George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
PhD Program

EDRS 833 Section 001 - Participatory Action Research
3 Credits, Spring 2023
Mondays 7:20-10:00pm, Innovation Hall Room 316, Fairfax Campus

Faculty
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Prerequisites/Corequisites

(EDRS 812[B-] or 812[XS]) and (EDRS 822[B-] or 822[XS]).
[B-] Requires minimum grade of B-.
[XS] Requires minimum grade of XS.

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. Offered by School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

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 a seminar format.

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 via email.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, VIA, 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	30
2. Documentation of PAR process	20 (4 times x 5 points each)
3. Research Journal Entries	50 (10 times x 5 points each)
	100 total points

Participation
Participation and attendance will comprise 30% of your grade. In keeping with the underlying epistemological commitments of PAR, 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 their participation across the four areas.
1. One can attain class participation credit for attending class fully.
2. One can attain credit by participating electronically through email or Blackboard postings to share materials, insights, facilitate discussions and so forth, attending out-of-class lectures/activities 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 contribute to the learning process.
3. One can also earn participation credit for in-class activities, like volunteering, sharing insights that extend the readings, being well prepared, articulating alternative and diverse perspectives, augmenting the readings with outside experience, texts, popular media, and other relevant opportunities to increase and deepen our understanding.
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 PAR, each person will be expected to decide the weight of the 30 points across the four categories with at least one point being designated to each of the four categories. You will be asked to complete self-evaluations on your class participation and thus will have a say in this portion of your grade. If you and I disagree, we will meet to reach consensus through dialogue and reflection.

Documentation of PAR Process
The research project portfolio in total will comprise 20% of your grade. Each class member will be responsible for engaging with one PAR 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.

PAR 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 that is 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 in the class. The more advanced student will serve as project director.

Option (3): Apprenticing with me
I will discuss possibilities on the first day of class.

Periodically during the semester and as indicated in the class schedule, I will check the online dropbox created for each student to review any documentation of the PAR process the student has engaged to date. Because the PAR process can look different for each person or collective, documentation may vary. You may include PDFs of email correspondence between yourself and your collective members. You may include sketches or notes from meetings or dialogue sessions. You may include lists of resources shared among collective members. You may include data collected or analyzed. This is completely up to you. The idea is that you share with me how you have engaged the PAR process. These check-ins are meant to provoke ongoing dialogue between you and me.

Research Journal Entries

Each student will have a private (between the student and instructor) online journal. Students are required to add entries as indicated in the main text and on the class schedule. You should add your work on "focus activities" in your journal prior to class meetings and responses to reflexivity questions during or after class meetings. You should choose one of the end-of-chapter suggested activities and record that work in your journal as well. Again, this is meant as an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the instructor in between class sessions and to engage in self-reflexivity throughout the course.

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   94% - 100%
A-   90% - 93%
B+   87% - 89%
B   80% - 86%
C   75% - 79%
F   Below 75%

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

Class session	Topic	Readings and Activities to be completed before class	The Research Project	Post-Class Session Assignments
Jan 23	**Introduction** Introducing the course, making initial fieldwork and decisions and plans Creating class/course agreements	CPI Introduction and Appendix Cases (Read prior to our first class)	Dialogue.	Journal: Explore your initial wonderings about PAR. What initial questions do you have?
Jan 30	**The roots, goals, use, and process of PAR; researcher positionality**	CPI Chs. 1 and 2 Complete chapter focus activities prior to class.	Dialogue and reflection.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to

				answer or complete.
Feb 6	**Ethics and validity in PAR:** conceptualization and operationalization	CPI Ch. 3 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Dialogue and reflection.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Feb 13	**Building (On) Relationships:** Insider/outsider research, inclusion and power dynamics, ethics of "entering the field"	CPI Ch. 4 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Identify potential project and make contact or prepare to make contact with the community.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Feb 20	**Getting Started:** Identifying stakeholders, key informants; identifying and dealing with power structures; engaging ethically and reflexively	CPI Ch. 5 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Determine how you will go about setting expectations and roles; welcoming conflict or disagreement; making power issues transparent.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Feb 27	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Making traditional data collection and analysis approaches participatory	CPI Ch. 6 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Discuss evidence and data collection with research collective – what does each person find compelling?	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Mar 6	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Trying out participatory data collection and analysis processes	Readings TBD	Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective.	Process documentation: MCC will check online drop boxes for documentation

				of your PAR process to date.
Mar 13	*No class meeting: Spring Break*			
Mar 20	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Arts-based data collection and analysis; practical and ethical concerns	CPI Ch. 7 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Mar 27	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Trying out arts-based data collection and analysis	Readings TBD	Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective.	Process documentation: MCC will check online drop boxes for documentation of your PAR process to date.
Apr 3	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Digital and Multimedia data collection and analysis	CPI Ch. 8 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Apr 10	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Trying out digital and multimedia data collection and analysis	Readings TBD	Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective.	Process documentation: MCC will check online drop boxes for documentation of your PAR process to date.
Apr 17	*No class meeting: AERA or project work*			
Apr 24	**Taking Action and Sharing Findings:** Considering authorship/ownership, working for change, and sharing findings	CPI Ch. 9 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.	Reflection. Share findings with broader community.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
May 1	**Staying Committed and in Solidarity:**	CPI Ch. 10	Reflection.	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity

	Identifying opportunities for and implications of staying involved with co-researchers	Complete chapter focus activity prior to class.		questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Week of May 8	*No class meeting*			Submit: participation self-evaluation (less than one page - assign points). Process documentation: MCC will check online drop boxes for final documentation of your PAR process.

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 VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments . 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, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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 or support measures 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/ .