George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
PhD Program

EDRS 833.Section DL1 - Participatory Action Research
3 Credits, Spring 2021
Thursdays 7:20-10:00pm, Online

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COVID 19 Procedures: Spring 2021
Students, please be aware of and follow all policies and procedures for Mason's Safe Return to Campus: https://www2.gmu.edu/Safe-Return-Campus

Prerequisite

EDRS 812 & EDRS 822, 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 online (76% or more) using a synchronous format (with some asynchronous involvement) via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. 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 is now available.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

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

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

  To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: https://get.adobe.com/reader/
  - Windows Media Player: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player
  - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

- Course Week: During typical synchronous weeks our class will meet via zoom on Thursdays at 7:20pm. These sessions will *not* be recorded. **All assignments, unless otherwise indicated on the class schedule, are due no later than 11:59pm on the day we hold class.**
- Log-in Frequency:
  Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 3 times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- Participation:
  Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence:
  Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:
  Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload:
  Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support:
  Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the

instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

- Netiquette:
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words*. Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- Accommodations:
Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes or 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.

Professional Standards

Not applicable.

Required Texts

There are no required textbooks for this course. All required readings will be posted as pdf files on Blackboard or will be shared through a Google Drive folder.

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	15
2. Research Project Portfolio	55
a. Documentation of process:	20 (4 times x 5 points each)
b. Methodological reflection journals:	35 (7 times x 5 points each)
3. Final Manuscript	30
	100 total points

Participation

Participation and attendance will comprise 15% 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 15 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 a 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 55% 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 projects on the first day of class.

Requirements:
1. Documentation of the process (20 points): You will submit short reports that will allow you to document the research process. These are indicated on the schedule.
2. Methodological Reflection Journals (35 points): As part of the course you will be required to keep a research journal (in google docs) 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. Points at which these are due are indicated on the course schedule.

You should turn them in on google docs. We will provide feedback through google docs. These journals are intended to build toward your final manuscript.

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. We have an opportunity to write manuscripts to be included in a special issue of *Educational Action Research*. You will need to research the journal 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 or how you are grappling with PAR epistemology or methodology in your own work. For example, you might frame your paper around learning participation through practice; learning validity through practice; learning ethics through practice; etc, or learning PAR as a teacher; applying PAR epistemology in a different methodological approach; etc. Your assigned journal entries will scaffold the writing of the manuscript and we will provide feedback on your journals that will help you craft the manuscript.

Grading

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.

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	The Research Project	Classwork

Jan 28	**Introduction and Epistemology:** 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 CPI Ch. 1 (Read prior to our first class)		Journal: Explore your initial wondering about PAR and its onto-epistemological underpinnings. What aspects of PAR do you connect with epistemologically?
Feb 4	**Researcher Positionality**	CPI Ch. 2 Santos Kemmis and McTaggart Appadurai		Journal: Conduct a researcher positionality inventory
Feb 11	**Building (On) Relationships:** Insider/Outsider, inclusion and power dynamics, ethics of "entering the field" Guest speakers: TBD	Freire Ch. 3 Fals-Borda and Rahman Chs. 1-2 CPI Ch. 4	Identify potential project and make contact or prepare to make contact with the community	Submit a short (less than one page) report of who you plan to work with and why.
Feb 18	**Getting Started:** identifying stakeholders, key informants; identifying and dealing with power structures; engaging ethically and reflexively Practice session: Facilitating the identification of problem or interest (Sharrell)	Limes-Taylor Henderson & Esposito (2019) Freire Ch. 4 Freire Fourth Letter CPI Ch. 5	Determine how you will go about setting expectations and roles; welcoming conflict or disagreement; making 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?
Feb 25	**Research with children/Youth Participatory Action Research**	Cammarota and Fine (2008) Cahill et al (2019) Brion-Meisels and Alter (2018)	Facilitate community identification of a problem or concern.	Submit documentation of the process to date

	Dialogue session: Ashleigh Clyde and LeAnne Beardsley			
Mar 4	**Making traditional data collection and analysis approaches participatory** Practice session: focus groups (Sharrell)	Chiu (2003) Sharing Circles Look at examples on publicscienceproject.org		Journal: Reflect on your onto-epistemological commitments – how are they evolving?
Mar 11	**Arts-based data collection and analysis** Practice sessions: 1. Collaborative poetry creation 2. Bring a found poem or lyrics, blackout poetry as analysis	Call-Cummings et al (2020) Goessling & Wager (2020) Tolia-Kelly (2007) Tanner (2016) Keith & Endsley (2020)	Make data collection decisions with stakeholders	
Mar 18	**Digital and Multimedia data collection and analysis** Practice session: Before class, post pictures and captions on Blackboard discussion board; analysis in class.	Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg (2016) Townley et al (2016) Akom et al (2016) Alexander et al (2010)	Train or otherwise prepare for data collection and analysis	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?
Mar 25	*No class - work week (data collection)*			
Apr 1	**Participatory data analysis** Practice session: Bring some of your data or your group's data	Choose 2: Vesely et al (2019) Sitter (2015) Goto (2010) Curry (2012) Nind (2011) Kramer et al (2011) Plus find one article from your own field that engages participatory data analysis, read, share with class	Reflection. Determine approach to data analysis.	Journal: How are you thinking about or conceptualizing collaboration, partnership, "us" or "we"?

Apr 8	**Returning analysis and conclusions to the community** Guest speakers: TBD	Mack (2012) Bertrand (2016) Proto et al (2013) Blodgett et al (2011)	Reflection	Submit documentation of your data collection and analysis
April 15	**Taking Action and Disseminating Findings** Guest lecturer: Bethany Letiecq	TBA	Share findings with broader community	Journal: Revisit your positionality inventory. What are you learning about yourself as a researcher? How are your epistemological commitments changing or expanding?
April 22	**Staying Committed and In Solidarity** Discussion session: Continuing complexity - breakout sessions with Sharrell, MCC, and Giovanni Dazzo	Solórzano & Yosso, 2002 Tuck & Yang, 2012 Drame, E.R., & Irby, D.J. (2015) Duval-Diop (2016)		
April 29	**Bringing This Back to Your Research** Discussion session: Each person take 10 minutes to informally present ideas of what you are taking with you, what new ideas you have, what continuing questions you're pursuing. How will you frame your final paper? Each person will receive feedback from everyone.			Submit by 11:59pm, May 8, 2021 on google drive in your folder: 1. Final documentation of process. 2. Participation self-evaluation (less than one page - assign points). 3. Final manuscript.

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

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 https://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 https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/.

- For information on student support resources on campus, see https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

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