

EDUC 800: Ways of Knowing  
Section 002  
Spring 2005

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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(or methods) 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. You will gain an understanding of a number of different ways of knowing that are important for education and educational research, and how these ways of knowing affect individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
2. You will be able to analyze and explain some important personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
3. You will be able to use different ways of knowing to enhance your own research and practice.
4. You will expand and refine your 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.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance), for getting notes and materials for that class from another student, and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.
2. You are expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions, with consideration of group dynamics in order to facilitate everyone's active participation.
3. 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.

### Required Course Texts

- Belenky, Mary, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. HarperCollins.
- Bruner, Jerome (1996). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. 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.
- National Research Council (2002). *Scientific research in education*. National Academy Press.  
Available online at <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10236.html> (order, or read for free).

### Recommended Text

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

### Assignments and grading

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

You are expected to prepare 8 reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, turned in electronically or in hard copy by the beginning of the class on the date we will discuss the topic. The intent of these brief papers (2 -3 pages, double-spaced) is to help you become more 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 with you 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. APA format required. **Paper is due: 5/11.**

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 (3/23). 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 this way of knowing's assumptions and characteristics, a demonstrated understanding of its implications for research and practice, 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. Here are some 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 scholarly 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 (**5/18**).

### **Honor Code**

Students are expected to abide by the GMU 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**

If you have any type of documented disability that may interfere with your learning in this class, please see me so that we can work out a reasonable accommodation.

### **Tentative Class Schedule**

1/26 **Introduction to the Course**

2/2 **Shared Experience: Romeo and Juliet** (meet in Robinson A210)

***Journal entry 1:*** 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. What observations can you draw?

2/9 The Cartesian ethos: How we've come to define "knowing" since Descartes

**Assigned reading:**

Descartes, *Discourse on method*: the translator's introduction, the Discourse itself, and The World, chapter 1 (pp. 85-87)

**Journal entry 2:** What are some examples of the scientific method, rationalism, empiricism, and positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life?

2/16 **1. More on Descartes and the foundations of inquiry**

**2. Shared experience: A case of teaching** (meet in Robinson A210)

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? What is your assessment of the discussants' analysis of his teaching?

**Journal entry 3:** Draw 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.

Read after viewing the film, but before writing the journal entry:

Articles 1-7 in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Volume 2, number 4 (1986) available online at

[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=IssueURL&\\_tockey=%23TOC%235976%231986%23999979995%23326020%23FLP%23Volume%202%2C%20Issue%204%2C%20Pages%20299-387%20\(1986\)&\\_auth=y&\\_view=c&\\_acct=C000035118&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_userid=650615&md5=dfb2cdfd7064e87ca9ef1ef54403d950](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=IssueURL&_tockey=%23TOC%235976%231986%23999979995%23326020%23FLP%23Volume%202%2C%20Issue%204%2C%20Pages%20299-387%20(1986)&_auth=y&_view=c&_acct=C000035118&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=650615&md5=dfb2cdfd7064e87ca9ef1ef54403d950)

2/23 **1. The perspective problem in the study of teaching**

Presentation of your graphic of Bennett's teaching

**2. What is a scientific revolution?**

**Assigned reading:**

Thomas Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, pp. 1 – 110

**Journal entry 4:** 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?

3/2 **The implications of scientific revolutions**

**Assigned reading:**

Thomas Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, pp. 111-210

**Journal entry 5:** 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?

3/9 **How ways of knowing change**

**Assigned reading:**

Belenky, Mary, et al., *Women's ways of knowing*.

**Journal entry 6:** How do the ways of knowing described in *Women's ways of knowing* compare to those of Kuhn and Descartes?

3/16 **Spring Break**

3/23 **Ways of knowing about education**

**Assigned readings:**

Bruner, *Actual minds, possible worlds*, Chapters 1,3,5,7,and 9

**Journal entry 7:** What is the essence of Bruner's argument about the two ways of knowing he describes? How do these fit the arguments of Descartes? How do they fit into your own way of knowing?

3/30 **What is scientific research in education?**

**Assigned reading:**

National Research Council, *Scientific research in education*, pp. 1-126. Read it online at <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10236.html>

**Journal entry 8:** How does the way of knowing presented as "scientific" in this work compare with those discussed previously? What strengths and limitations do you see this as having? Where do you see yourself in relation to "science" in education?

4/6 **The response to *Scientific research in education***

Articles on Scientific research and education by Feuer, Towne, and Shavelson, Pellegrino and Goldman, Berliner, Erickson and Gutierrez, and St. Pierre, and the reply by Feuer, Towne, and Shavelson. *Educational Researcher* 31(8), 2002. Online at <http://www.aera.net/publications/?id=438>

Maxwell, Causal investigation, qualitative research, and scientific inquiry in education. *Educational Researcher* 33(3), 2004. Online at <http://www.aera.net/publications/?id=333>

4/13 **AERA—no class**

Work on New way of knowing paper

4/20 **Narrative inquiry**

**Assigned readings:**

Eisner, Eliot. (1991). Educational criticism. In E. Eisner (ed.), *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. (pp. 85-105). New York: Macmillan. (electronic reserve)

Torill Moen, Sigrun Gudmundsdottir, and Annlaug Flem (2003). Inclusive practice: a biographical approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education* Volume 19, Issue 3, pp 359-370. Online at

[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)

4/27 **Chaos: A New Revolution?**

*Assigned reading:*

Gleick pp. 1-187; 273-318

5/4 **Chaos, Complexity, and Understanding the Human Professions**

5/11 **Shared Experience: Mindwalk (meet in Robinson A210)**

*Knowing Paper Due*

5/18 **Sharing your Way of Knowing paper**

*Reflective Analysis Paper Due*