Course Evaluation, Critical and Creative Thinking, UMass Boston
CRCRTH 693 Action Research for Educational, Professional, & Personal Change
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Hybrid, 2016 Spring

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) My personal goals for this course was to be able to understand what action research and how I can use that in my own personal/professional life. I think that for my person thinking, that it helped me to transform my own processes from the beginning to the end. That for my final action research report, I can actually go deeper and relate my personal life into a bigger picture. If I were to take the course again, I would try and be more efficient in making the deadlines for my project because I was not able to manage my time with work and school. I think it has to do with the fact that I was asked to do revisions. I was surprised that I had to do revisions because I did not see anything wrong with my project, but as the semester passed my thinking changed.

b) My personal goals for taking this course was to learn more about how action research could be used in my dissertation to support including marginalized populations. I think I have a much better understanding of how I can include constituents. If I were doing this course again, I think I would try to do a small research project that could be developed over the semester. I think that my personal feelings about "fuzzy" academic work got in the way of me delving deeply into all activities in the course.

c) I hoped to use this course to give me an additional research perspective outside of my home school/department. I'm just now, at the conclusion of week 13 beginning to better understand the broader concept of Action Research and how it applies to my work. I'm not sure that if I was doing it again that I would take this course; not that the content isn't useful for some students but I would have preferred a more rigorous research course that focused on methodology, writing, data collection etc. Personally I struggled balancing the submitting and resubmitting of work. While I appreciate the opportunity to revise my work, I didn't find the process of action research required such simplifying. I would rather have learned about the concepts and produce 2-3 lengthier documents than the short assignments that needed to consistently be revisited.

d) My personal goals were to learn more about action research because I am interested in it and I was running a pilot AR project while the course was going on. I did achieve this goal, not in the ways that I anticipated, but the experience was the point. I would not process differently, except that I would have had more patience with myself and my anxiety about learning in a way that is different from what I have become used to. My dyslexia or way of processing information-however, it is very good for me to push myself to engage in tasks that are not tailored to my learning comfort level, it helps me see that I can learn in many different ways.

e) My personal goals were to complete my Masters degree in the CCT program. Yes! I would have throughly researched the Wiki and studied the syllabus more throughly as well as networked more with classmates. Major personal obstacle was a trip taken in mid semester and a lag time getting focused to complete the assignments. The other major obstacle is working full time 50-60 hours per week.

f) I took this class to develop my personal change. It was about journaling. I achieved it. I identified my reasons, made research about tools and literature review and took my action. Firstly, I took my action steps and tried to define what I did. If we can call this is a personal obstacle, discovering yourself before reading, I would try to follow epicycles. But I preferred finding my own way and then read about cycles and epicycles. Then discovered which steps I have taken was fitting into cycles.

g) My personal goals for this class consisted of developing my knowledge on how to think about the early steps of research to later lead me to implementing them into my personal work environment. I wanted to

learn the steps that research involves besides the collection and analyzing of data. I feel as though I achieved these goals, but I'm not sure I completely understand the proper way to get there. If I was doing this class again I would ask for more clarification with directions on assignments before submitting the first draft so that every draft didn't need an edit. I have struggled with understanding the directions for assignments. I followed models from the wiki and then had to correct mine. Some major things in the beginning felt a little rushed and I felt behind in understanding the basics of the epicycles.

h) To design a research project to later be able to implement and to build understanding of how to be an action-researcher. I did achieve the goals, not to the level that I wanted to (for my own personal reasons, not to the fault of the instructor). If I were to do this class again, I think I would participate when a number of external factors were more settle for me personally and also not in the midst of starting a new job. My personal struggles were in identifying the causes of the changes I wanted to implement because I was still learning the job.

i) I didn't have any goal and didn't even know what the course was going to be about. This course was recommended by my superiors. However, I'm very happy I have taken it because it changed my mentality, made me think, analyze, reflect and take actions. I would have been more prepared if I had taken it again. My personal obstacles was lack of self-confidence.

j) Personally I wanted to gain increased research skills. I wanted to have an in depth understanding of a research model although I wasn't particularly sure if I would embrace it and apply it going forward. I started with the idea of doing research related to a project going on at work and I am so thankful that Peter encouraged me to look at another project that I had germinating in my mind because I went from fumbling around to things feeling like they clicked into place. At the course's end I have something which will become part of my doctoral dissertation - I didn't plan on that but I'm very excited that I arrived at that outcome. If I was doing this course again I would take a big breath at the beginning and allow myself to experience the course without feeling anxious about the new format (wiki), lack of grades during the semester, and very different approach. One of my classmates who had taken a CRCRTH class before advised me in the beginning of the semester not to worry that it really would turn out ok. It reminded me of the movie Shakespeare in Love there is a great refrain throughout every time it seems that things are at a complete loss with everyone wondering how things can possibly work out - one of the characters says " I don't know - it's a mystery". That is the approach that I needed to take - let the process unfold and experience the model. And yes - it did all work out! Personal obstacles? Wish that my schedule had allowed me to come to campus at least once.

1. Self-evaluation (continued). What have you learned about what you have to do to make a course stimulating and productive (with respect to the format of this course: face-to-face, online, hybrid)?

a) For the class as a hybrid, I have attended the class in person versus online. I think that the classes were very engaging as a hybrid where we have to meet up at a specific class. It is important that to make the class stimulating that it is not a class lesson that we are learning, but finding ways that we can use our resources and tools for our projects.

b) I was more engaged when I was in the classroom. I think having small side conversations with classmates can often help with the research and formulation of thoughts. I also think doing more work with partners or classmates really would have been helpful. We have so much to learn from each other.

c) I was able to engage in the class both in-person and online and appreciated that flexibility. I will say that having an online course that is a full 2 hours and 45 minutes is very difficult to maintain attention if participating remotely.

d) Do, I've always been better at actually doing things, practicing what we are talking about/learning....so I was not bored, and I do not think my students will be bored, maybe detred at times by the feeling that they are doing something completely new, but not bored

e) I have learned that in order to make this course stimulating and more productive is to complete the work immediately after each class, in order to make the learning relevant. Along with check in with the syllabus and Wiki at least 3-4 times per week to avoid missing anything.

f) I was going with face-to-face. I enjoy intearcting with people in person. It increases my motivation and inspire me as I did for them. IThis semester I had a chance to attend online because of my personal reasons. They were ok. I think I was familiar being a part of hybrid class. How to jump in, how to set up tech or how to be a part of discussion. These experiences encouraged me for the future. I could take some online classes in upcoming years.

g) I think that allowing for the class to participate and not just read about the tools is vital to understanding them. The fact that we started off by feeling comfortable with one another helped us to question one another and push each other's thinking. Allowing to edits on papers creates a less stressful environment as well.

h) I should do a lot more of the optional readings. I think they provide a bit more context to what we discuss in class and illuminate ideas that I struggled to understand in previous classes. I should also utilize office hours more (beyond just the mandated opportunities). Time management was a real struggle for me this semester (when it's typically not) so I needed to make a scheduled.

i) For, engaging with peers and PR' comments are the most productive

j) Since I was online - be prepared, be attentive, make an effort to be connected with other classmates - and speak up even when it felt a little awkward.

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) I think what makes this course special was that I was able to use my own experiences in part of the Action Research. It made the class more enjoyable when I am able to hear my classmates' experiences as well. For the WIP presentation, it helped me a lot to receive the feedback that I needed in order to change some part of my project so that it would be more cohesive and clear.

b) This is the weirdest course I have ever taken and I have been in college for 8 years. It was set up differently (using the wiki) and had different types of exercises. Overall, after I had settled in (it took nearly a month) I felt like I was able to be more productive and engage in the class more. The one thing I would change in this course of the number of elements that must be completed. Between the assignments, the clippings, the participation, and the buddy stuff, it's too much to keep track of and I am a severely organized person. There was just too much "out there" that could be done at any time over the semester that didn't lend itself well to my way of learning.

c) I appreciated the focus on the "process" in this course; even though at times it felt quite slow moving. I REALLY disliked the wiki format. I understand that it's unique to CRCRTH but, when the rest of the university uses Blackboard asking students to use a different format for just one course is unfortunate. Over the years I have developed strategies for using BB to my advantage and I still couldn't tell you where some of the information for this course is at week 13. I REALLY think you should consider converting the course to BB for student use. I think this course might be best taken by students who are part of the CRCRTH program. As a non-CRCRTH student I felt that some of the information being covered and/or the strategies were not as transferable as I would have liked. I would suggest using more examples of scholarly action research to help deepen the students understanding of the concepts and to allow them to see how this work is done in practice. I would also suggest revisiting some of the resources as the videos, articles and such are all VERY dated. There has to be more recent work related to action research that students would benefit from. I I Also REALLY think you should revise the description of the course. The majority of the content is directed to educators and for those who are not teaching or in an education setting this may have been frustrating.

d) It was so personalized to the individual interests of each of us, and for me it was excellent in modeling how to facilitate action research. I really do not know what I would suggest changing, it was thoughtfully done and the uncomfortable parts were okay too. In the name of growth.

e) This course had a wonderful group of students from many different backgrounds. Getting to know them and sharing in class was great. The class exceeded my expectations. I was not exactly sure what I was getting into and in the end it was a good experience.

f) Being independent learner and following my own self-pace are what I need. And I found them in this class. Also, I could choose my own topic. We could be more flexible about cycles and epicycles. Instead of fitting our progress into cycles, we could spend more time to create ours.

g) The group of people was wonderful and we really helped one another. There was a lot of work to this class in comparison to my other grad classes. One of my favorite things was allowing us time to get help from my classmates on assignments. I think that ther could be more discussion about the assignments before they are due. Using the examples was not helpful for me because they were all different, and when I would use one as a model I was asked to change it.

h) What I liked about the course was that it allowed for multiple opportunities for us to think about our thinking. For this class specifically we also had to research into the cause that we wanted to change which I found to be a very different approach to research to what I've done in the past. I appreciated the buddy system, even though it was hard to maintain at times, but it was nice to be able to share your work with someone and gain another person's perspective outside of the professors.   I appreciated the Rubin reading and I think it make things more clear and demonstrated Peter's way of thinking which is how this class have been developed over time. There is a huge focus on people as part of this class and I think it's been very different from classes taken in the past.

i) It's an absolutely new course for me. It was very frustrating and confusing at the beginning, but being in class was encouraging. Now I think that it was the goal to make student shifft from confusion to clarity by inflection and participatiion.

j) + lots of takeaway tools + structured syllabus - wiki a little challenging for me to navigate (I felt like I was still discovering its depths up until the last week) Exceeded expectations! Bring in someone who is currently doing an action research projec

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) At the first class, I was very confused because Peter talked about action research and I did not know anything about it. But also he focused on the evaluations for the class during that time which made it much more perplexing for me. Now at the end of the class, I wished that I did more to my project because I realized now how useful the tools that I have learned in action research has helped me.

b) I think my attitude ebbed and flowed this semester. For a few weeks I was loving it and then, I would be disenchanted by what we were doing because it no longer felt relevant. This graduate course has been quite different; less demanding with readings but demanding through small activities. I would recommend this to other students with the caveat of expecting a different type of course.

c) I struggled to connect to this course. The overall layout was a bit challenging (the wiki) and though there were a lot of concepts that were helpful, I feel like they were really tools and not concepts. I didn't find the course to be very academically rigorous which is not a bad thing- but it actually made staying engaged more difficult. I would recommend that students are very clear before taking the class about what they should expect. I would even suggest that they ask to see the syllabus and the wiki before they enroll in the class.

d) I felt like I would "be okay" as the course progressed and I realized that if I made an actual mistake I would be allowed to fix it. The thinking part, and being asked to organize my ideas differently part was really exhausting....but needed if a person wants to change things. I actually appreciate when things are hard.

e) My attitude changed throughout the course from having to just do the assignments and getting through it, to enjoying the material and learning a lot. This course had a lot of interesting components and assorted ways to learn the material. Overall recommendation to prospective students would be to review the syllabus and Wiki throughly   before the class starts and continue to do this every week. Network with classmates to confirm the work that need to be done to prepare for each class as well as the assignments that are due each session.

f) Keeping journal with digital tools helped me to keep my track continously. My attitude of keep moving worked in this class.   This class should be always a part of CCT. As other CCT class, it helps me to do my best and create my own solutions. IT is basicly practical and pushes us to do our personal or professional development better. If there is something in your mind to do or someting in your life to change and if your don't know where to start or which steps you will take, it is time to take this class.

g) I wish that I left his class feeling more confident , but I still feel as confused as I did during week 3. I felt as though I made progress, but then the comments on my work made me feel as though I was back at my starting point. I think that people who love research and that have CCT class experience would enjoy this class.

h) I don't think my attitude change, but I think my thinking about the class and the project that was being developed as part of the class changed. For prospective student, I would say be ok with being challenged or confused because it will happen often. This project is a continuous work in progress so leverage Peter and your buddy as often as possible.

i) From negative to positive. I would recommend students not to be scared and believe in themselves.

j) At the beginning of the semester I was very anxious about the format and wondered if I should drop it - by the end I would rank it as one of the most useful courses I have taken as part of my PhD work (the marriage of reflection and action). I actually felt that Peter, as the professor, had some interest in my project - which ironically doesn't always happen in my own program!

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.

> *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.*

a) Looking at the course description, all of the goals were met for me. I do not think that there should be any changes for the next following semester.

b) I think that overall, these goals were met but that some of the exercises that we did seemed not relevant to our own research projects. I guess I was having a difficult time making the connection because some of the activities were so different from my usual way of thinking. I think if each activity were tied to our own projects (like the KAQF and Eval Clocks) that would be more helpful. Or do some of the large group discussions about one or two people projects.

c) I think that the goals are accurate; however, I do feel like when students are looking at research courses they may take the terms "evaluation" in a more literal sense- meaning that they might be expecting a stronger focus on "research methods". I also think that if the course used more academic resources (cases, journals etc.) that it would strengthen the research components of the Action Research class.

d) I believe the course met the above goals, in the time we had.   It gave an overview of how to formulate comparaisons as a basis for evaluations and did not heavily go into instrument design, which was actually great because it allowed us to see generally grow it works without getting bogged down in our specific details.

e) The goals expressed in the course description were expressed well, but a times were also very ambiguous and difficult to follow at times.   The goals could have been met better with clarity in the instructions and the Wiki.

f) These objectives were parallel to what e have done in class. I learnt what are expected to be done. I achieved my goal and took my action. My expectation is to keep moving my action in the future and

would like to share what I will be doing or what I will change in my path with my peers. I think meeting with others (online/f2f) and developing network could be organized.

g) I agree that we looked at all of these objectives, but maybe a check in with these goals throughout the class would behemoths for feedback.

h) This class meets all of the outlined objectives. I wish that I we spent a bit more time with developing the evaluation part (KAQF and the Clocks were the hardest parts for me to develop and understand this semester.)

i) All goals have been reached successfully. Rubin's book could've been introduced at the very beginning together with the samples of final projects of previous students to avoid confusion,

j) We had opportunities to practice all the tools that we were exposed to. One more session at the end to return to the Cycles and Epicycles framework would have been helpful to tie up all our learning.

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) One of the things that I despised when I was in undergraduate was that I was in the science field, where most of the work was done through research that is in the classroom. I felt that there was a lack of connection between me and the sciences because there was no reflective practice that was emphasized in the classrooms. In this class, the structure was very different because we were given the freedom to pick a project that would enable us to develop our critical thinking. At first, I pitched my idea for the instructor for a project that seems out of the ordinary. But with his own remarks, he connected me in a way that I was able to use this project for my action research but also to make change in the future. Along with the help of my class mates, I was able to use action research that will enable me to look at different fields of projects at a whole different level. It would also give me the freedom to enjoy doing academia based on the topics that I am passionate about.

b) While this course is not your typical graduate course, it provides a lot of "out-of-the-box" information on how to perform action research. It takes a lot of time to orient yourself to the many different types of assignments and the wiki set-up off the course. It is essential to take the time at the beginning of the semester to get organized and understand how the course will run and all the assignments you are supposed to submit. If that's not done, the rest of the course will become quite difficult. I think my overall feelings of this course are mixed. There were moments of breakthrough for my research by using some of the activities that were presented in the course. There were other moments that I felt disenchanted by the work because it seemed to irrelevant to what I was doing. I think this course if for people who are more sensitive to their thoughts and enjoy dialogue.

c) This course supports the students abilities to think critically and offers tools and strategies for doing so. It will also introduce you to the process of reviewing and revising your own work...frequently. For students looking for a rigorous research course focused on methods etc. I would suggest considering an alternative class. Please also note that this class does not follow the standard Blackboard format and students will be required to familiarize themselves with an interactive wiki page. Additionally, students who are already enrolled in the CRCRTH program may find this course to be a more helpful addition to their course of study than those outside of the school. Peter is a passionate educator who is knowledgeable about Action Research and offers his students the flexibility that a course of this nature requires. He frequently references having taught this course multiple times and has extensive student experiences to share.

d) This is a great course to use as a way to let go of conventional ways of thinking about research and your own ambitions around changes you would like to bring about. You have to be willing to feel like we are a novice student again and to forge ahead with this feeling despite that challenging feeling. You should

expect to feel uncomfortable, but have a much better idea of what you want to do, and how to go about doing it. You will also gain many tools that you can use in the classroom if you are a teacher.

e) Overall, the course was interesting and stimulating. The Wiki and syllabus were sometimes difficult to follow, but the course content, activities and assignments were beneficial to the overall process and final project. The best part of the course was the interaction with the other students and discussions with classmates and sharing of our thinking and assignments.

f) If there is something in your mind to do or someting in your life to change and if your don't know where to start or which steps you will take, it is time to take this class. Being an independent learner and following my your self-pace are what you need. And I found them in this class. Also, I could choose my own topic. Keeping journal with digital tools helped me to keep my track continously. My attitude of keep moving worked in this class. These objectives were parallel to what we have done in class. I learnt what are expected to be done. I achieved my goal and took my action. My expectation is to keep moving my action in the future and would like to share what I will be doing or what I will change in my path with my peers. I think meeting with others (online/f2f) and developing network could be organized. This class should be always a part of CCT. As other CCT class, it helps me to do my best and create my own solutions. IT is basicly practical and pushes us to do our personal or professional development better. We could be more flexible about cycles and epicycles. Instead of fitting our progress into cycles, we could spend more time to create ours.

g) This course would be great for someone that maybe has past experiences with research or is planning on a focus in research. The tools and papers are very detailed and draining to think about, so if there is confusion with the topic or main goal then the assignment becomes difficult. There could use to almost be less examples on the site because that can lead to confusion with the template or layout of an assignment. I loved the class activities that we participated in, and when we got to use group or partner work. I wish there was more time spent on the beginning material and the cycle information.

h) This class is an introduction to action research. It will challenge your preconceived notions around research and challenge your thinking on a number of levels. While there are times you may be frustrated with some parts of the class, I've recognized after going through it all that it was a nuanced reflection process, that forces one to think about their thinking, why they decided they wanted to work on the specific topic, what the expected outcomes were and what we find ourselves continuously learning as part of the process. While I found myself confused and frustrated at time because I reverted to the normal mentality of getting the assignment done to get the grade, I later saw it as my own cycles and epicycles of learning and becoming a researcher.

i) If you want to develop yourself, think deeper, reflect on the situations around you, develop your self-confidence and courage, this course is for you.

j) CRCRTH 693 is a course that attracts graduate students from a variety of fields who have an interest in doing research that is intended to actually achieve change in the real world. Theoretical models of action research are married with concrete resources that allow the student to leave the course ably armed with tools to apply to problems in his/her own life. With a goal of developing an action research plan by the end of the semester, each week builds on the week before to create the effect of a journey of discovery and development from which the plan almost organically emerges. Students should enter the course with some problems or questions that action research could address. An email to the student in advance to stimulate thinking is helpful.

I give permission for my response to Question 4 to be included anonymously in the compilation posted to the CCT wiki (and thus viewable to the public).

a) Yes
b) Yes
c) Yes
d) Yes
e) No
f) Yes

g) No
h) Yes
i) Yes
j) Yes

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

a) 5
b) 4
c) 4
d) 5
e) 3
f) 4
g) 3
h) 4
i) 5
j) 5

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

a) 5
b) 4
c) 4
d) 5
e) 4
f) 5
g) 4
h) 5
i) 5
j) 5