

EDCI 777 * Research to Practice *** Section 001**
Spring 2013

Thursdays, 7:20 p.m. -- Innovation Hall, Rm. 205

Associate Professor Dr. Lorraine Valdez Pierce
Ph.D., Georgetown University

Mailing Address Graduate School of Education, CEHD, MSN 4B3
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030-4444

Office Location Thompson Hall, Suite 1500, Rm. 1502

Office Hours Mondays, 3 – 5 p.m. & by appointment

Phone: (703) 993-2050

To make an appointment, request, or ask a question: Email: lpierce@gmu.edu

To fax a document: FAX: (703) 993-5300

Course prerequisites: Admission to Graduate School of Education in CIMM, CISL, or CIFL program. **Completion of ALL other courses in these programs.** Possible exceptions: Concurrent enrollment in EDRS 590 or elective or permission of instructor. This is the capstone course for the M.Ed. in Multilingual/Multicultural Education and, as such, represents the culminating experience in this graduate program.

Course Schedule: This course is offered each Spring and Fall semester but not in Summer.

Catalog Description

This course provides a culminating experience that synthesizes and applies the essential elements of second language teaching and learning. Emphasizes the teacher as a change agent through critical inquiry into practice. Aims to promote collaboration between ESL or FL and grade-level teachers to advance the achievement of English and second language learners and language minority students.

All students will obtain and use a GMU Email account with access to the Internet. GMU makes these accounts available and provides training at no cost to students.

MASON ALERT

Register for the MASON ALERT system to be informed of emergency situations on campus by cell phone and email. Go to <http://alert.gmu.edu>

This course and all parts of this syllabus were designed by Dr. Lorraine Valdez Pierce.

Rationale

This capstone course aims to have program candidates synthesize, evaluate, and reflect on the essential elements of what they have learned in the M.Ed. program and apply these to their own teaching. If candidates are not currently in the classroom, they will be asked to collaborate with a teacher who is. A major focus of the course is the nurturing of teacher-leaders through critical inquiry into educational practices that have an impact on culturally and linguistically diverse students. This inquiry will have as its purpose to help **increase student learning and achievement** among English language learners, language minority students, and foreign language learners.

In the capstone course, candidates become part of a learning and research community by sharing with others what they have learned through applying research to practice. Teachers no longer work alone; schools have seen an increase in teacher teams working with student cohorts. ESL and FL teachers are often a part of a grade-level team and, as such, are responsible for informing general education teachers about how to help English language and foreign language learners participate in grade-level classes.

Overview of Course

Essential elements of this course include: reflection on teaching; collaboration; Action Research through field work, problem solving and innovations in teaching; applications of technology; and development of presentation skills. Candidates will collaborate with peers to identify a research question in curriculum, instruction and assessment and design an Action Research Project that investigates the question. The Action Research Project and the presentation on the project will make use of technology to facilitate learning as well as professional development. Candidates are especially encouraged *to develop instructional and assessment models to be shared with other teachers, including general education, grade-level teachers* who are relatively unfamiliar with second language teaching approaches. Candidates will experiment with Action Research approaches that address a real-life need demonstrated by an actual group of teachers and/or students.

Course requirements consist of a multi-part **Action Research Project** and a **Teaching Demonstration**. Each course requirement will be evaluated using a scoring rubric or rating scale.

Course Objectives

Candidates enrolled in this course will:

1. Learn how to work as change agents by collaborating to make improvements in the education of English and foreign language learners and language minority students;
2. Develop professional presentation skills using computer technology;
3. Identify a student learning need or challenge and develop a research question for addressing the need in a classroom setting;
4. Collect, analyze, and interpret data to address the need; and
5. Propose and apply innovative, research-based approaches to instruction aimed at meeting the need.

Technology Requirements

1. Students will be asked to use a personal computer for preparing course requirements, for accessing BlackBoard, and for contacting the instructor and classmates through email. However, ***personal computers (including tablets, laptops, cell phones) are not to be used during class for any purpose other than taking notes.***
2. **Class Web Site:** Each student will access MyMason/Blackboard using *his/her GMU email login name and password* to obtain course assignments, handouts, and other materials and also to submit course projects and other required tasks.

The only way to access Bboard 9.1 is through the myMason portal (<http://mymason.gmu.edu>) on the Courses tab.

If you have problems getting into BBoard 9.1, please contact MyMason@gmuy.edu or go to <http://itusupport.gmu.edu/STG/blackboard.asp> or call (703) 993-8870.

3. **GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS:** Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

College of Education & Human Development: 5 Core Values



The College of Education & Human Development is committed to five CORE VALUES: *collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice.* Graduate students are expected to adhere to these values both in and out of class.
<http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that *all students* abide by the following principles:

Expectations for Students in this Course

HONOR CODE: NO PLAGIARISM.

Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code ([http:// oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/](http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/)). The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are as such.

What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work (online, published, printed handouts, personal communication) in any part of performing your assigned task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Honor Code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Honor Code: Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty members have a responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the learning and testing process. They should explain at the beginning of each semester what would be considered an integrity violation in their courses. Special attention should be given to the subject of ***plagiarism***. Faculty members may actively proctor exams in situations that they believe warrant it. At the beginning of each semester, faculty members have the responsibility of explaining to their classes their policy regarding the Honor Code. They must also explain the extent to which aid, if any, is permitted on academic work.

FOR THIS COURSE:

Violations of the Honor Code include:

1. Copying a paper or part of a paper from a previous student (current or past);
2. Plagiarizing or copying the words of an author from a textbook or any printed source (including the Internet) without using quotation marks or not inserting a citation immediately following these words;
3. Working with another individual (who is in this class or not) to prepare your papers for this course (you must write your own papers). Except for appointments to the GMU Writing Center, assistance with writing papers for this class is not allowed. You are being graded on your own ability to write papers.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- **OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

- **WRITING CENTER:** Robinson Hall A, Rm. 114; (703) 993-1200;
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing.

- **UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES** “Ask a Librarian”
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

- **COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance.

- **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University 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 are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

Cell Phones OFF: Students are required to keep all cell phones turned off during class, per university policy. In case of a campus emergency, the instructor will be notified on her cell phone.

Inclement Weather/Emergency Policy

In case of snow, hurricanes, other bad weather, or security emergencies, call 703 993-1000 or go to www.gmu.edu for information on class cancellations and university closings.

MASON ALERT

Register for the MASON ALERT system to be informed of emergency situations on campus by cell phone and email. Go to <http://alert.gmu.edu>

Course Requirements

Task	% of Final Grade	Due Date
1. Action Research Project (ARP)* [team project]		
Stages 1-2: Review of Literature and Research Question	20%	Week 4
Stage 3: Data Collection Plan	20%	Week 6
Stage 4: Data Analysis & Action Plan	30%	Week 15
2. Demonstration – Teaching Intervention [team project]	15%	Weeks 8 - 12

**Action Research Projects can be conducted in 2- or 3-member teams. I strongly recommend that Pre-Service teachers work with In-Service teachers in order to enhance your learning.*

Textbooks

Required

Craig, D.V. (2009). ***Action research essentials***. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Optional

Dana, N. F. & D. Yendol-Silva. (2003). ***The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry***. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/Sage.

Class Schedule

Week # & Date	Topics	Readings to be discussed this week
1 1/24	Objectives of this course, textbooks, and requirements. What is Action Research? Selecting a research topic. The recursive nature of Action Research. Group dynamics: Practical aspects of collaboration, member roles. Steps in the Action Research Process. Ethics in research.	<i>Craig, Ch. 1</i>
2 1/31	Identifying problems. Narrowing your focus. Drafting a Research Question. Selecting sources for the Literature Review. Writing up the Lit Review (see Checklist, p. 79).	<i>Craig, Chs. 2 & 3</i>
3 2/7	The literature review – critical to development of research question. Designing well-written research questions. Characteristics of good research questions. Independent and dependent variables in the question.	<i>Craig, Ch. 4</i>
4 2/14	Data vs. data sets. Creating tools to answer research questions. Triangulation Matrix: Setting up a valid & reliable data collection plan. Making a data collection schedule (see P. 133). <i>Due today: Stages 1 – 2 -Literature Review & Research Question.</i>	<i>Craig, Ch. 5</i>
5 2/21	Keeping a Field Journal. Reflecting on teaching needed for change, change needed for improvement. Your Draft Triangulation Matrix & Assessment Tools – Class Feedback.	<i>Craig, Ch. 6</i>
6 2/28	Organizing & analyzing qualitative data. Revisiting the Triangulation Matrix and Revising Assessment Tools (data sources). Team Work Session. <i>Due today: Stage 3 - Data Collection Plan.</i>	<i>Craig, Ch. 7</i>
7 3/7	<i>Teaching Intervention Demo Criteria & Self-Assessment Guidelines. Mid-Term Feedback Forms.</i> <i>BEGIN DATA COLLECTION NO LATER THAN THIS WEEK</i>	
8 3/14	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>	

9	3/21	TEACHING INTERVENTION TEAM DEMOS. ARP Team Work Session.	
10	3/28	TEACHING INTERVENTION TEAM DEMOS. Revising your Data Collection Plan.	
11	4/4	TEACHING INTERVENTION TEAM DEMOS. Reporting Action Research. Turning results into Action Plans. Team Work Session. Instructor meets with Teams. Data Tables: Pre-Test Data Results. USING EXCEL.	<i>Craig, Ch. 8</i>
12	4/11	TEACHING INTERVENTION TEAM DEMOS. <i>Send Self-Assessment of your demonstration to Instructor by email within 48 hours of your presentation.</i>	
13	4/18	TEACHING INTERVENTION TEAM DEMOS. Data Analysis – Interpreting the Data. Turning Findings into Action Plans. Using EXCEL Software for data analysis	
14	4/25	DATA ANALYSIS WORKSHOP. Data Analysis Process. Interpreting the data results. Coding data for analysis.	
15	5/2	Class feedback on Draft Data Analysis. Writing up your Data Analysis: Essential Components. Team Work Session. Course Evaluation Forms. Feedback Forms. Materials Release Forms. Due Mon., May 6: Stage 4 - Data Analysis & Action Plan.	

Description of Course Requirements

1. Action Research Project

How can we improve our teaching? How can we increase student learning? What have we learned in our M.Ed. program about effective teaching and how to measure student progress and learning? What instructional or assessment approaches can we try out to see how they work with our own students?

Candidates will follow the 4 Stages of the Action Research Process (Sagor, 2005) to improve and refine their teaching. Teachers will collaborate in teams to identify and address the learning needs of a specific target population (e.g., Grade 9, Level II Spanish class). Each team will draft a research question to address learners' needs. If working individually (which is not recommended), candidates must get feedback from a team working on a similar research topic. The educational setting will typically be in one team member's classroom. Sample learning needs may be: (1) reading strategies; (2) vocabulary development; (3) oral language development; or (4) a need for innovations in curriculum design and/or assessment approaches.

Candidates will: find a focus; base the focus on sound theory; identify a research question; collect data to address the question; analyze the data; report the data, and establish an action plan to help improve teaching and students' learning. Teachers will demonstrate applications of technology to their Action Research Project, through the use of a classroom computer console, Powerpoint slides, computer-generated instructional materials, and uses of the Internet.

2. Teaching Intervention Demonstration

Candidates will demonstrate their professional presentation skills and receive peer feedback in class. Candidates will make a presentation on the Teaching Intervention used for their Action Research Project and lead a question/answer session with their classmates. **Teachers will be evaluated on their ability to design and present a teaching demonstration.** Skills for design and delivery include: organization, use of visuals, gestures, and technology; oral language communication skills; use of humor; and engagement of the participants.

Assessment of Your Work

Each course project will be assessed using a scoring rubric developed especially for that project. Scoring rubrics will typically be performance-based, using an analytic scoring rubric with a fixed scale from 1 - 4. Total scores for each project may result in decimal values, as in 3.5 or 3.8 and will be indicated on each project. The rubrics include the following criteria: (1) connection of project to assigned readings; (2) depth of analysis (rather than just description of research) and accurate interpretation of data; (3) application to personal experiences and change process; and (4) coherence and clarity in writing and/or other presentation format. Students will receive the scoring rubric for each project before the project is due so that they know in advance how their work will be evaluated.

Evaluation for Course Grade

Course grades will be calculated by multiplying the rating received for each project by its assigned weight on the syllabus and then tallying the subtotals for a total score. For example, if a student achieves a total score of 3.9 – 4.0 (on a 4.0 scale), he/she will receive an A. “A”s or “A minuses” will be assigned to final scores totaling 3.7 or above. *[Pluses (+) and minuses (-) are optional and may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.]* Total course scores from 3.0 -3.69 will be assigned a “B” or “B plus” and scores at 2.9 or below will receive a C.

This grading policy is based on past experience using scoring rubrics to assign course grades. Each course instructor develops his/her own grading system. GMU has no official grading policy, although it does assign numerical values to grades received in this course. However, these numerical values are in no way comparable to the scores assigned to projects using the scoring rubrics in this course.

Group or Individual Grade?

Each individual will have the option of choosing a GROUP or INDIVIDUAL grade for the ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT. If an INDIVIDUAL grade is chosen, the student will be responsible for handing in her own paper and an electronic copy of the Action Research Project. ***Please send me your decision on this matter by our 7th class session.***

Feedback & Criteria

In assessing your work, my goals are: to provide you with **feedback** for improvement, to determine the extent to which you have met the **standards and criteria** for performance, and to be as **fair and objective** as possible.

1. I will provide each of you with individual **feedback** on your projects. This feedback will not only reflect to what extent you have met the standards for performance but also how you can do better on your next project. *The criteria for each project are quite similar*. The feedback may include suggestions for improving critical thinking, linking assigned readings to your project, elaborating on implications, or improving writing skills for graduate level work. If you need clarification on my evaluation of your work, let's talk about it.

2. Each teacher's project will be assessed using the **criteria** specified in the Scoring Rubric for each project. I will post examples of previous students' projects online at our class web site. To assess each project, I conduct a blind, criterion-referenced assessment; I do not know the identity of the author of the project I am rating. I assign a rating on the merits of the project itself as it compares to the criteria specified in the scoring rubric. This is why it is very important that you meet each criterion on the Scoring Rubric (from Greek, it's *one criterion, two criteria*). I will most likely not know your identity until after I have finished reading all projects and begin to record the scores.

3. To ensure **fairness**, I will cover your name on the cover page and assign your project a numerical code. This helps maintain anonymity and fairness in the rating process. You can help me achieve my fairness goal by putting your name on the cover sheet only and not on any other page of your project (appendices, teacher letters, forms, etc.). I use blind assessments to eliminate potential bias on my part and to be as fair to you as I can. To protect your identity, do not make your paper look distinctive in any way (fancy fonts, colorful cover pages, etc.) Papers with one staple in the upper left-hand corner are preferred to folders, covers, or book-like stapling. If you have any suggestions as to how I can make the assessment process fairer, please let me know.

Other Assessment Issues

Absences: **PLEASE CALL ME ON OR BEFORE THE SAME DAY OF THE CLASS** if you know that you will be late to or absent from class. Leave a message on my voicemail if I am not available. **For same day absences, email will probably not get to me before class; use the phone.** Your presence in each class meeting is highly valued. Absence from class means you miss the presentation and group discussion, and we miss your contribution to the session.

Late projects: If you need to request an extension of time to turn in a project, please **CALL ME BEFORE THE DUE DATE (not ON the due date)** to talk about it. Only one late project will be accepted per student.

Revised Papers: You will have sufficient opportunities to get feedback on your projects from your peers and from me **BEFORE YOU HAND IT IN.** Therefore, once your project has been turned in, scored, and returned to you, please do not ask for additional opportunities to revise it.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using an author's exact words as they appear in print without using quotation marks and/or without citing the author in your paper. Plagiarism is unethical and illegal and goes against the GMU Honor Code. Evidence of plagiarism will result in a rating of 1 and a note to the Dean's office. **Avoid using authors' exact words at all;** instead, paraphrase in your own words. Your papers are too short to submit somebody else's words.

Double dipping: Projects or papers submitted for credit in one course cannot also be used for a grade in a different course, even if you revise them. It's unethical.

Grade Incompletes (IN): Are not automatically assigned and are discouraged. If you need to request an Incomplete grade, you will need to show serious cause for this decision (see Graduate Catalog). I will review your status in this course to determine whether to grant your request.

About your Current Teaching Status

To fulfill the requirements of this course, you will need direct access to students and instructional and assessment materials in classroom settings. There should be at least 5 students in this classroom. Working with fewer than 5 students is not likely to yield meaningful information on your research. Here are some possible scenarios:

1. **You are currently teaching in an ESL/FL/Immersion** classroom on a part- or full-time basis. You can work with these students to meet course requirements.
2. You are currently teaching in a classroom, but **not with ESL/FL/Immersion students**. You will need to talk with me regarding your individual situation.
3. **You are NOT currently teaching in a classroom** with 5 or more students. You will need access to curriculum and assessment materials and students. You can team up with someone in this course who is willing to share his/her students with you. Or you can partner with a teacher who is not in this course.

If you are in Teaching Category 2 or 3 above, *let me know by email as soon as possible (but no later than the 3rd week of class)* the names of the teachers with whom you will be collaborating or the arrangements you have made to have access to a class of students.

If you are in Teaching Category 1 above, please consider inviting teachers from this class who are in Categories 2 and 3 to work with you or with your students.

Guidelines for Working on Research Teams

The Action Research Project may be conducted in a team with 1 or 2 others in this course (3 team members max)

1. Teachers who want to work together as a team need to discuss carefully each team member's role in the project. **Each of you should take a lead role**, but you should not proceed without getting feedback from your team members and informing them of your progress, consulting them for ideas, and so on.

Taking a lead role means that you will be the person primarily responsible for a particular task; it does not mean that you will be working alone. Take a lead role that helps you use your individual strengths. In some cases, team members may decide to take two lead roles each. **Draft an agreement specifying each team member's lead role and how and when each person will contribute to the team, and submit your work agreement to me by email.**

Lead roles may include:

- ✓ presenting theoretical models to the team for feedback;
- ✓ identifying outside readings that can inform your project and sharing them with the team;
- ✓ presenting a data collection plan
- ✓ presenting ideas on how to address issues of validity and reliability;
- ✓ identifying a school site and making arrangements for data collection;
- ✓ drafting an outline of the project;
- ✓ planning the data analysis or drafting the data tables; and
- ✓ preparing the initial draft of the written report.

2. ***Try to ensure that at least one teacher on your team is currently in a classroom setting and has two or more years of full-time teaching experience.***

3. ***If one or more of your teammates is not currently teaching in a PreK-12 classroom setting***, he/she should observe and assist the team member whose classroom is being used for collecting the data for the study.

4. **Plan on regular, weekly team meetings in between our Saturday classes** to increase the productivity of your research team (based on suggestions by previous students in this course). ***Each team should meet at least weekly and be in touch by phone or email more often than that. In addition, each research team should consult with me by email, SKYPE, our Blackboard Chat Room, or by phone for feedback on their progress during weeks when we have no class meeting or at least every two weeks. If you have a Web Cam, we can communicate face-to-face in real time with SKYPE (a free Internet service).***

Team Process Assessment

To provide your team and this instructor with feedback on your perceptions of how the team functioned as a unit, you will be asked to **complete and submit a Team Process Assessment form (see next page)**. With this form, you will indicate how each team member fulfilled his/her lead role as well as how you feel about how your participation contributed to the success of the group. The Team Process Assessment form assures individual accountability of each team member and provides the instructor with insights as to how you perceive teammates' contributions. This information will be confidential. Your self-assessment and the assessment of teammates will be used to inform the rating assigned to each team member and/or the team.

CAVEAT: *At any point of your working together, if you realize that your team members are not carrying their own weight, please let me know. You may be able to work on a different team. Individual projects are not recommended. Do this as early in the semester as possible. Let me know if this is your decision.*

Team Process Assessment

Your name _____ Lead role _____

Your teammates' names _____

Date _____

Circle one response or write a response for each item.

1. Assessment of Team Process

A. How did your team work together as a single unit?

Fairly well OK Not so well

B. How could your team have improved its performance?

2. Assessment of Peers

A. What was the level of productivity and collaboration of your peers?

Pretty high Acceptable Not enough

B. Make a statement to support your choice in the preceding statement.

3. Assessment of Self

A. How would you rate your own level of productivity and collaboration?

Maximum Acceptable Minimum

B. How could you have improved your contribution to your team?

4. Other comments

Copy & submit this with each stage of your ARP, but do not attach it to your paper.