

## 11.237 Participatory Action Research (PAR) 2 Spring 2019

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 to 6:30 PM in 9-451

Prerequisite: Permission of the instructors  
Units: 3-0-3

### INSTRUCTORS

**Dayna Cunningham, Esq**  
MIT CoLab 9-238  
Phone: 646-327-3770  
Email: [dayna@mit.edu](mailto:dayna@mit.edu)

**Katrin Kaeufer, PhD**  
MIT CoLab 9-238  
Phone: 617-253-3216  
Email: [kaeuffer@mit.edu](mailto:kaeuffer@mit.edu)

**TA: Antonio Moya-Latorre**  
MIT CoLab 9-238  
Phone: 617 710 2861  
Email: [amola@mit.edu](mailto:amola@mit.edu)

### STELLAR SITE

<http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/11/sp19/11.237/>

First class will meet on Tuesday, February 5, 2018 and the course will run for 7 weeks.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is an approach to research and inquiry that enables communities to examine and address consequential societal problems. In bringing together community researchers and academics to investigate a consequential social problem and determine what ought to be done, PAR seeks to transform existing unequal power relationships between marginalized groups and those traditionally considered “expert” researchers. This seven-week module builds on Participatory Action Research (PAR) 1. This module seeks to deepen our exploration of knowledge co-production with communities, focusing on: co-designing and co-conducting research with community partners at various stages of the research process; actual cases in which PAR-like methods have been used with greater or lesser success; and interaction with community members, organizations, and individuals who have been involved in PAR collaborations. As part of this course, students will be expected to produce a PAR research proposal together with a community partner. (Students may take PAR 1 and PAR 2 in any order.)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Class meetings:** The class will meet for 1.5 hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00 to 6:30 PM from February 5<sup>th</sup> through March 21<sup>nd</sup>. Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively in class discussions and activities.

**Reading Assignments:** Readings will be available on Stellar. Please check the Stellar site and email communications from the teaching team on a regular basis; additional readings may be posted as the semester progresses.

**Assignments & Expectations:** The teaching team and the MIT Community Innovator's Lab are involved in building a body of knowledge about PAR as a core democratic capacity and a critical practice in efforts for building economic democracy and self-determination. Through active engagement in class discussions and through quality written assignments/presentations, we expect students to play a role in helping to explore and build this body of knowledge. Over the course of the semester students will be expected to produce the following:

1. **Journal:** Students will be required to journal on a weekly basis, responding to questions posed by the teaching team. The journaling will include reflections on the evolution of the project with the organization they are working with. Students will deliver the complete journal at CoLab's office (9-238) on **March 22nd**.
2. **PAR Proposal:** Students will work in teams to co-produce a PAR research proposal with a community partner, oriented toward addressing a consequential question in the partner's work. While it is not possible to actually carry out PAR within a 6-week time frame, the purpose of this assignment is to think through the design of a PAR process and apply that to the specific context and questions of a community partner. We expect students to draw on class readings and discussions, any of their own experiences with participatory research or planning, background materials on the partner's work, as well as co-production sessions with the partner to craft a proposal that responds to the specific needs, priorities, and interests of the partner.
  - Draft Due: Student teams and community partners will agree on a date to submit a draft proposal for the partner to review. The draft should be submitted to both the partner and the teaching team.
  - Final Presentation: March 19 & 21. Student teams will present the PAR proposals they developed with community partners. The presentation should include an overview of the proposal's content, reflections on the co-production process, and references to the PAR theory and cases we discuss in class.
  - Final Due: April 4 (two weeks after the last class session).

Further directions for each of these assignments will be given in class.

**Grading:**

Active participation:	25%
Journaling:	20%
PAR Proposal (draft & final):	35%
Final Presentation:	20%

**Office Hours:** The teaching team will offer weekly office hours to meet students individually or in groups (TBD). Office hours are also available by appointment. Please reach out via email to schedule a time.

**Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform in class, please see one of the instructors early in the semester so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself, (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, or (3) cheat on an exam. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possibly even suspension from MIT. Please see Dayna Cunningham if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating will be reported in line with recognized university procedures.

**Final Exam:** There will be no final exam.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This year, students will be working with partners both in the Boston Area and New York City.

1. [AgitArte](#): “AgitArte is an organization of working class artists and cultural organizers who create projects and practices of cultural solidarity with grassroots struggles against oppression, and propose alternatives that generate possibilities for transformations in our world. We initiate and lead community-based educational and arts programs, along with projects that agitate in the struggles for liberation.”
2. [Urbano Project](#): “Urbano is a non profit art space that brings together practicing visual artists, local youth, and community members to learn and experiment through place-based projects. We foster public and participatory art as a vehicle for personal transformation, community cohesion, and social change. Our projects consist of [Artists in Residence](#), Youth Projects, Apprentices, and Workshops all of which intersect around an annual curatorial theme.”
3. [BCDI](#): “The Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI) is a community-led effort to build an equitable, sustainable, and democratic local economy that creates wealth and ownership for low-income people of color—what we call economic democracy.”
4. [La Colmena](#): “La Colmena is a community-based organization working with day laborers, domestic workers, and other low-wage immigrant workers in Staten Island, New York, through organizing, education, culture, and equitable economic development. The Ñani Migrante (Migrant Brother in Mixtec language) project emerged in 2013 with the objective of promoting actions of family reunification, cultural promotion, economic justice and access to rights, through the organization, education and collaboration of migrants natives of San Jerónimo Xayacatlán, Puebla (Mexico) with their community of origin.”
5. [Beth Mount & Learning Institute](#): “My life work of four decades is devoted to the possibility that all people, particularly those with disabilities, are seen in the light of their capacities and potential. My community works steadily on many aspects of personal, neighborhood, organizational, and cultural change so that the hopes expressed by people and their allies have some concrete impact on the structures of society. I stitch together symbols and patterns of the longings, joys, struggles, and beauty of thousands of people who are learning how to bring the gifts of every person to life and to create a more inclusive community by doing so. This work has affirmed in me the belief that all people have gifts to bring, and that the fabric of community is strengthened when we incorporate the capacities of “labeled” people into the civic life of all.”

Other partners will be confirmed depending on the total number of registered students.

## SYLLABUS

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### **CLASS 1. Tuesday, February 5:**

#### **DEFINITION OF PAR AND OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE**

What is Participatory Action Research, and what is its relationship to democracy & social justice? What are the methods that we can consider in a PAR process? Overview of syllabus, partners, and course expectations.

#### **Required Reading:**

Greenwood & Levin (2007), Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. *Chapters 4 & 5* (pp. 55-88)

PAR Maps produced by students during the Fall class

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### **CLASS 2. Thursday, February 7:**

#### **PAR THEORY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

For students who have not taken the first semester Theory course, or students who want a quick refresher, this session reprises the key theoretical pillars of PAR. Can a field grounded in social action be a legitimate science? What is knowledge and how is it created? What is the relationship between knowledge, power, agency and democracy?

#### **Required Reading:**

Freire, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Chapter 2.

Appadurai, A. (2006) "The Right to Research," *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 4(2): 167-177.

Glassman, Michael & Patton, Rikki (2015). "Capability Through Participatory Democracy: Sen, Freire, and Dewey," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46(12): 1353-1365

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### **CLASS 3. Tuesday, February 12:**

#### **METHODS 1: THE CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS**

What does co-producing knowledge between community and academic researchers entail in practice? What needs to be in place to enable genuine co-production of knowledge? How do PAR researchers address and engage issues of power, perceived legitimacy, and difference? Who brings what type of knowledge and expertise to a PAR process? What are the roles of the co-researchers engaged in a PAR process? How do we engage identity and positionality? What considerations, challenges, and potentials does an activist approach to research raise for PAR practitioners?

**Required Reading:**

Greenwood, D. & Levin, M. (2007) "Social Science Research Techniques, Work Forms, and Research Strategies in Action Research." In *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (pp. 89-101). Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks.

Pulido, L. "FAQ: Frequently (un)Asked Questions about Being a Scholar Activist," in: Charles Hale, ed., (2008) *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, pp. 341-365. University of California Press: Berkeley.

**Case Study**

Ayala, J. (2009) "Split Scenes, Converging Visions: The Ethical Terrains Where PAR and Borderlands Scholarship Meet," *Urban Review*, 41: 66-84.

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**CLASS 4. Thursday, February 14****WORKING SESSION 1 & GUEST PARTNERS****Guest Partners (TBC)**

Dey Hernández, [AgitArte](#).

Stella Aguirre, [Urbano Project](#).

Katherine Mella, [BCDI](#).

Gonzalo Mercado, [La Colmena](#).

**Required Reading:**

TBD

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**CLASS 5. Thursday, February 21:****METHODS 2: MIXED METHODS (QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE)**

PAR involves and requires disciplined inquiry. How are qualitative and quantitative methods used in the co-production process? How do PAR practitioners determine methods appropriate to the specific context they are working in? In PAR, how do academic and community researchers make sense of their findings collectively and collaboratively?

**Required Reading:**

Manijeh Badiee, S. & Creswell, J. (2012) "Designing community-based mixed methods research". In *Qualitative Strategies for Ethnocultural Research*. Ed.: D. K. Nagata, L. Kohn-Wood, and L. A. Suzuki. American Psychological Association.

### **Case Study**

Feilzer, M. Y. (2009). "Doing Mixed Methods Research Pragmatically: Implications for the Rediscovery of Pragmatism as a Research Paradigm." In *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 4(1), (pp. 6-16)

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### **CLASS 6. Tuesday, February 26:**

#### **METHODS 3: NARRATIVES**

As some of the most basic forms of human communication, storytelling and narrative are powerful tools for communicating and making sense of reality, as well as advancing struggles for social justice. How can we harvest knowledge from storytelling and what challenges arise in relation to interpretation and meaning-making?

#### **Required Reading**

Landman, T. (2012) "Phronesis and Narrative Analysis" in Flyvberg et al. Eds., *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis* (pp. 27-47). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

### **Case Study**

James, D. (2000) "Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Meatpacking Community." In *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (pp. 120-142). Duke University Press: Durham.

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### **CLASS 7. Thursday, February 28:**

#### **WORKING SESSION 2 & GUEST SPEAKER**

#### **Guest Speaker**

Beth Mount, [Learning Institute](#) (TBC)

#### **Required Reading:**

TBD

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### **CLASS 8. Tuesday, March 5:**

#### **METHODS 4: SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES**

This class will look at the "knowing - doing gap": why do we collectively create results that nobody individually wants. Social Technologies address this gap. They provide methods, tools and techniques that allow to overcome this gap.

## Required Reading

Scharmer, O, & Kaeufer, K. (2015) “Awareness-Based Action Research: Catching Social Reality Creation in Flight,” in Hilary Bradbury, Ed., *Sage Handbook of Action Research, Third Edition* Sage Publications: London. (pp. 198-209).

Scharmer, O. (2008) “Theory U—Form Follows Consciousness”. In *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco. (pp. 16-32)

## Case Study

Bergeron, J. [Hungry for Words—The Power of Communication](#). Presencing Institute.

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## CLASS 9. Thursday, March 7:

### METHODS 5: OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING

What can a research orientation that recognizes epistemological diversity open up in terms of production of knowledge and the ability of communities to take action on consequential problems? What methods allow PAR practitioners to engage these “other ways of knowing” that have been historically marginalized by the academy and excluded from the research enterprise?

### Required Reading:

Abram, D. (1996) “The Forgetting and Remembering of the Air.” In *The Spell of the Sensuous*. (pp. 225-260)

de Sousa Santos, B. “Opening Up the Canon of Knowledge.” In *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. Verso: London.

### Case Study:

Presencing Institute. (2018) [Social Presencing Theater in Education](#)

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## CLASS 10. Tuesday, March 12:

### METHODS 6: ETHICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

What ethical dilemmas arise in research and the practice of PAR? What is the role of the Institutional Review Board and what tensions/differences exist between IRB protocols and the agreements and practices developed with community partners? How do PAR practitioners deal with differences in power and incentives? What practices and mechanisms do academic PAR researchers use to stay accountable to community researchers?

### Required Reading:

Tuck, E. & Guishard, M. “Uncollapsing Ethics: Racialized Sciencism, Settler Coloniality, and an Ethical Framework for Decolonial Participatory Action Research,” in: Tricia M. Kress et al., eds., (2013) *Challenging Status Quo Retrenchment: New Directions in Critical Research*, Information Age Publishing Inc.

**Case Study:**

Tang, S. (2008) "Community-Centered Research as Knowledge/Capacity Building in Immigrant and Refugee Communities." In Charles Hale, Ed., *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, pp. 237-264. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Gordon, E., Racine, L. & D'Ignazio, C. "[A Community Approach to Research Partnerships](#)" & "[Memorandum of Understanding for Mutually Beneficial Research](#)," Engagement Lab @ Emerson College.

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**CLASS 11. Thursday, March 14:  
WORKING SESSION 3 & PROJECT DISCUSSION****Presentation:**

Antonio Moya-Latorre: *The Fazendinha Project*. São Paulo, Brazil.

**Required Reading:**

Moya-Latorre, A. (2018) [Art and participation in Jardim Colombo. A culture-oriented approach towards the transformation of a community in the margins](#). In UD:ID. Harvard GSD.

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**CLASS 12. Tuesday, March 19:  
FINAL PRESENTATIONS****Required Reading:**

Presentation Slides

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**CLASS 13. Thursday, March 21:  
FINAL PRESENTATIONS & GROUP REFLECTION****Required Reading:**

Presentation Slides

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