

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

EDUC 800  
Ways of Knowing  
Fall, 2012  
Tuesday 4:30 – 7:10, Krug 209

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Office hours: T/Th 2:30 - 4:00 or by appt.

**Course Description:** 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 Objectives:**

1. Students will describe, compare, and contrast ways of knowing from a variety of perspectives.
2. Students will describe ways of knowing of individuals or groups and will analyze and explain personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
3. Students will explore how various ways of knowing affect individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
4. 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.  
Kuhn, Thomas. (1976). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.  
Strogatz, Steven. (2004). *Sync: How order emerges from chaos in the universe, nature, and daily life*. New York: Hyperion.

### **Additional Required Readings:**

Eisner, Eliot. (1991). Educational criticism. In E. Eisner (ed.), *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*, (pp. 85-105). New York: Macmillan.

Moen, T., Gudmundsdottir, S. & Flem, A. (2003). Inclusive practice: A biographical approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 19, 359–370.

Henson, R. (2001). The effects of participation in research on teacher efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17, 819–836.

Mueller, J. & O'Connor, C. (2007). Telling and retelling about self and “others”: How preservice teacher (re)interpret privilege and disadvantage in one college classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23, 840–856.

### **Recommended Text:**

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Author: Washington, DC. (Recommended for entire doctoral program).

### **Supplies**

Computer with Internet access and current GMU email account.

### **CEHD Course Expectations**

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

- **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.
- **Tardiness:** Prompt arrival for the beginning of class is expected.
- **Participation:** 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.
- **Absence:** 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:** All assignments must be completed in MSWord and sent to me as an attachment via email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.
- **Honor Code:** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].

- **Exceptionalities:** 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/>].
- **Computing:** Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- **Email:** 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.
- **Distractions:** Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- **Dispositions:** 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/>].

### **Assignments**

#### **Weekly reflections (8 x 5 = 40%)**

You are expected to prepare 8 reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, turned in electronically by the beginning of the class on the date we will discuss the topic. The intent of these brief papers (2 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 a discussion with you 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: 12/4.**

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 ninth week (10/30). 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 below 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 (12/11). **Since this is a reflection paper, APA format is not required.**

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

### **Course Delivery**

This course is a doctoral seminar, and my teaching style revolves around the concept of “learning via conversation.” As such it is expected that you will read in advance of class and continue to try

to find the bigger picture as you learn to sort through the findings of one study to the next. In addition to classroom attendance and participation, I expect you to participate fully in 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 (<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>) framework throughout the course; many of the examples are posted there for you to read in advance of our discussions.

## **Tentative Class Schedule**

### ***August***

28 Introduction to the Course

### ***September***

4 Shared Experience:

***Journal entry 1 (due next week)***: After viewing the film, prepare a two-page, double-spaced review of the film and what you thought it was about.

11 Debriefing the film

Cartesian ethos: How we've come to define "knowing"

Read: Descartes

Read: The Enabling Virtue (on blackboard)

***Journal entry 2 (due next week)***: What is an example of rationalism, empiricism, positivism/logical positivism, and post-positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life?

18 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?

***Journal entry 3 (due next week)***: Draw a pictorial representation of the relationships among the approaches to analyzing Bennett's teaching, and bring a copy of your representation as a powerpoint, overhead, etc. 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.

25 The Perspective Problem in the Study of Teaching (presentations of your graphic)

Read: Morine-Dersheimer, et. al (1986) from *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 2(4), 299-328. (Accessible through University Libraries e-journal service)

### ***October***

2 What is a Scientific Revolution?

Read: Kuhn in two parts pp. 1 – 110

***Journal entry 4 (due next week)***: Imagine a conversation between Kuhn and Descartes: what would Kuhn say to Descartes about his Discourse? Many have argued that Descartes created the first revolution in what is evidence. Does it meet Kuhn's attributes? Why or why not?

- 9 No Class (Columbus Day adjustment)
- 16 A philosophical view of how ways of knowing change  
 Read: Kuhn pp. 111-210  
*Journal entry 5 (due next week)*: 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?
- 23 The Culture of Education  
 Read: Bruner, pp. 1 – 99  
 Read: Measurement and its Discontents (on blackboard *weblinks*)  
*Journal entry 6 (due next week)*: 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?
- 30 The Culture of Education and Knowing  
 Read: Bruner, pp. 100 – 185  
*Journal entry 7 (due next week)*: What is the essence of Bruner's argument about culture? How does it fit into your own way of knowing?  
**NB: Final paper topic due**

### **November**

- 6 Practitioners' Ways of Knowing  
 Read: Lyons and LaBoskey, pp. vii – 130  
 Read: Henson on e-reserves or blackboard  
*Journal entry 8 (due next week)*: What arguments about the creation of knowledge are these authors making? How do they fit with Descartes, Kuhn, and Bruner?
- 13 Narrative Inquiry  
 Read: Lyons and LaBoskey, pp. 133 – 199  
 Read: Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem (on blackboard)
- 20 Narrative and Aesthetic Inquiry  
 Read: Mueller & O'Connor on blackboard  
 Read: Eisner on blackboard
- 27 Chaos/Complexity: The New Revolution?  
 Read: Strogatz, pp. 1-100

### **December**

- 4 Chaos, Complexity, and Understanding the Human Professions  
 Read: Strogatz, pp. 103-176  
**"Knowing" paper due**
- 11 What do we know?  
 Read Strogatz, pp. 179-289  
**Reflective Analysis paper due**

## 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.