Prepare: Original source documents (webpage) for in-class exercise

### **Week 6: Sampling**

February 25

- Newing, Chapter 4

February 27

Prepare:

- for in-class exercise exercise (webpage)
- Midterm available after midnight, due March 3 by midnight.

## **Part III: Gathering Information**

### **Week 7: Participant Observation and Involvement**

March 4

- Newing, Chapter 5

March 6

- Newing, Chapter 8

Spring Break (no class March 11 and 13)

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*"Basically, I'm not interested in doing research and I never have been. I'm interested in understanding, which is quite a different thing."*

*David Blackwell (statistician)*

<http://scidiv.bellevuecollege.edu/Math/Blackwell.html>

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### **Week 8: Interviewing—climate, questions, challenges**

March 18

- Newing, Chapter 6
- Research example TBD

March 20

- worksheet on creating interview guides (webpage)

### **Week 9: Mapping**

March 25

- Newing, Chapter 9

March 27

- Newing, Chapter 10

- Research example TBD, in class activity

### **Week 10: Survey research**

April 1

- Newing, Chapter 7
- Preparing survey questions (webpage)

April 3

- Research article—**Conservation Article**

### **Week 11: Fieldwork and researcher as instrument**

April 8

- Newing, Chapter 11
- Research Article—Magolda, “*Accessing, Waiting, Plunging in, Wondering...*”

April 10

- Newing, Chapter 12

### **Week 12: Ethics of Research**

April 15

- Newing, Chapter 13
- Attend undergraduate conference, short report

### **Week 13: Case study presentations and papers due**

April 22 Groups Z & Y

April 24 Groups X & W

### **Week 14: Emerging issues in conservation**

April 29 Reading TBD

May 1 Review, evaluations

**Final Exam period May 8:** class meets, short reports on individual research proposals

*I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you looked at it the right way, did not become still more complicated.*

-- Paul Alderson (1926-...) in "New Scientist", 25 September 1969, 638