

Participatory Action Research Spring 2001

LDSP 390 (01)
M, W, F 9:20-10:10 pm
Jepson 101
Office Hours MW 3:30 to 5 pm
and by appt

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Syllabus and Class Schedule

“It was my destiny to join a great experience.” Herman Hesse, *Journey to the East*

Participatory action research combines new paradigms in research methods with an orientation to democratic processes of social and organizational change. As a research method PAR combines a scholarship of engagement with research methods particularly suited for leadership. Consequently, PAR fits well within a curriculum, such as the Jepson School's, that is community-based and challenge-centered. This course satisfies the research method course requirement of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies.

During the course of the semester we will undertake to:

- explain participatory action research;
- examine examples of participatory action research in different contexts;
- compare it with other research methods; and
- conduct a participatory action research project.

Achieving these goals in a four Section semester presents incredible challenges. Consequently, this class will be unlike most that you have had. We will function more as a working group than a class. That means each of you will have responsibility to the group to help us learn about participatory action research as we do it. Unlike other classes, also, your work in this class will have real stakes for real people. It will require more commitment and responsibility than most classes; it will also be one of your most rewarding educational and life experiences.

The texts for the course will be:

Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin. *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*.

Horton, Myles and Paulo Freire. *We Make the Road by Walking*.

Kauffman, Draper. *Systems I: An Introduction to Systems Thinking*

Selener, Daniel. *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*.

Stringer, Ernest T. *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*.

This is an eclectic and dynamic field with deep roots and new developments. I will place on reserve, in the Jepson student lounge Room 110, other books related to the field. In addition, we will use several on-line resources. One valuable gateway to this field is PARnet at Cornell University. <http://www.parnet.org/>.

Grades.

Assignment #1 10%; Assignment #2 10%; Midterm (take home) 10%; Assignment #3* 20%; Peer Evaluation 20%; Portfolio 10%; Final exam 20%..

You will receive more instructions regarding your peer evaluation and portfolio in Section 3 of the semester.

* This will be weighted by specific questions on the peer evaluation.

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Class Schedule

Section 1 Participatory Action Research--Introduction and Examples

This is a busy Section. We have to learn the elements of PAR and use our knowledge to select a topic. We have some excellent candidates for our term project, as you will see.

Week 1 An introduction to the course and to each other
January 15th

We will make introductions to each other. We will examine the syllabus and discuss the assignments for this course.

You will also spend an hour on the internet visiting sites that will inform you about the nature of participatory action research.

1. Go to PARnet.org and come back with information about
 - two interesting conferences between now and the end of the year;
 - two American universities and two universities abroad that have significant PAR programs;
 - three subject areas where PAR has been used; and
 - material in the PARnet archive.
2. Do a search for participatory action research and action research with several search engines of the net and report what you find.
3. Go to an online data base of the library (not the UR catalog) and search for books and articles on action research and participatory action research. What related fields do you find? Who seem to be the prominent authors in the field.

We will spend time this week discussing the research project for the semester. We will have to make a decision about the semester project by the end of the Section. Here are some topics that we might look into:

- The arts in Richmond. See attached op-ed piece by Stephanie Micas.
- Foster Care in Richmond and other aspects of the Juvenile Court. We have a good start on this with *Mending Broken Promises* and Elizabeth's internship with Judge O'Donnell.
- Develop something with Hope in the Cities.
- Incarcerated Women and Their Families. This may be the most developed and ready to go. Mary Sue Terry has worked with women in the Goochland prison, state legislators, and members of the faith community to increase ties between women in prison and their family members, especially their children through the internet.
- Others that you suggest.

Your first assignment is to contact a key person for each of these topics and determine their feasibility. Here are the criteria for a project topic, in order of importance:

- A strong and committed community or institutional partner;
- A reasonable fit with the criteria of participatory action research;
- A specific focus and challenging but doable workload in the time that we have; and
- It continues work already started--binge drinking studies, *Mending Broken Promises*--or initiates work that someone is committed to continuing.

Week 2 Participatory Action Research--Concepts

January 22nd

By the end of this week you should have a very clear idea of what PAR is and confusion about the diverse statements about it. We will introduce the analytical framework that Selener provides us.

Selener, Daniel. *Participatory Action Research*, 1-10, 275-280.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, frontis and pp. 3-13.

Couto, Richard A. "Participatory Research: Methodology and Critique."

Please read one of the following closely and prepare a one page note for the benefit of your classmates that defines PAR and its elements. Also, you should use Framework II to relate these views of PAR to its elements.

Whyte, *Participatory Action Research*, pp. 7-15.

Ansley and Gaventa, "Researching for Democracy and Democratizing Research," in *Doing Community Based Research*.

Park, *Voices of Change*, pp. 1-19.

Fals-Borda and Rahman, *Action and Knowledge*, pp. 1-34.

Campus Compact, *Action Research* also *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Week 3 *Participatory Action Research*

January 29th

You have a lot of reading for this week but it the only way to make sure that we get started well and soon is to provide you with a thorough understanding of what we are about. We will divide the reading so that each class members will take responsibility for explaining one of the four areas.

Selener, Daniel. *Participatory Action Research*, pp. 11-195. Each student should take one chapter, a context, and prepare an explanation of it according to the elements of Selener's framework. Please be sure to read all of the material well enough to follow someone's explanation of it.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 14-32. This is important to everyone but especially those looking at PAR in organizations. See also, pp. 235-52 for material related to Farmer PAR and its relevance to evaluative research in all contexts.

We will view Chamber's tape on Rapid Rural Appraisal methods in class. It relates to Farmer PAR. The relevance of this has to do with implementation of recommendations for change which is applicable to any field and endeavor.

Week 4 *The Methods of Participatory Action Research*

February 5th

This week is the time that we decide on a topic. We will need the information that you have gathered in a rapid appraisal method. You now know enough about PAR to know what you are looking for. We will need to make a decision which of the proposed topic fit our criteria and whether to pursue a single or several topics.

We will examine how you do participatory action research. We will synthesize the material from Stringer and Greenwood and Levin and examine how we have applied them already.

Stringer, *Action Research: An Introduction for Practitioners*. Skip Chapter 9.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 93-108, 151-72.

Additional material that will be useful at some time.

William Foote Whyte, *Learning from the Field*, pp. 1-128 esp. material on interviewing

Yoland Wadsworth, *Do It Yourself Social Research*

Assignment 1. Write a short essay (maximum 2000 words), "The Theory and Practice of Participatory Action Research." The paper should synthesize the material you have learned this Section; it should give a single definition and related principles of practice of PAR.

On February 5th, several leaders in the local arts community will discuss the arts and urban revitalization. This may give us insight into action research applied in another field. Modlin Center at 7:30 pm. Your attendance is required.

Section 2 Participatory Action Research. What is unique about PAR?

Having learned a little about PAR and how to do it, we now turn to examination of its examples. We have one framework for analysis already. We will develop another. We will contrast methods within PAR and among PAR and other research methods.

Week 5 Examples of Participatory Action Research
February 12th

In examining different approaches in PAR we learn more about methods to conduct it. We will examine the criteria of PAR, see Framework II.

Selener, Daniel. *Participatory Action Research*, pp. 199-273.

Week 6 More Examples of Participatory Action Research
February 19th

We will apply the criteria of PAR to various studies in different contexts. All of this information should help us sharpen the focus of our own study.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 33-50, 127-49.

Each student will take one of the following books and report on at least two of the case studies reported in it. McTaggart, Chambers, Park, Fals-Borda and Rahman, and Whyte, *Participatory Action Research* (esp. pp. 19-55)..

Time permitting I will introduce and discuss with you other community-based work that is and is not PAR. *Vandiversity, Redemptive Resistance, "Failing Health or New Prescriptions," Mending Broken Promises, Taking Stock, and Charter of Commitment.*

Week 7 Systems Analysis
February 26th

We will go deeper than Selener does into the systems theoretical framework implicit in organizational action research. This framework is also applicable to other contexts.

Kauffman, *Systems I*, pp. 1-28

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 187-202.

Week 8 Systems
March 5th

Ditto.

Kauffman, *Systems I*, pp. 29-41

You will have a take home mid-term exam this week. Do a systems analysis of the topic of your participatory action research work. Be sure to place values at the center of the system; include positive and negative loops; and locate any problems and challenges in one or both loops.

On March 7th in the Modlin Center for the Arts at 7:30 p.m., Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. will speak on "Protecting Urban Waterways." This is very much an area of participatory action research. Your attendance is required.

Spring Break

Section 3 How is Participatory Action Research Different from other Research Methods?

We now move our considerations up a notch to discuss ontology and epistemology. What is social reality and how can we know that we know it? You will find the class reading load lightening up. This will permit you to put more time into the term project. You should be a full roll by this time. Look ahead also and begin your work on Assignment #2.

Week 10 Action Research as an Alternative
March 19th

This week we examine how our authors distinguish PAR from other research methods.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 51-92, 109-126, 203-214.
Stringer, *Action Research: An Introduction for Practitioners*, Chapter 9.

We will divide these readings among us:

Denzin and Guba, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, “1. Introduction,” “6. Competing Paradigms,” and “36. The Fifth Moment.”

Argyris, Putnam and Smith. *Action Science*. Preface ix-xv and Chapter 1, pp. 1-35.

Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline*, pp. 1-135 (two people).

Week 11 Alternatives within Action Research
March 26th

There are different approaches with PAR, as Selener told us already. This week we look those differences.

Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. 173-186
Reason, Peter. “Three Approaches to Participative Inquiry.” In Denzin and Guba, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 306-23.
Argyris and Schon in Whyte, *Participatory Action Research*, pp. 85-98.

Week 12 Another Look at Methods
April 2nd

Your second assignment is due this week. Write a short essay (2000 words maximum), “The Methods of Participatory Action Research.” Your paper should take one specific element from the reading of May 18th and develop it in light of your experience over the past two Sections. Each member of the class should coordinate the selection of the topic to avoid replication. We should have the foundation for a short student manual as a result of your work.

Section 4 Popular Education, Knowledge, and Pedagogy of Liberation

This should be another fairly easy Section of class work but very demanding for your work on the project. We will turn the first half of the Section over to in-class work and report on the term project(s). In the second half, we will examine the roots of PAR in popular education, primarily Paulo Freire and Myles Horton. These last two classes should be an invitation for you to reflect on your education and the relation of education, socialization, and liberation. We will bring to the classroom the same criteria that we used in Framework II. Let’s plan to have one of these classes at my home with dinner and discussion.

Week 13 Student Reports and In-Class Work
April 9th

Week 14 The Roots of PAR
April 16th

Freire and Horton reflect on their formative years and education. This is easy reading.

