

Participatory Modes of Inquiry
CSUS 838
Fall 2023
Thursday 1:50-4:40pm

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I. Introduction

This course provides an in-depth, graduate-level exploration into the nature of participatory inquiry. It is designed for students who plan to take a participatory or action research approach to their thesis, dissertation or capstone project. The course surveys the major streams of literature that lay the foundation for *how* we might engage with others outside the academy to do our work. It therefore involves principles of community engagement and draws heavily on the theoretical and practical literature in the areas of participatory and action research. Throughout the course students are expected to identify the streams of the literature that resonate with their own philosophy of research and are compatible with the body of work in which they intend to locate their own research. Students examine how the various approaches to participatory inquiry coincide or conflict with their current epistemological and methodological views. Students are asked to consider how they might incorporate participatory approaches into their personal, professional and academic lives. The format of the course is varied and includes mini-lectures, discussion, group work, and individual and collective reflection.

Prerequisites

Graduate students. Students should have completed 1) at least one graduate level research methods course and 2) CSUS 800, 802, or a graduate philosophy of science course. Preference is given to CSUS graduate students.

Course objectives

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- Define community engagement and its relationship to inquiry and research.
- Identify the key characteristics of an action or participatory approach to inquiry and how these approaches are relevant to the concept of community engagement

- Identify how action/participatory inquiry differs from ‘conventional’ or ‘traditional’ approaches to research.
- Differentiate the various branches of participatory and action research, their roots, their essential philosophies, areas of emphases, and essential differences.
- Identify research stream(s) that lie closest to their personal philosophy of inquiry and consider whether (and how) they may be incorporated into their own personal, professional or research work.
- Demonstrate the ability for reflection and dialogue; specifically: demonstrate ability to surface assumptions, use the reflective loop, engage in active listening (suspending, summarizing, paraphrasing and reframing).

II. Course Format

The class will meet weekly in Wells A236 on Thursdays 1:50-4:40 p.m. The course is structured as an in-person seminar, with emphasis on large and small group interaction.

Our purpose in this class is to develop an understanding of the scholarly foundations to the work we plan to do in community. Each of us will have our own path to our own practice and how we want to express it in a scholarly way. Nevertheless, our objective will always be to *learn together* and to support each other in our parallel journeys. I am therefore keen to create an environment in which we develop a collective learning space through dialogue. During class students should feel free to raise questions, share pertinent experiences, bring interesting articles to class, or make suggestions about how we do things. In addition, since this course is taught in an interdisciplinary fashion it is expected that there will be diversity in disciplinary backgrounds and epistemological beliefs within the class. As such, it is important that we cultivate a tolerant, open-minded ethos within the class. Our goals will be the same, our scholarly views may differ.

The course reader is posted on D2L, with the readings organized by week. Each week students are expected to do the assigned readings before class and respond in one of two ways: with a mini-paper or a posted reading response. On two occasions a skills assignment will be due instead. The course schedule is detailed in Section IV, including due dates for all the assignments.

Finally, midway through the course we will evaluate how it is going and try to make whatever changes we can to meet our course objectives and/ improve the experience for all of us.

III. Course requirements

- 32% Four mini papers synthesizing weekly course readings (each worth 8%)
- 12% Skills Assignment 1: Surfacing assumptions using the reflective loop
- 12% Skills Assignment 2: Dialogue
- 10% Class preparation and participation
 - Reading responses posted on time
 - Preparation for in-class skills day
 - Entry statement
 - Contributions to class sessions
- 34% Final essay and reflection

We plan to spend the majority of our class time working with concepts presented in the assigned readings. Our time together represents a formal space for us to think collectively about what these concepts mean and how we may try them out in our scholarly and practical work. Since the readings provide a point of departure for these discussions, it is essential that we all come to class prepared. This means doing the reading and spending some time before class thinking about how these new ideas make sense (or don't make sense) to your own practice. As such, **your preparation--your commitment-- to the class, will make this class. It is everything....**and I ask that you are fully present for your colleagues when you arrive. I promise the same to you. As part of this, I ask everyone to stay off the internet and social media while we are in class.

3.1. Mini Papers (4 Papers, 32%; each 8%)

The goal of this assignment is to help develop the skills necessary to read and critically analyze the scholarly literature on participatory inquiry. A mini-paper is a 2-3 page paper that is written about the week's readings. The tasks of the mini paper assignment are to: 1) determine the main ideas presented in these papers and 2) to synthesize these ideas into a concise 2-3 page statement about the topic. The paper need not be organized around a "thesis statement" or "hypothesis" but it must be clearly written and organized. The length is purposely limited to encourage students to focus on identifying the most important ideas, rather than mechanically summarizing everything mentioned in the article.

All students will submit four mini-papers. The first mini-paper is required of all students in Week 3. Feedback will be given on the first mini-papers in Week 4. After this date (eg, starting week 5) students may choose the weeks in which they prefer to write a mini paper or write a reading response. To help you keep pace with your work, I require that **at least one** additional mini paper be submitted by Week 7. You choose the weeks that you want to write and of course you can write more than two before Week 7. After Week 7, you will have 6 more opportunities to write the remaining two mini-papers. In the weeks you do not write a mini paper, you will write a reading response (see below).

Mini-papers must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class (1:50pm) or before class. Late mini-papers will not be accepted. Guidelines for mini-papers and how they are evaluated are detailed in the Mini Paper handout and can be found on the course D2L site.

3.2. Skills Assignment Write-Ups (2 assignments, 24 %; 12% each)

Aside from understanding the intellectual material, we hope to develop skills that are important to the practice of participatory modes of inquiry. Two skills days are planned in which students will practice reflection and active listening/dialogue. Following the in-class practice of each skill students are expected to continue working on these skills with a follow-up assignment. A write-up will be required of each.

3.3. Class Preparation and Participation (10%)

Active participation is necessary to make this class a meaningful learning experience. We will learn more from each other if we stay engaged with the material, reflect on its meaning for our personal practice, and support others as they contribute to our collective understanding of this work. On a weekly basis students are expected to attend class, read the readings, reflect on the content and meaning of these texts, participate in class discussions, approach classes with a spirit of dialogue, and complete the weekly assignments that are designed to promote engagement with the chosen topic on time (specifically, a mini-paper, reading response, and/or skills assignment).

Note, that starting in Week 5 we will begin a regular routine in which **students write either a mini-paper or reading response each week**. If a student opts for a reading response, the response should be posted by 7am, Thursday morning. This allows others in the class time to have a look before class. Over the course of the semester, students are expected to post 6 reading responses.

Finally, I ask we all agree to stay present while in class that we **refrain from using our devices**, getting on the internet, answering texts, and having side conversations or experiences. We will have a much richer experience if this is the case.

- **Reading Responses**

What exactly is a response?

Unlike the mini-paper, a reading response may be written in an informal style. The point of the response is to record your reactions to the readings. What were the readings about? What points are most interesting of confusing to you? In particular we

ask that you identify questions or concepts that you wish to delve into more deeply during class (and why you chose them). Our hope is that the reading responses will enliven class time discussions and encourage students to think individually, and then collectively, about the readings and to integrate the material over time.

- **Skills Activity Preparation**

On two occasions we will use class time to practice skills that we believe are important to the practice of participatory inquiry. Some of these activities will require preparation before class. The completion of this work will fall under your class participation grade.

In general, expect to attend class prepared, participate in discussions in class or over the class website, work earnestly on in-class activities, keep an open-mind, and provide collegial support to fellow students. Do this and you will receive full credit for class participation.

3.4. Final Essay and Reflection (34%)

A final essay and reflective statement is required at the end of this course. The purpose of this assignment is 1) to allow students to integrate their thinking with respect to the concepts presented on participatory and action research methodologies and 2) to consider how they may (or may not) fit in with their current views and / or plans for research. Guidelines for this reflection will be posted to the course website by week 13. As suggested by the weight assigned to this work, the final essay/reflection represents the culmination of a student's learning in the class. Be prepared to work on this assignment as you would any final exam or paper.

IV. Course Topics and Schedule

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENT

Week	Date	Topic	Due on this date
1	Aug 31	Overview: Action Research, Participatory Research, Inquiry	
2	Sept 7	Worldview and Inquiry	Entry paper, post to D2L by Sept 6, 5pm
3	Sept 14	Reflection	Mini Paper #1 Required before class
4	Sept 21	Literature Streams: Lewin & The Action Research Cycle	Skills Assignment #1: Reflexivity No mini paper
5	Sept 28	“Southern PR”: Fals Borda/Freire/Horton; Decolonizing Approaches	Mini Paper or Response
6	October 5	Cooperative Inquiry/Human Inquiry	Mini Paper or Response
7	October 12	Community-Based Participatory Research	Mini Paper or Response
8	October 19	Choice of: Citizen Science, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Modelling, Indigenous Methodologies	Mini Paper or Response*
9	October 26	Participatory Design	Mini Paper or Response
10	November 2	Power and Knowledge	Mini Paper or Response
11	November 9	Dialogue: Practice	No Mini Paper Skills assignment #2 due Nov 11, 5pm

12	November 16	Presentational Knowledge/ Representation	Mini Paper or Response
	November 23	Thanksgiving	Post Your Grid
13	November 30	Validity	Mini Paper or Response
14	December 7	Mainstreaming and Co-optation	Mini Paper or Response
15	December 11		Final Essay and Reflection

***Two mini-papers must be completed by October 12 (Week 7).**

V. Course Policies

4.1 Class attendance – Students are expected to attend class and to be on time. Absences will be noted. If you are sick, please stay home and get well. However, please notify me beforehand. If you miss class it is your responsibility to obtain notes from fellow students and check D2L for upcoming assignments.

4.2 Class conduct – Collegiality is important in this course. Each of us should feel free to raise questions, share experiences during class, bring interesting articles or issues to class, or make suggestions about how we do things. The course is taught in an interdisciplinary fashion and it is expected that there will be diversity in disciplinary backgrounds and epistemological beliefs. As such, it is important that we cultivate a culture of open-mindedness in the class.

4.3 Readings – All assigned readings should be completed before coming to class. Be ready to discuss them in depth. The readings are chosen carefully to give you background information about the different data collection and analysis techniques and are helpful resources when carrying out your final essay.

4.4 Grading - Throughout the course I will grade your work. To help those who are conscious of grades, I will also try to give students an indication of “where you stand in the class” from time to time. Although we try to focus on what we are learning rather than grades, I

am sympathetic to students' desire to have feedback about how they are faring in the class. If you feel unsure about this you should always feel free to come talk to me and ask me; it's completely fair—so don't be embarrassed if you are concerned.

4.5 Accommodations – If you need accommodations in this class related to a disability or religious holidays, please make an appointment with me to discuss as soon as possible.

4.6 Academic Integrity – Article 2.III.B.2 of the SRR states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations.

Therefore, unless specified otherwise, you are expected to complete all written course assignments on your own. This means you are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course.

4.7. Writing assistance

We have many students whose first language is not English and many students want to work on their writing. Learning to write is a skill that we hope to develop in graduate school and I will be very patient as long as you try your best. If you have trouble writing, especially if it is because English is not your native language, please just do your best to get your point across, in your own words. If you need weekly help, I strongly suggest that you visit the MSU Writing Center (www.writing.msu.edu) for assistance. You will find that the Writing Center is an amazing resource for helping you learn an important skill. If you visit the Writing Center every week, by the time you are ready to write your dissertation or thesis or Plan B paper you will be ready. If not, you are likely to really suffer when it comes time to write your dissertation or thesis or Plan B paper. (I have seen several students turn from very poor writer into reasonably good writers simply by working with the Writing Center every week.)

4.8 AI-Assisted Work We are going to talk about this in class and develop our own understanding of an appropriate policy among ourselves.

4.8. Other MSU Required Syllabus Components

Please see the end of the syllabus for detailed language regarding MSU's policies regarding academic integrity, sexual harassment and sexual violence, and mental health.

6. Other University-Wide Policies Required by MSU

MSU Guidelines for Handling Emergencies

In the event of an emergency arising within the classroom, the instructor will notify you of what actions that may be required to ensure your safety. It is the responsibility of each student to understand the evacuation, "shelter-in-place," and "secure-in-place" guidelines posted in each facility and to act in a safe manner. You are allowed to maintain cellular devices in a silent mode during this course, in order to receive emergency SMS text, phone or email messages distributed by the university. When anyone receives such a notification or observes an emergency situation, they should immediately bring it to the attention of the instructor in a way that causes the least disruption. If an evacuation is ordered, please ensure that you do it in a safe manner and facilitate those around you that may not otherwise be able to safely leave. When these orders are given, you do have the right as a member of this community to follow that order. Also, if a shelter-in-place or secure-in-place is ordered, please seek areas of refuge that are safe depending on the emergency encountered and provide assistance if it is advisable to do so.

Responsible Conduct of Research

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at any institution of higher education; therefore, we cannot tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize or falsify. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, we reserve the right either to assign a grade sanction or to refer the case to appropriate campus authority. **Ignorance (not knowing the rules) is NOT an excuse for an academic integrity violation.** Therefore, if you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to speak with me before you turn in a test or assignment.

[Article 2.III.B.2](#) of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, [Protection of Scholarship and Grades](#); the all-University Policy on [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#); and [Ordinance 17.00](#), Examinations.

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

Spartan Code of Honor: Student leaders have recognized the challenging task of discouraging plagiarism from the academic community. The Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU) is proud to be continuing awareness of the Spartan Code of Honor academic pledge, focused on valuing academic integrity and honest work ethics at Michigan State University. The pledge reads as follows:

“As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.”

You can learn more about the Spartan Code of Honor at honorcode.msu.edu.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence

“Michigan State University is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu.”

Unless identified as a confidential source, all university employees are obligated to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual misconduct, stalking, and relationship violence that:

- Are observed or learned about in their professional capacity
- Involve a member of the university community or
- Occurred at a university-sponsored event or on university property

Employees are only required to report relationship violence and sexual misconduct of which they become aware in their capacity as a university employee, not in a personal capacity.

Limits to Confidentiality

Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.