George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development/Graduate School of Education
FAST TRAIN Program
EDCI 777 - Research to Practice
Spring/Summer 2014

PROFESSOR
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Prerequisites: All other program courses except elective, or permission of instructor

Catalog Description
EDCI 777 emphasizes the teacher as a change agent through critical inquiry into practice. The course includes an overview of the basic elements of educational research, methods (quantitative and qualitative), questions addressed, design, and data collection and analysis.

Course Overview
Teachers are often encouraged to implement "research-based" practices, required to attend workshops where research findings are presented, provided with lists of books that synthesize research, and asked to suggest changes in practice based on the implications of research. Although these practices have their place, the assumption implicit in much of the discourses surrounding educational research is that teachers are *consumers* and/or *objects* of research, rather than *producers* of research. The past decade has seen a growing movement to upend those assumptions through an emphasis on the importance of teacher research. Thus, the research and theory we will read and the methodologies with which we will engage are those associated with "teacher research" (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). Teacher research positions teachers as *producers* of knowledge—professionals who can learn about and improve their practice by studying important questions that grow from their own experiences and observations.

This course, and the framework of teacher research, offers a way to systematize our examination of our own teaching practices and our own attempts to become better learners and better teachers. By making our questions more visible to ourselves and to our colleagues, being more rigorous in our gathering of data about the situation, and being intentional in our quest to find out how our interventions are working, we become students of teaching and thus learners in the company of our students.

This class is designed to support you in building and using the ideas and content you have encountered in your previous coursework. Most importantly, the course assists you as you consider ways to better support your students. In other words, your current and future students are at the center of our work. Toward these ends, the course requires you to

conceptualize, design, and begin to implement an original research project in your school/classroom. You will need to hit the ground running, starting your research project early, and working on it steadily. Through our readings, we will explore research methodologies. The methods of data collection will allow you to systematically open your mind to new information about your teaching; the process of writing thick descriptions and careful analyses ask you to step back from your intuitive thoughts and assumptions and bring reasoned theories, experiences, and beliefs consciously to your question. These readings and your discussions will help you develop your own rationale and "road map" for your inquiry project.

Course Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, participants will achieve the following outcomes:
- Identify the basic elements of educational research, including methods (quantitative and qualitative), design, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability
- Formulate an inquiry/action research question that is relevant to their work setting
- Design and conduct an inquiry/action research study
- Use inquiry/action research as a foundation for professional growth, improvement of instruction, and advocacy
- Identify strategies for sharing the results of inquiry/action research

Course Delivery
The course is delivered through a variety of on-line, face-to-face, and individualized instructional approaches. Most on-line sessions will be conducted in an asynchronous format, but students will be expected to post their own reflections and assignments and respond to peers' and instructors' postings and feedback by the end of each designated class week (midnight US eastern standard time each Monday). During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities.

Please note that because you have much to learn from each other, and because teaching is often a collaborative effort, you will frequently work in groups. This will give you a chance to bounce ideas off each other, to be exposed to a variety of perspectives (rather than only the professor's), and to support each other as you continue to hone your teaching and researching skills.

Students may request a voice, face-to-face, or chat conference at any time; voice and chat conferences will be conducted via Skype (free Skype© software is available at **http://www.skype.com/intl/en/get-skype/**). Please include your "Skype Name" and your time zone in your conference request. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. I look forward to collaborating with each of you as you work toward your goals.

Class Meetings
On-line: Beginning: Tuesday March 4th, 2014 and ending Monday, Jun 16th, 2014.
Face-to-face - Fairfax campus (TBA) Wednesday, July 16th through Friday, July 25th, 2014.

Please note that due to the nature of this course, this class will meet via Blackboard the

majority of the time, followed by eight days of face-to-face meetings as a whole group in late July. On-line class sessions will run from each Tuesday until the following Monday (midnight US eastern standard/daylight time).

Required Texts
Mills, G.E. (2011). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education, Inc., Merrill Prentice Hall. ISBN: 978013700314-3.

In addition, each week an additional Powerpoint, article or chapter will be added to support the discussions for that week.

Teacher Research Websites
http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/tr_action/ (GMU teacher research site)
http://www.accessexcellence.org/LC/TL/AR/ (teacher research site)
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/ (UK teacher research site)
http://www.teacherresearch.net/ (international teacher research site)

Course Requirements

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard (email attachments are an option we can discuss). The submission deadline for assignments is Monday midnight (US eastern time) each week. All projects must be typed, in 11- or 12-point font, with one inch margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font. Writing quality (including mechanics, organization, and content) is figured into the overall points for each writing assignment, so please proofread carefully.

Late papers and projects will not be accepted without penalty, excepting extraordinary circumstances. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. Note: I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester.

Attendance and Participation (20 points)
FAST TRAIN students are expected to attend *all* class periods of courses for which they register. Class participation—both in on-line and face-to-face settings—is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as whole. Class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation and as a result lower the grade as stated in the course syllabus. Participants are expected to read the assigned materials, complete on-line activities including pre-session Blackboard assignments, arrive promptly, attend all class meetings for the entire session, and participate in on-line and face-to-face class discussions. It is your responsibility to offer insights, questions, comments, and concerns from the readings.

If, due to an emergency, you will not be able to participate during a given week of class, please contact me as soon as possible via email and certainly prior to any face-to-face class time.

Absences and tardies—in both on-line and campus class sessions—will impact your grade. Any week that you do not complete the required assignments will result in one point being removed from your participation grade. (there is no partial credit for partial work). Missing 30% or more of the online session will result in automatic course failure.

FAST TRAIN students are expected to attend all face-to-face sessions. Tardies, or late arrivals beyond one hour without prior notification will result in one point being removed from your participation grade. Absences for each day, up to two days will result in your grade being reduced by one letter grade. Any absence of three or more days will result in automatic course failure.

Blackboard Participation and Assignments (30 points)

Due to the large class size and to make discussions relevant and manageable, you will be divided into three subgroups, three times over the course of the semester. You will see the first group you are assigned to when you log into Blackboard the first day of class.

1. The first five weeks you are divided on the discretion of the instructor and will be assigned to one of three GROUPS: Citius, Altius, and Fortius.
2. For the next five weeks, you will be grouped based on interests and inquiry questions into one of three groups: Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité.
3. Finally, the last five weeks will focus on clarifying methods and findings and you will be in one four GROUPS – Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

Please note these are not closed groups – meaning others can read what you have posted – so please maintain a professional tone in whichever group you are assigned.
The intent is to ensure that each of you get a chance to interact with as many of your classmates as possible, but for the quality of the online discussions to be maintained, it might be burdensome for you to read 21 thoughtful and full fledged posts every week. In the effort to make that easier to navigate, I have created smaller groups, but will expect extremely high quality responses online.

Participants are expected to log onto Blackboard at least twice weekly during the on-line portion of the course and daily while the class is in session in July. The Blackboard URL is https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp. **Each participant will be responsible for contributing at least two postings PER discussion. One response should be directed towards the discussion prompt. The second to further extend an idea responding to a post by someone else in the group. The first posting should be within the first three days of the week and the second posting should come after three days from your first posting (Our week runs from Tuesday-Monday. For example, if your first post is on Tuesday, your second should come at between Thursday and Monday. If your first post is on Thursday – the latest day in the first half of the week, the second post, should come on Sunday or Monday). Doubling up on responses in a short time frame (2 days) will not be considered appropriate participation.** Please see course schedule for details on the discussion prompts, readings and other pertinent details.

Please post contributions by the end of the week in which the topic is discussed. Discussion postings should be thorough and thoughtful. While I want to encourage you to support the ideas you are reading - just posting an "I agree/disagree with your comment" or "I think the same" will not be considered adequate. You must also have a substantial post in response.

Draft Literature Reviews (10 points total - 5 points each)

This assignment is intended to engage you in a thoughtful process that will help you do a bit of reconnaissance for your action research paper and continue your development as critical consumers of education literature. Each participant will submit two literature reviews (2-3 pages, 400-800 words each). In each paper participants will review and critique literature for their research project (this could include artifacts such as school policies, empirical research, policy or interviews etc.) that relates to their question. Draft literature reviews should describe how the participant relates to the ideas of the author of the literature considered and how and these ideas can *and* cannot be applied in practice. Participants should select readings that relate to their Inquiry/Action Research Project. Draft Review #1 is due March 31st and Review #2 is due April 21st.

Inquiry/Action Research Project (40 points)

Participants will design and conduct an inquiry/action research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. An outline for this project will be provided. You will write a literature review and proposal for this project, collect and analyze preliminary data, and share the results of your study with both our class and potentially an outside audience.

Both pre- and in-service teachers must complete the project. It is possible to partner with another student for the purpose of sharing data and researching different aspects of a common topic; each partner, however, must submit an original, stand-alone report. Each participant will present his/her paper in a form to be decided before the July meeting (ungraded) on her/his project.

Please note that projects or papers submitted for credit in another course cannot also be used for a grade in this course. With instructor approval, however, participants may build on a research topic originally presented as a significant research proposal in the EDRS 590 Education Research course. Your data sources for this project must include combinations of the following artifacts: 1) visual representations (images or photographs of your classroom, students at work, etc.); 2) student feedback related to your research question and your teaching intervention; 3) quotes from interviews conducted with stakeholders in your project (parents, colleagues, students); student work samples. Your initial research outline and draft introduction is due June 16th, drafts of sections will be due at various points during our on campus period of July 16th-25th, and your final project is due July 25th.

Assessment and Mastery Grading
All assignments will be evaluated be holistically using a mastery grading system; the general

rubric is described, and a specific rubric provided with each assignment. A student must demonstrate "mastery" of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a "B" level score. Only if a student additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through quality, quantity, or the creativity of her/his work—will she/he be assessed with an "A" level score. With a mastery grading system, students must *choose* to "go above and beyond" in order to earn "A" level scores.

- "A" level score = Student work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant component. Student supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified and extended to other contexts. Student work is exceptionally creative, includes additional artifacts, and/or intentionally supports peers' efforts.
- "B" level score = Student work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Student supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified.
- "C" level score = Student provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is typically not provided.
- "F" level score = Student work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible.

Grading Scale

A+ = 100
A = 94-99
A- = 90-93
B+ = 85-89
B = 80-84 (no B- grades)
C = 70-79 – does not meet licensure requirements or Level I award recommendation
F = Does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to students who are passing a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ninth week of the next semester, not including summer term, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Faculty may grant an incomplete with a contract developed by the student with a reasonable time to complete the course at the discretion of the faculty member. A copy of the contract should be provided to the FAST TRAIN office.

TaskStream: Every student registered for any FAST TRAIN course with a required performance-based assessment (will be designated as such in the syllabus) is required to submit this assessment (The INQUIRY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT) to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of your performance-based assessment will also be provided using TaskStream. Failure to submit the

assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

Assignments/Possible Points

Attendance and Participation	20 points
Blackboard Participation and Assignments	30 points
Draft Literature Reviews	10 points
Inquiry/Action Research Project	40 points
Total	**100 points**

COURSE SCHEDULE
Please note all assignments are DUE by Monday after the Tuesday start dates
PLEASE ALSO NOTE THE PROMPTS OUTLINED HERE MAY CHANGE AS THE COURSE PROGRESSES. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AS WHILE THEY MAY NOT CHANGE DRAMATICALLY THEY MAY EVOLVE DEPENDING ON PRIOR DISCUSSIONS.

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT	READINGS
WEEK 1 **March 3-10**	**Getting to know each other and our understanding of research**	Read welcome letter and post a brief biographical sketch introducing you to the class. PLEASE ANSWER AT LEAST TWO DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP • As you understand it, what is the scientific method and what is its purpose? • When you hear the term "education research" what do you think? • What has your experience been in reading education research studies, reports or articles? How have they been beneficial? • Have you conducted or taken part in a research project or study? If so, please describe the experience, including your role.	NONE
WEEK 2 **March 11-17**	**Contextualizing our classrooms and understanding action research**	PLEASE ANSWER BOTH DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP • What problem or issue in your class would you like to make your area of focus? Why? • Action Research is often criticized because the outcomes are not generalizable. How might you respond to this concern in defending action research as a viable research method?	Mills – Chapter 1
WEEK 3 **March 18-24**	**Finding our focus**	PLEASE ANSWER BOTH DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP (QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED) On p. 60 Mills lists the nine steps in the "Action Research Plan. • What do you want to focus on and why? • How will you pose your discussions questions based on	Mills – Chapter 3

		your focus? Also - Please prepare the following first three steps from the Action Research Plan and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb (Write an area-of-focus statement (2 points), Define the variables (1 point) and Develop a research question (2 points)	8
WEEK 4 March 25-31	**Validity, reliability, subjectivity and generalizability**	**1st Draft Literature Review DUE. Please upload to the assignments section of Blackboard.** PLEASE ANSWER ONE DISCUSSION PROMPT ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP On p. 92 Mills defines the term "triangulation." • How will you triangulate the data collection in your study? Why did you choose these sources? • How will you insure that your study is VALID? • How will you insure that your data collection techniques are RELIABLE?	Mills – Chapter 5
WEEK 5 April 1-7	**Ethics**	**NEW GROUPS WILL BE ASSIGNED.** **Please introduce yourselves again and provide the group with a brief summary of your interests and discussions you have participated in thus far.** PLEASE ANSWER ONE DISCUSSION PROMPT ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP • What steps will you take to insure that your study has met all ethical challenges? • What is your school's ethics policy regarding the collection of data from students?	Mills – Chapter 2 .
WEEK 6 April 8-14	**Action research planning – Data collection**	Return to the Action Research Plan on p. 60 in Mills. Please upload your responses to the following items to the Assignments section of Bb. • Describe the intervention or innovations • Describe the membership of the action research group • Describe negotiations that need to be undertaken • Develop a timeline • Develop a statement of resources • Describe the data collection sources and process, including plan for triangulation. (1 point for each not including timeline). You may not have something for every point – but you can say that. Use the discussion board this week to help you answer questions or clarify roadblocks you might be seeing.	Mills – Chapter 4
WEEK 7 April 15-21	**Action research planning - Data Analysis and interpretation (cont.).**	**2nd Draft Literature Review DUE. Please upload to the assignments section of Blackboard.** PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP Synthesize the reading you feel most excited about on the discussion board.	Mills – Chapter 6

WEEK 8 April 22-28	**Data Collection Period**	PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP During the data collection period continue to check Bb site twice per week for updates and discussion questions related to *AR*, Ch. 8/9.	Mills – Chapter 7
WEEK 9 April 29- May 5	**Data Collection Period**	PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP During the data collection period continue to check Bb site twice per week for updates and discussion questions related to *AR*, Ch. 8/9.	Mills – Chapter 8
WEEK 10 May 6-12	**Data Collection Period**	**NEW GROUPS WILL BE ASSIGNED** PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP During the data collection period continue to check Bb site twice per week for updates and discussion questions related to *AR*, Ch. 8/9.	Mills – Chapter 8
WEEK 11 May 13-19	**Data Collection Period**	PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP During the data collection period continue to check Bb site twice per week for updates and discussion questions related to *AR*, Ch. 8/9.	Mills – Chapter 9
WEEK 13 May 27- June 2	**Data Collection Period**	PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP During the data collection period continue to check Bb site twice per week for updates and discussion questions related to *AR*, Ch. 8/9.	Mills – Chapter 9
WEEK 14 June 3-9	**Data Analysis and Drafting**	PLEASE ANSWER ALL DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP • What have been your top two or three questions about this teacher research work thus far? That is, questions about the PROCESS of doing teacher research, the challenges of doing it. • And how would you answer those questions now, if such a question was posed to you by someone else planning to take this course or conduct a teacher research project in the future?	TBA
WEEK 15 June 10-16	**Data Analysis and Drafting**	PLEASE ANSWER DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON BLACKBOARD FOR YOUR GROUP On p. 182 Mills presents an Outline format for an Action Research Report. Please complete the outline and upload it to the Assignments section on Blackboard.	TBA

Summer Session		
Week #16 W, Jul 16th 8 a – 3 p	Course overview: Description, objectives, content; major learnings from course; applications to teaching Revisiting questions, context and literature. Overview of action research	Draft first three sections DUE

Week #17 Th, Jul 17th 8 a – 3 p	Digging into data analysis Conferences	
Week #17 F, Jul 18th 8 a – 3 p	Coding and analysis	
Week #17 M, Jul 21nd 8 a – 3 p	Peer review and revisions	Draft sections 4-5 due
Week #17 T, Jul 22rd 8 a – 3 p	Focus Group session planning and presentation	
Week #17 W, Jul 23th 8 a – 3 p	Themes, significance and meaning	
Week #17 Th, Jul 24th 8 a – 3 p	Preparation for presentations Individual presentations	
Week #17 F, Jul 25th 8 a – 3 p	Individual presentations	Final Paper due

GMU Policies and 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/1301gen.html].

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/].

Professional Dispositions
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

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/

Human Subjects Review Board
Any research or action research that will be publicly disseminated must have prior approval of the GMU Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Inquiry/action research that is used solely for the purpose of studying pedagogical aspects may be conducted without additional permission but cannot be disseminated. Detailed information on what is involved in submitting a proposal to the Review Board is available from the following web site: http://www.gmu.edu/research/ORSP/index.html. I am also happy to provide you with examples of approved HSRB applications.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/]