

**CONF 642, Integration of Theory Research and Practice,
Spring 2011 Section 1, Monday 4:30-7:10
Truland 647**

Objectives

One of the great challenges of working in a developing field is to bring together the various initiatives and experiments that emerge as scholars and practitioners try out new ways of thinking and acting so that they might break into the new territory. For the student, it can be a bewildering and sometimes frustrating experience to try to piece together these various often half-articulated components into a meaningful whole. To help you to do that is the purpose of this integration class. To cope with the necessarily complex nature of a new field like ours, we will build an integration process of your master's experience from the ground up and not the top down. The class will not express *my* view of what *I* think you *should* have experienced as a Master's student at ICAR; rather it will build on your own accumulations of examples of best practice in three areas: theory, research and practice. These three areas are the categories of instruction and scholarly effort that we have committed to as a field and which should have in some way characterized your experience here in the program. We will use the vehicle of the small group (four groups of five in all) to pore through our own instruction archives to share with our colleagues what our own experience at ICAR has been and how we might weave the pieces together into a meaningful whole. Your own experience will serve as both the warp and woof of the field as it really is confronted on the ground. The guidance of the instructor will be crucial as a catalyst, but it will be your own reflections that will make the class successful. At semester's end, you should be able to look back on your own experience and conceive of it as a meaningful whole that was worthy of your years of effort in pursuing it.

Instructor and Office Hours

This section of the course is taught by Solon Simmons, who can be reached at ssimmon5@gmu.edu. Office hours will be held in the Truland building on Wednesday at 6-7:15 PM.

Graded Exercises and Related Matters

We will organize the class into three larger blocks of instruction that will correspond to the categories of scholarship I described above: theory research and practice. Each group of five students will be responsible for developing reading materials for the whole group in each of these areas. So, for example, your group will provide three instructional

portfolios, one dedicated to CAR theory, one to CAR research, and one to CAR practice. A portfolio will consist of reading materials that can take many forms. These may be a paper you read for a class, a paper you wrote for a class, a set of weblinks that tell a kind of story, video material, conference materials, or other more creative forms. The only restriction on your choices is that these can be made available to all students in the class one week before they are to be discussed. This means that materials for the first substantive session would be due on the *ning* network on February 9 (I will provide three reading samples for the February 2 section that address each of the three substantive areas). Participation for this part of the course will be graded for the group as a whole (with allowance for individual variation as the case demands) and will account for 40% of the grade. At the end of each block of instruction, each student will write a short (6-8 pages) synthetic paper in which he or she will reflect on the nature of that aspect of the ICAR experience as it played out in their own experience. Note that in many cases, this may mean that you volunteer your own work for sharing. Given that there are three blocks of instruction, one for theory research and practice respectively, there will be three short papers required from each student. These will each be worth 20% of the grade.

Course Materials

All course materials will be made available on the ICAR community web forum, also known as *ning*. Apart from the first substantive section on February 2, all materials will be collected and posted by the student groups themselves. This places a burden of responsibility on the students to make sure that their peers have ample opportunity to process those materials before class. Therefore, materials will be due by class time the week prior to their use. For example, week four materials are due on *ning* by the beginning of week three of class. It may make sense for each of four groups to consider themes that emerge in the materials they gather. This could be helpful in facilitating general discussion and also in helping students to develop their own synthetic views about theory, research and practice in their individual papers due at the beginning of each new block of instruction (or after terms end in the case of practice).

Course Schedule

Session 1: January 24

Introduction to the course

We will cover the class structure, development of materials and provide an overview of what is in store.

Session 2: January 31

Example reading materials provided by instructor on all three blocks: theory, research and practice. In some cases the lines between the categories will not be clear cut, and you may find the same in your own experience.

BLOCK 1: THEORY

Session 3: February 7

Group one's materials discussed

Session 4: February 14

Group two's materials discussed

Session 5: February 21

Group three's materials discussed

Session 6: February 28

Group four's materials discussed

BLOCK 2: RESEARCH

Session 7: March 7 (*Synthetic paper on Theory due*)

Group one's materials discussed

Session 8: March 21

Group two's materials discussed

Session 9: March 28

Group three's materials discussed

Session 10: April 4

Group four's materials discussed

BLOCK 3: PRACTICE

Session 11: April 11* (*Synthetic paper on Research due*)

Group one's materials discussed

Session 12: April 18

Group two's materials discussed

Session 13: April 25

Group three's materials discussed

Session 14: May 2

Group four's materials discussed

**FINAL SYNTHETIC PAPER ON PAPER ON *PRACTICE* DUE ONE WEEK
AFTER THE LAST DAY OF CLASS ON MAY 9th**