

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Action Research for Social Change and/or Environmental Sustainability

Multi-Unit Graduate Course Welcoming Graduate Students in Four Programs:

School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

CONF 695 (Sections 002, CRN 81803, and 007, CRN 82627)

College of Education and Human Development, Ph.D. Program

EDRS 797 (Section 002, CRN 83147)

College of Science

EVPP 505 (Sections 001, CRN 82773 and 002, CRN 82777)

Schar School of Policy and Government

POGO 750 (Section 18, CRN 82659)

Offered in Arlington and Fairfax Simultaneously

Arlington Campus: Founders Hall, Room 322

Fairfax Campus: Merten Hall 3001

3 Credits

4:30 – 7:10 pm Thursdays

Fall 2018

PROFESSORS:

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Prerequisite: Acceptance into a graduate program at George Mason University.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Action Research Methods for Social Change and/or Environmental Sustainability brings together graduate course participants from Mason programs in Conflict, Education, Environmental

Science and Policy, Public Policy and Government and beyond to engage in multi-disciplinary action research. The course will be team-taught, drawing in faculty from each of these programs. This is the first of a two-course series, with the second course, Practicum in Action Research for Social Change and Environmental Sustainability, planned for Spring 2019.

Action Research Methods for Social Change and/or Environmental Sustainability engages the underlying epistemological foundations and history of action research, historically effective applications (and conditions), the variety of approaches to action research including participatory action research, and methods, ethics, and positionality in action research. How can research help with addressing real world problems? How can data collection and knowledge creation be participatory in a truly democratized co-owned process? And, how can we use action research as a means to transcend disciplinary boundaries in order to positively impact social and environmental change?

Please note the catalog description for EDRS 797: Advanced study of selected topics in education for students preparing for doctoral studies or who have been admitted to the PhD program in education. Notes: May be repeated for credit with CEHD approval. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May be repeated within the degree.

DELIVERY METHOD:

This course will be delivered face-to-face and by way of teleconference on both the Arlington and Fairfax campuses. In addition, course participants will be required to work in interdisciplinary teams outside of class sessions. Materials will be posted via Mason's Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS), housed in the MyMason portal, <http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available by September 1, 2018.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).

- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to 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>

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/> .

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

To participate in this course, course participants will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- Maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, the official methods of communication for this course.
- Create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements, if requested.
- Install media-viewing plug-ins, available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Either
 - Windows Media Player: <https://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/downloads/windows-media-player>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

EXPECTATIONS:

- Course Participation: Active and consistent participation in the course as described in the individual course syllabus is extremely important for courses. Course participants are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Courses will, at a minimum, have weekly requirements for student participation that can be documented by any or all of the following methods:
 - Consistent presence in class sessions
 - Submission/completion of assignments as specified by the professors
 - Regular communication with the professors
 - Active, meaningful, and respectful communication with peers and professors

Course participants must also regularly check their GMU email for communications from the instructors. There are specific deadlines and due dates listed in the CLASS SCHEDULE section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

- **Written Assignments:** All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. (Formal assignments do not include Blackboard discussions, class/course feedback, in-class reflections or journaling) Accepted style guides include the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition (CMOS), and should be followed consistently for formal written assignments. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully BEFORE submission. (Use spell check!) If course participants are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check their APA or other style guide manual. Course participants may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support. Course participants will do the following:

- Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
- Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
- Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
- Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

- **Sessions:** Class sessions are on Thursdays from 4:30 – 7:10 pm in Arlington and Fairfax simultaneously face to face in each classroom and with teleconference connections between the two campuses.
- **Technical Competence:** Course participants are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Course participants are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course.
- **Technical Issues:** Course participants should expect that they could experience some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly.
- **Mentoring/Advising:** If you would like to schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues, and you are unable to come to the Mason campus, we can meet via telephone or web conference. Send an email to your instructors to schedule your one-on-one session and include your preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- **Netiquette:** Some of our class communications will be via Blackboard. Our goal is to be collaborative, not combative. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued. We suggest that you always review-read your responses carefully before you post them to encourage others from taking them as personal attacks. Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words. We will do the same. Remember, you are not competing with each other but sharing information and learning from one another as well as from the instructors.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

Course participants will:

- Demonstrate understanding of theoretical grounding, epistemology and elements/procedures/practices and varieties of AR approaches.
- Use deliberative democratic practices and apply critical consciousness to the process and product/ results/ outcomes/ consequences of AR.
- Know when/how to (or not to) use AR.
- Use AR methods to address social justice, education, peace and/or sustainability challenges.
- Use AR methods to explore and discover processes of change.
- Develop positionality in terms of being an action researcher. In other words, analyze and understand the nature and implications of one's own position in the research context, and use that understanding to create more relevant, practical, impactful, and effective research.
- Develop skills for identifying and incorporating a range of research methodologies and skills within an action research framework and orientation, such as: interviews, focus groups, surveys, participant observation, ethnography, auto-ethnography, case studies, etc.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to enable course participants to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of, and appropriate context for, action research as a research approach in various changemaking initiatives
2. Describe and illustrate key elements of a theory of change diagram
3. Formulate a plausible AR approach for testing a theory of change for a given challenge.
4. Describe, analyze, critique AR as a research approach (assignment: essay)
5. Develop and practice skills of how to do systematic research “with” people rather than “on” people, and articulate the rationale for this approach
6. Develop self-awareness in context sensitive communication, self-reflection and participatory approaches to address internal biases while conducting action research
7. Articulate the historical and theoretical foundations of action research
8. Describe the common characteristics of action research and its many forms (PAR, CPAR, YPAR, Practitioner Action Research, Teacher Action Research...)
9. Outline/describe ethical considerations common to the action research process
10. Be ready to confidently apply skills from this course to a specific action research project.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR CEHD STUDENTS:

This course fits with the core values of the College of Education and Human Development and other academic units, which include collaboration, research based practice, innovation, ethical leadership, and social justice.

This course is designed to meet the following professional teaching standards:

- GMU Dispositions for a Career Educator I, II, and III
- Commitment to the Profession
- Commitment to Honoring Professional Ethical Standards
- Commitment to Key Elements of Professional Knowledge

- Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations I and II
- Lifelong Learners
- Learner-Centered Educators
- NBPTS Propositions 2, 3, and 4
- Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Course participants
- Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning
- Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience

REQUIRED TEXTS:

A selection of case studies will be available, with course participants choosing case study readings from a larger set. For example:

Participatory Action Research (PAR), a Tool for Transformation Conflict: A case study from south central Somalia. Life and Peace Institute. 2016. Available online: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Somalia_PAR_WEB.pdf

Texts recommended for purchase by all students:

Hinchey, Patricia H. (2008) *Action Research Primer*. Peter Lang, Inc.

Fine, Michelle. (2018) *Just Research in Contentious Times: Widening the Methodological Imagination*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Doctoral students are recommended to purchase also:

Herr, Kathryn and Gary Anderson (2015) *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. SAGE: Los Angeles.

Selected chapters on reserve are listed in the weekly course schedule.

Argyris, Chris. TBD

Greenwood, D.J. & Levin, M. (2009). *Action Research and Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press. (selected chapters)

Schön, D.A. (1983). "The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action," New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-75.

Wink, J. (2010). Critical pedagogy: notes from the real world. selected chapters

Additional readings will be assigned as appropriate in response to emergent learning opportunities.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: Specific rubrics for each assignment will be distributed in class.

1. Assignment descriptions

- Class Participation (20%) (Assesses objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4)
- Collaborative Mason-related project (30%) this course will focus on needs assessment, initial data gathering phase of AR and identifying a research question/inquiry in preparation for implementation/practicum [topics could include: recycling, Koch brothers funding, pesticide use, green buildings LEED certification, facilitating IEP meetings with parents; or other project of student interest]. Final presentation will be 10% of the course grade, final report will be 10% of the course grade, and the project process will be 10% of the course grade.
- Action Research Journal Reflections (15%) (Assesses objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4). This assignment There are three assigned journal reflections this semester. Each will have a set of reflection prompts for you to address.
- Choosing an Appropriate Research Approach: Research Conceptualization and Application Planning Essay (10%) Each student is asked to write a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced) analyzing when action research is appropriate or inappropriate in research related to their chosen area of study.
- Reflective Research Practice: Positionality Analysis Paper (25%) Each participant will write a paper of 10-12 pp. that explores their own positionality in terms of being an action researcher. They will be expected to share their understanding of their personal and social power from multiple perspectives in diverse contexts, including institutional and societal contexts, and how power and privilege connects to world view, marginalization, cultural capital, social justice, and achievement.
- Draft Action Research Design (winter term assignment) Students who wish to enroll in the spring 2019 action research practicum will be asked to complete a draft action research design of 3-5 pages to turn in for 5 points credit by January 10 as a pre-requisite for starting the spring course.

Doctoral Student Additional Requirements: Each doctoral student enrolled in the course will complete an additional assignment in line with his/her doctoral program of study, ensuring doctoral level work in this course. Doctoral students may choose to explore applications of the action research approach to their proposed dissertation topics, or other relevant doctoral level work. The doctoral specific required work will be worth 30 points, meaning doctoral students will be graded on their work on a total possible 130 points.

2. Assignment weighting

Class Participation	15 points
Off-campus experience Due Dec 6 or before (report in class after experience) Each student will choose an out of class engagement with action research, for example: https://www.thepraxisconferencedc.com/ November 2-3, 2018.	5 points

Action Research Journal Reflections Reflection #1- 5 points (Sept 13) Reflection #2- 5 points (Oct 4) Reflection #3- 5 points (Dec 6)	15 points
Collaborative Project Project Process 10 points Final Presentation 10 points Final Report 10 points (draft due Oct 25, Final Nov 29)	30 points
Choosing an Appropriate Research Approach: Research Conceptualization and Application Planning Essay Due September 20	10 points
Reflective Research Practice: Positionality Analysis Paper Draft due Sept 27 Final version due Nov 1	25 points
Doctoral Students' Additional Assignment: Action Research Dissertation Concept Paper Due Nov 15	30 points
Draft Action Research Design- due January 10 for those enrolling in the spring semester course	[5 points for the spring course]

GRADING SCALE - Master's Students		GRADING SCALE - Doctoral Students	
95-100	A	123-130	A
90-94	A-	117-122	A-
87-89	B+	113-116	B+
83-86	B	108-112	B
80-82	B-	104-107	B-
75-79	C	96-103	C
74 and below	F	95 and below	F

TK20 PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

There is no required performance-based assessment for this course.

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

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

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT

While students in the course will be drawn from across Mason graduate programs, the course participants are asked to work within the core values as articulated by the College of Education and Human Development: collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Course participants are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

CONF 695, EDRS 797, EVPP, POGO 750

CLASS SCHEDULE

Session Date	Topics & Major Assignments Due
Aug 30	Topics: History and Models of AR Team-building for AR Preliminary discussion of possible group projects
Sept 6	Topics: Developing a research community, plan and questions Identify group project(s) Due Sept 20: Choosing an Appropriate Research Approach: Research Conceptualization and Application Planning Essay Pre-reading before class: Hinchey, Ch. 1&2 Chapter 1 of Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Anisur Rahman (1991) <i>Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action-Research</i> . Rowman and Littlefield. Doctoral students read Herr and Anderson chapters 1 and 2.
Sept 13	Topics: Collecting and Analyzing Data Alternative and creative methods of data collection Develop interview protocol Develop other data collection methods Practice interviewing one another, practice implementing other data collection method Due Sept 13: Action Research Journal Reflection #1

	<p>Assignment prior to next week: interview two people about the group project topic; upload interview notes to Blackboard</p> <p>Pre-reading before class: Hinchey, Ch. 3 & 4</p> <p>Lederach, John Paul and Preeti Thapa (2018) “Staying True in Nepal: Understanding Community Mediation Through Action Research” p. 33-58 in d’Estree, Tamra Pearson and Ruth J. Parsons, eds, <i>Cultural Encounters and Emergent Practices in Conflict Resolution Capacity-Building</i>. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.</p> <p>Doctoral students read Herr and Anderson chapter 4.</p>
<p>Sept 20</p>	<p>Topics: Action Plans, Recording Studies and Sharing In class: Every group provides oral presentations of preliminary work</p> <p>Due Sept 20: Sharing interview reports with group members Pre-reading before class: Hinchey, Ch. 5</p> <p>Appropriateness Essay due.</p>
<p>Sept 27</p>	<p>Topics: Positionality in Group Projects Ethics in AR Due: DRAFT of Reflective Research Practice: Positionality Analysis Paper</p> <p>Pre-reading before class:</p> <p>Greenwood, D.J. & Levin, M. (2007). Chapter 17, Action research, participation and democratization, pp. 255-265, in <i>Introduction to action research: Social research for social change</i>. 2nd Edition</p> <p>“Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen” Author(s): H. Richard Milner IV Source: Educational Researcher, Vol. 36, No. 7 (Oct., 2007), pp. 388-400 Published by: American Educational Research Association Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/30136070</p> <p>Doctoral students read Herr and Anderson chapter 3 and 7.</p>

	<p><i>Possible Class Field Trip: Sept 27, 6-7:15 pm in Founders Hall, Forum on Polarization. Consider ethics in PAR, and ethics of designing and implementing forum on polarization.</i></p>
Oct 4	<p>Topics: Theory of Change</p> <p>Choose one of the offered materials (grant proposal, curriculum, piece of environmental legislation); work together to determine and make explicit the implied theory of change</p> <p>Due October 4: Action Research Journal Reflection #2.</p> <p>Pre-reading for class: Selected case study from list to be distributed</p> <p>Friedman, Victor J and Jay Rothman (2015) “Action Evaluation: An Action Research Practice for the Participative Definition, Monitoring, and Assessment of Success in Social Innovation and Conflict Engagement” p. 90-99 in Bradbury, Hilary, ed, <i>The SAGE Handbook of Action Research</i> London: Sage.</p>
Oct 11	<p>Topics: Critical PAR</p> <p>Case studies of AR: Learning from Experience (presented by Dr. Allen)</p> <p>Pre-reading before class: Fine, Michelle. (2018) <i>Just Research in Contentious Times: Widening the Methodological Imagination</i>. New York: Teachers College Press.</p>
Oct 18	<p>Topics: Mid-way Group Process Check-In</p> <p>AR Reports; Ways of Sharing AR Insights</p> <p>Revisit ethics discussion</p> <p>Due Oct 18: complete Strengths Finder online through Mason access prior to class. Bring your top strengths descriptions with you to class.</p> <p>Pre-reading before class: Strengths Finder</p>

<p>Oct 25</p>	<p>Topics: Reflecting on experiences of research “with” rather than research “on”</p> <p>Case studies of AR: Learning from Experience (presented by Dr. View)</p> <p>Due: draft AR report to share with other groups, 5-7 pp.</p> <p>Pre-reading before class:</p> <p>View, J.L. & Azevedo, P. (in press). Learning Historic Places with Diverse Populations: Teacher-ranger partnerships, in J.L.Thompson & A.K. Houseal (Eds.) <i>America’s Largest Classrooms: What We Learn from Our National Parks</i>, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.</p> <p>View, J.L. & Guiden, A. (in press). Learning Historic Places with Diverse Populations: Student perceptions case study, in J.L Thompson & A.K. Houseal (Eds.) <i>America’s Largest Classrooms: What We Learn from Our National Parks</i>, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.</p> <p>View, J.L. (2017). Teaching the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi: Teacher professional development and CRT/RPCK, in P. Chandler and T. Hawley, <i>Race Lessons: Using Inquiry to Teach about Race in Social Studies</i>, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press</p>
<p>Nov 1</p>	<p>Topics: Comparative AR approaches (PAR, CPAR, YPAR, Practitioner Action Research, Teacher Action Research...)</p> <p>Due: feedback to groups on draft reports, using rubric</p> <p>Also due: FINAL VERSION: Reflective Research Practice: Positionality Analysis Paper</p> <p>Pre-reading before class:</p> <p>All students read Herr and Anderson Chapter 6.</p> <p>Doctoral students read Herr and Anderson chapters 5 and 6 and 8.</p>
<p>Nov 8</p>	<p>Topics: Dilemmas, tradeoffs, and challenges in AR</p> <p>Discuss feedback on draft reports</p> <p>Pre-reading before class:</p> <p>Lykes, M. Brinton and Alison Crosby (2017), “Participatory Action Research as a Resource for Community Regeneration in Post-conflict Contexts” p. 237-</p>

	<p>254, in Bretherton, Diane and Siew Fang Law, eds, <i>Methodologies in Peace Psychology: Peace Research by Peaceful Means</i>. New York: Springer.</p> <p>Aragon, Alfredo Ortiz and Juan Carlos Gile Macedo (2015) “Radical Epistemology as Caffeine for Social Change” p. 681-690 in Bradbury, Hilary, ed, <i>The SAGE Handbook of Action Research</i> London: Sage</p>
Nov 15	<p>Topics: Using deliberative democratic practices and applying critical consciousness in AR</p> <p>Group project time</p> <p>Begin thinking/ planning about the spring semester action research project</p> <p>Pre-reading before class: Wanda Pillow (2003) Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research, <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i>, 16:2, 175-196, DOI: 10.1080/0951839032000060635</p> <p>Doctoral Students Assignment AR Dissertation Concept Paper due.</p>
Nov 22	NO CLASS- Thanksgiving Recess
Nov 29	<p>Topics: Final presentations</p> <p>Guest speakers: Dr. Jessica Srikantia and Dr. Dann Sklarew to prep for spring semester</p> <p>Due Nov 29: Final project presentation and report</p>
Dec 6	<p>Topics: Reflections on Action Research; Lessons Learned, Looking Forward</p> <p>Due Dec 6: Journal Reflection #3</p> <p>Also Due Dec 6: Off campus experience report</p>

ALTERATIONS:

Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to course participants.

ASSESSMENT RUBRICS:

Specific rubrics for each assignment will be distributed during class.