COURSE DESCRIPTION

A. Prerequisite: Admission to the Master’s in New Professional Studies program.

B. Catalog Description: *Examines central problems of epistemology, what is meant by “ways of knowing” and “reflective practitioner,” and what they imply for professional learning. Special attention to developing skills for reflective practice through journals, narrative autobiography, and imaginative literature; and to considering how personal and professional identity is influenced by personal intentions and commitments to learning and schooling.*

This course guides teachers through the processes of articulating, critically examining, assessing, and refining their understanding of themselves as persons, as knowers, and as creators/discoverers of knowledge. In examining the conditions for attributing "information" to be "knowledge," the course considers the central problems of epistemology in the context of education broadly conceived, of schools, of classrooms, and of the contexts for each of these levels. Fundamental to the course are the processes of critical inquiry, critical dialogue, and critical reflection.

A central assumption that drives this master’s program concerns the importance and power of reflective practice. Thus, the primary aim of this course is to develop an understanding of and
commitment to reflective practice as a means toward developing critical classroom pedagogy. The rationale includes the following:

- Effective and moral teaching requires deliberate, ongoing reflection and careful articulation of the moral and epistemological assumptions made by ourselves and others, including the various researchers and theorists we read and discuss.
- Reflective practitioners strive to uncover and critique their own values, assumptions and biases, examining constantly their day-to-day strategies, intentions and decisions.
- Reflective practice demands individual contemplation and collegial dialogue.
- Reflective practice is the foundation for developing public intellectualism, encouraging teachers to be leaders who advocate for democratic practices and social justice in their schools and communities.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course includes a variety of learning activities: discussions in seminar format, text-based/multi-media presentation of course materials, experiential learning activities including teacher action research, interactive assignments, cooperative learning group activities, online discussions and activities, and lecture.

**LEARNER OUTCOMES**

- To support teachers in becoming researchers and reflective practitioners,
- To frame research inquiries around moral purposes and on moral truths, and
- To help teachers develop a critical perspective on issues related to teaching and learning.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

IET faculty have developed a set of assumptions about teaching and learning that are spelled out in our Beliefs and Principles in IET Practice document. One of the central assumptions relates to the importance of school-based inquiry. The Beliefs are stated as follows:

- The needs of students and the potential and limits for school change become more visible when teachers study education in the context in which they work.
- When school is a naturalistic base for teacher’s inquiry and research, problems in teaching or curriculum are not idealized, but grounded in the complexity and difficulty in which teachers present themselves in schools.
- Teachers appear more enterprising and autonomous in the conduct of school-based inquiry, providing an opportunity for students to see teachers, and to see themselves, as people who construct knowledge and critique knowledge.
When teachers’ inquiry and research projects are based in their own practices, they are more likely to lead to action.

This course fits the mission of the Graduate School of Education, which is committed to:

- Developing reflective professionals who are leaders in research and practice,
- Expanding and refining the knowledge base for teaching and learning,
- Transforming higher education, schools, and other organizations through applied research, teaching, and collaboration, and
- Understanding and modeling democratic values and social justice.

By helping teachers to do research based in their own classrooms and schools, this course also supports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards propositions 1, 4, and 5:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning,
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

REQUIRED TEXTS


http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol29_no3/art6.pdf


Note: Readings for the second year are listed in each of the second-year syllabi. Additional readings will be distributed throughout the year.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

**Readings** are carefully chosen to stimulate thinking and dialogue. Some are chosen to challenge your thinking about particular issues. Others are chosen to dialogue with those challenges. Our hope and intention is that you will engage in dialogue around these readings and others you may want to bring to our deliberations. These readings will not contain answers; rather they are designed to raise questions. Any “answers” we come to will arise out of our deliberations as we compare ideas in books with classroom experience and practical wisdom. Evidence of incorporation of critical interaction with readings into on-line discussions, team meetings, journals, and papers is the essential element of documenting that one has engaged with the readings.

**Attendance and Participation in Class Activities** are essential. This program is built on the assumption that teachers have much to learn from each other as they bring their experience and practical wisdom to bear on new learning contexts and new problems. Each class day is equivalent to approximately three weeks of class in a traditional program. It is important to be on time and to be engaged. Coming late or leaving early undermines the possibility of learning from your peers and helping your peers learn. Research on learning suggests that students learn best when they are actively engaged with the material to be learned, when they have opportunities to operate collectively and collaboratively, when faculty address students’ various learning styles and multiple intelligences, and when faculty help students see why their subjects and assignments are relevant and important. We plan class days to maximize the likelihood that you will encounter ideas in a variety of ways. We also build a lot of collaborative activity into our class days. When you are absent or not engaged, you deprive yourself and others of the chance to construct knowledge together. *(See the Attendance Policy on pg. 5 in the Program Overview section of the IET Notebook.)*

**Class Day Reflective Feedback** offers you an opportunity to revisit and reflect on your experience of each class day. It also gives the faculty valuable information about how you experience the curriculum and where you are in your thinking.

**Teaming** provides the context for intellectual community, critical dialogue, social support, and professional transformation. Meeting weekly as a team is necessary for achieving the aims of the
program and is a requirement of the program. Within the team, you have the opportunity to explore your own thinking, to probe the thinking of others, and to construct positions on crucial aspects of teaching and learning. We recruit teachers in teams from schools to combat the isolation and alienation of many schools. We hope that teams will become the nucleus of a learning community within your schools and will provide social and intellectual support for the personal and professional transformation the program seeks to foster. Team meetings should be used to discuss all aspects of the research process and progress. These regular team meetings allow teams to develop a supportive collaborative research space to engage in critical dialogue over research and teaching issues, readings, and assignments. We ask teams to maintain a team log that will document participation in this aspect of reflective practice.

Reflective Journals are a requirement of the IET program and are designed to help you think about your experience as a moral professional. Continue to maintain a journal throughout the year. You are to write in your journals at least twice a week. When your school is in session, one of the entries each week should be field notes from your classroom or school. For the other entry, sometimes we may assign a specific topic but usually you will choose your reflection topic. You must write at least one journal entry reflecting on each required reading (except those assigned to be read during class days), reflecting on the reading’s impact on your thinking/learning and teaching. You should also use your journal to reflect on your research: in addition to reflecting on observations of your students and on your practice, you should use the journal to record questions, puzzlements, ideas, and insights. Later, reflect on patterns you are seeing in your data, how what you are finding relates to the work of others, and how your question and/or data collection strategies are changing as your research progresses. Make it a habit to come to team meetings prepared to read selected journal entries with your teammates, particularly about the readings and research process. Twice a year, you will be asked to turn in your journals with selected entries copied to be handed in to your advisor. These entries will demonstrate your attempt to reflect deeply about a variety of issues and your own professional practice. This year, journals will be handed in on the December class day and again in May, 2010.

The New View Walk is an opportunity for you to revisit your school community and examine it more deeply through a Freirian framework. This project will be completed during the summer session - detailed guidelines will be distributed.

Research Memo #1. While part of your Second Year Collaborative Action Research, the Research Memo #1 will count toward your grade for this reflective practitioner course. It should be written as an individual report and is due in the Blackboard Drop Box by Nov. 1st, 2009. This memo will include your research topic/question, a review of the literature, ideas for initial actions you plan to take in your classroom, and an analysis of the ways that the collaborative, problem-posing dialogue process is driving the research. Detailed guidelines will be distributed.

Literature Synthesis Discussion. One of your team/regional team meetings (with your advisor) will focus on synthesizing the information that each team member uncovered through her/his review of the literature in Research Memo #1. The team will develop a concept map from this synthesis discussion that will be included with Memo #3 (see IET 752 syllabus).
Summary of Grades

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation (4 class days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard class day feedback (4 class days)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journals – Summer/Fall</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>New View Walk &amp; Representation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Memo #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Synthesis Discussion</td>
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**TOTAL** 100 points

Grade Distribution

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<td>90-94</td>
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<td>74 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS: All students must abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See [http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm](http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm) for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12) for the full honor code.


If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see your adviser and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.