

Syllabus EDUC 6550

Research for Classroom Teachers

Spring 2005 Th, 7:15 - 9:45 pm Bowen 233

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Office Hours: M 1 – 3, Th 2 – 4, or by appointment.

Required Texts:

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, C. (2004). *A handbook for teacher research: From design to implementation*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Other readings will be available on electronic reserve.

Course Description:

EDUC 6550: Research for Classroom Teachers. Assists teachers in applying measurement issues and research methods to classroom problems; in locating, interpreting, and using research reports; and in writing research-related papers on teaching.

-- USU General Catalog, 2004-2005, p. 382

As the above catalog description indicates, this course will review methods of research useful to classroom teachers. This course will specifically center on Teacher Research (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). The reasons we wish to gain a familiarity with these methods are 1) to improve one's classroom practice, 2) to elaborate one's identity as a professional educational practitioner, and 3) to gain a competent familiarity with the larger research literatures related to education.

There will be a good deal of reading and sharing in this class. We will review the nature of scientific and academic research, the competent reviewing of such literature, the nature and limitations of quantitative methods, the nature and limitations of qualitative methods, the nature and limitations of conceptual methods, the ethics of research, and the basis for assessing quality in research.

As we shall discover, there are few clear-cut answers to our most pressing questions. Implications for classroom practice and policy are even less certain. Such is life and, yes, the nature of science. However, through reading, reflecting, writing, and discussion we should hope to become comfortably conversant with teacher research methods as means to intelligent and effective improvement of practice. At the very least, this should improve our understanding of how teaching and learning in classrooms may be improved.

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Course Design:

Given the differences between students in this course regarding location, grade level, subject area, nature of students served, institutional community, experience, personal and professional style, and intellectual interests, it is incumbent upon students to take responsibility for their own learning.

This means taking an active interest in the intention of this course as described on the first page of this syllabus, and taking a proactive interest in a set of self-selected questions you wish to answer with the help of this course. These would likely, but do not necessarily need to, relate to your classroom practice and professional development.

Begin thinking immediately about what it is you hope to learn from this course. The

questions you select at first may not turn out to be the questions you eventually select to guide your final research paper (see below). The readings, reflections, analyses, writing, sharing, and interrogation we will engage in during this semester should help clarify your questions and thinking, and simultaneously help foster some provisional answers.

Evaluation:

Students in EIEd/ScEd 6320 will be graded on the following items:

Attendance & Participation (20%)

Reflective Essay (25%)

Research Paper (30%)

Written Reflection for Sharing (10% Bonus)

Final Exam (25%)

Attendance and Participation:

- 1) **Attendance** will be taken each class, either at the beginning, during, or at the end of the class. **Quizzes** on the readings or class material will also be given periodically.
- 2) Please **get the name and contact information from at least two (2) other students**. You are responsible for class material that you miss.
- 3) Please **do not contact me asking me to reprise class contents**. I simply do not have the time to write-up email versions of every class, and university distance policy forbids posting my powerpoints on-line. Videos of the class are **NOT** available from the university, but you are welcome to tape-record classes if you wish.
- 4) The **technological complexity** of our classroom and the satellite delivery system pose some very real challenges to what otherwise would be a fairly cohesive classroom environment. Your understanding and positive contribution to help surmount these challenges will be greatly appreciated.
- 5) Be prepared and willing to **think “out of the box”** (positively and creatively) not only about the course content, but also about its instructional methods.

Reflective Essay:

Due Thursday, February 10th.

Through the use of structured *process activities* involving class, internet, and individual effort, you will be expected to construct three (3) related questions on a topic of interest to you connecting the intent of this course with your own teaching, pedagogical or policy agenda, or epistemological inquiries. You will be selecting one of these questions to do the Research Paper activity described below.

For the reflective essay, however, you will explain your classroom practice and/or theoretical orientation and how it informs your three questions. This paper is about what you think and want to know.

Research Paper:

Due Thursday, March 31st.

After you have selected a key question, browse the journals, handbooks, and edited volumes in your subject area, in reading/literacy education, and in educational research. Seek at least six (6) empirical (quantitative or qualitative, descriptive, correlational, or experimental) or theoretical (conceptual, historical, or meta-analytic) **research articles** involving teaching and learning that might help address your question.

Do NOT select practitioner articles !!!!! (i.e., anecdotal how-to articles about teaching activities or experiences by and for teachers). Your articles should have been selected

from three (3) or more **research journals** in your content area field of study (e.g., science, health, art, etc.), or from a journal or handbook of research (e.g., in literacy, for instance, choices might include *Reading Research Quarterly*, *The Journal of Literacy Research*, *Reading Research and Instruction*, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, *Reading Psychology*, *The Handbook of Reading Research, Volume I, II, or III*, *The Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*, *The American Reading Forum Yearbook*, *The Yearbook of the College Reading Association*, *Reading Online*, etc.), or **journals or volumes of educational research generally** (*Educational Researcher*, *The American Educational Research Journal*, *Review of Educational Research*, journals or handbooks of educational psychology or research on teaching, etc.).

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Do not just select the first six articles your web or library search comes across – be selective. You may, however, use one (1) chapter from the course text as one of the six articles. You may only do this, however, if you can justify how it fits with your inquiry. Read what you find closely. Rethink your question. Search some more. Read some more. Think some more. Now what was that question again? Maybe one of your other two questions is a better key question. Maybe something else entirely.

Rephrase your question more precisely and select three (3) articles from your search that address it. You may **not** use the course text chapter as one of these.

On the basis of the three papers you have selected, synthesize a paper addressing your question and reviewing the answers provided in the research you have read, including the three articles you have selected in some detail. The entire paper should not exceed six or seven pages (plus a page for references in proper APA style – list **ALL** the articles you looked into!!!).

Written Reflection:

Due Thursday, April 21st.

This assignment is for you to organize your class responses, notes, memories, thoughts, feelings, observations, readings, sharings, and viewings into a coherent observation for sharing with the class on April 21st.

Final Exam:

Test Time and Date: 7:15-9:45, Thursday, April 28th

There will be an in-class final exam. It is open book, so take good notes in this course, and take good annotations in your text, and review these well in preparation for the test. It will be multiple choice with a few short answers.

The test should not take more than 40 minutes to complete, so it will be okay if you get to the test late. We can discuss this further.

Important Dates:

February 3rd – **No Class – Human Rights and Presidents Holiday!**

February 10th – Reflective Paper Due

March 17th – **No Class; St. Patrick's Day**

March 31st – Research Paper Due

April 14th – **No Class; Written Reflection Day**

April 21st – Last Day of Class; Bonus Reflection Sharing Due

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April 28th – Final Exam – 3:30 – 5:20 – This is a Thursday!

Your Notes:

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Schedule EDUC 6550

Research for Classroom Teachers

Readings & Assignments

Thursday, January 13th

Introduction

Thursday, January 20th

The Nature of Science and Scientific Research

Chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, January 27th

The Nature of Teacher Research

Chapters 3 & 4

Thursday, February 3rd

No Class

Thursday, February 10th

Researching the Literature

Chapters 5 & 7

Thursday, February 17th

Quantitative Methods in Classrooms

Chapter 8

Thursday, February 24th

Qualitative Methods in Classrooms

Chapter 9

Thursday, March 3rd

Collecting Qualitative Data in Classrooms

Chapters 10 & 11

Thursday, March 10th

Collecting Qualitative Data in Classrooms, Part II

Chapter 12

Thursday, March 17th

No Class; Spring Break

Thursday, March 24th

Analyzing Qualitative Data in Classrooms

Chapter 13

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Thursday, March 31st

Analyzing Qualitative Data in Classrooms

Chapter 14

Thursday, April 7th

Analyzing Qualitative Data in Classrooms

Chapter 15

Thursday, April 14th

Re-informing Practice

Chapter 16

Thursday, April 21st

Summation and Sharing

Last Day of Class
Thursday, April 28th
Final Exam; 7:15-9:45