EDRS 833 Section 001 - Participatory Action Research
3 Credits, Spring 2024
Wednesdays 4:30-7:10pm
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 an approach to inquiry that seeks to shift the power between researchers and those being researched and build trust-based research partnerships that generate knowledge to inform community action taking for systems change. Participatory action research (PAR) is community-based and often engages with already existing community groups or organizations, privileging the research interests, complexities and challenges of the communities themselves.

Participatory action research brings together concepts of research, learning, and change. PAR aims to generate democratic, inclusive, and equitable practices with goals of confronting structural inequities and empowering people enduring structural oppression to both democratize knowledge production (and what is problematized in research) and direct action taking that benefits their communities. In this way, PAR approaches honor and privilege the experiences, perspectives, and efforts of people experiencing structural marginalization and social exclusion.

In this class you will learn foundational history and principles associated with PAR, 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 readings and discussions as well as the conduct of an action research project. Through these processes, you will come to your own understanding of and appreciation for practitioner-centered research known as PAR.

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

Call-Cummings, M., Dazzo, G. P., & Hauber-Ozer, M. (2024). *Critical participatory inquiry: An interdisciplinary guide.* Sage.

In addition to the text, there will be supplemental readings listed on the syllabus and posted as pdf files on Blackboard.

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. I expect you to make clear linkages to and cite readings and other relevant sources often; (2) critical reflection and responses to issues and concepts; and (3) clarity of expression (inclusive of well-formulated and well-written products). *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	Percentage
1. Participation	20
2. Peer-to-Peer or Group Debriefs	10
3. Facilitated Discussion	10
4. Research Journal Entries	30 (min 6 entries x 5 points each)
5. Documentation of PAR process	30 (inclusive of final presentation)
	100 %

Participation (20% of grade)

Participation and attendance will comprise 20% of your grade. 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 products 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.

Peer Review or Group Debriefs (10% of grade)

Throughout the course, there will be time set aside to engage in peer review or peer-to-peer/group debriefs/inter-relational reflexivity where it is expected that you will engage in critical conversations about PAR and your engagement. You may share work with each other for feedback or critique an article together, etc. These groupings will be configured early in the semester and members of each group will evaluate the others for final debrief grades.

Facilitated Discussion (10% of grade)

Each student will choose a topic/date to prepare a mini-lecture and lead class discussion. You may provide the class with additional readings preferably shared in advance of your lecture!

Research Journal Entries (30% of grade)

Each student will have a private (between the student and instructor) online journal documenting their engagement with the course text/readings, reflections, conceptualizations, and applications of PAR. Students are required to write at least six (6) entries. [Note, there are 10 opportunities noted on the course 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.

Documentation of PAR Project Portfolio (30% of grade)

The research project portfolio in total will comprise 30% 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 PAR project.
2. Work with an advanced student on a cooperative action research project.
3. Work with me or other faculty on an on-going project.

PAR is an engaged approach to research and so its conduct always depends on the involvement and availability of others. It is process-oriented and trust-base—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 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 faculty. We will discuss on-going projects and possibilities for engagement on the first day of class.

Periodically during the semester, I will check in with you to review progress and any documentation of the PAR process the student has produced to date (emails, qualitative protocol, survey protocol, data collection efforts, etc.). 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, agendas or minutes from meetings, or notes on 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 and your partners as you work through your PAR process. 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. At the end of the semester each student/group will present their project and the keys lessons learned both as an individual and as a collective.

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	PAR Process & In-Class Actions	Post-Class Session Assignments
Jan 17	**Introduction** Introducing the course, making initial fieldwork decisions and plans Creating class/course agreements	CPI Preface and Appendix Cases (pp. 221-251) (Read prior to our first class) Letiecq et al. 2022 Explore: https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/home	In-Class: Dialogue; Discuss Syllabus, Agree to terms. Identifying PAR possibilities.	Journal: Explore your initial wonderings about PAR. What initial questions do you have?
Jan 24	**Whose Knowledge Counts? The roots, goals, use, and process of PAR; researcher positionality**	CPI Chs. 1 and 2 Complete chapter focus activities prior to class. Minkler, 2000 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Identify/ Establish PAR project	Journal: Choose one of the reflexivity questions or suggested activities from the chapters to answer or complete.
Jan 31	**Ethics and validity in PAR:** conceptualization and operationalization	CPI Ch. 3 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class. Cornish et al., 2023 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Identify/ Establish PAR project **In-Class: Peer Review or Debrief**	Journal Entry
Feb 7	**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. Vaughn et al., 2017	**PAR Process:** Establish PAR project	Journal Entry PAR Check-In

		Facilitators:		
Feb 14	**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. Wallerstein et al., 2019 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Determine RQs, methods, how you will go about setting expectations and roles; welcoming conflict or disagreement; making power issues transparent. **In-Class: Peer Review or Debrief**	Journal Entry
Feb 21	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Making traditional data collection and analysis approaches participatory	CPI Ch. 6 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class. Held et al., 2019 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Determine data collection efforts with the collective.	Journal Entry PAR Check-In
Feb 28	**Gathering Data and Making Meaning:** Arts-based/ Digital/Multimedia data collection and analysis; practical and ethical concerns	CPI Ch. 7-8 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Determine/ Engage in data collection efforts with the collective. **In-Class: Peer Review or Debrief**	Journal Entry

Mar 6	*No class meeting: Spring Break*

Mar 13	**Collective Data Analysis**	Vesely et al., 2022 Hallett et al., 2016 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Engage in data collection efforts with the collective.	Journal Entry PAR Check-In
Mar 20	**Taking Action and Sharing Findings:** Considering authorship/ownership, working for change, and sharing findings	CPI Ch. 9 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class. **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective. Take action. **In-Class: Peer Review or Debrief**	Journal Entry
Mar 27	**PAR Tensions and Challenges**	Stoecker, 2008 Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012 **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective. Take action.	PAR Check-In
Apr 3	**Staying Committed and in Solidarity:** Identifying opportunities for and implications of staying involved with co-researchers	CPI Ch. 10 Complete chapter focus activity prior to class. **Facilitators:**	**PAR Process:** Engage in data collection and analysis with the collective. Take action. **Consider next steps…**	Journal Entry
Apr 10	*No class meeting: AERA or project work*			
Apr 17	**Final Presentations**		**In-Class:** Share findings with class/ broader community.	
Apr 24	**Final Presentations Course Wrap-Up Course Evaluations**		**In-Class:** Share findings with class/ broader community.	
May 1	**No Class Meeting**			<mark>Submit final project portfolio and any remaining work.</mark>

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/ .