

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**PhD Program**

EDRS 897 A01 – Special Topics: Decolonizing Methodologies  
3 credits, Summer 2020, Session A (June 1-July 2, 2020)  
Online

**Faculty**

Name: Meagan Call-Cummings  
Office hours: By Appointment  
Email address: mcallcum@gmu.edu

**Prerequisite**

As an advanced qualitative methodology course, you should have some previous qualitative methodology experience/coursework.

**University Catalog Course Description**

Develops knowledge and skills of selected advanced research methods topic(s). Offered by School of Education. May be repeated within the degree for a maximum 6 credits.

**Course Overview**

This course will examine the theoretical and philosophical ideas and assumptions that undergird critical race, decolonizing, and indigenous methodologies. Students will acquire understanding of these theories and methodologies using a variety of modalities. The course will highlight how these methodological orientations are changing the essence of what it means to engage in qualitative inquiry and even what “science” means.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. While there will be opportunities to meet synchronously throughout the course session, these meetings will not be required. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site is currently available.

**Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.**

*Technical Requirements*

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see:  
[https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#supported-browsers](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers)

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

[https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems)

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player:  
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
  - Apple Quick Time Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

### *Expectations*

- Course Week:  
Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will start on Mondays, and finish on Saturdays.
- Log-in Frequency:  
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 3 times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings. For this course, synchronous meetings are held on Thursdays but are not required.
- Participation:  
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence:  
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:

Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.

- Workload:

Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

- Instructor Support:

Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

- Netiquette:

The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- Accommodations:

Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

## **Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Articulate the historical and theoretical foundations of critical race, decolonizing, and indigenous theories and methodologies;
2. Describe some common methods used in each of these approaches;
3. Discuss common practices associated with designing qualitative studies that engage these approaches;
4. Discuss tensions and critiques of these approaches;
5. Outline ethical considerations related to these approaches;
6. Discuss validity implications related to engaging in these approaches.

## **Professional Standards (that are met through this course)**

Not applicable

## **Required Texts**

There is no required text for this course. Any assigned readings or content will be shared on Blackboard. Because this is such a stressful time for so many, I will assign more video-based content rather than readings. I will post readings but most of them will be resources for you when you have the time, rather than assigned during the course.

## **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

I will not assign any letter grades for assignments. As an advanced doctoral-level course, I do not think grades accurately reflect your learning or engagement. In addition, I do not think we “grading” you fits into the onto-epistemological commitments this course explores. Therefore, at the end of the course I will ask each of you to send me an email outlining what you think your grade should be and why. If I disagree, we will engage in dialogue about our disagreement. The final grade will be determined by us jointly.

## **Assignments**

1. Class participation
  - a. Participation in weekly discussion boards
  - b. Adding to resources/bibliographies
2. Positionality statement

Your work should be original, thoughtful, rigorous, and thorough. Plagiarism in any form is not acceptable. Please err on the side of documenting and citing sources.

## **Assignment Descriptions**

### *Class Participation*

Because this is such a small class and due to the upheaval caused by the global pandemic, I have structured this course so as to allow students with various other commitments and concerns to be able to participate as much as they can while also reaping the benefits of being in the course with others. We will all work together to learn and share our knowledge and growing understandings of these approaches. With this in mind, much of the quality of our joint learning experience will be dependent on your participation in weekly discussion boards and adding to resource lists and bibliographies.

You can help us all enjoy a full learning opportunity through your participation in various ways:

1. Adding to the readings/resources list on the class Google Drive related to the weekly topic or methodological approach. These resources can be journal articles, books, book chapters, videos, songs, lyrics, curriculum, pedagogical ideas and activities, and other things. I will provide a limited list of resources and readings for each of the weekly topics on Google Drive. My hope is that by working together we can create a master list that others could use. A goal might be for each student in the course to add 3-5 resources for each weekly topic, along with a short description for each. Resources might cover theory,

philosophy, methodology, and method/applications. Another idea is to review something that I or someone else put on the list.

2. Participating in the weekly discussion through Blackboard's discussion board tool. Each week I will post a short video with reflections on that week's readings/resources. I'll offer questions for consideration and short, reflective activities or exercises, which are already on this syllabus. I hope you will offer authentic and deep reflection on the week's readings/topic through the discussion board as you bring together your thoughts on the readings/resources you choose to review that week, the videos I post and request that you view, the activities I lay out in the syllabus, and your own experiences and insights. A good aim would be to check the discussion board daily (if possible), offer your ideas and thoughts on the readings, make connections between readings and resources I've provided as well as readings and resources you might be adding, other classes you've had, fieldwork you may have been involved in, developing ideas for your dissertation, etc. You do not need to display brilliance; rather, I hope you will display a sincere desire to grapple with these complex ideas, theories, and philosophies.

### *Positionality Statement*

One of the main goals of this course is to stimulate our thinking around our own positionalities as researchers and people in this world and to deeply consider not only what it means to "do" research, but also what it means to "do" research in your body, from your position. What does it mean for me, as a white, middle class, cisgender woman to take up critical race theory or decolonizing methodologies? Should I even do this? What tensions will I grapple with? By this point in your doctoral program you may have written several versions of a positionality statement. For this assignment, due during the last week of the course, you should thoughtfully consider our conversations and readings and explicitly articulate who you are and what it means to do research from your position. This paper should take a reflexive and nuanced tone and should be able to be used in your dissertation. These reflections will most likely be about 3-5 pages, but can be longer if appropriate.

### **Course Philosophy**

In our community, I will position myself as a co-learner, as well as a teacher. Hence, if I am teaching and you are not learning, then I am not teaching. Throughout the course, I welcome feedback and encourage your participation in an informal mid-course evaluation.

I will facilitate this class much like a seminar. While I will provide asynchronous "mini-lectures" each week through video tools, we will rely primarily on asynchronous and synchronous discussions and applied methodological activities to construct our understanding. We will all bring different levels of experience to the class. Let's agree to practice patience and support one another as we progress.

### **Professional Dispositions**

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

## Class Schedule

Date	What's happening?
<i>Week 1: Introduction to each other and the approaches</i>	
<b>Week of June 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View MCC introductory video</li> <li>● Post your own introductory video on discussion board, and:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Listen to “Respiration” by Black Star feat. Common, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqYeTjeRJ84">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqYeTjeRJ84</a>, (please read the lyrics). Think of a song that has an interesting/creative/critical perspective on a landscape, and post a link to the song and a sentence explaining your choice. OR</li> <li>○ Choose a section or page from the Mason website and turn it into a Zine page (you can print it out and do an old-school collage or use a photo-editing software on your computer or at the library). Share with the class on the discussion board and connect it to at least two of the readings or the video assigned for this week. OR</li> <li>○ Search the Mason website for a mention of race, racism, or colonialism. Note the URL and share it with the class through the discussion board. Reflect on what you found and connect it to at least two of the readings or the video assigned for this week (below).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● View Trinh T. Minh Ha’s Reassemblage - add reflections to the discussion board.</li> <li>● Read/review/add to resources posted in Google Drive - add to the discussion board.</li> <li>● Synchronous meeting (to be recorded and posted): Thursday, 1-2pm, Eastern Time</li> </ul>
<i>Week 2: Critical Race Theory/Methodologies</i>	
<b>Week of June 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View MCC video</li> <li>● Engage/post in discussion board - choose one or more of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Watch The New School. <i>Bell Hooks: Moving from Pain to Power I</i>. YouTube, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpKuLI-GC0M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpKuLI-GC0M</a>. Watch the full video, then please choose a 1-minute section of the recording you found insightful. Transcribe that section, noting different speakers and writing out their exact words, to the best of your abilities. Please include the start/end times for the segment, and 2-3 sentences explaining your choice. Submit the transcripts and explanation on the discussion board. OR</li> <li>○ Download Baldwin, James, and Margaret Mead. <i>A Rap on Race</i>. Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1992. Read the conversation, and select a small soundbite (2-4 sentences) that interests you, or that you would like your classmates to read. Share it with the class on the discussion board and connect it to at least two of the readings or the video assigned for this week. OR</li> <li>○ Watch UBC. <i>Barnor Hesse - Raceocracy: How the Racial Exception Proves the Racial Rule</i>. YouTube, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCAyQNWteUA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCAyQNWteUA</a>. Reflect on this</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>video and connect with at least two readings or the video talk assigned from this week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View David Stovall's talk: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_bXao5zFtw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_bXao5zFtw</a> - add reflections to discussion board.</li> <li>● Read/review/add to resources posted in Google Drive - add reflections to discussion board.</li> <li>● Synchronous meeting (to be recorded and posted): Thursday, 1-2pm, Eastern</li> </ul>
<i>Week 3: Decolonizing Theory/Methodologies</i>	
<b>Week of June 15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View MCC video</li> <li>● Engage/post in discussion board: Read: Claire Barliant, "The Hanging at Mankato," <i>Triple Canopy</i>, no. 13 (August 4, 2011), <a href="https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/the_hanging_at_mankato">https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/the_hanging_at_mankato</a> on the Triple Canopy website. Listen to the embedded recordings. Write a short (500-700 words) reflection linking the article to at least two of the readings or the video talk assigned from this week.</li> <li>● View Leigh Patel or Linda Tuhiwai Smith's talk: <a href="http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/">http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/</a> - add reflections to discussion board.</li> <li>● Read/review/add to resources posted in Google Drive - add to discussion board.</li> <li>● Synchronous meeting (to be recorded and posted): Thursday, 1-2pm, Eastern</li> </ul>
<i>Week 4: Indigenous Theory/Methodologies</i>	
<b>Week of June 22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View MCC video</li> <li>● Engage/post in discussion board: Review the following ethics documents and reflect on what they mean, in light of the readings you choose to explore this week and the talk you choose to view (below): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Akwesasne Good Mind Research Protocol: <a href="http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/download/akwesasne.pdf">http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/download/akwesasne.pdf</a></li> <li>○ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. <i>Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies</i>. <a href="http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical.html">http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical.html</a></li> <li>○ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1993. "Ethical Guidelines for Research." <a href="http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/index_e.html">http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/index_e.html</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>● View Eve Tuck's talk: <a href="http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/">http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/</a> or Kim Tallbear's talk: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-yVjSQ5ZPc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-yVjSQ5ZPc</a> - add reflections to discussion board.</li> <li>● Read/review/add to resources posted in Google Drive - add to discussion board</li> <li>● Synchronous meeting (to be recorded and posted): Thursday, 1-2pm, Eastern</li> </ul>
<i>Week 5: Bringing it all together</i>	
<b>Week of June 29</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● View MCC video</li> <li>● Engage/post in discussion board: As students and scholars we operate within the realities and expectations of academic and community contexts. Given the long history of violent racist and colonial research agendas and practices of knowledge/resource extraction, can university research objectives and</li> </ul>

	<p>Indigenous ways of knowing ever be reconciled? What is your role in this? Connect to the talk you choose to view (below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Choose one to view: Peter McLaren, Joel Westheimer, or Chad Gaffield: <a href="http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/">http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/</a> - add reflections to discussion board.</li> <li>● Read/review/add to resources posted in Google Drive - add to discussion board.</li> <li>● Synchronous meeting (to be recorded and posted): Thursday, 1-2pm, Eastern</li> <li>● Turn in Positionality Statement on Blackboard assignments tab</li> <li>● Email MCC with grade and reasoning</li> </ul>
--	---

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

### **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education and 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/>.

### **GMU Policies and Resources for Students**

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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 with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*



- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

**Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.**