

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

EDUC 800 – Section 004: Ways of Knowing
3 Credits, Fall 2015
Thursday 4:30 – 7:10, Thompson 1010

PROFESSOR:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A. Prerequisites

None

B. University Catalog 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.

C. Expanded 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.

LEARNER OUTCOMES:

This course is designed to enable students to:

1. Describe, compare, and contrast ways of knowing from a variety of perspectives including feminist, critical race, cultural-historical, and post-colonial and consider how different ways of knowing might factor into their research interests.
2. Describe ways of knowing of individuals and groups and analyze and reflect upon personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
3. Explore how various ways of knowing affect individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
4. Expand and refine their scholarship abilities including critical and analytic reading, writing, thinking, oral communication, and the use of scholarly resources.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Descartes, R. (1637). *Discourse on method and related writings*. Penguin Classics.
- Kuhn, T. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions (4th edition)*. University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples (2nd edition)*. NY: Zed Books, LTD.
- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (Eds.). (2009). *Foundations of critical race theory in education*. Routledge.

Additional Required Readings:

Articles Posted on Blackboard in Assignments - Blackboard can be accessed at:
<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/>

Recommended Text:

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

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.
- **Promptness:** 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 and work to promote a positive environment 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. Communication is key. Please keep me informed of any unexpected challenges as I may be able to support you or help you to find resources if needed.
- **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.

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- 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. *In EDUC 800 all email communication regarding course performance will be sent using Mason email addresses.*
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
Regarding electronic devices (such as laptops, cell phones, etc.), please be respectful of your peers and your instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated

to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism and may affect your participation grade.

- 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/>].
- 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/>].
- 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 and 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 [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS:

Weekly Journal Reflections (8 x 5 = 40%)

You are expected to prepare 8 journal reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, uploaded to Blackboard by the beginning of the class on the date we will discuss the topic. Please bring a hardcopy to class as a reference for yourself. The intent of these brief papers (1-2 pages, single-spaced) is to help you critically engage with the course material and connect the readings to your own experiences. The course outline lists specific assignments for the journal. You should look upon these papers as an opportunity to engage me in discussion 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/framework/approach 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 and/or principles 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: 12/3.**

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As part of the development of your paper, please submit via email, a one-page description of your proposed project so we can agree on your topic early in the semester (no later than the ninth class: **10/29**). 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: *This assignment is the performance based assessment for EDUC 800.* 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 overview following the course schedule*).

Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing (20%)

For this final paper, you will look across the semester and consider its effects on you. You are encouraged to revisit your journal reflections. 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/social location/situatedness, what factors (e.g., personal, experiential, familial, sociocultural, historical, and/or disciplinary) influenced your ways of knowing?
3. How has the course affected your understanding of your standpoint epistemology and 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 and 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 (**12/10**). **Since this is a reflection paper, APA format is not required.**

All assignments must be completed in MSWord and uploaded to Blackboard prior to class.

SUMMARY OF DUE DATES:

Weekly Journal Reflection Papers

Reflection #1 –September 10

Reflection #2 –September 24

Reflection #3 – October 1

Reflection #4 – October 8

Reflection #5 – October 15

Reflection #6 – October 22

Reflection #7 – October 29

Reflection #8 – November 5

New Way of Knowing Paper

Description Due on October 29

Paper Due on December 3

Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing

Due on December 10

Grading Scale:

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 85-89

B = 80-84

C = 70-79

F = Did not meet course requirements

COURSE DELIVERY

This is a “face-to-face” doctoral seminar, where we will work to create a community of learning and discovery via critical reading, conversation and reflection. 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 Mason’s web-accessible Blackboard (<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>) regularly throughout the course; articles/readings are posted there for you to read in advance of our discussions.

BLACKBOARD REQUIREMENTS

Every student registered for EDUC course with a required performance based assessment is required to submit the course assessment—for EDUC 800, the assessment is the Ways of Knowing Paper—to Blackboard (regardless of whether the course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Blackboard will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changes upon completion of the required Blackboard submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

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PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE:

	Date	Topic	Assignments
Class 1	September 3	Introduction to the Course and to each other	Reflection paper 1: Your ways of knowing: Introduction of self and situatedness <i>(Due next week)</i>
Class 2	September 10	Ways of Knowing	Read: Descartes <i>(for next week)</i>
Class 3	September 17	Ways of Knowing and Cartesian Ethos	Reflection paper 2: What is an example of the scientific method, rationalism, empiricism, and positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life? <i>(Due next week)</i>
Class 4	September 24	More on Descartes and the foundations of inquiry	Read: Kuhn in two parts pp. 1 – 110 <i>(for next week)</i> Reflection 3: Imagine a conversation between Kuhn and Descartes: what would Kuhn say to Descartes about his Discourse? Many have argued that Descartes created a scientific revolution. Does it meet Kuhn’s attributes? Why or why not? <i>(Due next week)</i>
Class 5	October 1	What is a Scientific Revolution?	Read: Kuhn pp. 111-210 <i>(for next week)</i> Reflection 4: 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? <i>(Due next week)</i>
Class 6	October 8	Kuhn’s Revolution Cont’d	Read: Bruner <i>(for next week)</i> Reflection 5: What is the essence of Bruner’s argument about culture? How does it fit into your own way of knowing and meaning making? <i>(due next week)</i>
Class 7	October 15	The Culture of Education	Read: Kincheloe, hooks <i>(for next week)</i> Reflection 6: TBD: Critical Pedagogy <i>(due next week)</i>
Class 8	October 22	Critical Pedagogy	Read: Taylor et al. <i>(for next week)</i> Reflection 7: TBD: Critical race theory New Way of Knowing paper description (due October 29th)

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Class 9	October 29	Critical Race Theory in Education	Read: Smith Reflection 8: TBD: Indigenous methodologies <i>(due next week)</i> New Way of Knowing paper description due
Class 10	November 5	Decolonizing Methodologies	Work on Way of Knowing paper
Class 11	November 12	No Class—NCFR	Read articles on CBPR (posted on BB) Work on Way of Knowing paper
Class 12	November 19	Community-Based Participatory and Action Research Approaches	
Class 13	November 26	No Class—Mason Holiday	“Knowing” paper due electronically next week – December 3
Class 14	December 3	Discussion of New Ways of Knowing	Knowing Paper Due Reflective Analysis paper due 12/10
Class 15	December 10	What do we know?	Reflective Analysis paper due

Overview of Scoring Rubric for the “Way of 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.