

Course Evaluation, Critical and Creative Thinking, UMass Boston  
**CRCRTH 693 Action Research for Personal, Professional, and Educational Change**  
Hybrid format, Fall 2013

Note: lettered responses represent the same individual across the questions, so that all “a)” responses come from the same person, and so on.

**1. Start with an evaluation of yourself What were your personal goals in taking this course? Did you achieve them? How would you have proceeded differently if you were doing this course again? What have been your major personal obstacles to learning more from this course?**

- a) I wasn't sure what to expect from this course. If I have to take this course again, I would change my research to something simple. My major personal obstacles was trying to understand word by word and then got lost in the middle of the course also picked a big project.
- b) I had no knowledge of Action Research before this class started, so I didn't really have any personal goals at the start. Throughout the semester, I developed a personal goal of taking my Action Research plan and attempting to implement it in my place of employment. I haven't achieved those goals yet, but I'm in the process of accomplishing, and I feel like this class did a good job of helping me along the way. I don't think I would do anything differently if I took this course again. I'm very pleased with the outcome. My major personal obstacles were outside distractions (work, etc.) I would love to dedicate more time to the class and the projects involved, but I was often attempting to accomplish my work at the edges of the day when my focus isn't the best.
- c) I originally took this course because I needed a research class for my program. My goal was to pass this course, receive credit and graduate. I would get myself better acquainted with the technology involved to conduct the course. More sufficient examples and discussion time provided in class.
- d) I wanted to learn what action research was, how it could be done, and be able to work earnestly on a particular problem that was meaningful to me. I do feel I met these goals, although to some extent I have reservations about the last one--not because I felt I didn't progress on my project, but because I see now how large a problem it is to work within the educational system I am in, which is rather rigid, slow to change, and not very accepting of real change that addresses what it means to be well educated. If I was doing the course again, I might organize my materials a bit better from the beginning (my research), I might structure my PD workbook to be more visual in nature and adaptable to different situations and mediums (like voice recordings, for example). Personal obstacles I encountered were that my "day job" competed for time that I may have used for research and also provided a source of some fatigue--a new evaluation system at school took up a few large chunks of time. There are always the vicissitudes of life.
- e) In my profession, the way we do things is constantly being evaluated and altered accordingly. My field is also in the midst of (potential) radical changes. I took this course in the hopes of gaining a greater understanding of how effective change is identified, communicated, and implemented, so that I could positively impact my organization/field as both evolve.
- f) My personal goal was to better understand how I have participated in Action research in the past without actually realizing I was involved in it. This course allowed me to understand each step and how to also take each step in a more methodical manner and achieve the most out of my progression. The major

obstacle I encountered was to train myself not to move as quickly in any attempt at Action research and to understand and enhance on each step.

**1. Self-evaluation (continued) What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

- a) Variety of activities help to keep everyone interested.
- b) Time management and self-direction. My keys to success in online classes is to always look ahead to get an idea of what's coming. That way you can plan your time accordingly and work ahead when there's the opportunity. With so much of the class (and all the classes in the CCT program) being very self-directed, you really have to take control of your education versus being a more passive student.
- c) I personally wouldn't want to take an online course. I had too many issues with the technology.
- d) I interacted proactively with the folks online.
- e) Work, work, work. You get as much from this course as you put in. I struggled in the initial classes, and I later realized this was because I was ill-prepared. As I familiarized myself with the material earlier in the week, I felt as though the added prep time helped. In addition, building relationships with my fellow classmates -- both online and offline -- also helped. If I didn't quite understand something, I could simply shoot an e-mail, text, or phone call there way.
- f) After taking several such courses I have found that both online & face2face aspects can offer the same benefits by taking advantage of the technical advances of the day. Although I prefer face2face classes this class aided me in enjoying feedback by communicating with online members outside of the actual class.

**2. General Evaluation of course What was special about this course (+positive and/or -negative)? How did the course meet or not meet your expectations? In what ways do you think this course could be improved?**

- a) The path of the course was very clear and detailed, but to be able to keep with it, you have to be wise and choose a project that you will be able to work with. I think this course maybe require more time when it comes to finish the final draft.
- b) It did a tremendous job of teaching me how to break down problems into manageable chunks, develop a plan of action, and measure the results. It presented a repeatable process that I feel like I can implement in the future to make Action Research part of my life.
- c) The aspect of problem solving was most significant. Also, developing dialogue within group discussions about shared thoughts.
- d) I knew this course would be a good deal of work, and take a lot of time. My personality (to some extent) and time constraints led me sometimes to doubt the progress I had made, but I combatted this with positive thinking. I really liked that this course allowed me to follow a path that was meaningful to me, and designed by me, while still providing me with possible tools and guidance to use along the way. A couple ideas for improvement are on the printed copy of the syllabus from the last class.
- e) As it was mention in class, a little more focus on both professional and personal growth as it applies to action research would have been enjoyable. For many of us, our projects involved making change outside of the educational field. Also, going forward, if we are to utilize what we've learned to its full

potential going forward, this practice/learning would have been useful. I really appreciated the flexibility of this class, which reflects highly on the professor. This being my second go-around, it was nice to be able to practice the action research process on my own, without a constant back-and-forth with Peter. I had done that the first time I took this course, and on this occasion, I relied heavily on the feedback of my "buddies", as well as feedback from the class during our work-in-progress sessions. With my insane work schedule, I often caught up on weekends .. or took off days to read ahead. It's nice being treated like an adult in a graduate course.

- f) The course was fine--probably because I am accustomed to these courses now and the knowledge of the teacher, as always, was exemplary.

**2. General evaluation (continued) In what ways did your attitude to doing the course change through the semester? How does it compare with other graduate courses? What would be your overall recommendation to prospective students?**

- a) Do not take this course as one of your first classes. I think you need to be more prepared to do it.
- b) I started out blissfully ignorant about the class subject matter. Then I felt like I picked it up quickly. There was a brief stage of confusion in the middle before I got straightened out and cruised to the end. I think the class measure comparably with the other classes I have taken. My recommendation to future students would be to keep it simple. Don't try to make your Action Research plan too grandiose. And don't lose site of your ultimate goal.
- c) I have to say that I was very confused about the nature of this course in the beginning. It is different in regards to its structure and enphase on group dialogue.
- d) As I got deeper into my project and the epicycles, I had to be mindful of my own resilience in the face of obstacles and changes in how I perceived my project/intervention. I had to bargain for and sometimes declare my need for time regarding the work. I had to remind myself even when things were difficult to sit down and think and write in order to reflect. This enabled me to move forward (and sometimes back, when needed). The class is a challenging journey, but if you take advantage of it you can produce something that you can be quite proud of and that has meaning for you. You have to make a habit of being reflective.
- e) I never thought of change in one's professional or personal life as a systematic approach -- and I'm embarrassed to admit that. Once I got more acquainted with the process and the literature, I became really excited about action research. My advice to future students? Avoid judgements for the first month. Read, discuss, share, and read some more.
- f) My attitude in this class changed as I became more comfortable. Knowing most of the students from before always helps and the personal aspect of better understanding Action research made it more interesting. In recommending this class to other students I would advise them to: 1. fully understand the syllabus and, 2. have a strong understanding of the WIKI.

**3. Evaluation in relation to the course description Read the course description/goals below. Comment on how well the goals expressed in the syllabus were met. Make general and specific suggestions about how these could be better met.**

*Learning Objectives: By the end of the semester, you will have:*

- *experienced, learned, and practiced a set of tools and processes to promote participation and reflective practice (including your own participation);*
- *learned to formulate informative comparisons as a basis for evaluations;*
- *examined critically the evaluations of others (or the lack of the appropriate evaluations), including the influences of political context on evaluation and research;*
- *considered the ideal of participatory action research in relation to politics generated from below; and*
- *undertaken a project in an area of your particular concern in which you design (and, optionally, carry out) an Action Research process using the Cycles and Epicycles framework (and addressing the other course requirements).*

- a) The goals are very clear and understandable.
- b) I think this is a very fair and accurate description of the course and the work involved. The entire class was assembled in modules that built on the previous week's learnings. Overall, I found it to be a lot of work, but definitely manageable. And the compartmentalized nature of learning a tool and implementing it one week, and then building on that tool with new learnings the following week made it relatively easy for me to grasp the material.
- c) The objectives for the class were consistently carried out. However, most of the projects required understanding and work outside the classroom and needed some time in the class to devoted to the projects.
- d) I think all of these were accomplished. I might have taken more time in the beginning on my own to write more about these goals--what did I think these meant, how would I paraphrase this language, and maybe do some mind maps. This would help me to have a better grasp of them as the course progressed.
- e) All of the course's objectives were met.
- f) At times the readings are more complex than anticipated. If part of the class work was to create a "chart" of the tools available I do think that this form of visual aid would be helpful. In a program such as CCT outlining the basic concepts is critical.

**4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) Building on your comments from Qs 1-3, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course.**

- a) This course is a very rich class that you help you understand better the tools to action research. You can apply it to your work scenario or even personal life. It is more focused to educational area, but if you are willing to take the challenge you can make it work in any area. To some activities would be nice to have a little bit more time to do it. With the activities involving readings, would be interesting to make sure that during the dialogue hour all the students had read the same text.
- b) Overall, I really, really enjoyed this class. It was genuinely taxing, but I felt like it was on par with what a graduate level course should be. The material was well organized and explained. There was adequate

time each week to work through the material and implement it, so that the material was learned and internalized. One thing that I genuinely enjoyed and valued in the course was the buddy work. It helped me tremendously to have someone in the class with whom I could chat as I attempted to work through the various assignments. It also gave me an opportunity to get to know the other students and see their projects through their eyes, which was really neat.

- c) I experienced a great deal of difficulty operating the wiki site at times. This was extremely frustrating because my files would be entered on the checklist one minute and two minutes later it would be deposited on another block and sometimes delete the work done by others. The instructor is knowledgeable of the subject matter. But sometimes the objective of carrying out activities was not fully clear to me. The course required buddy's to review each others work and offer corrective ideas and support. However, students were not always willing to assist in this requirement.
- d) I strongly recommend this course because, though I haven't taken other AR courses, it seems to me to be a thoughtful approach to this topic. Instead of a course (like many ed courses) that simply gives you a task and asks you to complete it, this course requires you to learn action research through reflection. The course requires and enables interaction, intrinsic motivation, and a thoughtful student-centered approach to the sometimes overwhelming task of doing meaningful action research. A realization of the effect of this class on me might be that I see this evaluation itself as taking stock of my own work in the course, more so than of the course particulars themselves.
- e) So, I have an idea for change? How do I know if it's a good idea? How can I practice and evaluate it? For those this change may impact, how can I involve them in this process? Prior to taking the Action Research course, I had no simple answer to any of the questions, despite the fact that my professional role practically required it. At the course's end, I can not only answer these questions, but I believe as though I can teach action research to others. This is how I "grade" a course's evaluation. And this course grades highly.
- f) I find that at this point I am probably in a better position to analyze this course and the other associated CCT courses. The subject matter may be a bit "unknown" to some since it is not in the norm of courses such as in English, Math or science but it is still a very viable subject. The problem here is that no course is offered as a true introduction to the CCT Major. Once one has reached a point where they understand where they are going and what they are learning the subject matter comes into sight. So, for a time, without a very basic course, all of the more advanced courses take on a different light and are more difficult to comprehend. I have found that new students coming into the Program are often confused by new technology and a complex syllabus. It seems that they are "jumping into the middle of something" that they are not well versed in.

**Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this course? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]**

(AVERAGE = 4.17)

- a) 4
- b) 4
- c) 3
- d) 5
- e) 4

f) 5

**Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this instructor? [1. Very Poor, 2. Poor, 3. Average, 4. Good, 5. Excellent]**

(AVERAGE = 4.67)

- a) 5
- b) 4
- c) 4
- d) 5
- e) 5
- f) 5