EDRS 833 B01, Participatory Action Research
3 credits
Summer Session B (June 5 – July 29, 2017)
Peterson Hall 2411 – Fairfax Campus

Faculty
Name: Meagan Call-Cummings
Office hours: By Appointment
Office location: Colgan Hall, 220A, Prince William Campus
Office Phone: 703-993-1718
Email address: mcallcum@gmu.edu

Teaching Interns
Name: Giovanni Dazzo
Office hours: By Appointment
Email address: gdazzo@gmu.edu

Name: Sascha Reed
Office hours: By Appointment
Email address: saschareed@gmail.com

Prerequisite:
EDRS 812, contact instructor for additional information.

University Catalog Course Description:
Explores theoretical concepts associated with participatory action research and teaches how to apply participatory data collection and analysis procedures in educational research.

Course Overview:
This graduate advanced level research course focuses on a qualitative approach to inquiry that actively engages participants in confronting and changing their life situations or patterns. It is community based in that it engages with already existing communities privileging the terms, interests, complexities and challenges of the communities themselves.

Action research, often attributed to the work of Lewin who was concerned about the psychological effects of "minority" social life on individual members of those communities, is specifically aimed at involving people in solving their own community challenges by coming to better understand those challenges and their own place in them (Freire also emphasized this in his pedagogy of the oppressed) as well as the potential for change and action. Participatory action research brings together concepts of research, learning, and change. Action research aims for democratic, inclusive, equal practices with goals to better the lives of people involved in ways that honor and privilege their experiences, perspectives, and efforts.

In this class you will learn foundational history and principles associated with action research, with an emphasis on the epistemology, ethics, and practice of critical participatory action research. In the critical tradition, research works best when it is open to critiquing inequity in its findings, research practices, relationships, and purposes. It is not a neutral way of approaching research nor does it enact a hierarchy of expertise with the researcher at the top. You will engage in reading and discussions as well as the conduct of an action research project. Through these means, you will come to your own understanding of and appreciation for practitioner-centered research known as PAR.

PAR "is concerned with efficacy and must answer to the participants, whose current welfare is at stake. Participatory Action Research is inscribed within the temporality of a life and its immediate needs, lending this research an urgency, particularly when at-risk populations are involved and during periods of economic crisis or political change, with all their attendant feelings of insecurity" Hajdukowasid-Ahmed. M. (1998). Bakhtin without borders: Participatory research in the social sciences. *The South Atlantic Quarterly, 97*(3/4), p.667.

Course Delivery Method:
This course will be delivered using seminar and fieldwork formats. Some online work may be included.

Learner Objectives:
This course is designed to enable students to do the following:
1. Articulate the historical and theoretical foundations of participatory action research;
2. Describe the common characteristics of participatory action research;
3. Discuss common practices associated with designing participatory action research studies;
4. Outline ethical considerations common to the participatory action research process;
5. Describe the various types of data collected in participatory action research studies;
6. Create a participatory action research study;
7. Carry out participatory/collaborative fieldwork, including multiple forms of data collection (such as visual, media-based, or narrative);
8. Carry out participatory/collaborative data analysis;
9. Describe ethical issues related to representation and writing up findings in participatory action research.

Required Texts:
There are two required textbooks for this course:
- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. (available open source online)
- Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.

Any other required readings will be posted as pdf files on Blackboard or will be handed out as hard copies in class.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

As an advanced applied methodology course, this course requires a significant time commitment. First, this is a **reading and writing intensive course.** Thus, please plan accordingly, as the readings and writing assignments have been carefully selected to support your growth as a critical scholar and researcher. Second, the **fieldwork does require a significant amount of time**, particularly as I encourage you to pursue this assignment with care and thoughtful reflection. Throughout the course, know that I will be here to support you and facilitate the learning process! My intent is to make this a truly meaningful learning (and growing) experience.

In all of your assignments, I am looking for evidence of: (1) understanding and the application of the concepts and processes learned and discussed in class and online; (2) critical reflection and responses to issues and concepts; (3) clarity of expression; (4) explicit connections among ideas; and (5) complete work with no grammatical or spelling errors. Incompletes and Withdrawals are strongly discouraged and are only given when the conditions of the university are met and after a conference with the instructor at the initiation of the student.

Assignments	Points
1. Participation	20
2. Research Project Portfolio	50
a. Documentation of process:	25
b. Self-evaluation:	5
c. Methodological reflection journals:	20
3. Final Manuscript	30
	100 total points

Participation:
Participation and attendance will comprise 20% of your grade. In keeping with the underlying epistemological commitments of participatory action research, this grade will ultimately be assigned through a process of consensus.

There are four areas for you to document your participation. I intend for there to be some flexibility in the sense that each class member will establish how to develop her or participation across the four areas.
1. One can attain credit by participating electronically through email or forum postings to share materials, insights, facilitate discussions and so forth, attending out-of-class lectures and sending a synopsis to classmates, and so forth. The idea here is that there are things that can be done outside of class that can contribute to the learning process.
2. One can also earn participation credit for in-class activities, like volunteering, sharing insights that extend the readings, being well prepared, articulating counter and diverse perspectives, augmenting the readings with outside experience, texts, popular media, and other relevant opportunities to increase and deepen our understanding.
3. One can also attain class participation credit for attending class fully.

4. One can also attain class participation by integrating the fieldwork into the class discussions, whether online or face-to-face so that the fieldwork becomes an important element of one's class participation. Bringing in examples from your fieldwork, sharing transcripts or other research projects along the way, and presenting the final project are examples of ways to engage in the class through the project. Additionally, you can serve as a peer debriefer for classmates, provide feedback, challenges, and praise to classmates regarding their fieldwork as a way to participate in the class.

In keeping with the underlying epistemological commitments of participatory action research, each person will be expected to decide the weight of the 20 points across the four categories with at least 1 point being designated to each of the four categories. You will be asked to complete self-evaluations on your class participation and thus you will have say in this portion of your grade. If you and I disagree, we will meet to reach consensus.

Research Project Portfolio:
The research project portfolio in total will comprise 50% of your grade. Each class member will be responsible for engaging with one participatory action research project. These are the options:
1. Work independently on your own action research project.
2. Work with an advanced student on a cooperative action research project.
3. Work on a project with me as an apprentice.

Participatory action research is an engaged methodology and so its conduct always depends on the involvement and availability of others. It is process oriented and the process cannot be easily rushed. For this reason, we will want to begin thinking of a small-scale PAR project doable in a short amount of time. ***I will need to approve any choice you make*** so that you are set up for success in this course and beyond.

OPTION (1) WORKING INDEPENDENTLY.
This is a great option to choose if you have already taken a number of research courses, if you have connections with a community already, and are able to get started quickly.

OPTION (2) WORKING WITH AN ADVANCED STUDENT OR TEACHING ASSISTANT ON THEIR PROJECT.
This is a good option if you are more of a novice at research and have an interest in working alongside, helping out, and engaging with research that has been coordinated by a more advanced student or teaching assistant in the class. The more advanced student or teaching assistant will serve as project director. I might be able to steer you to some projects. I know of several possibilities for participatory action research projects.

OPTION (3) APPRENTICING WITH ME
I will discuss my ongoing PAR project on the first day of class.

Requirements:
1. Documentation of the process (25 points): You must document the research process, provide the data and the analysis, and a community action plan.
2. Self-Evaluation (5 points): In keeping with the underlying epistemological commitments of participatory action research, your research portfolio grade will ultimately be assigned

through a process of consensus. In order to do this, you will complete a self-evaluation form related to the project in which you engage. If the project you are participating in is group-oriented then each individual member will complete a group-evaluation form instead. You will assign yourself points related to your final portfolio and methodological reflections.

3. Methodological Reflection Journals (20 points): As part of the course you will be required to keep a research journal in which you will regularly reflect on the PAR process and on the methodology itself, including questions, ethical concerns, etc. This should not be a performance of brilliance, but rather a deep engagement in sincere reflexivity. You may choose to keep these on the Blackboard site for all your peers to have access, or via another method to share only with me, the instructor. You should plan on adding to the journal at least weekly during the course.

Final Manuscript:
The culminating assignment for the course will be worth 30% of your final grade and is a manuscript that will be written for a peer-reviewed journal. You will need to research the journal you will submit the manuscript to and then write for that audience, in that required style, etc. The manuscript will be written around learning an aspect of PAR theory through practice. For example, learning participation through practice; learning validity through practice; learning ethics through practice; etc. While you will not be required to actually submit the manuscript to a journal, you may choose to work with me and other students on a journal submission, special issue of a journal, or on an edited book volume after the completion of the course (this is totally voluntary and we will talk more about our approach in class). These manuscripts may be co-authored by up to three students each, but each of you must be prepared to clearly document how and where you contributed. You may consider also inviting non-university-based members of your PAR collective to act as co-authors, in which case you would have more than three co-authors, total.

Course Performance Evaluation Weighting:
The following is the grading scale. As noted above, your final grade is based on the number of points you earn throughout the semester.

Grading Scale
A   93% - 100%
A-   90% – 92.9%
B+   87% - 89.9%
B   83% - 86.9%
B-   80% - 82.9%
C+   77% - 79.9%
C   74% - 76.9%
C-   70% - 73.9%
D+   67% - 69.9%
D   64% - 66.9%
D-   60% - 63.9%
F   0% - 59.9%

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/.

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/.

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	The Research Project	Classwork
June 4	Introducing the course, making initial fieldwork and manuscript decisions and plans Creating class/course agreements, selecting readings Dialogue session: Critical Participatory Action Research Onto-epistemology	Freire, Introduction, Chs. 1 & 2 (Read prior to our first class)		
June 6	Critical Exposure Field trip	Fals-Borda and Rahman Chs. 1-2 Santos Kemmis and McTaggart Appadurai		Journal: Explore your initial wondering about CPAR and its onto-epistemological underpinnings. How might a future project be framed?
June 11	Getting Started: Insider/Outsider, inclusion and power dynamics, ethics of "entering the field" Practice session: Facilitating the identification of problem or interest	Patel (entire book) Datta et. al (2014) Optional: Allen (2012) Bensimon et al (2004) Kuriloff et al (2011) Randall (2012)	Identify potential project and make contact or prepare to make contact with the community	
June 13	More on getting started: identifying stakeholders, key informants; identifying and dealing with power structures; engaging ethically and reflexively Practice session: How to bring people to the table.	Letiecq and Schmaltzbauer (2012) Plus, choose one: Ponic Torre Stoudt	Determine how your community action board will operate; make power issues transparent.	Journal: For your project or idea, who needs to be at the table? How will you identify and grapple with power structures explicitly and collaboratively? How are you thinking about ethics?

	Guests: Bethany Letiecq and Colleen Vesely			
June 18	Research with children/Youth Participatory Action Research Dialogue session	Dolan et al. (2015) Cammarota and Fine (2008) Mitra and McCormick (2017) Brion-Meisels and Alter (2018)	Facilitate community identification of a problem or concern.	
June 20	Visual and Dialogical Methods of Data Collection Practice session	Wang (1999) Boxall and Ralph (2009) Joanou (2009) Didkowsky et al (2010) Sitter (2015)	Make data collection decisions with stakeholders	Journal: What idea, reading, or tool has been most thought provoking to you thus far? Why? What concerns do you have at this stage? How do you see yourself as a researcher changing/growing?
June 25	Textual Methods of Data Collection Practice session	Chiu (2003) Shager (2007) Hunter (2018) Optional: Lui (1995) Townley et al (2016) Akom et al (2016)	Train or otherwise prepare for data collection	
June 27	*No class meeting: Project work day*			
July 2	*No class meeting* Due: Conceptualize data analysis (1 page) AND Paper outline			
July 4	*No class meeting*			
July 9	Participatory data analysis Practice session	Vesely et al (2019) Plus, choose two: Goto (2010) Curry (2012) Knoester (2010) Nind (2011) Kramer et al (2011)	Reflection. Determine approach to data analysis.	Journal: How are you thinking about or conceptualizing collaboration, partnership, "us" or "we"?
July 11	*No class meeting: participatory data analysis work day*			

July 16	Consciousness-raising and Data Analysis Practice session: Theatre of the Oppressed	Korth (2002) Boal, selected chapters	Data Analysis	Paper draft
July 18	Returning analysis and conclusions to the community Guest speaker: Dr. Linda Stern, Director of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning, National Democratic Institute	Mack (2012) Cahill and Torre (2007) Bertrand (2016) Selected white papers	Reflection	Journal: Reflect on your onto-epistemological commitments – how are they evolving?
July 23	Hold for remaining interests of students / working day		Plan/action with CAB	
July 25	Sharing our research with one another; reflecting on the process.	Blodgett et al (2011) Fine (2018) Ch. 1 and conclusion Optional: Holtby et al Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg	Share findings with broader community	Submit by 11:59pm, July 28, 2019 in ONE email to instructor: 1. Research portfolio. 2. Participation self-evaluation. 3. Final manuscript.

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.