

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

EDUC 800  
Ways of Knowing  
Spring, 2010  
Tuesday 4:30 – 7:10, Innovation Hall 211

**Instructor**

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Office hours: Tuesday/Wednesday 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

This course is a foundation course for the Ph.D. in Education program. The purpose of the course is to explore how we come to know and accept a method(s) of inquiry among the various ways of knowing. Using a seminar approach structured around readings, reflections on those readings, class discussions, and individual research, the course seeks to develop in students an ability to reflect critically on the strengths and limitations of the various ways of knowing and to become aware of the implications of the different ways of knowing for research and practice.

**Course Description:** Provides understanding of characteristic ways of knowing in various liberal arts disciplines while examining subject matter, key concepts, principles, methods, and theories. Analyzes philosophical traditions underlying educational practice and research. Required course during the first semester in the program

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will understand the traditions of inquiry that serve as the underlying foundations for inquiry in education research, including rationalism, empiricism, positivism, logical positivism, and post-positivism.
2. Students will understand how these traditions attract adherents and understand how and why they have changed over the centuries.
3. Students will analyze and explain some important personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
4. Students will explore how various ways of knowing affect individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
5. Students will describe, compare, and contrast the ways of knowing from a variety of perspectives.
6. Students will expand and refine their scholarship abilities including critical and analytic reading, writing, thinking, oral communication, and the use of scholarly resources.

## **How this Course Supports GSE's Priorities**

This introductory course seeks to develop each student's ability to be a reflective practitioner who becomes grounded in the ways we come to know through inquiry. Through the readings, the classroom conversations, discussions, and presentations, it is intended that each student will become more analytic about the conduct of inquiry and one's own perspectives on inquiry and the nature of knowledge, and to develop a respect for the diversity of thought that characterizes inquiry.

## **Required Course Texts:**

Bruner, Jerome. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.  
Descartes, Rene. (1637). *Discourse on method and related writings*. Penguin Classics.  
Lyons, Nona & LaBoskey, Vicki Kubler. (2002). *Narrative inquiry in practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.  
Gleick, James. (1987). *Chaos*. Penguin.  
Kuhn, Thomas. (1976). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

There is also a book chapter on e-reserve and three journal articles on e-reserve and blackboard.

## **Recommended Text:**

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Author: Washington, DC. (Recommended for entire doctoral program).

## **Electronic Requirements**

Students must activate and access their GMU email accounts. Go to <http://mail.gmu.edu/> to access your GMU email.

*Students will also be expected to access Blackboard to download pertinent course documents. Blackboard can be accessed by going to <http://courses.gmu.edu>.*

There is a link to e-reserve articles on the Blackboard site (click on the external links toolbar; click on e-reserves in the libraries website homepage or click on the e-reserves link in course materials).

## **CEHD Course Expectations**

The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) expects that all students abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://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](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full honor code.

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](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.

Each student is expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions. It is expected that each student will be attuned to group dynamics in order to ensure the active participation of all in the class.

If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.

### **Assignments**

#### **Weekly Journal Reflections** (8 x 5 = 40%)

You are expected to prepare 8 reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, turned in by the beginning of the class on the date we will discuss the topic. The intent of these brief papers (2 - 3 pages, double-spaced) is to help you become thoughtful and analytic about some rather conceptual, and sometimes complex, course content. You should look upon these papers as an opportunity to engage me in discussion as you grow over the semester.

#### **Paper on a New Way of Knowing** (40%)

Select a new way of knowing for you, e.g. a new theory in your field, an area within the arts, sciences, or social sciences, or an interdisciplinary area of inquiry. Explore this new way of knowing. Prepare a paper (about 2500 words/10 pages) that demonstrates: 1) your understanding of the basic assumptions of this approach, and 2) what it is that makes this approach a new way of knowing for you. Note: depth and analysis are more important than breadth. APA format required. **Paper is due (electronically): 5/4.**

As part of the development of your paper, please submit via email, a one-page description of your proposed project so we can agree early in the semester no later than the eighth class (3/16). The outline should address the following questions:

1. What is the way of knowing you will explore?
2. How do you propose to study it?
3. What are your tentative sources?

If appropriate, I will share your thoughts with others who have identified a similar area to explore.

Evaluation of the final paper: The main criteria are a clearly defined focus, clear and accurate presentation of its assumptions and definitions about knowing, a demonstrated understanding of the implications for research, and clear organization and writing (*see scoring rubric below*).

## **Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing (20%)**

You are expected to keep a weekly journal (above) that is both reflective and analytic during the course. The overall purpose is to use informal journal writing as a means to think and reflect on the content of the course. In particular, the journal is a means for you to connect course material to your own experiences and to analyze the course readings critically. The course outline lists specific assignments for the journal. For this final paper, you will look across the semester and consider its effects on you. The guiding questions for this final paper are:

1. How would you have described your way(s) of knowing, learning, and thinking when you began this class?
2. As you consider your autobiography/personal history, what factors personal, experiential, familial, sociocultural, historical, and/or disciplinary influenced your ways of knowing?
3. How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher?
4. How would you describe your current way of knowing?
5. What are the implications of your reflections on questions 3 and 4 above for your personal and professional growth during your doctoral study?

Criteria for assessment include: evidence of serious reflection and analysis, clear organization and clear writing. This paper is the culminating activity of the course and is due at the beginning of the last class meeting (5/11).

*All assignments must be completed in MSWord and turned in when due or sent to me as an attachment via email prior to class.* Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

### **SUMMARY OF DUE DATES:**

#### *Weekly Reflection Papers*

**Reflection #1 --February 2**

**Reflection #2 --February 9**

**Reflection #3 – February 23**

**Reflection #4 – March 2**

**Reflection #5 – March 16**

**Reflection #6 – March 23**

**Reflection #7 – March 30**

**Reflection #8 – April 6**

#### *New Way of Knowing Paper*

**Topic Due on March 16**

**Paper Due on May 4**

#### *Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing*

**Due on May 11**

## Course Delivery

My teaching style revolves around “learning via conversation.” In addition to classroom attendance and participation, you are expected to complete readings, whole class and small group discussions, group, pair, and individual projects, internet research, analyses of case studies, and reflections on practice. I will use GMU’s web-accessible Blackboard (course.gmu.edu) course framework regularly throughout the course.

	Date	Topic	Assignments
Class 1	January 19	Introduction	
Class 2	January 26	Shared Experience – Film: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<b>Reflection paper 1:</b> After viewing the film, briefly write your review of it. Then, locate as many reviews as possible of this film. In your journal, write an essay about the reviews paying particular attention to the point of views the various critics take and what they use as their points of comparison. What observations can you draw? Due Feb 2nd Read: Descartes ( <i>for next week</i> ) Read: The Enabling Virtue (on blackboard) ( <i>for next week</i> )
Class 3	February 2	Debriefing the film Cartesian ethos: How we’ve come to define “knowing”	<b>Reflection paper 2:</b> What are some examples of the scientific method, rationalism, empiricism, and positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life?
Class 4	February 9	More on Descartes and the foundations of inquiry Shared Experience: A Case of the Study of Teaching	Viewing questions: How well did Secretary Bennett teach the class? What did you find yourself watching, looking for, and looking at as you watched the video? <b>Reflection 3:</b> Draw a pictorial representation of the relationships among the approaches to analyzing Bennett’s teaching, and bring a copy of your representation on an overhead transparency to class. Place the approach you find most consistent with your way of knowing at the center of the pictorial representation so we can see how you view yourself. Read: Morine-Dershimer, et. al (1986) from <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> (on Blackboard) ( <i>for class on February 23rd</i> )
Class 5	February 16	Individual Work on	

		Journal Reflections and Ways of Knowing Topic	
Class 6	February 23	The Perspective Problem in the Study of Teaching - presentations of your graphic.	Read: Kuhn in two parts pp. 1 – 110 ( <i>for next week</i> ) <b>Reflection 4:</b> Imagine a conversation between Kuhn and Descartes: what would Kuhn say to Descartes about his Discourse? Many have argued that Descartes created a scientific revolution. Does it meet Kuhn’s attributes? Why or why not?
Class 7	March 2	What is a Scientific Revolution?	Read: Kuhn pp. 111-210 ( <i>for next class on March 16</i> ) <b>Reflection 5:</b> How does the second half of Kuhn’s perspective appeal to you? Why? What is it specifically about his perspective that helps you understand how we come to know? Did you find any weaknesses in his argument, i.e., things you just could not accept? What were they and why? <b>New Way of Knowing paper topic (due March 16)</b>
No Class	March 9	GMU Spring Break	
Class 8	March 16	A philosophical view of how ways of knowing change	Read: Bruner, pp. 1 – 99 ( <i>for next week</i> ) <b>Reflection 6:</b> Fit the first half of Bruner with Cartesian philosophy. How does Bruner argue that we come to know? What does he mean by the culture of education is the influence of culture on how we come to know? <b>New Way of Knowing paper topic due</b>
Class 9	March 23	The Culture of Education	Read: Bruner, pp. 100 – 185 ( <i>for next week</i> ) <b>Reflection 7:</b> What is the essence of Bruner’s argument about culture? How does it fit into your own way of knowing?
Class 10	March 30	The Culture of Education and Knowing	Read: Lyons and LaBoskey, pp. vii – 130 ( <i>for next week</i> ) Read: Mueller & O’Connor on blackboard ( <i>for next week</i> ) <b>Reflection 8:</b> What arguments about the creation of knowledge are these authors making? How do they fit with

			Descartes, Kuhn, and Bruner?
Class 11	April 6	Practitioners' Ways of Knowing	Read: Lyons and LaBoskey, pp. 133 – 199 ( <i>for next week</i> ) Read: Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem on blackboard ( <i>for next week</i> )
Class 12	April 13	Narrative Inquiry	Read: Eisner chapter on Educational Criticism ( <i>for next week</i> )
Class 13	April 20	Narrative and Aesthetic Inquiry	Read: Gleick pp. 1-80 ( <i>for next week</i> )
Class 14	April 27	Chaos: The New Revolution?	Read: Gleick pp. 81-187; 273-318 ( <i>for May 11</i> ) <b>“Knowing” paper due on 5/4</b>
Class 15	May 4	Individual work on Reflective Analysis Paper	<b>Reflective Analysis paper due 5/11</b> <b>“Knowing” paper due electronically</b>
Class 16	May 11	Chaos, Complexity, and Understanding the Human Professions	<b>Reflective Analysis paper due</b>

## Scoring Rubric for the “knowing” paper

1. Focus: the way of knowing is clearly identified and its historical roots are clearly described
  - Accomplished:** the focus of the paper is clearly stated and its historical roots are clearly described.
  - Basic:** the focus of the paper is either clearly identified and its historical roots are not clearly described or vice versa.
  - Unsatisfactory:** the focus of the paper and/or its roots are neither clearly identified nor clearly described.
2. Presentation of Assumptions: the fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge in the “way” are explained clearly and the key terms necessary to understand this way of knowing are defined.
  - Accomplished:** the fundamental assumptions are clearly explained and the key terms are defined.
  - Basic:** the fundamental assumptions are explained and some key terms are defined.
  - Unsatisfactory:** neither are the assumptions made clear, nor are the key terms defined.
3. Demonstrated understanding of the implications for research: the nature of the research questions this way of knowing has been used to explore are included and described clearly.
  - Accomplished:** the nature of the research questions are included and relevant examples
  - Basic:** either the nature of the research questions or the examples are not included or are not clearly presented
  - Unsatisfactory:** neither the research questions are clear nor are the examples clearly presented
4. Organization and Clarity: the paper is well-organized; the argument flows easily from point to point; follows APA writing guidelines.
  - Accomplished:** the paper is well-organized with the logic following from point to point; follows APA guidelines; there are no grammatical errors, typos, misspelled words, etc.
  - Basic:** the paper jumps from topic to topic; there are grammatical errors, typos, misspelled words, etc.; APA guidelines used inconsistently.
  - Unsatisfactory:** the paper is hard to follow as the points are not connected into a coherent whole; inattention to grammar, typographical errors and misspelled words; failure to consult APA is evident.
5. Discussion of why this is a new way of knowing for you
  - Accomplished:** Delineations between your way of knowing and that of this “other” perspective are clear.
  - Basic:** Distinctions are drawn, but not developed in enough depth to see what you learned from the exercise.
  - Unsatisfactory:** No attention is given to how this way of knowing is new to you.