

**IET CLASS OF 2012 (PW)**  
**MASTERS IN NEW PROFESSIONAL STUDIES – TEACHING**  
**SYLLABUS FOR MNPS 704 (3 credits) & EDUC 597 (3 credits)**  
**RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES IN THE NEW PROFESSIONALISM**  
**Spring/Summer 2011 (January-July 2011)**

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## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

- A. Prerequisite: Admission to the Master's in New Professional Studies program.
- B. Introduces qualitative approach to research as individual school-based projects are undertaken. Draws on "action research," which starts with participants describing reality as they see it, reflecting on it, and deriving theories and action strategies immediately applicable to concrete situations. Emphasizes understanding and using various research methodologies as innovative approaches to teaching and learning are developed.

## **II. NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course includes a variety of learning activities: discussions in seminar format, text-based/multi-media presentation of course materials, experiential learning activities including teacher action research , interactive assignments, cooperative learning group activities, online discussions and activities, and lecture.

## **III. LEARNER OUTCOMES**

Briefly, the goals of this course are:

- To support teachers in becoming researchers and reflective practitioners.
- To give teachers the opportunity to plan, carry out, write, and present a classroom research project.
- To foster reflective practice.
- To frame research inquiries around moral purposes and on moral truths.

## **IV. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

IET faculty have developed a set of assumptions about teaching and learning that are spelled out in our Beliefs and Principles in IET Practice document. One of the central assumptions relates to the importance of school-based inquiry. The Beliefs are stated as follows:

- The needs of students and the potential and limits for school change become more visible when teachers study education in the context in which they work.

- When school is a naturalistic base for teacher's inquiry and research, problems in teaching or curriculum are not idealized, but grounded in the complexity and difficulty in which teachers present themselves in schools.
- Teachers appear more enterprising and autonomous in the conduct of school-based inquiry, providing an opportunity for students to see teachers, and to see themselves, as people who construct knowledge and critique knowledge.
- When teachers' inquiry and research projects are based in their own practices, they are more likely to lead to action.

This course fits the mission of the Graduate School of Education, which is committed to:

- Developing reflective professionals who are leaders in research and practice
- Expanding and refining the knowledge base for teaching and learning, and
- Transforming higher education, schools, and other organizations through applied research, teaching, and collaboration.

By helping teachers to do research based in their own classrooms and schools, this course also supports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards propositions 1, 4, and 5:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning,
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

### **A Moral Framework in Teacher Research**

Education/teaching is directly concerned with human betterment. It is therefore a moral business. (Sockett, 1993, p. 90)

Professional expertise has to be captured in a moral language of personal attribution, that is, professional virtue. These human qualities (virtues such as fairness, honesty, courage, care, and practical wisdom) are integral to the individual attributes, competencies, and capabilities the teacher (in his or her role) possesses, because we can understand ourselves in our roles through these concepts of virtue. These virtues are necessary qualities in teaching for the effective exercise of the role. They are also the content of teaching and have to be learned or acquired by students. (Sockett, 1993, p. 91)

Your research should be framed by moral purposes and upon moral truths. We ask you to reflect on and explicitly articulate your moral purposes as you brainstorm, revise, negotiate, and implement research in your classrooms.

- In what ways will your research better the prospects and lives of your students?
- How will you promote courage?
- How will you show courage?

- How will you develop trust in your relationships with your students?
- How will you show caring toward students and your teammates?
- How will you foster caring among your students?
- Will your research relate to your students honestly? How will this affect trust?
- What practical wisdom will you show toward your students?
- What practical wisdom will you elicit from your students as they relate to their classmates?

### **Your Life as a Researcher**

Remember that researchers draw inspiration from many different kinds of experiences. As you begin to investigate your research question, be attuned to the way sources in popular culture can help to inform your thinking and understanding. Remember how useful and insightful it was to use the characters – in the book *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time* and in the movie *Freedom Writers* – as the basis for exploring important educational issues. As you continue your research, keep up the connection with sources in popular culture that you experience within your everyday life.

For example, when you see a movie or TV show, read a novel, hear a song on the radio, or experience other imaginative works that deal with teaching and learning, ask yourself “Is there something here that connects to my research?” If you are making a connection, capture your thoughts in your journal, share your thoughts with team members, or post a paragraph or two on Blackboard. Keep yourself open to works of fiction and works of art that will engage your imagination and emotions and possibly lead you to new ideas and fresh perspectives that can ultimately enrich your research.

### **V. REQUIRED TEXTS**

Readings will be assigned throughout the year. You should also be doing some background reading on your chosen research topic. Assigned readings include:

#### **Books**

Nieto, S. (2010). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities: 10th Anniversary Edition (Multicultural Education Series)*. Teachers College Press.

Genesee, F., Paradis, J., Crago, M. (2010). *Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning (Communication and Language Intervention Series)*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company.

Freire, P. (1970/1998). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing (Chapters 1 & 3 for the summer).

Patterson, K. et al (2002). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. McGraw-Hill. (Entire text for the summer).

Wink, J. (2005). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching*. Jossey-Bass

**Articles and chapters on gender (posted on blackboard):**

Sadker, D., & Zittleman, K. (2007). Gender Bias: From Colonial America to Today's Classroom. In James A. Banks, & Cherry A. McGee Banks, (Eds), *Multicultural Education: Issues and perspectives* (pp.135-170). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lorber, J. (2000) Night to his day: The social construction of gender. In M. Adams, W.J Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H.W Hackman, M.L. Peter, X Zunega, (Eds.), *Reading for Diversity and Social Justice*, (pp.203-219).New York: Routledge

**Article or chapters on research methodology (posted on blackboard):**

Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (1995). *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (selected chapters will be distributed)

Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (1993). *The art of classroom inquiry*. New Hampshire: Heinemann. (selected chapters will be distributed)

Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (1999). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher researchers*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers. (selected chapters will be distributed)

Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press. (selected chapters will be distributed)

Hendricks, C. (2006). *Improving schools through action research: A comprehensive guide for educators*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. (selected chapters will be distributed)

Wood,D. R. (2010). *A companion booklet for action research projects*. Unpublished manuscript. VA: IET

**Note: Additional articles or chapters will be posted on blackboard**

**VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The activities for the course will consist of completing and using assigned readings, regular and engaged participation in class activities and weekly team meetings, regular

journaling, and completion of a course project. The project should incorporate readings, personal journals, in-class discussions, and observations from your classroom and school community.

Readings are carefully chosen to stimulate thinking and dialogue. Some are chosen to challenge your thinking about particular issues. Others are chosen to dialogue with those challenges. Our hope and intention is that you will engage in dialogue around these readings and others you may want to bring to our deliberations. These readings will help us to consider multiple theories, ideas and perspectives to inform our understanding of teaching and learning. Any “answers” we come to will arise out of our deliberations as we compare ideas in the readings with classroom experience and practical wisdom. It is expected that evidence of critical reflection on the readings will be demonstrated in class discussions, team meetings, reading reflections (see below), and projects.

Attendance and Participation in Class Activities are essential. This program is built on the assumption that teachers have much to learn from each other as they bring their experience and practical wisdom to bear on new learning contexts and new problems. *Each class day is equivalent to approximately three weeks of class in a traditional program. It is important to be on time and to be engaged.* Coming late or leaving early undermines the possibility of learning from your peers and helping your peers learn. Research on learning suggests that students learn best when they are actively engaged with the material to be learned, when they have opportunities to operate collectively and collaboratively, when faculty address students’ various learning styles and multiple intelligences, and when faculty help students see why their subjects and assignments are relevant and important. We plan class days to maximize the likelihood that you will encounter ideas in a variety of ways. We also build a lot of collaborative activity into our class days. When you are absent or not engaged, you deprive yourself and others of the chance to construct knowledge together. **(See the Attendance Policy in the Program Overview section of the IET Course Book.)**

Class Day Reflective Feedback after each class day offers you an opportunity to revisit and reflect on your experience of the class day. It also gives the faculty valuable information about how you experience the curriculum and where you are in your thinking.

Teaming provides the context for intellectual community, critical dialogue, social support, and professional transformation. Meeting weekly as a team is necessary for achieving the aims of the program and is a requirement of the program. Within the team, you have the opportunity to explore your own thinking, to probe the thinking of others, and to construct positions on crucial aspects of teaching and learning. We recruit teachers in teams from schools to combat the isolation and alienation of many schools. We hope that teams will become the nucleus of learning communities within and across schools and will provide social and intellectual support for the personal and professional transformation the program seeks to foster. We ask teams to maintain a team log that will document participation in this aspect of reflective practice.

Reflective Journals are a requirement of the IET program and are designed to help you think about your experience and development as a critical educator and moral professional. Continue to maintain a journal throughout the year. You are to write in your journals regularly. When your school is in session, **you should write in your journal at least twice a week**; one of the entries each week should be field notes from your classroom or school. For the other entry, sometimes we may assign a specific topic but usually you will choose your reflection topic. **When your school is not in session, you should write in your journal at least once a week.**

Reading reflections: You must write at least one entry on every required reading (except those assigned to be read during class days), reflecting on the reading's impact on your thinking/learning and teaching. Consider the following questions and issues when reflecting on each reading.

- What are the key points or arguments posed by the author/s? Identify 3 or 4 issues.
- In what ways does the reading relate to your experiences?
- In what ways do your cultural experiences influence your work with children and families?
- How would you apply the information from this reading to your work with children and families?

You are required to post four of your reading reflections on Blackboard over the course of the semester (2 as a requirement of the MNPE 704 course and 2 as a requirement of the MNPE 703 course).

Research reflections: You should also use your journal to reflect on your research: in addition to reflecting on observations of your students and on your practice, you should use the journal to record questions, puzzlements, ideas, and insights. Later, reflect on patterns you are seeing in your data, how what you are finding relates to the work of others, and how your question and/or data collection strategies are changing as your research progresses.

Make it a habit to come to team meetings prepared to read selected journal entries with your teammates, particularly about the readings and research process. Twice a year, you will be asked to turn in your journals with selected entries copied to be handed in to your advisor. These entries will demonstrate your attempt to reflect deeply about a variety of issues and your own professional practice. This year, journals will be handed in on the December class day 2010 and again on the May class day 2011.

Seminar Assignments are great opportunities to learn through dialogue and discussion. During each seminar you will be asked to present some information to the group. Your advisor will be present and will facilitate the dialogue.

**The First Year Action Research Project** will incorporate the writing of several research reports. Writing research reports is a way to document your research process. These are used to reflect on the topic/issue that led to your research question, strategies you have tried in your classroom, your data collection processes, and your analysis of the data. You are required to write three of these reports over the course of the year. **Research Report #1** is due on **February 12, 2011** and will include your research topic/question, a review of the literature, and an explanation of the proposal research process (See attached

guidelines.) **Research Report #2**, due **April 2, 2011** and **Research Report #3**, on **July 11, 2011** will focus on the continuing process of reflection, implementing action strategies, data collection, and data analysis. (Guidelines will be distributed later.)

**Your Research Presentation** will be given in **July, 2011** during the two-week summer session. (Guidelines will be distributed later.)

**Summary of Grades**

**MNPE 704:**

Attendance & Participation (4 class days)	12 points
Blackboard class day feedback (4 class days)	8 points
Reading Reflections (2)	10 points
Research Report #1	35 points
Research Report #2	35 points
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TOTAL	100 points

**EDUC 597:**

Attendance & Participation (4 class days)	12 points
Blackboard class day feedback (4 class days)	8 points
Reading Reflections (2)	10 points
Journal – Winter/Spring	10 points
Research Report #3	40 points
Research Presentation	20 points
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TOTAL	100 points

**Grade Distribution for Each Course**

95-100	A
90-94	A-
85-89	B
80-84	B-
75-79	C
74 and below	F

**VII. COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:**

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform

their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University 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 must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### *Campus Resources*

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].



**Research Report #1**  
**MNPE 704: Research Methodologies in the New Professionalism**  
**Assignment due: February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

This assignment provides you with an opportunity to formalize your thinking and plans around your research project and to allow us to see where you are so that we can offer our support. There are six main components to this report:

1. Description of research problem/question
2. Explanation of the significance of the problem/question
3. Examination of your assumptions regarding the problem/question
4. A review of the literature
5. Description of your research participants and setting
6. Explanation of your proposed research process

The following paragraphs will provide further detailed instruction on each component of this report. Use the questions provided within each component to guide your writing. The research-related readings that were assigned in fall 2010 and the Companion Booklet will help you to conduct your research and to address the questions here. **Follow the guidelines in the IET Style Guide** (Posted on Blackboard under Class Materials).

**1. Description of research problem/question**

Remember that a research problem/question is a tension, paradox, or puzzle that emerges from reflection, dialogue and inquiry. Your research should be focused on a problem that you care about deeply and should strive to discover ways that teaching and learning might change. Keep in mind that your research needs to be manageable in scope. You may need to narrow your focus in order to formulate a feasible plan of research.

- What is the issue you are interested in exploring?
- How have you articulated that issue in the form of a research question?

**2. Explanation of the significance of the problem/question**

Reflect on the following questions:

- How does this research problem/question emerge from your own lived experience?
- How do you think that your research efforts might help you to address a specific classroom problem that seems to be hindering your students' learning and/or your teaching (the practical significance of your research problem)?
- What are the underlying moral issues inherent in your problem/question?
- What moral questions and issues is it important to grapple with as you investigate the problem and consider your research approach?

**3. Examination of your assumptions regarding the problem/question**

Reflect on the following questions:

- What assumptions do you have about the nature of the problem that warrant closer examination?
- What assumptions do you have about the role students/parents/colleagues play in this issue that warrant closer examination?
- How do you plan to examine/unpack these assumptions?

#### **4. A Review of the literature**

As a researcher, it is important to explore what is already known about your research topic in order to guide your actions and assist you in uncovering a deeper understanding of the issue. Refer to the chapter by Hendricks (2006) on Blackboard for guidance with conducting a literature review.

- Use the readings we have assigned for class, articles from educational databases, and any other reading materials that seem relevant to explore all angles of your research topic – What do others have to say about the issue? How does what they have to say inform your own thinking about the issue?
- Synthesize what you are learning from your reading (You might want to use an idea map before you begin writing – see Hendricks (2006), p. 49-55.)
- You must include **a minimum of ten sources.**

#### **5. Description of your research participants and setting**

Drawing on your community walk experience and your current and past experiences in your classroom and school, describe your school setting and its culture in terms of its impact on your research problem as well as the students with whom you work.

- What aspects of your school's culture (e.g., language, organization, policies, values of students or teachers, etc.) make your research necessary?
- Describe your classroom setting – what does the reader need to know in order to better understand the context in which your research is taking place?
- What is significant about your classroom context in relation to your research question?
- Describe the students you are working with this year – who are they and how do they fit into the research problem/question?

#### **6. Explanation of your proposed research process**

Answer the following questions:

- What teaching/learning strategies do you plan to implement at this point in your classroom in order to address your research problem/question? (This is the “action” piece that is meant to change what is happening in your classroom for the better. Your initial strategies are not “set in stone” and may change as you learn more about your problem/question.)
- How did the literature impact your decision to use these particular teaching/learning strategies?
- Why do you believe that each these teaching/learning strategies will be helpful for the problem/issue you are studying and for teaching and learning in general?
- What kind of data do you plan to collect that will help you to better understand the impact of your teaching/learning strategies and help you gain insight into your research problem/question?

**Teamwork.** Although you will be conducting research as an individual researcher in your classroom this year, teamwork is an integral part of the process. Each team member benefits greatly from discussing his/her research with the team at all points in the process, drawing on each teammate's knowledge and experience to address new and unresolved

questions and issues. This collaborative work will allow you to join forces to generate ideas and to consider and negotiate interpretations of evidence that will result in a fuller understanding of your teaching and your children’s learning. You are required, therefore, to read drafts of each others’ reports and give written feedback before handing them in to your advisor.

As the **primary researcher/author of your study**, you should share a draft of your research report with at least one team member in a timely manner. (That is, don’t expect him/her to read your draft quickly and return it with useful comments within the hour.) It is very useful if you ask your teammate to read your paper for specific things (e.g., Have I given enough detail? Is my paper organized so that you understand clearly what I plan to do and why I’m doing it? Based on the guidelines, what do you think is missing or what section may need more information?). Review the suggestions given by your teammate(s) and make appropriate revisions for a final draft due February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

As the **reader** of a teammate’s draft, it is important to read with a “critical” mindset. Ask clarifying questions rather than making revisions. Suggest points for further thought and alternative perspectives for consideration. For example, what assumptions need to be examined further? In what ways can issues of power and hegemony be further considered? In your role as a “critical friend,” avoid making changes on your teammate’s draft; instead, make suggestions or ask questions and let the owner act or not act on them. Be a helpful teammate and help the writer expand his/her thinking. Don’t just say “Great” without giving any suggestions for refining, clarifying and/or qualifying the ideas/methods presented. Pointing out the “good” is part of critical feedback but making suggestions for improvement is crucial to forming a successful critical dialogue team. If necessary, note grammatical errors and the need to spell check. Don’t do a “rewrite” – let the author “own” the revisions. **\*These critiqued copies will be collected on the February class day, so do NOT throw them away.**

**Assignment and Grading Summary:**

Description of research problem/question (about 1 page)	3 points
Explanation of the significance of the problem/question (about 1 page)	3 points
Examination of your assumptions regarding the problem/question (about 2 pages)	4 points
A review of the literature (5-7 pages)	12 points
Description of your research participants and setting (about 2 pages)	3 points
Explanation of your proposed research process (about 2-3 pages)	5 points
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TOTAL	30 points