George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDRS 825
ADVANCED RESEARCH METHODS IN SELF-STUDY

Fall 2013

To my surprise, of all the projects I have worked on to date, my self-study research project has been the most practical...the insights I gained about myself, my colleagues, and the position have helped me enormously. Self-study forced me to think outside the box in new ways, and it changed my way of thinking, despite myself.

Mary Adams-Legge, 2006

Meeting Day/time: Tuesdays 4:30 pm-7:10 pm
Location: Enterprise 77

Professor: Anastasia P. Samaras, Ph.D.
Email: asamaras@gmu.edu
Web: mason.gmu.edu/~asamaras
Phone: 703-489-1663
Office hours: email/call for apt.

Course Description
Prerequisites: Successful completion of EDRS 810 and [EDRS 811 or EDRS 812] is required. This course has been approved as an official course in the Research Methods track as an Advanced Research Methods. It may also count towards a major or minor area of specialization.
Prepares students to conduct research using the self-study research methodology, a qualitative research approach for systematically examining one’s practitioner role for improvement-aimed purposes with contributions to the educational field and knowledge base.

**CEHD Core Values**

In 2006, the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) adopted five core values on which to focus: collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. This course supports each of these values by providing multiple learning experiences that necessitate collaboration. Students are afforded opportunities to reflect on their leadership roles in their work and learning contexts; to design and engage in innovative research-based practice, and to analyze proceedings under the umbrella of a social justice conference theme. These Core Values are aligned with course goals:

**Course Goals**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the self-study research methodology by applying it in a self-study research project;
- learn an advanced qualitative methodology with application to professional practice;
- develop and refine qualitative research skills; e.g., conduct a literature review, articulate a research proposal, design a research study, dialogue in validation groups, assess ethics and social justice implications of study; collect and analyze data, interpret, write, and present findings;
- develop skills to critique self-study writings
- develop and present knowledge of one’s research interest with evidence-based practice integrating the literature of the Self-Study School;
- develop, self-assess, and peer-assess a self-study of research project.

**GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

c. 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.

d. 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 [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their
instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].
f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be
turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
g. 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 [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

CEHD PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CEHD CORE VALUES COMMITMENT
The College of Education & 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/ For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].

Emergency Procedures
You are encouraged to sign up for emergency alerts by visiting the website https://alert.gmu.edu. There are emergency posters in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures exists on http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert .

Course Nature of Course Delivery
This course utilizes a seminar format. Seminars will include professor and student-led discussions, reflective activities, special speaker, and student presentations that will take place during class meetings. Students are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue and sharing of ideas. Learning activities will include individual and collective activity in-class and online.

Mutual Support
Our work will involve mutual support, collaboration, and continuous peer review and my encouragement and support for each of you as developing scholars and educational leaders. We will review guidelines for collecting and reporting research findings with multiple examples. We will also discuss how these sources can serve as general templates for your particular topic. There will be significant support along the way from peers and professors, culminating in your final presentation and project. The course provides support in developing your professional skills in writing, presenting, and publishing.

Collaboration
The critical friend memos assignment is a carefully constructed dialogic assignment designed from Vygotskian (1978) theory to scaffold your particular self-study research interest and its development. Consider what you would be interested in studying and researching further and why. Construct research questions that relate to your interest. You may start with broad questions. Then you need to reflect on your questions and utilize research articles on your specific topic. Include researched based information, such as refereed journals, books that are supported by research, and dissertations or theses.
Reconstruct your questions so they fit what you want to pursue. Think about how you will go about conducting the research, collecting and analyzing data. Share your thinking with your critical friend and professor for feedback.

**Peer Review**

Virtually all research designs go through some type of peer review process in academia, including the dissertation proposal stage, requests for funding, or when a study is reviewed for publication. For this reason, I am having you involved in a collaborative, peer review process, designed to be supportive as well as constructive. You will provide, and receive, constructive suggestions to assist you in improving your thinking and in looking at something familiar in a new way. In a collaborative relationship, you are expected to practice your best professional relationship skills in your discussions. This collaboration/peer review will provide us with opportunities to see the value of collaborating as well as the challenges. It gives us practice.

**The Self-Study School**

The Self-Study School grew out of the work of teacher educators and extends now to other practitioners (i.e., it is not limited to teachers) therefore, self-study is applicable to practitioners from all disciplines and settings (e.g., administrators, counselors, research methodologists, policy leaders, educational reformers). The methodology requires openness, reflection, collaboration and validation with critical friends, transparent data analysis and process, and improvement aimed work which contributes to professional knowledge. Class assignments are designed to stimulate deep reflection on the concept of the “self” within a professional/practitioner context. This course includes a synthesis of the literature of the Self-Study School, the methods, methodological requirements, and dispositions integrated with assignments that are collaborative, interactive, and creative.

**Required Course Texts**


Other assigned readings will be made available through Blackboard (BB), E-reserves (“issues”) (ER), or E-journal (EJ).

**Required Readings**  
EJ = Electronic Journal; ER = E-Reserve; Password = “issues”


**Critical Friend Resources**


**Additional Self-Study Resources ~ Also see Self-Study Resources on textbook website.**


Rilke, Rainer Maria. (1934). *Letters to a young poet*. Trans. M. D. Herter Norton. NY: W. W. Norton & Company. (see pp. 34-35). Excerpts have been placed on ER.


- Visit Websites: Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group (S-STEP) on aera.net

- Overview Self-Study Dissertations: [http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/living.shtml](http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/living.shtml)

- An extensive resource list on self-study research is located in the Appendix of Samaras (2011) in the Self-Study Resource Center and in Samaras & Freese (2006).

### Course Requirements and Evaluation

1. Participation 30%
2. Self-Study Research Project 60%
3. Exit Paper 10%

**Assignments**

High quality work (i.e., “A” work) is expected on all assignments and in class participation. All assignments must be completed. For full consideration, all assignments are due to professor *electronically* in the digital drop box prior to the beginning of class on the day they are due, unless otherwise announced. Blackboard will not accept deposits after the due date and time of class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with the professor.

All written assignments are to be word-processed using Times Roman 12 pt font, double-spaced, and submitted electronically on our class My Mason [http://mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu)
You need to install Java at java.com to upload assignments. Title each assignment with your last name and the name of the project/assignment, e.g., Smith.ResProp.09.20.11. Also bring a copy of the completed assignment to class for discussion which you can later place in the appendix of your report. SAVE YOUR WORK FREQUENTLY. It is suggested that you save your work on your personal digital drop box on BB. Use APA style. See American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication Manual (6th ed.)*. Author: Washington, DC.

### Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Graduate Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Meets Standard</td>
<td>90 – 92.9</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Approaches Standard</td>
<td>88 – 89.9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
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</table>

1. **Participation** (30 points)

To be successful in the course, you will need to actively participate and read widely to become familiar with the self-study literature. I have generated a list of reading resources to provide you with a rich reservoir of materials to draw upon for your research project and I can direct you to particular research. My expectation is for you to read and use these resources as they apply to your self-study research project. You should informally journal and/or take notes about the readings. Your participation includes:

#### Class Participation

You are expected to participate in class discussions with openness, consideration, and effort to “hear for” and “listen to” others as you also seek to be understood. You are also expected to share leadership roles. Come to class prepared to share your insights, important concepts in the readings and the connections you are able to make to your learning and research experiences. Your comments should include any connections you see across other readings and any connections to your personal experiences. Analyze both the content and methodology of the reading (when appropriate). Go beyond "what the author said." Share the questions you have about the reading in class. Your active participation is a major requirement of this course. Please notify professor if you must miss a class. There is no way to "make up" for class time that is missed.

#### Critical Friend Inquiries

Effective research involves continuous reflection on learning and often with others. You will have the opportunity to work with critical friends in a series of critical friend inquiries, i.e., peer conversations and feedback with meta-conversations about the development of your project. We will use MyMason Blackboard space to post and offer feedback. You will find critical collaborative inquiries throughout the textbook.
Critique as Conference Proposal Reviewer
You have been selected as a reviewer for the Proceedings for the 8th International Conference on Self-Study edited by Lynnette B. Erickson, Janet R. Young, and Stefinee Pinnegar (2010). Visit https://sites.google.com/site/castleconference2010/Home

Select one of the papers the 2006 year proceedings and send your review to us as you play the role of reviewer. You may choose a paper from an earlier proceeding that aligns with your research interests. A review form is located on our Blackboard page. Please place a copy in our drop box and bring one copy to class. See link below for all proceedings and the upcoming one at this biannual international conference. Consider submitting the work you prepare in our class for the 2014 conference.

Rubric for Participation (30 pts.)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading widely and specifically about the outgrowth, nature, and methods of self-study is central to students’ understanding of its application to their individual self-study projects. Dialogue with peers about the readings broadens students’ perspectives and thinking about the readings</td>
<td>Selects and completes all readings and papers. Comes prepared with thoughtful synopsis, questions, and comments to share with class</td>
<td>Selects and completes most of the readings and papers. Is prepared for sharing reading and asking questions</td>
<td>Selects and completes some of the readings and papers. Is somewhat prepared to share readings and questions</td>
<td>Little or no involvement and sharing of readings and papers. Is seldom prepared to share readings and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimentation in self-study methods deepens students’ comprehension and invites critical friends into conversations and projects to extend learning.</td>
<td>Completes all activities; Integrates and demonstrates a keen understanding of self-study in activities; Well-presented in class; Reflects extensively on activities</td>
<td>Completes most activities. Presents in class. Demonstrates an understanding of self-study in activities. Reflects on activities</td>
<td>Completes some activities. Demonstrates a beginning understanding of self-study in activities. Occasionally reflects on activities</td>
<td>Completes few activities. Demonstrates a limited understanding of self-study in activities. Lack of reflection on activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Participation

Participation is a critical component of this course. It is based on your contribution to building a positive classroom climate and community. Participants contribute to each others’ learning by actively listening, exchanging ideas, and supporting each other’s efforts; shares leadership roles.

| Participation | Participates regularly and actively in discussions and activities. Promotes conversation focused on the topic. Comments demonstrate a high level of understanding. Listens actively to peers. Prompts feedback and input; Purposely shares leadership roles in CF work. | Participates in discussions and activities on a regular basis; questions and comments reveal thought and reflection. Frequently involves peers in discussion; Shares leadership roles in CF work. | Doesn’t contribute to discussions or activities very often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection. Follows rather than leads group activities. Solicits some peer discussion; Somewhat shares leadership roles in CF work. | Few meaningful contributions to class discussions. Little evidence of participation. Shows little concern for peers’ learning or input. Misses classes and does not make up work; Does not share leadership roles in CF work. |

2. Self-Study Research Project (60 points)

It’s your inquiry: For your self-study research, you should choose a research question that really matters to you. It should be something you’re curious about and willing to spend time researching and learning about. If you aren’t eager to spend several days curled up reading about your topic, then it’s not love, and you need to ditch it and find another topic (Roberts, GMU alumna, 2009). Choose a research project which includes the “self” as a resource to the research. Push yourself out of your comfort zone. Be honest, brave, and bold. Ask how your research matters to you, to others, to education, and towards social justice in education. We will discuss what this means and how it relates to this methodology at length in class. Designing and completing your self-study research project will be a significant marker in your personal and professional development. For this assignment, you may build upon prior research when writing your paper. This project includes professor and peer support and continuous review with class presentation. Each assignment is purposely designed to scaffold the development of your project. Each assignment counts towards your participation grade.

3. Exit Paper (10 possible pts.)

Analyze, and write about your professional growth and your thinking about the process and product of your research project. Begin with an analysis of a self-assessment of addressing the self-study methodological requirements and dispositions we have been studied and discussed (see below). Then write a personal Exit Paper assessing your development as a self-study scholar. Below are some suggested questions to guide your data analysis followed with more specific questions in the matrix. You do not have to answer them all:
• How well did you meet the self-study methodological requirements and dispositions in your self-study research project? (Use Critical Friend Inquiry (CFI) 11.3, pp. 222-225 in Samaras text).
• Read through your critical friend research memos. Which entries/comments stand out for you and consider why you chose the points to discuss.
• What categories or common themes are evident in your looking back?
• Read back to your earlier viewpoints, beliefs, and understandings. Has anything changed? Remained the same? What factors and experiences do you believe contributed to the changes? What new insights have you gained about yourself? What would you do differently in the research process?
• Is there evidence of reflective thinking about your new understandings regarding your practice and its impact?
• What were your dilemmas?
• What metaphor best captures who you are as a researcher and a professional?
• Are there paradoxes that capture the essence and process of this work? These might include: disharmony/harmony; despair/hope; status quo/change; struggle/success; or consistency/possibilities.
• What role did critical friends play for you?
• What kind of critical friend were you?
• What was it like to be a critical friend and to have one?
• What was your greatest ah-ha or discovery?
• How do you see yourself as a researcher at this stage of your professional development?
• Do you think your colleagues would describe you differently from when they first started working with you? What might they say?
• What do you want to continue doing?
• What are you still struggling to understand about yourself and/or others?
• What are your professional wishes and hopes yet unfulfilled?
• What are the contributions of your work to others and to the field?

Rubric for Exit Paper (10 pts.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguished 10 pts.</th>
<th>Proficient 9 pts.</th>
<th>Basic 8 pts.</th>
<th>Below8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Situated Inquiry:</strong> Evidence of deep reflection and analysis about research situated in professional practice</td>
<td>Evidence of critical reflection and analysis about research situated in professional practice and broader context towards social justice, innovation, and reform</td>
<td>Evidence of some critical reflection and analysis about research situated in professional practice</td>
<td>Little or no evidence of critical reflection and analysis about research situated in professional practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Development as Self-Study Scholar**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transparent Research Process</strong></th>
<th>Asking difficult questions about the complexities of research and self-study methods</th>
<th>Asking some difficult questions about the complexities of research and self-study methods</th>
<th>Minimal questioning about the complexities of research and self-study methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistently asking and exploring difficult questions about the complexities of research and self-study methods; Excellent articulation of research misconceptions and thorough discussion of reframed understanding</td>
<td>Good articulation of research misconceptions and good discussion of reframed understanding</td>
<td>Satisfactory articulation of research misconceptions and discussion of reframed understanding</td>
<td>Undeveloped summary of research misconceptions and reframed understanding</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Professional Learning Community</strong></th>
<th>Evidence of effort to share and contribute to peers’ research; significant movement beyond personal perspective and with contributions to professional knowledge base</th>
<th>Some evidence of effort to share and contribute to peers’ research; significant movement beyond personal perspective and with contributions to professional knowledge base</th>
<th>Little evidence of effort to share and contribute to peers’ research; significant movement beyond personal perspective and with contributions to professional knowledge base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant evidence of effort to share and contribute to peers’ research; significant movement beyond personal perspective; contributions to knowledge base</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Language Mechanics</strong></th>
<th>Good organization, writing, and language mechanics</th>
<th>Average organization, writing, and language mechanics</th>
<th>Poor organization, writing, and language mechanics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent and clear organization, writing, and language mechanics</td>
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## Tentative Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignment Due</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1    | 8/27  | **Introduction to Course** and Self-Study Research**  
*Introductory note emailed about bringing your personal learning event* |
| 2    | 9/3  | **Finding Your Research Question**  
*Post learning event aligned to research question*  
Community of Self-Study  
Read Preface, Chapters 1 & 3 & Table 2.1 & 2.2, Samaras  
Read pp. 9-36, Pinnegar & Hamilton |
| 3    | 9/10  | **The Self-Study Methodology**  
Self-Study Methods  
Designing Your Study  
Research Ethics  
Read pp. 47-77, 98-102, Pinnegar & Hamilton  
Read 222-225 and Chapters 4-7 Samaras  
Read LaBoskey, 2004 on ER  
Post **RQ and rationale in an arts-based format.**  
Make a case for the “I” and “other” in your work  
Recommended Reading  
Read Barnes and Loughran & Northfield 1998 on ER  
Read Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001 |
| 4    | 9/17  | **Critical Friend Work**  
*Write and post a letter to CF to dialogue about your research question and method. Respond to each other.*  
Read Feldman, 2003  
Read Lighthall, 2004 on Electronic Reserve (ER) |
| 5    | 9/24  | **Cataloguing: Unique to Collecting Data in Self-Study**  
Read pp. 79-97, 109-134, Pinnegar & Hamilton  
Chapters 8 & 9 Samaras  
Chapter 5 Pinnegar & Hamilton |
| 6    | 10/1  | **Research Proposals**  
*Post: Research Proposal**  
*Individual consultations with professor on proposal design* |

*Post all work on Class Discussion Board  
F2F = face to face  
TEL = Technology Enhanced Learning*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td><strong>Further Readings will be made available as aligned w/ your study</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| TEL  | Critiquing SS Research Review | Read Chapters 10-11 Samaras  
Read pp. 147-166, Pinnegar & Hamilton  
*Post: Conference Proceeding Proposal Review* |
| 10/15| Columbus Day Recess NO CLASS | *NOTE: Mon classes meet instead on Tues this week.* |
| 8    | 10/22 | Conceptual Framework And Argument | Share “big ideas” gleaned from your lit review as they align with your RQ and method  
*Post draft of your framework* |
| F2F  | Assess Research Quality Validation Workshop | Begin Check-coding use CFI 11.1 and 11.2 |
| 9    | 10/29 | Writing up Your Findings | Read Chapter 12 Samaras  
*Post: Draft 1 Research Paper to Critical Friends with continued check-coding  
Peer and Individual Consultations* |
| F2F  | Self and peer critique Refine | *Post: Draft Research Paper 2 to Critical Friends & Professor (integrate 222-225 Samaras)  
Peer and Individual Consultations* |
| 10   | 11/5  | Final Review | *Post: Feedback Draft 3 to Critical Friends & Professor Peer and Individual Consultations* |
| TEL/ F2F | Abstracts Knowledge Generation and Presentation | Chapter 13 Samaras  
*Peer and Individual Consultations* |
|      | Have a Happy Thanksgiving! | |
| 12   | 11/19 | Class Presentations: Knowledge Generated for Field | *Post: Final Self-Study Research Project  
Bring printed final copy of project to last class.*  
*Post: Exit Paper by 12/10* |