OVERVIEW

In a single coaching session with a client, an artful coach coordinates a complex set of skills that come together in an improvisational conversational dance with the client. While listening closely, a coach must also simultaneously observe multiple data points beyond the conversational content. She must observe subtle shifts in energy and emotion in both her client and herself. She holds the client’s agenda while staying open to what unfolds, and makes decisions about which response will have the most impact for the client. The coach connects multiple themes and ideas from both present and past conversations. She also seeks her client’s perspectives without making judgments, while observing and lightly holding her own perspectives. All this is done while being in the moment and fully present to her client, as well as her own thoughts, feelings, somatic reactions. How does one embody this complex choreography?

(Potter, 2017)


This course focuses on building participants’ foundational coaching skills and the theories that underpin adult learning and coaching. Participants will recursively dive deeply into the experiential aspects of coaching and engage in individual and group reflection. Students will review and assess current theories as they relate to coaching. Finally, each student will conduct application experiments in service to integrating coaching into their work interactions. In doing so, participants will learn to use a coaching approach within select interactions, and also demonstrate a theoretical understanding for what coaching is (and isn’t).

I. Knowledge and Understanding

- Understand the differences and overlaps between coaching, consulting, training, and mentoring
- Understand the current state of the coaching field and its relationship to OD
- Understand theories that serve as a foundation for coaching
• Comprehend the ways in which one’s own learning style influences one’s coaching
• Understand the role of psychological safety in establishing a coaching partnership
• Demonstrate critical thinking in terms of ethical boundaries in coaching
• Undertake regular critical reflection and assessment of one’s coaching performances
• See the complexity of coaching through the lens of eight dialectical tensions

II. Professional Development
• Mindfulness
• Somatic awareness
• Self-awareness
• Other/social-awareness
• Suspension (increased ability to notice and suspend judgments and inferences)
• Coaching Presence (learning from the moment, in service to the future)
• Reflection-in-action

III. Skills
• Demonstrate a basic coaching skill level
• Use one’s thoughts, feelings, and reactions in service to interactions
• Facilitate another person’s reflection and insight
• Hold a psychologically safe space for others
• Use complex judgement and decision making
• Writing and communication skills

READINGS

Required Text:


Recommended Books:
(We will read excerpts from these books. You may want to add them in your professional library. The book on dialogic OD will be used in the Advanced Coaching & Organization Development course which will come later in the program.)


Required Readings and materials (articles, videos and book chapters):  
(These will be made available to you on Blackboard)


Potter, P. M. (2018). Becoming a Coach: Experiential learning as a theoretical foundation in coaching. Unpublished article. (final draft article for publication by class time)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION
The course requirements include the following (fuller descriptions of assignments will be handed out in class at appropriate times):

1) Final PRAE: 50% (not letter graded)
2) Participation and engagement with the materials and in-class exercises, including being present and engaged in class discussions as well as the coaching practice, adopting an inquiry orientation, staying current on readings, enriching class discussions: 35%
3) Online submissions completed outside of class: 15%
4) Journaling is assigned in service to your final paper, but is not graded (see below)

Please note that full attendance and participation in class meetings is essential. If due to unavoidable circumstances you need to miss a class or part of a class, I request that you communicate with me as far in advance as possible. Please note that due to the large proportion of class time represented by each class period, and as per: official ODKM policy, it is not possible to miss more than one class period and still receive passing credit in the course. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out what was covered and to make up what you missed.

Note: Appropriate effort and approach participation means that the use of cell phones, text messaging devices, email, web-browsing, computers and so on are NOT permitted to be used in class, unless being used with explicit group request or consensus to support the collective class work or for officially approved special needs. If you must use your text messaging device, etc. for an emergency, please take it outside of the classroom.

CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN OUR CLASSROOM
As part of developing our own coaching skills, and in support of creating an enriching and generative learning experience for everyone in the classroom, please attend to the quality of how we talk with one another, in support our own and each other’s learning. Some suggestions: Focus on developing curiosity and inquiry skills as replacements for judgment and advocacy in class and coaching conversations. Use an appreciative lens when providing coaching and feedback. Maintain a focus on your own coaching strengths and growth edges.

WEEKLY READINGS AND CLASS SESSIONS:

Class 1: Friday, August 24

Topics: Coaching Overview. In this class we will cover the basics of coaching, including its history, various definitions, and the current state of the profession. We will also discuss and practice basic coaching skills.

- What is coaching and how does it differ from consulting, training, and mentoring
- Development of the field of coaching
- Levels of listening
- Use and purpose of curiosity and inquiry in coaching
- Coaching practice
Readings:


Assignment (Due Date, Time): Watch the following videos and reflect online about your experience coaching in this class:

1. Shining Eyes. Benjamin Zander (14 mins) YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS-YYhoyBMo
2. Backwards Bicycle. YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFzDaBzBIL0
3. Journal about your experience in class. What was easy? What was challenging? What was your reaction[s]? Post a reflection on your experiences, how they relate to any of the readings, and respond to at least two other postings

Class 2: Friday, September 20

Topic - Adult Learning in Coaching. Being a relatively new field, coaching has borrowed theories from other professions. Given that coaching is a skill that facilitates others' own self-directed learning, we will focus on three adult learning theories and the ways in which they may be applied in coaching.

- Transformative learning
- Experiential learning
- Conversational learning
- Coaching dialectics
- Coaching practice
Readings:


Potter, P. M. (2018). Becoming a Coach: Experiential learning as a theoretical foundation in coaching. Unpublished article. (proposal in review; may be updated to a published article by class time)


Assignments:

1. Journal about your experience in class. What was easy? What was challenging? What was your reaction[s]?
2. Post a reflection on your experience, how it relates to any of the readings, and respond to at least two other postings

Class 3: Friday, October 4

Topic: Coaching the Whole Person. In coaching, it is easy to be distracted with trying to coach our client’s dilemmas, and lose site of the whole person. In this class, we will learn to “soften our view” and, with curiosity, listen to the subtexts of our clients’ stories, sense their energy and emotions, and conceptualize their values. At the same time, we will practice noticing the same in ourselves.

- Self and other awareness: body, language, moods, and emotions
- Suspension & Presence in coaching
- Creating awareness with metaphors and mirroring
- Coaching practice

Readings:


Assignments:

1. Journal about your experience in class. What was easy? What was challenging? What was your reaction[s]?
2. Post a reflection on your experience, how it relates to any of the readings, and respond to at least two other postings.

Class 4: Saturday, October 26

Topic: Identity and Transitions. We are not one identity. We consistently lean on our identities for stability and a sense of belonging – this is where I fit in the world. At the same time, as we interact with our environments, our identities are constantly updating. In this class, we will explore with one another the ways in which we’ve constructed our own identities, and the ways our identities have constructed us.

- Identity construction
- Subject/object shifts
- Gender, race, cultural identities
- Liminality in identity transition

Readings:


Assignments:

1. Journal about your experience in class and with your group.
2. Post a reflection on your experience and response to at least two other postings

Class 5: Friday, November 8

Topic: Seeing the client in their system[s]. What our clients are able to live into and accomplish has as much to do with the systems in which s/he is situated as our own knowledge, skills, abilities, and initiative. Additionally, being in the system ourselves is not the same as understanding its impact through our
client’s own experience and histories. In this class, we will focus on noticing what the client notices, and perhaps help them to see with a wider lens and/or see the system differently.

- Locating the client in the organizational system
- Recognize polarities in the system
- Systems listening

Readings:


Assignment:

1. Continue to work on your PRAE, due no later than December 10.

Class 6: Saturday, December 7
Topic: Final practicum and reflections. Reading about coaching is not the same as being a coach. In this final class you will put together all you have learned to enact coaching.

ASSIGNMENTS

Ongoing Reflection & Journaling
As you do your readings and engage with the course keep a journal in which you reflect on whatever you find most valuable, including the following:

1. Did you have any emotional reactions while reading/viewing/participating? If so, what and how strong was your reaction, and what were you reacting to? When you reflect back later, do you see or feel any differently? What about if you try on different perspectives (which, and with what effects?)

2. What synergies, tensions, syntheses or new learning have you experienced when you look back after completing the work for the class? After discussing all of it in class? Try to reflect from varied perspectives.

Online Conversational Space
Within 10-days of class, post reflections, insights, questions, challenges on Blackboard. Respond to at least two other posts within 5 days of the next class. Please engage in making substantive, thoughtful, and comments practice respectful inquiry and good coaching skills that reflect your reading of
course materials. Please focus on exploring previous assumptions, learning from each other’s ideas and perspectives, and sharing your related personal experience.

**PRAE** (Due by December 10)
Your PRAE should be about one classroom coaching experience or a distillation of several experiences that led you to insight, seeing with a fresh perspective. Your paper should be no longer than 12 pages. You do not have to select themes for the AC, but simply use the texts to make sense of your CE and RO. I encourage you to begin writing as soon as you have an experience that you can write about. You are expected to follow APA format for all assignments.

**Grading**
The following scale will be used to determine your grade out of a total of 100 points.

- 98-100 = A+
- 92 – 97.99 = A
- 90 - 91.99 = A-
- 86 - 89.99 = B+
- 83 - 85.99 = B
- 80 - 82.99 = B-
- 70 - 79.99 = C
- Below 69.99 = F
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

GMU Writing Center. I would encourage you to make use of the GMU Writing Center while you’re here (regardless of how well you write), since getting feedback on writing is often a great learning opportunity and one that’s harder to come by once you leave school. The writing center info can be found online at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/. Their Arlington location is in the Original Building, room 311: 703-993-4491. For updated information please check for their hours on their website.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you are a student with special needs that require academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703 993-2474 as early as possible. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC and must be prospective rather than retrospective.

Class Meetings and Missed Classes. Please note that on-time attendance in class meetings is essential due to the experiential nature of this class. If you must miss a class, you can maintain your participation grade by submitting a 45 minute recording of a coaching conversation with a classmate (or approved other person) and an essay that incorporates your reflection on the coaching conversation and applying the readings for that week (2-3 pages single spaced).

Honor Code: GMU has an honor code and all students are required to know and abide by it. The information is located at: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/

PLAGIARISM: All submitted work must be your own, and it is imperative that you accurately cite all sources in your work.
GMU has an official university policy on plagiarism that can be found at: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/  

- Please note that in addition to the GMU policies, ODKM has a policy that if you reuse any of your own work in or for this class, you must amply cite the earlier uses of the material, and you may not reuse substantive portions of earlier work without prior permission from me.
- Violations of plagiarism policies can result in expulsion from the university.
- Note that ignorance of the policies is not a defense, so please familiarize yourself with what plagiarism is and how to ensure that you don’t commit it. If you have any questions about what constitutes the appropriate use and citation of sources, please talk with me.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School of Policy & Government takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero-tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the
student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Note that most cases of plagiarism are unintentional, but are plagiarism nonetheless and carry all the consequences. Here are a few tips to help you avoid making such a serious mistake:

- As a rough guide, if you use three or more consecutive words from a source, use direct quotation marks around the text and cite it (see a style manual for citation guidelines). Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks, with references to the corresponding source and page number(s). Images, data and charts must also be cited and referenced.
- If you use ideas, data, or other material from a source but put it in your own words (paraphrasing), then you must reference the source materials with in-text citations.
- All direct quotations and all paraphrased ideas and data need to be cited in the text where they appear (can be with footnotes, endnotes, or in-text parentheses depending on your manual of style), with a bibliographic entry at the end.
- These requirements apply to all forms of submission or presentations (including oral presentations), and all kinds of sources, including material drawn from the internet.
- IN YOUR NOTES AND ALL WRITING/PRESENTATIONS, to protect yourself from unintentional plagiarism, ALWAYS 1) take the time when copying notes to put quotation marks around direct quotations (and then copy the quoted material accurately – you can use ellipses (...) to skip parts of the quotation and brackets ([ ]) to change specific words such as replacing “He” with “[The informant]” to clarify references, etc.); 2) clearly distinguish direct quotations from paraphrases in your notes so that it’s clear what is your language and what isn’t; 3) clearly distinguish paraphrases of others’ ideas and data from your own original ideas and data so it’s clear in your notes what are your original ideas and what is drawn from others – this is easy to forget over time.
- In sum, always make clear which language and ideas come from which sources, vs. which are your own original ideas, & cite all direct quotations & all paraphrases clearly, fully & appropriately.