

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

**EDUC 800, Section 004, 3 credit hours
Ways of Knowing
*Fall Semester, 2013***

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

- A. **Prerequisites** – Admissions to PhD Program
- B. **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.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course meets in a face to face format to examine various “ways of knowing” and explores the psychological and social construction of knowledge. The course is designed to help students become aware of their own ways of knowing, to understand alternative ways of knowing as conceptual tools, to critically reflect on the strengths and limitations of various ways of knowing, and to become aware of the implications of different ways of knowing for research and practice. The course is structured around readings, reflections on those readings, and class activities. Using this collection of activities, the methodology of the course seeks to build clear bridges between know how, theoretical/research perspectives, and research strategies.

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 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.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts will be used in the course:

1. Movie: *The Name of the Rose* (Available as Streaming Video at Amazon.com)
http://www.amazon.com/The-Name-of-the-Rose/dp/B005IAVJB6/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1325787493&sr=1-1
2. Movie: *Looking for Richard* (Available as Streaming Video from Amazon.com)
http://www.amazon.com/Looking-For-Richard/dp/B001LH1B6S/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&s=digital-video&qid=1249914819&sr=8-7
3. Clay Johnson's *The Information Diet* ISBN-10: 1449304680
4. Rene Descartes' *Discourse on Method and the Meditations (Penguin Classics)*
ISBN: 0140442065
5. C. P. Snow's *The Two Cultures* ISBN: 0521457300
6. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* ISBN: 0226458083
7. Jerome Bruner's *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* ISBN: 0674003667
8. James Gleick's *Chaos: Making a New Science* ISBN-10: 0143113453
9. David Weinberger's *Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren't the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room Is the Room* ISBN-10: 0465021425
10. Xerox articles as appropriate

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance in class is mandatory, as discussions, lectures, and hands-on activities are important parts of the course.
2. Each student is expected to complete all readings and participate in discussions.
3. Each student is expected to participate in and complete all classroom activities.
4. Students who must miss a class are responsible for notifying the instructor (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.
5. Assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the date due. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with the instructor. All papers should be written in a scholarly, typed format.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Weekly Reflections – (27 points/3 points each): Students are expected to write reflections, which are both reflective and analytic, during the course. The overall purpose is to use personal writing as a means to think and reflect as well as to prepare for class discussions. In particular, the reflections are a means to connect course readings to experience and to analyze course readings critically. The course outline lists specific assignments for reflections. Reflections must be word-processed and turned in on the assigned week. Reflections should be double-spaced. Although there is no specific length requirement, two or three, well-constructed pages **might** serve to frame the scope of writing. Reflections should be thoughtful with ideas clearly presented. They are opportunities for the student and the instructor to interact one on one and should be seen as iterative when appropriate.

2. Knowing Research Paper – (38 points): Students will select a way of knowing that is new to them or one in which they would like to delve more deeply. Examples include but are not limited to: multicultural ways of knowing or a particular cultural way of knowing, metaphysical ways of knowing, women's ways of knowing, narrative ways of knowing, hermeneutic ways of knowing, the ways in which technology shapes knowing, the ways in which a particular technology shapes knowing, scientific ways of knowing, chaos/complexity as a way of knowing, reflection as a way of knowing, etc. The research paper should explore this way of knowing and be presented in a scholarly manner. Explore this new way of knowing and demonstrate: 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. Again, no specific length is required. Although there is no specific length requirement, 2500 words or 10 double-spaced, well-constructed pages **might** serve to frame the scope of writing.

As part of the development of your paper, please submit one page that outlines your proposed paper no later than class on October 15th. This outline should address the following questions: What are/is the way of knowing you will explore? How do you propose to go about exploring it? What are some of your sources? The paper is due at the beginning of the twelfth class (November 12th). Criteria include: clearly defined focus, clear and accurate presentation of assumptions and definitions, well articulated implications for research and inquiry, and sufficient and clear organization and writing. Note: depth and analysis are more important than breadth. APA format required.

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*).

Overall Scoring

1 = fails to meet standards	2 = meets standards (basic)	3 = exceeds standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the paper and/or its roots are neither clearly identified nor clearly described. • The fundamental assumptions are clearly explained and the key terms are defined. • Neither the research questions are clear nor are the examples clearly presented • 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. • No attention is given to how this way of knowing is new to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus: the way of knowing is clearly identified and its historical roots are clearly described • 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. • 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. • Organization and Clarity: the paper is well-organized; the argument flows easily from point to point; follows APA writing guidelines. • Clear and relevant discussion of why this is a new way of knowing for you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the paper is clearly stated and its historical roots are clearly described. A high degree of expertise is evidenced in establishing focus. • The fundamental assumptions are clearly and expertly explained and relevant key terms are clearly defined and elaborated upon. • The nature of the research questions are included and significant relevant examples are clearly presented. A high degree of understanding is exhibited. • The paper is very well-organized with the logic following from point to point; follows APA guidelines explicitly; there are no grammatical errors, typos, misspelled words, etc. • Delineations between your way of knowing and that of this “other” perspective are clear and considerable insight is demonstrated.

3. Reflective Analysis Paper – (35 points): Drawing on reflections, class discussions, and other course activities, students will write a scholarly paper that addresses the following questions: How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher? How would you describe your current position on suitable way(s) of knowing? What are the implications of your reflections on the above two questions for your personal, professional, and doctoral activities? Criteria for assessment include: evidence of serious reflection and analysis; clear organization and writing; connections with class readings. This paper is due at the beginning of the last class meeting.

Evaluation of Reflective Analysis Paper - Points will be assigned to the Reflective Analysis and Knowing Papers using a rubric process. Both class participants and the course instructor will be involved in

assessment of graded assignments. Prior to the due date for any assignment, the class will participate in the development of an assessment rubric. This rubric will result from a discussion of applicable course objectives and an elaboration of qualities and components associated with excellence in completion of the assignment. In this way, the development of the rubric will inform the final completion of the assignments as well as serve as the instrument for assessment and determination of points awarded.

EVALUATION

Since this is a graduate level course, high quality work is expected on all assignments and in class. Points for all graded assignments (see section 6) will be based on the scope, quality, and creativity of the assignments. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making arrangements with the instructor.

Summary of Points

Weekly Reflections (3 points each)	27
Knowing Research Paper	38
Reflective Analysis Paper	35
Total	100

Grading Scale

Grade	Point Range
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	86-89
B	80-85
C	70-79
F	69-below

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES

1. Resources for Students

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- c. 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.
- d. 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/>].
- e. 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/>].
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

- g. 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/>].
2. Professional Dispositions
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.
 3. Core Values Commitment
The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>
 4. For GSE Syllabi:
For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>] For RHT Syllabi:
For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://rht.gmu.edu/>]

Class Topics and Schedule

Dates	Class Topics	Assignments
Week 1 Aug 27	Introductions – The Name Game Overview of Course and Syllabus	Watch Al Pacino’s <i>Looking for Richard</i> Read <i>Information Diet</i> Reflection – define/compare/ponder the following: knowledge, understanding, meaning, knowing, learning. Try dictionaries and Internet to get you thinking.
Week 2 Sept 3	Happy Hour: <i>Looking for Richard</i> Discuss definitions	Watch <i>The Name of the Rose</i> Read Descartes’ <i>Discourse</i> Reflection: I _____, therefore I am. What do you think belongs in the blank and explain.
Week 3 Sept 10	Discuss Descartes’ Exercises in the Big 4: SJR, Tall Tales, The Scientific Method.	Begin C. P. Snow’s <i>Two Cultures</i> Reflection: What is meant by rationalism, empiricism, positivism. www.britannica.com is an excellent resource. What are some examples of empiricism, positivism, rationalism in action – in your discipline, job, and/or life?
Week 4 Sept 17	Discussion: Rationalism, Empiricism, Positivism Burma Shaves Writing a Dissertation	Finish C. P. Snow’s <i>Two Cultures</i> Reflection: Locate a Quantitative Research article in your field. Analyze the article in terms of Descartes’ “list” – Is this a useful way to “know”? Is there another way? A better way?

Week 5 Sept 24	Discuss: Research Article An Image of Snow – A Conversation Between Two Scholars (RT)	Read half of Kuhn’s <i>The Structure of . .</i> Reflection: Pick a concept, idea, or belief related to your “field” – represent it “artfully.” Then write about the process - How is your “artful” representation better, different, useful, not useful
Week 6 Oct 1	Sharing “Artful” Representations Thomas Kuhn Goes Poetic Discuss “ways of knowing” paper topics	Finish Kuhn’s <i>The Structure of . . .</i> Reflection: What’s a paradigm; do you and/or your discipline have any? Begin thinking about Ways Paper !!!!
Week 7 Oct 8	Can you spare a pair’a dimes? Mapping the “Knowing” Cycle A Theory of Knowledge and History	Think About/Research Ways Paper Begin Bruner’s <i>Actual Minds . . .</i> Reflection: Does Kuhn inform your understanding of your own discipline? Pick a case history, thinker, question, or problem Begin Knowing Research Paper
Week 8 Oct 15	One Page Outline Due Narrative Modes of Norton’s Personal Example of the Good, Bad, and Ugly Analyzing some sample stories	Finish Bruner’s <i>Actual Minds . . .</i> Reflection: Write a story that illustrates an insight, lesson, concept in your own disciplines Work on Knowing Research Paper
Week 9 Oct 22	Sharing and analyzing Stories Stories and Research <i>60 Minutes</i> on television <i>A Matter of Fact</i> Planning a Strategy for Sharing of Knowing Papers?	Read first half of Gleick’s <i>Chaos</i> Reflection: Watch two or three sitcoms; how do they shape knowing; what do they tell us about ourselves OR Watch two versions of the national news (ABC, NBC, CBS) on the same night; how do they shape knowing Work on Knowing Research Paper
Week 10 Oct 29	Discussion: Media and Knowing NOVA’s <i>Chaos</i>	Finish Gleick’s <i>Chaos</i> Work on Knowing Research Paper
Week 11 Nov 5	David Letterman’s Top Ten <i>The Game of Life</i>	Read first half of Weinberger’s <i>Too Big to Know</i> Finish Knowing Research Paper
Week 12 Nov 12	KNOWING PAPER DUE Discussion: Chaos and your interests and discipline Simulations, Logo	Finish Weinberger’s <i>Too Big to Know</i> Begin Final Reflection Paper
Week 13 Nov 19	Course Evaluations Discussion – <i>Too Big to Know</i> A Final Reflection Activity - Everything I Needed to Know about Knowing, I learned . . .	Work on Final Reflection Paper
Week 14 Nov 26	Thanksgiving	Finish Final Reflection Paper
Week 15 Dec 3	FINAL REFLECTION PAPER DUE Course Evaluations	Have a Great Holiday Break!