Introduction to Research: Purposes, Issues, and Methodologies

Course Description

This is an introductory course to educational research in which you will learn how to make use of educational resources and how to carry out educational research to address educational issues that interest you. This course addresses some important concepts, principles and issues that are relevant to various educational processes by means of reading and discussing multiple frameworks that underlie educational research literature. Throughout the course, you are required to carry out several tasks that help you understand research procedures to become an informed consumer of educational research. I will use several different teaching methods, including lecture, class and group discussion, students’ presentation and demonstration.

Instructor Information

Yo-An Lee, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
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(Email) ylee19@depaul.edu
Office hour: Monday & Wednesday 4-5

Goals

By the end of this course,
• You will gain knowledge of the basic principles and rationales for different types of educational research.
• You will become informed of the multiple frameworks in educational research with particular emphases on their methodological features and rationales.
• You will become equipped with conceptual and analytic tools that help you to read and evaluate different types of educational research.
• You will be able to find resources to help your own teaching practices and to conduct educational research in various educational setting.
• You will gain skills that help you carry out your own research agenda and present it in an academically acceptable form.
• You will gain skills that help you write a research proposal which may lead to a full length research paper.
• In the end, I hope this course helps you become an independent thinker who knows how to pull together educational resources and to produce informed analytic reports.
Readings

Textbooks


Articles & Reports

- Ethical Standards by AERA (American Educational Research Association) [http://www.aera.net/about/policy/ethics.htm](http://www.aera.net/about/policy/ethics.htm)

Jigsaw Reading

Qualitative Research


Survey Research


Correlational Research


Experimental Research


**Course Requirements**

**Attendance & Participation**

10

**Individual Research Proposal**

50

- Preliminary Research Questions 5
- Proposal Draft 15
- Proposal Presentation 5
- Final Proposal 25

**Writing Review**

10

**Group Project**

20

- Research in Everyday Life 15
- Journal Report 5

**Class Activity**

10

**Extra Credit**

- Perfect Attendance 5

**Final Grade will be based on the accumulation of points as follows.**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>F-</td>
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**No incompletes will be given.**

**Attendance & Participation**

Class attendance is an essential part of the learning experience and an absolute requirement.

- You are allowed only one unexcused absence.
- Further absences may be excused only with the written documents to justify the absence.
- After the first absence, each absence will result in lowering one grade (A to A-, A- to B+, for example).
- Late arrivals and early departures (beyond 20 minutes) will be considered a half an absence.
- If you are absent more than 3 times, you will fail the course.
• Extra Credit (5%) will be awarded to those who have a perfect attendance without any absence, early departure and late arrival.

You are expected to participate fully in the classroom activities throughout the course. Learning takes place when there are active exchanges of ideas especially when those ideas carry informed views. Your assigned readings will provide you with necessary resources to enrich classroom discussion and activities. Your contribution to the class is absolutely critical for the success of this course.

Class discussion should take place in respectful manners without generating personal conflicts. I expect you to respect the right of your classmates to express their views on topics relevant to the course and I intend to respect that right as well. Be open and flexible to diverse opinions.

**Individual Research Proposal**

This assignment provides you with an opportunity to research an educational issue that interests you. Because research is a multi-step process, this assignment will have you go through several stages of planning research process. This involves generating research questions, doing library research, collecting reading materials, writing a research proposal and presenting it to the class. In this way, you will pursue one question/problem in depth, which will sharpen your critical thinking and help you become more informed in making use of educational resources.

**Preliminary Research Questions** (Due on September 29th)

You are going to identify three important questions that interest you. Since this is the very first step for the individual research project, you are not required to cite any scholarly papers for this task. This is just to help you pull together your interest and experience and to translate them into researchable questions. Three questions you choose could be completely different from each other: one for learning styles of high school students while others are about parents’ perception of standardized tests. Your questions could be closely relevant because you are trying to narrow down your question. For example, under the general umbrella question ‘learning styles’, you can have three different questions such as ‘Would learning styles be culturally related?’ ‘How do Hispanic students perform in class discussion?’ and etc. Write a paragraph or two for each question (100-150 words) and bring it to the class (Week 3). We’ll have poster session on September 29th in which you share your question with your classmates to solicit feedback and suggestions from each other.

**Proposal Draft** (Due on November 5th)

You are going to write a proposal draft before turning in your final draft. This draft should include the essential component of research papers, which will be covered in the course. This draft should include enough information to give me
an idea of what your research is about and how you carry out your research. Based on this draft, you will receive feedbacks from me and possibly from your classmates through classroom activity scheduled on week 9. Minimum length of the paper is 7 pages in double spaced format (1700-1800 words).

**Final Proposal** (Due on November 22\(^{nd}\)).
Your final paper should take the form of research proposal and thus contain the following components: introduction, literature review, research questions, and research methods. You need to include a detailed justification for your study illustrating why this study is important to you and what other research have found out about the issue. This is very important part of writing in that it helps you develop skills to advertise your plan effectively such that your readers would see its benefit readily. Your proposal also needs to explain the type of research methods you plan to use and how you are going to collect information. You are also asked to present your research proposal to the class for about 6-8 minutes to share what you have investigated so far.

**Proposal Grading Criteria**

Based on your report draft, you are required to write a final paper. This paper should include title, introduction, review of the literature, research methods and expected outcome. The minimum length of the paper will be 10-12 pages (2500-3000 words). The following is the evaluation criteria for student research papers.

**Thesis** (25%)
Your paper has to have a clear purpose, intention, question or problem that guides your entire writing. A clearly developed thesis will also inform your readers and audience of what you are trying to do in your research project by justifying why your thesis is important and how you address your thesis in your research. There are many different ways to deliver your thesis in your writing, so try to find your own style. Note that stating your research question once does not constitute good thesis writing. You need to develop it, by offering background information, introducing the question, illustrating, and justifying it. Your own personal experience and literature is great source to help you accomplish this task. Note that your task is to convince your readers about something that you are convinced through your research.

**Organizational Structures** (25%)
Having coherent organizational structures mean that your paper has recognizable structures that give your reader a clear roadmap of what you are doing in each section. For example, your introduction tells the reader what you want to accomplish in your paper. Literature review informs the readers of the previous research on the same issue/questions and thus how they help shape your thinking. Research method sections offers detailed information about the research subject (participants), methods of inquiry, methods of analysis for the data you have gathered. Expected outcome and conclusions tells the readers
about what you expect from your research. Pay close attention to how your writing interacts with your readers, for example, your assumption on what your readers know at a given point. This means that you will have to make an array of strategic decisions as to what to put and where to put it as you go.

**Informative (25%)**
Since you will spend a lot of time on researching your question, you will become an expert in this topic. Therefore, you want to make sure that your presentation of your research proposal is informative for your audience such that the readers/audience will learn something from your presentation. This also includes the quality of papers you reviewed in your literature review (More than 5 scholarly papers) and how you incorporated that information into your own research.

**Forms (25%)**
This criterion is concerned with the form in which the contents are presented. This includes following APA styles, eliminating mistakes, and establishing coherence. You need to pay particular attention to APA styles. Following established convention is critical not just for the academic writing, but other types of writing as well. You are strongly encouraged to follow APA style in your writing in order to make your paper consistent. Writing is one of the primary modes of academic communication and it is absolutely critical for you to write clearly.

**Writing Review (Due October 29th)**

In order to help you understand thesis writing, I will have you assume a professor’s position who teaches research courses to graduate students. You will be given two research papers written by graduate students and make comments based on the evaluation criteria for your final research paper. You are required to give a grade (25 points maximum) based on your knowledge of research method, effective academic writing and class discussion that are covered in this course. Your review should be sent to me electronically using word-processing program.

**Group Project I: Research and Everyday Life**

In Week 1 & 2, you will be asked to form a group of 4 people and choose one topic from the following list of topics. These are some questions that help you think about how research is a way of thinking and a part of our daily life. Through this activity, I want us to reflect and discuss ways to develop our knowledge and skills to become more informed consumers and producers of research. For this task, each group is to choose one scenario and to collect necessary resources to present the issue to the class. Each group has about 45 minutes to present. This includes at least 10 minute discussion session in which the presenting group will lead a class discussion based on their presentation.
I strongly encourage you to use internet to find resources for your presentation. The format of your presentation is completely up to each group. You can lecture, do a skit, role play, show video clip, do powerpoint presentation and etc. Your presentation could take any format that is most effective in delivering what your group wants to express, for example, it could be historical overview of the issue or your group can take a certain stance and make a case for it. Just try to make your presentation coherent. Your group also needs to come up with discussion questions to lead the discussion session after the presentation. This presentation will be evaluated by me and your classmate according to the following criteria: coverage (if the presentation covers all the necessary information), informative (if the presentation offers useful information about the journal) & insightful/interesting (if the presentation reflects presenters' insight and analysis).

**Issue 1 – Presentation on Week 3**

In the year 2002, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) spent about 15 billion dollars although there has been no exciting program such as Apollo. One might question if NASA program is worthy of that much taxpayer’s money. Examine NASA program in terms of research findings it generates. Define and discuss the impact of NASA research and justify or disprove its usefulness for general public. What would be the role of scientific research that NASA generates? What are the limitation and how their research would be different from other types of research? Would you support for funding for space programs?

**Issue 2 – Presentation on Week 3**

According to a Gallup poll, the half of US citizen believes UFO is a real world pheomena and has always captured imagination of the public. However, there is general lack of interest among scientists in the UFO issue. The reason for absence of curiosity seems well described by NASA’s Frosch in his reply to the White House. “…we have not been able to devise a sound scientific procedure for investigating these phenomena. To proceed on a research task without a disciplinary framework and an exploratory technique in mind would be wasteful and probably unproductive.” Examine the controversy over UFO especially in terms of research evidence and scientific procedures. Some questions you might want to consider are as follows: You may have seen many accounts of UFO sighting. Do these accounts and experiences not count as scientific evidence? What constitutes empirical and scientific evidence and what constitutes sound scientific procedures? Science seeks for truth, but what is truth? Can we ever prove ‘anything’? What evidence do we use to prove? Would one case be enough? How many is enough?

**Issue 3 – Presentation on Week 5**

In 1994, two Harvard professor, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray published a controversial book “The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life”. Examine the controversies around this book, not only its content, but the way it is presented, how it is received by the public and research community. Particulary focus should be on the role of research embedded in the controversy. What constitutes reliable research? What constitute the targeted readers? What were the public’s reactions?
**Issue 4 – Presentation on Week 5**

In January of 1800 in southern France, a 12-year old child was discovered. He was almost completely wild, without any human contact, living in the wild. Named, Victor, this wild boy of Aveyron presented enormous opportunities for psychological research. He was cared and taught by a young and ambitious physician named, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard. While Victor was an opportunity for Itard, his treatment of Victor creates problems in dealing with research subjects. Discuss the ethical concerns in this case. What role did Itard’s status play in the research and how this case manifests the issue of human rights in research? Discuss the ethical and educational implications.

**Issue 5 – Presentation on Week 6**

It seemed like an open-and-shut case. The George Holliday Video, played on television so often that an executive at CNN called it "wallpaper," showed three Los Angeles police officers--as their supervisor watched--kicking, stomping on, and beating with metal batons a seemingly defenseless African-American named Rodney King. Polls taken shortly after the incident showed that over 90% of Los Angeles residents who saw the videotape believed that the police used excessive force in arresting King. Despite the videotape, a jury in Simi Valley concluded a year later that the evidence was not sufficient to convict the officers. Within hours of the jury's verdict, Los Angeles erupted in riots. When it was over, fifty-four people had lost their lives, over 7,000 people had been arrested, and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property had been destroyed. Examine the process of trial in order to figure out how the interested parties (defender, prosecutor, media, LAPD, community) make use the available information and what types of arguments are made. What types of evidence was gathered and how were they used for what purposes? What are the roles of research each party used and how they become presented in the trial process?

**Group Project II: Data Base Review** (Presentation on October 20th)

On Week 4, we will have a library session in which you will be introduced to various data base DePaul library system has. In pair, you will be asked to choose one data base and to investigate the data base. On week 6, you will be asked to present what you have found out about the data base using the computer/internet in the class for about 5-7 minutes. You are required to prepare 1-2 page handout that summarizes the essential features of the data base you investigate. There is no writing assignment for this task. This presentation will be evaluated according to the following criteria: coverage (if the presentation covers all the necessary information), informative (if the presentation offers useful information about the journal) & insightful/interesting (if the presentation reflects presenters’ insight and analysis).
Late Assignment Policy

You are expected to submit your assignments on time. If you are using email to submit your assignment, the deadline is the midnight of the due date. I will deduct 3% of your total grade for the late assignment.

Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment &amp; Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<td>Sep 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>McMillan 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 22nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>McMillan 3</td>
<td>Research Questions Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 29th</td>
<td>Harris 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Group Presentation 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>McMillan 4</td>
<td>Library Session</td>
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<td>Oct 6th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Bogdan &amp; Biklen</td>
<td>Group Presentation 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>Oct 13th</td>
<td>AERA Ethical Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>McMillan 11</td>
<td>Data Base Review Presentation</td>
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<td>Oct 20th</td>
<td>Jigsaw – Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Group Presentation 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>McMillan 5</td>
<td>Writing Review Due on Wed (29th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 27th</td>
<td>Harris 4, 5 &amp; 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>McMillan 6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Proposal Draft Due on Wed (5th)</td>
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<td>Nov 3rd</td>
<td>Jigsaw – Survey Research</td>
<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>McMillan 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Proposal Draft Discussion</td>
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<td>Nov 10th</td>
<td>Jigsaw – Correlational Research</td>
<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>McMillan 12 &amp; 13</td>
<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 17th</td>
<td>Jigsaw – Experimental Research</td>
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A Note on Written Assignments

All written assignments are to be typed (double-spaced) with 11-12 point font and standard margins. Refer to the following website for quick review of APA Style: [http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing_Center/WCWritingRes.htm](http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing_Center/WCWritingRes.htm) & 'Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association'. (5th edition). All academic writing in education follows APA style.
Writing is one of the primary modes of academic communication and it is absolutely critical for you to write clearly. By no means, clarity is easy to accomplish because it involves a diverse array of skills, including knowledge of English structure and rhetoric, of what your audience know, and of how you organize information in writing. There are a couple of books you can refer to if you want to develop skills that help you write clearly.

*Style: Toward clarity and grace* (1995) by Joseph M. Williams
*Line by line: How to edit your own writing* (1986) by Clair K. Cook

**Note on Plagiarism**

We are often tempted to rely on others’ work without crediting them. Given the widespread and easy accessibility of electronic resources, the temptation becomes much higher. While plagiarism is a major violation of academic codes of conduct, it is very detrimental to the learning process. Any plagiarized materials will result in a failing grade. Such misconduct includes (but not limited to) the following:

- Copying directly or paraphrasing from a written source without acknowledging the original authors
- Submitting the writing works that were prepared by someone else; including papers purchased from agency or other persons.

Should this plagiarism occurs, I will follow the university-wide policy on academic integrity which you can find at [http://condor.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html](http://condor.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html)

**Electronic Resource**

*Blackboard* – Student Technology Handbook

- I will communicate with you regarding course using blackboard. I also strongly encourage you to communicate with me through blackboard.
- I will also post your grades on the blackboard as they become available so that you can see your progress during the quarter.
- Blackboard also allows you to communicate with your classmates. Take advantage of it especially for your group projects.
- I also strongly encourage you to submit your assignments using blackboard because then, I can send my feedback more quickly. What we have on blackboard will be archived once the quarter ends.
- What you need to do includes
  - You need CampusConnect user name and password
  - Log on blackboard site – [http://oll.depaul.edu](http://oll.depaul.edu)
  - Once you log on, the site is not hard to navigate.

**Library Resource**

- You will need to open your library account as soon as possible
- Visit the library in person or its website [http://www.lib.depaul.edu](http://www.lib.depaul.edu)
Students with disabilities

If you have a disability which requires accommodation in order for you to realize your potential in this course, please see me or email me as soon as possible to notify me of the accommodation you need. Or you can contact OSD (Office of Students with Disabilities). Their contact information is as follows. Karen Meyer, Coordinator (kmeyer@depaul.edu). Telephone number is 773-325-7290 and their address is 2250N. Sheffield Room 307).

ERIC Website for research topics: http://www.eric.ed.gov/

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system designed to provide ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Established in 1966, ERIC is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement and is administered by the National Library of Education (NLE).

At the heart of ERIC is the largest education database in the world-containing more than 1 million records of journal articles, research reports, curriculum and teaching guides, conference papers, and books.

The ERIC system, through its 16 subject-specific clearinghouses, associated adjunct clearinghouses, and support components, provides a variety of services and products that can help you stay up to date on a broad range of education-related issues. Products and services include research syntheses, electronic journals, online directories, reference and referral services, and document delivery.

*Explore ERIC systems especially 16 subject clearinghouses. You will find an array of resources from which you would be able to find some topics that might interest you.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/topical.html

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) has a website that lists educational topics of inquiry. As a part of US department of education, OERI conduct research, collect statistics on the status and progress of educational institutes, distribute information and provide technical assistances to educators.

Suggested Reading


