

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
Ph. D. in Education and Human Development

EDRS 810 – B01: Problems and Methods in Education Research  
(3 Credits), Summer 2023  
Tuesday & Thursday 4:30 - 7:10 p.m. Innovation Hall 317

Instructor: Marvin Powell, Ph. D.  
Office Hours: by appointment  
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**Prerequisite:** Admission to the Ph.D. program or permission of the instructor.

**University Catalog Course Description:** Advanced course in interpreting and applying educational research methods. Emphasizes comparisons of alternative philosophies of research, ways of formulating questions and hypothesis, research plans, and analysis procedures. Students evaluate existing studies, and investigate a range of research approaches.

**Course Overview:** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to methods used in the practice of educational research. The course will reinforce and build upon concepts and skills acquired in EDRS 590. Students will learn through a combination of reading assignments and application activities. Students will be expected to identify and report on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods used in published research (i.e., journal articles).

**Course Delivery Method:** The class sessions will include lecture, class discussion, and small group work. **Questions are strongly encouraged.**

**Learning Objectives:** Upon successful completion of the course, student should:

- Be able to understand what research is, and how it differs from other intellectual and practical activities in education;
- Be able to understand the major approaches to educational research (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) and the implications for doing and evaluating research;
- Be able to identify different types of research designs;
- Be able to distinguish research design from methodological approach;
- Be able to find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field;
- Be able to design the basic components of small-scale research studies, both quantitative and qualitative, including:
  - Identifying a research problem to study
  - Formulating the purposes of the study
  - Developing a conceptual framework for the study
  - Generating appropriate research questions
  - Planning relevant and feasible methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis
  - Anticipating plausible validity threats, and thinking of ways to deal with these
  - Dealing appropriately with ethical issues in the research.
- Be able to write coherently and clearly about the conceptual framework, questions, and methods used in a research study;

- Be able to use the writing style described in the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) for writing term and research papers;
- Be able to reflect on their actions and choices and use that reflection to inform practice;
- Be able to present clear and coherent written summary of research results from scholarship.

### **Professional Standards**

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards: Not applicable for this course

### **Required Materials:**

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

Chicago Beyond. (2019). *Why am I always being researched? A guidebook for community organizations, researchers, and funders to help us get from insufficient understanding to more authentic truth*. Equity Series, Volume 1. Chicago Beyond. (available as a pdf on Blackboard).

### **Recommended Resource:**

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in Education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Collins, P.H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press.

Maxwell, J. (2012). *A realist approach to qualitative methods*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches*. Sage.

Wallerstein, N., Duran, B., Oetzel, J., & Minkler, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Community-based participatory research for health* (3rd ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Zhao, P., Ross, K., Li, P., & Dennis, B. (2022). *Making sense of social research methodology: A student and practitioner centered approach*. Sage.

Zuberi, T. & Bonilla-Silva, E. (2008). *White logic, White methods: Racism and methodology*. Rowman and Littlefield.

### **Anti-Racism Statement**

I affirm that in this class, faculty and students will work together to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, accessible, and just learning environment for all participants, regardless of racial/ethnic background or other marginalized or minoritized positionalities. We will actively seek ways to:

- Make constant, conscious decisions to interrupt racism, other oppressive forces, and cultivate equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, and in particular those from Black communities, Indigenous communities, immigrant communities and other communities of Color, who are most likely to bear the direct and indirect costs of systems of White supremacy;
- Interrogate histories of White supremacy and White-dominant culture, and to examine the ways in which these histories have impacted our individual beliefs, our interpersonal relationships, our institutional and structural policies and processes, and our entire society;
- Make a commitment to being responsible for our own relationships to, and actions within, systems of White supremacy; and

- Cultivate a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection that allows us to critically evaluate our own role in upholding White supremacy and identify the ways we can interrupt cycles of racism at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

The College of Education and Human Development, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and ability status.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, and become aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

### **Names and Pronouns Use Statement**

If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use he/him/his for myself and you may address me as “Dr. Powell” in email and verbally. Additionally, I invite students to approach me before or after class and during office hours. I recognize that a student’s name and pronoun(s) can change during a semester if they are in transition. I encourage students to use the tools Mason provides to change your name and pronouns on Mason records if you so choose: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/UpdatingChosen-Name-Pronouns/>

### **Course Performance Evaluation:**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, hard copy). If you fall behind, it is essential that we communicate when feasible so that I can support you in achieving your academic goals. 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 few to no grammatical or spelling errors. All assignments are due on the date listed in the Schedule table below. 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.

## **Participation (20%)**

Students are expected to actively participate in all aspects of class: attending all classes, respectfully contributing to class discussions and activities, and completing all course readings and all course tasks.

This class will be collaborative and interactive—be prepared for discussion. Questions are encouraged and expected, and alternative viewpoints are welcome. I value contributions to our discussions as we grow as a community of learners. However, I do expect you to support your assertions as we delve into complex topics, make linkages to extant works, and expand our knowledge. Also, I expect all of us to create an educational climate of open debate that is respectful and democratic. Familiarize yourself with the GMU Honor System and Code.

Participation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Student is prepared for discussion and tasks, making linkages to course content and reading materials.
- Student maintains balance between speaking and listening roles.
- Student listens attentively to others and offers constructive feedback. All contributions should be considered and negotiated.
- Student supports and contributes to healthy, democratic engagement in class.
- Student shares leadership roles (if applicable).

[Other criteria and course commitments to be determined as a collective]

**Homework Assignments (40%):** Specific guidelines for each assignment will be provided.

### **Assn #1 HSRB CITI Training Module Completion (10%)**

GMU requires a Mandatory Training for Persons Conducting Research Using Human Subjects. Modules in the **Basic Course** are required prior to applying to conduct any research at Mason using human subjects. For this course, you will be required to complete the Basic Course.

- Specific directions for how to log on can be found at the GMU Office of Research Integrity & Assurance website. This course can be accessed through this website: <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/human-subjects/training/>

- **Please complete the Basic Course**

Turn in a hard copy to me or email it to me. Be sure to keep a copy of your CITI training electronically. IRB will need it for approval of future projects, such as your dissertation!

- GMU also requires that all researchers (including student researchers) submit a research application to the office of Human Subjects in Research PRIOR to conducting research. For this course, you should review the application form for class discussion.

- Application forms and guidelines can be found at the external project management site, IRBnet.org, and information from the GMU Office of Research Subject Protection about IRBnet is found here: <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/human-subjects/>

### **Assn #2 Current Practices in Research (15%)**

Action research which requires investigating current issues and practices in research in a professional area.

### **Assn #3 Positionality Statement (15%)**

For this assignment, write a 1-page MAX positionality statement (single-spaced, 1" margins acceptable). For a deeper discussion on positionality:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1268044.pdf> and

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jee.20377>

For this assignment, write a positionality statement that identifies your key demographics in the spirit of transparency (e.g., "Establishing Transparency of Self Attributes" as described by Secules et al. 2021). Secules et al. (2021) also differentiates between "statements describing a process of maintaining trustworthiness and mitigating bias (Acknowledging Practice)...and... Contextualizing Methodology" (Section 6.1). You should address all three areas in your statement. We will discuss positionality and this assignment in detail in class.

### **APA formatting assignments (10%)**

Various activities and assignments will be completed in class and as homework in order to learn APA style. This includes proper citation, research paper structure, constructing reference lists, and using a writing style appropriate for the social sciences.

### **Final Paper (30%)**

At the end of the course, you will be required to write a final summative paper demonstrating your comprehension and application of course topics and based on materials from your readings, class discussion, and your more expansive review of the literature. You have agency and flexibility in topic selection/approach and how you wish to develop this assignment. All students should meet with me at least once to go over final paper plans (drafts welcome!). More information on the specifics of the assignment will be given in class. (Basic requirements: Paper: APA format, 20 double-spaced pages MAX inclusive of references, 15 peer-reviewed references minimum).

Example Paper topics:

- **Critical Reflection:** Explore critical works such as Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) and reflect on the following APA apology acknowledging systemic racism in psychology: <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/racism-apology> . Reflect on the following:
  - In what ways has research in your field historically perpetuated systemic racism and other harmful forms of oppression? Provide examples.
  - Are there particular methods, constructs, and/or measures that are accepted as the "norm" that may be particularly harmful to BIPOC and/or other marginalized people?
  - In what ways have researchers in your field or across disciplines attempted to redress scientific racism?
  - How will you personally advance an anti-racist/anti-oppressive research agenda? What is needed?
  - What barriers do you anticipate as you progress in your paradigmatic shift work?
- **Research Proposal:** Write a research proposal. Discuss your research philosophy, approach, positionality, theoretical framework guiding your study, research questions, research plan, and proposed methods. Include a discussion of analytical procedures, validity and reliability, and limitations.

**Class Attendance & Participation:** Students are expected to come to class on time, complete assignments, and participate in class discussions.

**Class Preparation:** Information on course assignments, weekly quizzes, and notes for class lectures are available on the course Blackboard site. For assistance with Blackboard students may email [courses@gmu.edu](mailto:courses@gmu.edu), call (803) 993-3141, or go to Johnson Center Rm 311 (office hours: 8:30 am-5 pm). For general technical assistance, students may call (9703) 993-8870 or go to the counter in Innovation Hall.

**Grading Scale:** Grades will be assigned based on the following:

A+	98-100%	B+	88-89%	C	70-79%
A	93-97%	B	83-87%	F	below 70%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%		

Final grades are based in the assessments described above. “Extra credit” is not available.

**Late Assignments:** *As a general rule, late papers/homework will not be accepted.* If you believe you have EXCEPTIONAL circumstances and wish to negotiate to have extra time to complete course work, you must discuss this with me before the day the assignment is due. (Negotiating means that you will be sacrificing a portion, perhaps substantial, of your grade for extra time).

**Professional Dispositions:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

### Tentative Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC/FOCUS	READINGS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO CLASS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
<b>May 30 (Class held online asynchronous)</b>	Introductions; Course overview; How do we know? Epistemology; What is research? Alternative philosophies of research	Read: Chicago Beyond, up to page 17  Research Methods Knowledge Base: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate: <a href="https://conjointly.com/kb/qualitative-debate/">https://conjointly.com/kb/qualitative-debate/</a>  Read: Allison & Pomeroy (2000) <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236896569_How_Shall_We_Know_Epistemological_Concerns_in_Research_in_Experiential_Education">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236896569_How_Shall_We_Know_Epistemological_Concerns_in_Research_in_Experiential_Education</a>	Introductions, Syllabus, Logistics; Discuss Goals of the Class; Interview Prep  <b>DUE:</b> Reflection: “Who am I, the researcher?”
<b>June 1 (Class held online asynchronous)</b>	Selecting research topics; Reviewing and Auditing the Literature; Mapping; Formulating research questions	Read: Chicago Beyond, pgs 60-66  Read: Smith 2022  APA 7 <sup>th</sup> edition (review)  Infoguides for Education <a href="https://infoguides.gmu.edu/education_guides">https://infoguides.gmu.edu/education_guides</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct literature search using Web of Science, other tools</li> <li>• Produce 3 references related to your interests; use APA format</li> <li>• Check out library infoguides:  <a href="https://infoguides.gmu.edu/education_guides">https://infoguides.gmu.edu/education_guides</a></li> <li>• Find three sources that are not considered “peer reviewed” or in “the cannon,” but that you feel are worthy of inclusion in your literature review.</li> <li>• Complete Assignment 1: CITI training</li> </ul>
<b>June 6</b>	Conceptualizing the research process; Theoretical underpinnings; Critical perspectives; Conceptualization to Operationalization; Ethical considerations	Read: Chicago Beyond, pgs. 68-78 and review other sections focusing on conceptualization and ethical considerations  Watch: Conversation on Making Sense of Social Research Methodology	<b>DUE:</b> Assn #1: CITI Training  Conduct interview for Assn#2 this week

		<a href="https://www.methodspace.com/blog/a-research-conversation-new-thinking-about-research-design">https://www.methodspace.com/blog/a-research-conversation-new-thinking-about-research-design</a>	
<b>June 8</b>	Proposal Writing— Building your Qualitative, Quantitative, or Mixed Methods proposal; Critical Perspectives; Positionality	Secules et al. (2021)  Skibba (2019): <a href="https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/disturbing-resilience-scientific-racism-180972243/">https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/disturbing-resilience-scientific-racism-180972243/</a>	<b>DUE:</b> APA Style Exercise #1
<b>June 13</b>	Study Purpose and Research Questions/ Hypotheses/Variables  How does it feel to be a problem? (Anti-deficit research)	Read/Review: Chicago Beyond, through pg 41  Guest speaker: TBA  Watch: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z04KVyhZM5g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z04KVyhZM5g</a>	
<b>June 15</b>	Sampling / participant selection	Review: <a href="https://cssr.gmu.edu/initiatives/ycr">https://cssr.gmu.edu/initiatives/ycr</a>  Read: Chicago Beyond, up to page 53  Listen: Qualitative Conversations podcast, Episode 30 <a href="https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2022-02-10T12_18_34-08_00">https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2022-02-10T12_18_34-08_00</a>	<b>DUE:</b> Assn #2: Interview Insights  <b>In Class:</b> Report out 2 key findings from interviews
<b>June 20</b>	Reliability and Validity	Read: Chicago Beyond, review all with a focus on validity and how ethics intersect with validity; read up to page 56  Read/Skim: Tracy, 2010 and Heale and Twycross, 2015	Peer-Review #3 Select a QUANT research article* of your choosing to peer-review, discuss: Approach; Sampling; Validity; Positionality  *Must provide APA reference and link to article  ** <b>In-Class groups:</b> Discuss/present quant reviews



			focusing on reliability and validity  Assn #3: Positionality Statement
<b>June 22</b>	Interpretation and Analysis, Quantitative Approaches; #QuantCrit	Watch: David Gillborn on Big Data <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFMhoR8Xv48">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFMhoR8Xv48</a>  Listen: <a href="https://www.researchminutes.org/episode/why-do-black-math-teachers-consider-leaving-the-profession/">https://www.researchminutes.org/episode/why-do-black-math-teachers-consider-leaving-the-profession/</a>  Optional: Garcia, N.M., López, N., & Vélez. V.N. (2018)	<b>DUE:</b> Reflect on how you've been socialized to consider what is "good" research or what is "valuable" evidence.  <b>In Class:</b> Share and discuss an article on your research interest that engages quantitative data/analysis  <b>In Class:</b> Discuss results from quant questions from interviews.
<b>June 27</b>	Interpretation and Analysis, Qualitative Approaches	Read: Schertz et al (2018)  Creswell & Miller (2000) <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2</a>  Optional Watch: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8vATyr0sRI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8vATyr0sRI</a>	<b>In Class:</b> Share and discuss an article on your research interest that engages qualitative data/analysis
<b>June 29</b>	Mixed Methods	Watch: Creswell on Mixed Methods <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II_OoiL0-E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II_OoiL0-E</a>  Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004). <a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X033007014">https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X033007014</a>	<b>DUE:</b> Reflect on data collection or analysis methods you are interested in engaging in your own work – how will you push against deficit frameworks?  <b>In class:</b> Bring an example of a mixed methods study in your own field/discipline to share and discuss
<b>July 4-6</b>	<b><i>No Class: Observance of Federal Holiday</i></b>		
<b>July 11</b>	Participatory Action Research	Read: Fine and Torre (2006)  Call-Cummings and Ross (2022): <a href="https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/download/3825/4878?inline=1">https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/download/3825/4878?inline=1</a>  Guest Speaker: Dr. Meagan Call-Cummings and colleagues	<b>In class:</b> Discuss Final Paper; APA guidelines  <b>DUE:</b> APA Style Exercise #2

<b>July 13</b>	Evaluation Research	Listen: Qualitative Conversations Episode 28, Dr. Jori Hall <a href="https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2021-09-27T10_22_40-07_00">https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2021-09-27T10_22_40-07_00</a>  Read: Hopson (2018)  Guest Lecture: TBA	<b>DUE:</b> Create an outline of your final paper. Include at least 15 references in APA format. Reflect on Chicago Beyond and how your final paper will engage some of the idea(s) set out there.)
<b>July 18</b>	Writing in and Navigating Academia	Listen: Qualitative Conversations, Episode 32 <a href="https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2022-04-20T14_15_39-07_00">https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aeraqrsig/episodes/2022-04-20T14_15_39-07_00</a>  Watch: Choose Eve Tuck, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, or Leigh Patel <a href="http://www.politicsofeducation.ca/full-conference-archive/">http://www.politicsofeducation.ca/full-conference-archive/</a>	
<b>July 20</b>	Reflection and tying things up	Read: anything you haven't yet read/focused on in Chicago Beyond  Watch: one talk that is of interest to you <a href="http://www.politicsofeducation.ca/full-conference-archive/">http://www.politicsofeducation.ca/full-conference-archive/</a>	
<b>July 25</b>	<b><i>No class meeting: prepare/submit final paper – email by July 30, 2023</i></b>		

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](mailto: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](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

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