

## CAP Research Seminar Syllabus

Ignorance, the root and the stem of every evil. –*Plato*

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. –*Galileo*

I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance. –*Socrates*

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect. –*Mark Twain*

The only thing that is constant is change. –*Heraclitus*

Welcome to an exciting semester of CAP Research Seminar!!! Since I started teaching this course almost two decades ago, dramatic changes have occurred in many areas of human existence—changes in our values, behaviors, organizations, institutions, relationships and consciousness itself. And yet, *the more things change, the more they have stayed the same*. We find ourselves still confounded by problems that have existed for centuries. CAP Research, like the rest of us, finds itself in the middle of this paradox. This class has undergone many changes in the last decade, and there are more in store this year. But while the means and activities may change, the desired ends mostly remain the same. Course goals may not be apparent to you all at once, but I'm hopeful that each of you bring your own goals and interests and that you are given the space and time to explore them.

Whatever changes we make, we will continue to explore what it means to *know stuff*. Research helps us *know stuff*. Our first task this semester will be to develop good **intellectual habits of mind**. *What steps and processes are necessary to arrive at knowledge?* We will put these intellectual habits to work exploring various topics in order to help you develop your own **conceptual framework**. *What do you understand about these issues and how can you connect that knowledge into a coherent system?* **Research** will be present throughout the course—sometimes at the forefront as we explore research methodology directly.

To support our research this semester, we will employ three elements that are essential to our pursuit of knowledge. We begin with **Questions**. *Only Questions* can guide our learning. Little of value is ever learned *and retained* by students without a curiosity that burns from within. The research process begins with a good question.

Once we have settled on a body of Questions to explore, there must be some mechanism through which we seek answers. Besides research, another process we will use to answer our questions is **Dialogue**. We are social beings. And thus we construct knowledge socially. Much of our class time will be spent in Dialogue. Dialogue is critical to truly understanding perspectives and ideas.

The last element of greatest importance to our work this semester is **Reflection**. While Dialogue is primarily a social endeavor, Reflection is a personal one. Reflection is the process of identifying and analyzing the source of our beliefs. We may derive and reflect on new ideas to see how they fit within our conceptual framework. Reflection helps us define our purpose. And through Reflection, we construct our collective and individual identities.

## Course Material

### I. Foundations of Knowledge and Habits of Mind

Epistemology, Skepticism, Inquiry, Elements and Ways of Thinking, Intellectual Traits

### II. Research Methodology and Skills

Foundations of Research, Research Design, Sourcing, Ethics, Literature Analysis and Review

### III. “21<sup>st</sup> Century” and Career Skills

Self-direction, Collaboration, Communication, Information Literacy, Leadership, Project Management

### IV. Organic and important topics

Education, Technology, Inequality, Communication, Society, College, Humanism...

## Grading System:

Your grade will be based on total points. There are no categories. Assignments and activities that will require greater time and effort will be worth more than assignments that take less time and effort. *Focus on the learning and the grade will take care of itself.*

## Make-up work, Late work, and Re-assessment Policy:

- A. Make-up work (absence)—To find out what assignments were missed during a legal absence, check Google Classroom first. If questions still exist, consult the teacher and other classmates. You will be granted a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.
- B. Late Work—All work is expected to be turned in on the assigned due date. The deadline for turning in late work is one class period after the original due date for blocked classes and two class periods for 9<sup>th</sup> period. Work submitted after the due date will have a 10% deduction in total points. No work will be accepted for a grade after the two-class-period deadline.
- C. Re-assessed work—Only assignments completed and submitted by the due date will be available for re-assessment. Students will be told in advance which assignments are available for re-assessment. The student must meet with the teacher prior to reassessing any work.
- D. 50% Rule—Students will not receive any grade lower than 50% for any assignment if basic requirements are met. The MCPS Grading and Reporting regulation says, “If a teacher determines the student did not attempt to meet the basic requirements of the task/assessment or the student engaged in academic dishonesty, the teacher may assign a zero.”

Students, I care deeply about your success in this class and will do everything in my power to enable you to be successful. I will make myself available to you after school and during lunch by appointment. Make plans to get help before it's too late. You may also contact me by email at-- [kevin.m.shindel@mcpsmd.net](mailto:kevin.m.shindel@mcpsmd.net)

## **Research is an ORGANIZED and SYSTEMATIC way of FINDING ANSWERS to QUESTIONS.**

**SYSTEMATIC** because there is a definite set of procedures and steps which you will follow. There are certain things in the research process which are always done in order to get the most accurate results.

**ORGANIZED** in that there is a structure or method in going about doing research. It is a planned procedure, not a spontaneous one. It is focused and limited to a specific scope.

**FINDING ANSWERS** is the end of all research. Whether it is the answer to a hypothesis or even a simple question, research is successful when we find answers. Sometimes the answer is no, but it is still an answer.

**QUESTIONS** are central to research. If there is no question, then the answer is of no use. Research is focused on relevant, useful, and important questions. Without a question, research has no focus, drive, or purpose.