Course description and objectives

This class is an introduction to systematic inquiry and research in the field of education. It is designed to help develop basic skills in determining areas of interest, formulating research questions, determining both scholarly and practitioner audiences, conducting literature reviews, and crafting research designs and argumentation strategies. The seminar also addresses issues related to ethical conduct of scholarly research, including responsible treatment of human subjects, proper use of published material, adequate citation of all sources used in developing in writing papers, and developing argumentation, responsible and thorough reporting of study findings, and several other pertinent topics.

To this end, we will review several quantitative and qualitative approaches. Upon completion of this course, you should have:

(1) a fairly clear view of your own research interest and who your key audience is,
(2) a sophisticated understanding of the relevant literature(s),
(3) a decent idea of inquiry methods you can use to study your interest,
(4) an emerging plan for a relevant research design and argumentation strategy.

Course requirements

Participation. Active participation in class discussions is an essential requirement. As in any doctoral seminar, students are expected to share ownership of the class with the instructor, and assume part of the responsibility for the quality and scope of the learning process. There is a significant amount of reading assigned for each session. It is imperative that all students complete the readings to the best of their ability and be ready to critically discuss relevant ideas, insights, and questions with their colleagues. Be prepared to open yourself to challenge and also feel free to challenge others’ ideas in class. Please notify me in advance if you are unable to attend any of the sessions. Students who miss two sessions will be at risk of limiting their grade to a maximum of “B.” Those missing more than three sessions may have to consider withdrawing from the course.
Final paper. You are expected to complete a paper that specifies your research interest and your particular research question. The paper must state clearly why your research question is important and interesting from a practitioner as well as a scholarly standpoint. What exactly are you addressing? Which administrators, policymakers, and researchers in the field should care? Why? What is so interesting? The paper must also include a fairly well developed review of the literature(s) you intend to rely on and possibly contribute to in making your argument. What exactly is your argument? In what ways are you planning to extend knowledge and practice in your area of interest? Another, equally important element of the paper has to do with research design? Where will your data come from? Methods? Procedures? Analytical approach?

Midterm exam. Reverse-engineer and schematically outline a peer-reviewed research article. This task involves:

. a brief summary of the article
. a chart that visually outlines the internal flow of the article, its structure, and its links to the other important work in the field
. an outline of its conceptual strengths and weaknesses
. and, particularly, a critique of its methodology

A full example will be provided before the exam and will be discussed in class for further clarity. The actual article for the midterm will be provided a few weeks prior to the exam.

Grading

Class participation 25%
Mid-term exam 30%
Term paper; parts A, B, and C 45% (3x15)

Required books


* Copies of all other readings for the class will be available either from the instructor or from BlackBoard.
Schedule

1. July 6: Puzzles, crises, questions, and relationships in research

Readings:
Kuhn (1962)—excerpt from the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

**Searching for an audience and an ongoing conversation—Lit review**

Readings:
Babbie—chapter 3: *Ethics and Politics of Social Research*
Creswell—chapters 2, 3
Dika and Singh (2002)
Ream and Palardy (2005)

Assignments:
Find at least two recent review articles concerning your area of interest (could be a “tentative” interest). Be ready to report a brief overview of them in class.

2. July 7: Basic qualitative research—Interview- and observation-driven studies

Readings:
Creswell—chapters 5, 6, 7, 9
Glaser and Strauss (1967)
Ng (2006)
Diamond (2007)

**Advanced qualitative approaches 1—Ethnography**

Readings:
Lareau (2000a)
Lareau (2000b)
Anyon (1990)
Lareau (1987) (optional)

Assignments:
Find at least two recent research articles concerning your area of interest. These could employ any particular method of research, but they need to be published in peer-reviewed journals.
3. July 11: Advanced qualitative approaches 2—*Conversation analysis, audio-visual studies, feminist studies, narrative studies*

*Readings:*
Ng & Thomas (2007)  
Mitchell & Parker (2008)  

**Advanced qualitative approaches 3—*Historical, comparative, legal studies***

*Readings:*
Rury and Saatcioglu (2011)  
Saatcioglu and Carl (2010)  
Imber & Gyler (1988) (read Imber, 1987 as well if you have time; it is quite short).

*Assignments:*
A short essay on your working research interest (max 3 pages): First, state your objective using the language you have encountered in your lit review so far. Try to narrow your focus down a bit. What do you want to study that others have not paid sufficient attention to? *How do we know that they have not paid sufficient attention?* What is novel about your plan—a new concept, an untested relationship, an under-researched population or context, …? Why should any scholar read your work? What do you want them to understand? What is your working argument? Who would criticize your argument and your approach? Why?

4. July 14: Basic quantitative research

*Readings:*
Creswell—chapter 8  
Babbie—chapter 5  
Daft (1978)  

**Advanced quantitative approaches 1—*Questionnaire-driven studies***

*Readings:*
Babbie—chapters 6, 7, 9  
Saatcioglu (2011)  
Saatcioglu, Bajaj, and Schumacher (2011)  
Mickelson (1990)

*Assignments:*
Term paper, part A due (about 10-15 pages)—Problem statement, argument, literature review, expected findings, and contributions. Prepare a short presentation, with handouts (4-6 minutes).

* Midterm begins (due July 18).
5. July 18: Midterm review, advising sessions, group discussions

6. July 21: Advanced quantitative approaches 2—*Evaluation studies*

*Readings:*
Babbie—chapter 12
Archbald (2004)
Boothe and Meier (2000)

**Advanced quantitative approaches 3—*Using administrative data***

*Readings:*
Babbie—chapter 11
Smith (2000)
Saatcioglu (2010)
Nibbelink (2011)
Platko (2011)

*Assignments:*
A short essay (max 2 pages) on alternative methods used in research on your area of interests. Discuss at least two key examples that are different from one another in terms of the inquiry approach they employ.

7. July 25: Advanced quantitative approaches 4—*Using large national data sets*

*Readings:*
Kim, Saatcioglu, and Neufeld (2011)
Fisher (2011)

*Assignments:*
Term paper, part A, B due (about 20 pages)—Problem statement, argument, literature review, expected findings, and contributions, methodology (method preference, data site, data collection procedure, analytical procedures, …). Prepare a short presentation, with handouts (4-6 minutes).

**Advising sessions, group discussions**

8. July 28: Papers and final presentations

Complete parts A, B, and C (concept definitions, data collection procedures) for the term paper (25-30 pages, 12 font, Times Roman, 1-inch on all sides). Be prepared for a 5-minute presentation, followed by a 2-minute Q&A.