



**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**Secondary Education**

Spring 2018  
EDUC 675: Research in Secondary Education  
Section 003 (3 credits)  
Tuesdays 7:20-10:00 p.m., Peterson Hall 2411, Fairfax Campus

**Instructor:** Tiffany Mitchell, Ph.D.  
**Office Hours:** By appointment only  
**Email Address:** [tmitch12@masonlive.gmu.edu](mailto:tmitch12@masonlive.gmu.edu)

**Prerequisites/Corequisites** EDCI 790 and licensure; enforced by registration system

### **University Course Catalog Description**

Links evidence of student learning to make informed instructional decisions. Engages students in critiquing various research paradigms, reviewing literature, and systematically collecting and interpreting evidence to improve practice. Facilitates completion of the M.Ed. exit requirement. *Note: This course requires that you must be working in or have access to a classroom or appropriate site to conduct your research. If you do not have your own classroom, you will need to let me know during our first class. I will suggest alternative arrangements, but these will still require that you conduct research in a classroom setting on a teaching strategy.*

### **Course Overview**

Teachers are the primary decision makers in the classroom tasked with creatively implementing curriculum to facilitate student learning. Therefore, they are uniquely situated to provide insight and conduct research on best practices to determine their impact and effectiveness in real classroom settings. The research methodologies we will engage are those associated with action, teacher, or practitioner research (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). Action, teacher, or practitioner 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. The course requires you to conceptualize, design, and begin to implement an original research project based in a school/classroom.

### **Course Delivery**

This is a hybrid course and will be delivered through a variety of instructional approaches, online, face-to-face utilizing individualized and collaborative instructional approaches. All of the

activities both in class and online are designed to support your action research/final project. As the schedule indicates the course will be approximately 50% face-to-face and 50% online.

## **Learner Outcomes**

The course is designed to enable students to:

- 1) demonstrate an understanding of the process and components used in action, teacher, or practitioner research by conducting and assessing a chosen scholarly inquiry situated in their classroom and impact on students' learning (research-based practice; innovation)
- 2) prepare a research proposal which makes explicit links between theory and practice (research-based practice)
- 3) examine ethical considerations when conducting action, teacher, or practitioner research (research-based practice; social justice)
- 4) conduct action, teacher, or practitioner research which includes: research question(s), research proposal; review of related literature; methods; data collection/analysis; findings; discussion of impact on students, teachers, and the education field (research-based practice)
- 5) participate in critical and collaborative inquiries to gain multiple perspectives in interpreting research and for validation and peer review of research (collaboration; ethical leadership)
- 6) demonstrate integration of national and state standards for content and pedagogy as related to their research question(s) by reflecting on their own teaching practice and its impact on students' learning (SPA standards respective to students' discipline)
- 7) demonstrate skills in the application of technology and use of resources in action, teacher, or practitioner research (innovation)

## **Professional Standards**

By the end of this course students will demonstrate an understanding and application of subject area standards aligned with the National Content Standards and identified by their Specialized Professional Association (SPA):

- Social studies teachers: National Council for the Social Studies, <http://www.ncss.org>
- English teachers: National Council of Teachers of English, <http://www.ncte.org>
- Math teachers: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, <http://www.nctm.org>
- Science teachers: National Science Teachers Association, <http://www.nsta.org>

Students should also have an understanding of and be able to apply the teaching and learning standards as outlined by the Interstate New Teacher Assistance and Support Consortium (INTASC):

- [http://www.ccsso.org/resources/publications/InTasc\\_model\\_core\\_teaching\\_standards\\_and\\_learning\\_progressions\\_for\\_teachers\\_10.html](http://www.ccsso.org/resources/publications/InTasc_model_core_teaching_standards_and_learning_progressions_for_teachers_10.html)

Finally, students should be aware of the skills framework of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the professional guidelines offered by the National Board for Teaching Standards:

- <http://www.nbpts.org/national-board-standards>

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## Required Text(s)

Mills, G. E. (2017). *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher* (6 edition). Boston, MA: Pearson.

All other readings and resources for the course will be available through links and PDFs on Blackboard under Course Content.

## Recommended Text(s)

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. *Note: APA guidelines are available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>*

## Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit **all** assignments **on time** and in the manner outlined by the instructor on the **assigned due date** (Blackboard, TK20 or hard copy). Late assignments will receive reduced credit. All assignments will be posted and should be completed on Blackboard.

## Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement

Every student registered for any Secondary Education course with a required Tk20 performance-based assessment(s) (designated as such in the syllabus) is required to submit this/these assessment(s), the **Teacher Research Project and Impact Presentation**, to Tk20 through 'Assessments' in Blackboard (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). Failure to submit the assessment to Tk20 (through Blackboard) will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed upon completion of the required Tk20 submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

## Assignments

All assignments should be turned in via Blackboard on the due date indicated in the schedule below. The submission deadline for assignments is Tuesday midnight (US eastern standard time) each week. All projects must be typed, in 12-point font, with one-inch margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font, and follow APA guidelines. 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. I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester.

Note: Please title each assignment with your last name, the name of the project/assignment, and the date you are submitting it (e.g., Mitchell\_Literature\_Review\_Draft\_4-1-18)

## **Attendance, Participation & Peer Feedback (15 points)**

Attendance is mandatory and required. It is directly tied to your participation grade for this course. Class participation—both in online and face-to-face settings—is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as whole. Participants are expected to read the assigned materials, complete online activities including pre-session Blackboard assignments, arrive promptly, attend all class meetings for the entire session, and participate in online and face-to-

face class discussions. It is your responsibility to offer insights, questions, comments, and concerns from the readings.

You will have the chance to work with peers across the semester as you draft and craft your research project. This community will be rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility; these foundations translate into consistent and punctual attendance and active participation in all class activities. My goal is to develop a comfortable online and face-to-face classroom community where risk-taking is encouraged; we can only grow through such open-heartedness. Your attendance, thoughtfulness, clarity, and active sharing of responsibility for our classroom community will affect your grade.

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 and certainly prior to any face-to-face class time; it's best to do so via my email.

### **Blackboard Participation & Assignments (10 points)**

Participants are expected to log onto Blackboard at least twice times weekly. Each member of our class will be responsible for contributing at least one posting to each discussion and for responding to at least two peers each week; we will develop a schedule of rotating respondents to ensure that each of us is giving and receiving quality feedback. Please post contributions by the end of the week in which the topic is discussed. Discussion postings should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree/disagree with your comment" or "I think the same" to someone else's thoughts is not considered adequate. *Note: Access to the Internet to search for resources and to engage in online course related activity is required approximately three times per week.*

#### **1. Assignment #1 (Due Tuesday, Jan 30<sup>th</sup>)**

Post a brief biographical sketch introducing yourself to the class. Attach a photo of yourself, preferably a close-up of you in your work environment (follow the guidelines/procedures of your work environment). Then respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board and upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- What has your experience been in reading and or participating in education research studies, reports or articles? How have they been beneficial?
- What do you believe the benefits of conducting research in your own classroom might be?

#### **2. Assignment #2 (Due Tuesday, Feb 6<sup>th</sup>)**

Briefly respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload your draft "Introduction" PPT slide:

- What are three to five research questions you might address with your research? Be sure that these are "how" questions rather than "yes/no" questions.
- Action, teacher, or practitioner research is often criticized because the outcomes are not generalizable. How might you respond to this concern in defending action, teacher, or practitioner research as a viable research method?
- What feedback might you offer and what questions might you pose to your peers on their "Introduction" slides?

**3. Assignment #3 (Due Tuesday, Feb 20<sup>th</sup>)**

Briefly respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload your draft “Literature Review” PPT slide:

- What are some surprises, challenges, and insights you’ve encountered in crafting your literature review?
- Why do we consider other researchers’ experiences with studies of similar topics, when crafting our research projects?
- What feedback might you offer and what questions might you pose to your peers on their “Literature Review” slides?

**4. Assignment #4 (Due Tuesday, Mar 6<sup>th</sup>)**

Briefly respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload your draft “Methodology” PPT slide:

- What will be your specific teaching interventions? What will be your primary data collection methods?
- How will you TRIANGULATE the data collection in your study? How will you insure that your study is VALID and your data collection techniques are RELIABLE?
- How will you ensure that you have met any ethical challenges associated with conducting research on your teaching and followed your school’s ethics policy regarding the collection of data?
- What feedback might you offer and what questions might you pose to your peers on their “Methodology” slides?

**5. Assignment #5 (Due Tuesday, Mar 27<sup>th</sup>)**

Briefly respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload one draft “Findings” PPT slide:

- What is an example of the most interesting, surprising, or consistent findings of the representative data you have gathered this week?
- What initial sense (analysis!) have you made of any data you collected this week or thus far?
- What feedback might you offer and what questions might you pose to your peers on their “Findings” slides?

**6. Assignment #6 (Due Tuesday, Apr 17<sup>th</sup>)**

Briefly respond to the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload a second draft of the “Findings” PPT slide:

- What themes emerged from your data? Did you find convincing evidence to support your themes? What did you find surprising about your data?
- Did your findings meet your intended outcomes? If so, how so? If not, why not?
- What feedback might you offer and what questions might you pose to your peers on their “Discussion” slides?

**Action/Teacher/Practitioner Research Project Draft Components (15 points)**

You will submit for instructor and peer review the following draft sections of your action, teacher, or practitioner research paper: introduction/contexts, literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion/action plan. Due dates of these drafts are listed in the

schedule below, and the specific elements of these sections will be provided via samples, descriptions, and rubrics. Completing these draft elements will scaffold you toward completion of your final project!

***Action/Teacher/Practitioner Research Project [PBA] (60 points)***

Participants will design and conduct an action, teacher, or practitioner research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. Outlines, examples, descriptions, and rubrics of these projects 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) in a PowerPoint presentation. 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 make an in-class maximum ten-minute presentation (ungraded) on her/his project; an outline and examples of these presentations will be provided. Please note that projects or papers submitted for credit in another course cannot also be used for a grade in this course. When considering research topics, you should identify a research question that really matters to you. It should be something about which you are curious and with which you are willing to spend time researching and learning.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Points</b>
Attendance, Participation & Peer Feedback	15
Blackboard Participation & Assignments	10
Component Drafts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction/Context</li> <li>• Literature Review</li> <li>• Methodology</li> <li>• Findings</li> <li>• Discussion/Action Plan</li> </ul>	15 (3pts each)
<b>Action/Teacher/Practitioner Research Project (PBA)</b>	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Grading**

All assignments will be evaluated holistically using a mastery grading system; the general rubric is described below, 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 did not follow 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.

A+	=100	4.00
A	94-99	4.00
A-	90-93	3.67
B+	85-89	3.33
B	80-84	3.00
C	70-79	2.00
D	60-69	1.00
F	<59	0.00

### Professional Dispositions

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

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

### 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/>.

### GMU/CEHD Policies and Resources for Students

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason 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 Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

- The Writing Center 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/>).
- The 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/>).

### **GSE/CEHD Information**

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



## Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Due for Class (Assignment & Reading)
1/23 On Campus	<b>Class 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and Syllabus Review</li> <li>• Review Action Research Project/Timeline</li> </ul>	None
1/30 On Campus	<b>Class 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diving Deep into Action Research</li> <li>• Finding a research Topic</li> <li>• Dissection of a sample introduction</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #1  <b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 1: What is Action Research? Mills Ch. 3: Deciding on an Area of Focus
2/6 On Campus	<b>Class 3:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissection of Sample Literature Review</li> <li>• Library Presentation on Research &amp; Lit Reviews</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #2 Draft Introduction/Contexts  <b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 4: Review of Related Literature
2/13 <b>Online</b>	<b>Class 4:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Collection Techniques</li> <li>• Feedback on Introductions (Google hangout conferences)</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment</b> Gather Initial/Baseline Data  <b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 2: Ethics Mills Ch. 5: Data Collection Techniques
2/20 <b>Online</b>	<b>Class 5:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on Introductions (Google hangout conferences)</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #3 Gather Initial/Baseline Data  <b>Reading</b> None
2/27 On Campus	<b>Class 6:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Collection Considerations</li> <li>• Research Plan &amp; Questions</li> <li>• Dissection of 2-3</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment</b> Draft Literature Review  <b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 6: Data Collection Considerations

	<p>Literature Reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review a Sample Methodology</li> </ul>	
<p>3/6 On Campus</p>	<p><b>Class 7:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research plan and data collection methods</li> <li>Feedback on Lit Reviews</li> <li>Dissection of 2-3 Teacher Researchers' Methodologies</li> <li>Dissection of Sample Findings section</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #4 Draft Methodologies</p> <p><b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 10: Evaluating Action Research</p>
<p>3/13</p>	<p><b>No Class</b></p>	<p><b>Spring Break</b></p>
<p>3/20 <b>Online</b></p>	<p><b>Class 8:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Collection</li> </ul>	<p>Collect and Organize Data</p>
<p>3/27 <b>Online</b></p>	<p><b>Class 9:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of 2-3 Teacher Researchers' Findings Section</li> <li>Feed back on Methodology section (Google hangout)</li> <li>Data Collection</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #5 Findings Draft</p> <p><b>Reading</b> Mills Ch. 7: Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</p>
<p>4/3 <b>Online</b></p>	<p><b>Class 10:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</li> <li>Feedback on Findings (Google hangout conferences)</li> </ul>	<p>Collect, Organize and Analyze Data</p>
<p>4/10 On Campus</p>	<p><b>Class 11:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Analysis &amp; Findings</li> <li>Dissection of 2-3 Teacher Researcher's Findings Section</li> <li>Sample Discussion Section</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assignment</b> Discussion Board Assignment #6 2<sup>nd</sup> Findings Draft</p> <p><b>Reading</b> Exemplar Papers (on BB under Class 11)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Conferences (pre-scheduled)</li> </ul>	
4/17 On Campus	<b>Class 12:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis &amp; Findings</li> <li>• Dissection of 2-3 Teacher Discussion Sections</li> <li>• Individual Conferences (pre-scheduled)</li> </ul>	<b><u>Assignment</u></b> Draft Discussion Section  <b><u>Reading</u></b> Mills Ch. 9: Writing Up Action Research
4/24 Online	<b>Class 13:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing and finalizing action research project</li> </ul>	<b><u>Assignment</u></b> Work on Teacher Impact Presentation & Final Project  <b><u>Reading</u></b> Mills Ch. 9: Action Planning for Educational Change
5/1 On Campus	<b>Class 14:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Impact Presentations</li> <li>• Final Project Rubric Review</li> <li>• Sharing insights from the process</li> </ul>	<b><u>Assignment</u></b> Final research project and presentation ( <b>PBA</b> ) due to Blackboard/Tk20 (under Assessments) by <b>Fri, May 4<sup>th</sup></b>