

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

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**EDLE 802: LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

**FALL 2014**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment  
**Meeting Times:** Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 p.m. (August 26 – December 2, 2013)  
**Meeting Location:** Thompson Hall L013

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Engages students in the study of major leadership and decision theories that inform educational leadership research. Students use theory to help inform their own research interests. Students begin work on analytical literature review.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

EDLE 802 is the second in a three-course sequence designed to provide a firm foundation for students' research in education leadership. The general emphasis in the sequence, culminating in EDLE 803, is on students learning how to explore their research interests in the context of the large sweep of educational leadership as a field with a focus on how leaders at multiple levels and various contexts impact the effectiveness and improvement of school and schools systems.

These courses are constructed as surveys. The goals include introducing students to a wide variety of theory and applied research on organization theory, leadership, and decision making, particularly in educational contexts. The courses also seek to provide the opportunity to develop both your personae as researchers and skills needed to be a successful doctoral candidate in education leadership. As such, the courses are designed around the theme of connecting theory, research, and practice; through which we will explore:

1. **Theory.** What are the features and assumptions of the perspective? What content themes are stressed? Does the perspective adequately describe, explain, and predict something of interest in the world of education leaders?
2. **Research.** What kinds of empirical questions tend to be addressed using this perspective? Are there any particular methodological considerations associated with the perspective (i.e., unit of analysis, typical research methods used)?
3. **Practice.** What does each perspective help us understand about school leadership, organizations, and decision-making? What are the limitations of the perspective?

## **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a solid understanding of formal leadership and decision theory through discourse, presentation, and written paper assignments;
2. Review and summarize research literature and present persuasive written and oral critiques;
3. Engage in conversation to explore topics in their field of interest that represent opportunities for future investigation;
4. Use theory to frame researchable questions and extant literature to inform problems relating to research and professional practice; and
5. Further develop their ability to write doctoral-level papers.

## **NATIONAL ELCC STANDARDS**

The following Education Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards are addressed in this course:

- 1.1 Candidates understand and can collaboratively develop, articulate, implement, and steward a shared vision of learning for a school.
- 1.2 Candidates understand and can collect and use data to identify school goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement plans to achieve school goals.
- 2.2 Candidates understand and can create and evaluate a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional school program.
- 2.3 Candidates understand and can develop and supervise the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff.
- 3.4 Candidates understand and can develop school capacity for distributed leadership.
- 5.4 Candidates understand and can evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the school.
- 6.1 Candidates understand and can advocate for school students, families, and caregivers.
- 6.2 Candidates understand and can act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment.

## **NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

Each class will include a variety of activities and exercises. Broadly speaking, your primary responsibilities are to: 1) read the literature; 2) share your questions, reflections, and engage in productive discussion to make the literature relevant to the world of practice that we experience and understand; and 3) write, share your written work, and provide feedback to others in a respectful fashion.

1. Classes will reflect a balance of activities that enable students to participate actively in the development of their *personae* as scholars. To promote an atmosphere that allows us to accomplish this, we will:
  - a. Start and end on time;
  - b. Maintain (flexibly) a written agenda reflecting objectives for each class;
  - c. Support our points of view with evidence;
  - d. Strive to be open to new ideas and perspectives; and
  - e. Listen actively to one another.

2. Student work will reflect what is expected from scholars. As such, students are expected to:
3.
  - a. Write papers that are well researched, proofread, submitted in a timely fashion, and consistent with APA guidelines (6th edition);
  - b. Participate actively in class discussions in a manner that challenges the best thinking of the class; and
  - c. Provide constructive feedback to others both on their ideas and on their written work, striving to learn from each other and to test each other's ideas.
4. We will endeavor to create a classroom climate that approximates what we know about learning organizations. As such, it is important that we create a space that allows participants to try out new ideas and voice opinions without fear of ridicule or embarrassment. The hallmark of a learning organization is a balance between openness and constructive feedback; hence, everyone is expected to:
  - a. Come fully prepared to each class;
  - b. Demonstrate appropriate respect for one another;
  - c. Voice concerns and opinions about class process openly;
  - d. Recognize and celebrate each other's ideas and accomplishments; and
  - e. Show an awareness of each other's needs.

### **Bias-Free Communications**

In course discussions and in your writing, please follow the recommendations outlined in the APA Publication Manual (6<sup>th</sup> edition) reference "Guide to Bias-Free Communications."

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

**The required text for this course is :**

Johnson, B. L., & Kruse, S. D. (2010). *Decision making for educational leaders: Underexamined dimensions and issues*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Additional required readings, to include journal articles and book chapters, among other materials, will be available through TaskStream (taskstream.com). Suggested readings may be added and provided throughout the semester based on student needs and interests.

To complete required assignments successfully, students will need access to a personal computer with Internet, the ability to use basic word processing software, and an active Mason email account. We will also use TaskStream in this course to facilitate communication, access assignments and handouts, and submit written work for feedback and assessment.

### **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/the-mason-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/>).

### **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/>.

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

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, & GRADING**

Consistent with expectations of any doctoral program, grading is based heavily on student performance on written assignments. The assignments constructed for this course reflect a mix of skills associated with synthesis and critique. Overall, written work will be assessed using the following broad criteria.

- Application of concepts reflected in class discussion and readings, and your ability to pick the most salient concepts and apply them.
- Creativity and imagination; papers provide an opportunity to speculate, to float questions or ideas reflecting your appreciation of the literature.
- Organization and writing. A clear, concise, and well-organized paper will earn a better grade.

Additionally, a portion of your class grade will be based on participation and the contribution you make to class discussions. The overall weights of the various performances are as follows:

#### **Class Leadership and Participation (20 points)**

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, study group activities, and serving as critical friends to other students. Each student will be expected to **co-teach** during at least one class session. Co-teaching will be planned with the instructor. Students will periodically have an opportunity to read and review each other's work in colleague-critical teams, as well.

As stated earlier, attendance is expected for all classes. If you must be absent, please notify the instructor by e-mail or phone. More than one absence may result in a reduction in participation points. Likewise, arriving at class more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes before the end of class may result in loss of points.

**Written Assignments (80 points)**

Two different types of papers will be expected of students in this class: one reflecting the skills associated with *critique* and the other *synthesis* of research literature. The **Critique of Research Articles** assignments take the form of analyses of published research papers. The **Bounded Rationality** and **Research Problem and Rationale** papers requires the application of research to a problem you may be interested in studying. It is also the program-level Performance-Based Assessment for this course.

Assignment descriptions and rubrics appear at the end of the syllabus. All written assignments must be submitted via TaskStream as Word file attachments. They should be typed, free from grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors and formatted according to guidelines established in the APA Publication Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. *Because of the nature of this course, there are high standards and expectations for quality writing, so make sure to consult APA guidelines, colleagues, and/or the GMU Writing Center [<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>] to review and edit your work before turning it in.* If you have any questions or concerns about your writing, please feel free to contact me before assignments are due.

- **Late work.** It is expected that student work will be submitted on time (before 11:59 p.m. on the due date). Extensions for emergency situations should be requested in advance, as late assignments will likely receive a considerable deduction in points.
- **Rewrites.** Students who receive a grade lower than 3.5 may re-write their papers. All re-writes are due one week after the student receives the initial grade and comments.

**Assignment Expectations and Possible Points:**

All papers must be typed (12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced in APA format – 6<sup>th</sup> edition) and submitted electronically via TaskStream (taskstream.com).

Class Leadership and Participation	20 points
Critique of Research Article #1	15 points
Critique of Research Article #2	15 points
Bounded Rationality Paper	20 points
Research Problem and Rationale	30 points
<b>TOTAL POSSIBLE</b>	<b>100 points</b>

*Grading Scale:*

A+	100
A	95-99
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C	75-79
F	0-74

## COURSE CALENDAR

All required readings are to be completed PRIOR to the class session in which they are listed. Please note that this calendar will be updated with additional readings made available via TaskStream. Assignments are to be turned in by 11:59 p.m. on the day under which they are listed. Note that this is a tentative course schedule that will be flexible and subject to change.

Class	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS DUE
1	8/26	Welcome, Introductions and Course Overview	Syllabus and course calendar
2	9/2	Leadership, Decision Making and the Theories	J&K – Ch. 1 and 2
3	9/9	Rational Decision Making	Simon (1993) <i>Decision-making: rational, nonrational and irrational</i> ;  Tregoe (2001) <i>Rational Thinking as a Process</i> ;  Langewiesche (2004) <i>Columbia's Last Flight</i>
4	9/16	Organizational Context of Decision Making;  Decision Making in Groups	J&K - Ch. 3  Group Decision Making Article (from Taskstream)  <b>Assignment Due: Critique #1</b>
5	9/23	Logic, Inferences and Assumptions;  Risk and Uncertainty	J&K Ch. 5  Hardman (2009) <i>Decision Making Under Risk and Uncertainty</i>
6	9/30	Politics and Decision Making	J&K Ch. 4  Marshall (1991) <i>It's All Political: the Micropolitics of Education</i>
7	10/7	Intuitive Decision Making  How Your Brain Makes Decisions	J&K Ch. 6  Lehrer (2009) – <i>The Predictions of Dopamine</i>
8	10/14	No Class (Fall Break)	<b>Assignment Due: Critique #2</b>
9	10/21	Data Driven Decision Making in Schools	J&K – Ch. 7
	10/25	EDLE Leadership Conference	GMU Campus
10	10/28	Emotions and Affect in Decision Making	J&K – Ch. 8
11	11/4	Making Difficult Educational Decisions	J&K – Ch. 10  <b>Assignment Due: Bounded Rationality Paper</b>
12	11/11	Decision Making and Leadership in Education	Case Study

13	11/18	Negotiating Bureaucracy and Multiple Stakeholders	Allison and Zelikow (1999) <i>Organizational Behavior pp. 143-185</i>
14	11/25	Research Problem and Rationale Paper Presentations and Peer Review	
15	12/2	Reflections and Culminating Activity	<b>Assignment Due: Research Problem and Rationale Paper</b>

**Critique of Research Articles (30 points; 15 points each)**

**Due: September 16 and October 7**

As scholars using published research to bolster your arguments, it is important you become a discerning reader. The purpose of these two papers is to give you opportunities to select, analyze and criticize published work in terms of the contribution it makes to both the knowledge base and methodology. Instructor feedback is intended to help you to hone your criticism skills.

*Expected Length: 6-7 pages per critique, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 pt. font*

To complete this writing assignment, follow the steps below:

1. Select a research article from a peer-reviewed professional journal that addresses one of the topics covered in this course. Carefully read the article with an eye toward understanding the contribution the work makes to the knowledge base and the methodological soundness of the work.
2. Write a critique of the article in terms of its usefulness to scholars. Include in your critique a discussion of the structure of the paper; the value of the research question(s) addressed; the appropriateness of the methodology used to address the question; and the reasonableness of the claims made regarding the conclusions. Be certain to begin your critique with an introduction that draws the reader into your paper and ends with a **clear thesis** for your paper. The thesis must establish your burden of proof for the paper.
3. Conclude your paper with a re-statement of your thesis and a brief discussion of the implications of your critique in terms of policy and practice.



### Assessment Rubric for Critique of Research Articles

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (4)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (3)</b>	<b>Approaches Expectations (2)</b>	<b>Falls Below Expectations (1)</b>
<b>Introduction (15%)</b>	Orients reader to purpose of paper, describes article critiqued and purpose of critique itself, and foreshadows significant findings through the thesis.	Provides adequate description of the paper critiqued and purpose of the critique itself.	Vague; does not adequately orient the reader to the paper.	Missing or insufficient; little consideration of reader's perspective.
<b>Research Topic &amp; Lit Review (20%)</b>	Extensive discussion of research questions and their appropriateness, importance of topic for theory and practice, merits of literature review.	Adequate treatment of research questions, importance of topic for theory and practice, and adequacy of literature review.	Superficial treatment of research questions, importance of topic, and merits of literature review.	Discussion of research questions, topic elements of this criterion are missing, confusing, and/or insufficient.
<b>Research Design (20%)</b>	Extensive analysis of research methods and design and their appropriateness for addressing research questions.	Adequate analysis of research methods and design and their appropriateness for addressing research questions.	Superficial or incomplete critique of research methods used design and their appropriateness for research questions.	Analysis of research methods and design used is missing, unclear, or incomplete.
<b>Data &amp; Findings (20%)</b>	Extensive critique of presentation, quality, and appropriateness of research findings; some discussion of gaps or inaccuracies; alternative ways of presenting data.	Adequate discussion of research findings in terms of presentation, appropriateness, and/or accuracy.	Superficial discussion of research findings in terms of presentation, appropriateness, and/or accuracy.	Discussion of findings is missing or incomplete.
<b>Conclusion (15%)</b>	Closes with a restatement of thesis; summarizes main points of critique (i.e., whether conclusions were reasonable and research questions were answered.) Persuasive in presenting implications of critique.	Adequate summary of main points of critique and its implications; but not necessarily persuasive.	Merely summarizes content of critique absent implications.	Critique ends without a discernible conclusion.
<b>Mechanics &amp; APA (10%)</b>	Accurate and precise. Nearly error-free. Reflects clear understanding of APA format and thorough proofreading.	Occasional grammatical errors, questionable word choice. Minor APA errors.	Errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread. Difficulty conforming to APA rules.	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and APA format.

## **Bounded Rationality Paper (20 points)**

**Due: November 4**

The purpose of this paper is for you to put the concept of bounded rationality to use as a tool for examining an organizational decision you have experienced. Although some description is required, keep in mind that the paper is intended to be primarily analytical. Your thesis must be analytical and must be demonstrated through the body of your paper.

*Estimated length: 7-8 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 pt. font*

1. Introduce the paper by briefly describing a decision made in your school or organization that had an impact—either positive or negative. Your thesis must explain your perspective on how the rationality (or reasonableness) of that decision was limited or bounded under the circumstances.
2. In the body of the paper, provide enough narrative description of the decision for the reader to understand its most important features. **DO NOT GO INTO EXCESSIVE DETAIL.** Subsequent to the description, demonstrate the validity of your thesis by using bounded rationality and related concepts to construct logical arguments that show the limitations of human reasoning in the decision-making process. Your task is to demonstrate how the concept of bounded rationality **helps to explain why the decision you chose came out as it did.**
3. Conclude by restating your thesis and explaining how decision makers and organizations might cope with or mitigate the effects of bounded rationality.

### Assessment Rubric for Bounded Rationality Paper

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (4)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (3)</b>	<b>Approaching Expectations (2)</b>	<b>Falls Below Expectations (1)</b>
<b>Introduction (20%)</b>	Introduction draws reader into the paper effectively. Thesis is clear and analytical dealing directly with the concept of bounded rationality, and requires demonstration through coherent arguments and support based on what the author has read, class sessions, the author's experience, or sound reasoning.	Introduction orients the reader to the paper. Thesis is apparent, though not entirely clear. It may be more descriptive than analytical. The thesis may not include bounded rationality.	Introduction explains what is in the paper, but lacks a clear and analytical thesis.	Introduction is weak. The paper lacks a clear thesis.
<b>Developing Arguments (50%)</b>	Author presents arguments that are clear, logical, persuasive, and easy to follow. Each argument relates directly to the thesis. Any debatable assertions are supported with evidence. Quotations or citations may be used judiciously to make especially difficult or powerful points.	Arguments are clearly linked to the thesis, but they may not be entirely persuasive.	Arguments are presented, but they may be unrelated to one another and/or to the thesis. Assertions and opinions are left largely unsupported.	Clear arguments in support of or related to the thesis are not made.
<b>Conclusions (20%)</b>	The conclusions drawn at the end follow logically from the body of the paper, and begin with a reworded statement of the thesis. The author explains how a leader could mitigate or better cope with the effects of bounded rationality in the decision examined.	Conclusions are related to the thesis but are not entirely persuasive. Mitigation and coping are not adequately discussed.	Conclusions follow from the body, but may not relate directly to the thesis. Mitigation and coping are not adequately discussed.	The conclusions drawn do not appear to be related to the thesis or supported by logical arguments.
<b>Mechanics (10%)</b>	The paper is nearly free of errors.	The paper has some errors.	The paper has numerous errors.	The paper appears not to have been proofread.

## **Research Problem and Rationale Paper (30 points)**

**Due: December 3**

This paper requires students to establish a research focus. It serves as a precursor to a statement of research problem appropriate for a dissertation proposal or dissertation. As with all other papers in this course, the Research Problem and Rationale Paper requires a thesis and supporting arguments intended to persuade the reader. This time, however, the topic is your own research. Most important, this paper requires extensive literature support to demonstrate how you have situated your thinking in established theory and empirical research.

Many of the articles and books we have provided for this course may be useful to you in the development of this paper. It is also true that the course readings will miss the mark for many topics that interest you. Students should expect to spend at least some time during the semester searching for sources relevant to their own research interests. A good strategy would be to explore the reference lists of articles and books we have assigned to check for sources that align with and are relevant to your research focus.

*Expected Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 pt. font*

### **Paper Components**

1. **Introduction.** Write an introduction that orients the reader to the type of research you wish to conduct. The introduction must include a question (or set of questions) that guides your thinking about your topic. This could be a viable research question, but we are not yet holding you to that standard. The introduction must also include a thesis statement that explains why it is important to conduct a study within your topic.
2. **Purpose Statement.** The body of your paper begins with a statement of purpose, answering the question: What is it you wish to learn about your topic? The purpose may be supported with literature citations if others have pursued or recommended a similar purpose, but it may not be possible or appropriate to support the purpose with literature.
3. **Significance.** The majority of the body should focus on significance, the “so what?” question that all researchers must answer. It is usually helpful to think in terms of research (or academic) significance and practical significance. How would the study contribute to both scholarship and practice?
4. **Future Research.** The final portion of the body should be a listing of potential research questions that flow logically from your statement of purpose and significance. Be inclusive and imaginative. This is a list you should want to carry forward and refine for portfolio 3 and beyond.
5. **Summary and Implications.** Conclude your paper with a restatement of your thesis and brief discussion of the implications of your potential study. Be sure to include discussion of gaps in the literature you have been able to locate and read up to this point. What should be the next steps in your work?

### Assessment Rubric for Research Problem and Rationale Paper

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (4)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (3)</b>	<b>Approaching Expectations (2)</b>	<b>Falls Below Expectations (1)</b>
<b>Introduction (10%)</b>	Draws reader into the paper. Thesis is clear and analytical, dealing directly with significance, and requires demonstration through coherent arguments and support from published literature.	Introduction orients the reader to the paper. Thesis is apparent, though not entirely clear; may be more descriptive than analytical and unclear in terms of significance.	Introduction explains what is in the paper, but lacks a clear and analytical thesis.	Introduction is weak. The paper lacks a clear thesis.
<b>Purpose (25%)</b>	Clear, compelling, and well supported by published literature (if possible) and explained from multiple perspectives (e.g., practical and academic) in a logical and persuasive manner.	Purpose of research is clear and engaging.	Purpose is apparent, but confusing.	Purpose is missing or unclear.
<b>Significance (25%)</b>	Clear, compelling, and well supported by published literature; explained from multiple perspectives (e.g., practical and academic) in logical, persuasive manner linked to purpose.	The author weaves together persuasive arguments regarding the significance of the topic that follow logically from the stated purpose.	Significance is apparent, but not well supported by literature and/or seems unrelated to purpose.	Significance is unclear or missing.
<b>Potential Research Questions (15%)</b>	Inclusive and stimulating; clearly and persuasively linked to purpose and significance.	Reasonable set of questions is presented; clearly follow from purpose and significance.	List of questions is brief and not very imaginative. Links to purpose and significance unclear.	List of questions is inadequate.
<b>Conclusion (15%)</b>	Begins with restatement of thesis in new language and summary of main points; broadens to discuss study's direction and future literature needs to support purpose and/or significance.	Conclusion summarizes the content of the paper well and restates the thesis in a manner that seems to flow logically from the body of the paper. Future direction is apparent.	Conclusion merely summarizes what has come before. Thesis may be stated in same words as at the beginning or altogether missing from conclusion.	Paper fails to conclude properly.
<b>Mechanics &amp; APA (10%)</b>	Accurate and precise. Nearly error-free. Reflects clear understanding of APA format and thorough proofreading.	Occasional grammatical errors, questionable word choice. Minor APA errors.	Errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread. Difficulty conforming to APA rules.	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and APA format.