

## EDUC 800: Ways of Knowing Spring 2004

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**Course Description:** This course is a foundation course for the Ph.D. in Education program. The purpose of the course is to explore how we come to know and accept a method(s) of inquiry among the various ways of knowing. Using a seminar approach structured around readings, reflections on those readings, class discussions, and individual research, the course seeks to develop in students an ability to reflect critically on the strengths and limitations of the various ways of knowing and to become aware of the implications of the different ways of knowing for research and practice.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Students will describe, compare, and contrast ways of knowing from a variety of perspectives.
2. Students will describe ways of knowing of individuals or groups and will analyze and explain personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
3. Students will explore how various ways of knowing affect individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
4. Students will expand and refine their scholarship abilities including critical and analytic reading, writing, thinking, oral communication, and the use of scholarly resources.

### **How this Course Supports GSE's Priorities**

This introductory course seeks to develop each student's ability to be a reflective practitioner who becomes grounded in the ways we come to know through inquiry. Through the readings, the classroom conversations, discussions, and presentations, it is intended that each student will become more analytic about the conduct of inquiry and one's own perspectives on inquiry, and to develop a respect for the diversity of thought that characterizes inquiry.

### **Required Course Texts:**

Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R., Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. New York: Basic Books.  
Bruner, Jerome. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.  
Descartes, Rene. (1637). *Discourse on method and related writings*. Penguin Classics.  
Gleick, James. (1987). *Chaos*. Penguin.  
Kuhn, Thomas. (1976). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

### **Recommended Text:**

American Psychological Association. (2001). Publication Manual (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Author: Washington, DC. (Recommended for entire doctoral program).

## Course Requirements

1. Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.
2. Each student is expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions. It is expected that each student will be attuned to group dynamics in order to ensure the active participation of all in the class.
3. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.
4. All assignments must be completed on a word processor. Assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

## Honor Code

All evaluations and homework will be taken under the GMU Honor Code. Students are expected to abide by the honor code set forth in the current edition of the Student Handbook. All exams, assignments and papers are honor work. That means that students must not give nor receive any unauthorized assistance. While members of a team may collaborate on written paper assignments, they may not give or receive assistance from other teams. Plagiarism is also a violation of the honor code. The University's Honor Code guidelines for academic honesty are at: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>.

## Learning Disabilities

Students with any type of documented disability that may interfere with their learning in this class may negotiate a reasonable accommodation with the instructor.

## Tentative Class Schedule

- 1/21 Introduction to the Course
- 1/28 Shared Experience: Romeo and Juliet  
**Journal entry:** After viewing the film, briefly write your review of it. Then, locate as many reviews as possible of this film. In your journal, write an essay about the reviews paying particular attention to the point of views the various critics take and what they use as their points of comparison.  
Read: Descartes for next class
- 2/4 Debriefing the film  
Cartesian ethos: How we've come to define "knowing"  
**Journal entry:** What are some examples of the scientific method, rationalism, empiricism, and positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life?

- 2/11 More on Descartes and the foundations of inquiry  
 Shared Experience: A Case of the Study of Teaching  
 Viewing questions: How well did Secretary Bennett teach the class? What did you find yourself watching, looking for, and looking at as you watched the video?  
 Read: *Teaching and Teacher Education*  
[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=IssueURL&\\_tockey=%23TOC%235976%231986%23999979995%23326020%23FLP%23Volume\\_2,\\_Issue\\_4,\\_Pages\\_299-387\\_\(1986\)&\\_auth=y&view=c&\\_acct=C000035118&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_user\\_id=650615&md5=dfb2cdfd7064e87ca9ef1ef54403d950](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=IssueURL&_tockey=%23TOC%235976%231986%23999979995%23326020%23FLP%23Volume_2,_Issue_4,_Pages_299-387_(1986)&_auth=y&view=c&_acct=C000035118&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_user_id=650615&md5=dfb2cdfd7064e87ca9ef1ef54403d950)  
**Journal entry:** Do a pictorial representation of the relationships among the approaches to analyzing Bennett's teaching, and bring a copy of your representation on an overhead transparency to class. Place the approach you find most consistent with your way of knowing at the center of the pictorial representation so we can see how you view yourself.
- 2/18 The Perspectival Problem of Studying Teaching (presentations of your graphic)  
 Read: Kuhn in two parts pp. 1 - 110  
**Journal entry:** Imagine a conversation between Kuhn and Descartes: what would Kuhn say to Descartes about his Discourse? Many have argued that Descartes created a scientific revolution. Does it meet Kuhn's attributes? Why or why not?
- 2/25 What is a Scientific Revolution?  
 Read Kuhn pp. 111-210  
**Journal entry:** How does the second half of Kuhn's perspective appeal to you? Why? What is it specifically about his perspective that helps you understand how we come to know? Did you find any weaknesses in his argument, i.e., things you just could not accept? What were they and why?
- 3/3 A philosophical view of how our ways of knowing change  
 Read: Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, pp. ix – 86.
- 3/10 Spring Break
- 3/17 Women's Ways of Knowing  
 Read: Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, pp. 87 – 152.
- 3/24 Women's Ways of Knowing  
**Journal entry:** What arguments about culture are these authors making? How do they fit with Descartes and Kuhn?  
 Read: Bruner pp. 1-99
- 3/31 The Culture of Education  
**Journal entry:** Fit the first half of Bruner into Cartesian philosophy. How does Bruner argue that we come to know? What does he mean by the culture of education is the influence of culture on how we come to know?  
 Read: Bruner pp. 100-185

- 4/7 The Culture of Education and Knowing  
**Journal entry:** What is the essence of Bruner's argument about culture? How does it fit the arguments made in Women's Ways of Knowing? How does it fit into your own way of knowing?  
 Read the following articles:  
[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=MIimg&\\_imagekey=B6VD8-47XSSC7-5-1&\\_cdi=5976&\\_orig=browse&\\_coverDate=02%2F28%2F2003&\\_sk=999809997&view=c&wchp=dGLbVtzzSkWb&\\_acct=C000035118&\\_version=1&\\_userid=650615&md5=7f3089684537db6832bdae6dbd41ff45&ie=f.pdf](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=MIimg&_imagekey=B6VD8-47XSSC7-5-1&_cdi=5976&_orig=browse&_coverDate=02%2F28%2F2003&_sk=999809997&view=c&wchp=dGLbVtzzSkWb&_acct=C000035118&_version=1&_userid=650615&md5=7f3089684537db6832bdae6dbd41ff45&ie=f.pdf)  
[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=MIimg&\\_imagekey=B6VD8-48D2R3P-3-1&\\_cdi=5976&\\_orig=browse&\\_coverDate=04%2F30%2F2003&\\_sk=999809996&view=c&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkzS&\\_acct=C000035118&\\_version=1&\\_userid=650615&md5=c399392eaf5a7474f09ed6604f1ebc6b&ie=f.pdf](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=MIimg&_imagekey=B6VD8-48D2R3P-3-1&_cdi=5976&_orig=browse&_coverDate=04%2F30%2F2003&_sk=999809996&view=c&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkzS&_acct=C000035118&_version=1&_userid=650615&md5=c399392eaf5a7474f09ed6604f1ebc6b&ie=f.pdf)  
 Eisner, E. (1991). Educational criticism. In E. Eisner (ed.), *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. (pp. 85-105). New York: Macmillan. (to be handed out in class)
- 4/14 Narrative and Aesthetic Inquiry  
 Read Gleick pp. 1-80
- 4/21 Chaos: The New Revolution?  
 Read Gleick pp. 81-187; 273-318
- 4/28 Chaos, Complexity, and Understanding the Human Professions
- 5/5 Sharing Knowing Papers  
**Knowing Paper Due**
- 5/12 Shared Experience: Mindwalk  
**Reflective Analysis Paper Due**

### Assignments

#### **Weekly reflections** (8 x 5 = 40%)

You are expected to write 8 reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, turned in at the end of the class on the date they are due. The intent of these brief papers (2-3 pages, double-spaced) is to help you become thoughtful and analytic about some rather conceptual, and sometimes complex, course content. You should look upon these papers as an opportunity to engage me in a discussion as you grow over the semester.

### **Paper on a New Way of Knowing (40%)**

Select a new way of knowing for you, e.g. a new theory in your field, an area within the arts, sciences, or social sciences, or an interdisciplinary area of inquiry). Explore this new way of knowing. Prepare a paper for presentation (about 2500 words or 10 pages) that demonstrates: 1) your understanding of the basic assumptions of this approach, and 2) what it is that makes this approach a new way of knowing for you. Note: depth and analysis are more important than breadth. **Paper is due: 5/5.**

As part of your development of your paper, please submit via email one page that outlines your proposed project so we can agree early in the semester no later than the ninth week (**3/17**). The outline should address the following questions:

1. What is the way of knowing you will explore?
2. How do you propose to study it?
3. What are your tentative sources?

If appropriate, I will share your thoughts with others who have identified a similar area to explore.

Evaluation of the paper: The main criteria are a clearly defined focus, clear and accurate presentation of its assumptions and definitions about knowing, a demonstrated understanding of the implications for research, and clear organization and writing.

### **Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing (20%)**

You are expected to keep a weekly journal (above) that is both reflective and analytic during the course. The overall purpose is to use informal journal writing as a means to think and reflect on the content of the course. In particular, the journals are a means for you to connect course material to your own experiences and to analyze the course readings critically. The course outline above lists specific assignments for the journal. You can use the following guiding questions for this final paper:

1. How would you have described your way(s) of knowing, learning, and thinking when you began this class?
2. As you consider your autobiography/personal history, what factors personal, experiential, familial, sociocultural, historical, and/or disciplinary influenced your ways of knowing?
3. How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher?
4. How would you describe your current way of knowing?
5. What are the implications of your reflections on questions 3 and 4 above for your personal, professional and doctoral activities?

Criteria for assessment include: evidence of serious reflection and analysis, clear organization and clear writing. This paper is the culminating activity of the course and is due at the beginning of the last class meeting (**5/12**).