

ED 331a: Introduction to Research in Administration and Policy Analysis

Time: Thursdays 3:15 – 6pm. First class is April 6, 2006.

Location: CERAS 5th Floor conference room

Instructors:

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This seminar is intended to provide first-year doctoral students in Administration and Policy Analysis (APA) with a basic understanding of how to conceptualize educational research. Students will learn how to read, interpret and critique research within different methodological paradigms; formulate meaningful research questions; evaluate and conduct a literature review.

Assignments

Required readings: They are in the following texts and can be purchased from the Stanford Bookstore.

Education 331a: Course Reader.

Wiersma, William. 2004. *Research Methods in Education: An Introduction*, 8th Edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Students are expected to engage in class discussion as well as structured individual and group work. Since the course relies on participation and experiential learning, students are expected to complete the required readings and written assignments prior to each class. The quality of the course depends in large part on your preparation and engagement. We will often be in “workshop mode” to address your particular interests and concerns as they develop.

A major assignment for the course will be a literature review in an area that you are likely to explore for the qualifying paper (QP), which is due in the spring quarter of your second year. As you think about a topic and relevant literature for your QP and dissertation, you may want to consider these questions: What am I interested in understanding more deeply? What kind of research is needed in this field? Where do my ideas fit within the field? What will this study contribute to our understanding? Selecting a topic to explore for this course can be a daunting task because it is early in your PhD program. Many APA students change their topics and refine their research questions as they develop the QP and dissertation proposal. Even if you do change your topic, the literature review for this course should prove useful to you. For the QP you will use published literature to substantiate your statement of a problem, research question, conceptual framework, research design and methods. Developing the QP is an iterative process in which you reformulate and refine these components. The readings and discussions in this course will provide a context for your choices and demonstrate how the components of a proposed study need to be aligned.

In addition to locating published research in your area of interest, you should become familiar with guidelines for preparing manuscripts for publication. See, for example, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th Edition) and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th Edition).

Evaluation

Students are encouraged to take the course for pass/no credit. Course grades will be based on:

- brief homework assignments associated with in-class discussion [20%]
- participation in class and group activities and occasional presentations [30%]
- a preliminary literature review in an area of your choice [50%]

Students may revise their papers in light of feedback and resubmit them for a revised grade, if desired.

Weekly Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Asterisk (*) notes the reading is in the Course Reader.

Part I: Foundations of Reviewing Research

Week 1 Introduction: Purposes and strategies of educational research
April 6

Readings:

Wiersma, Chapters 1 and 2

Core concerns:

What is the nature of research? Principles of systematic inquiry.

What makes a research design credible? Note general characteristics.

What is a research problem? Consider what is involved in selection of a research problem and development of problem statements.

What is a researchable question? Consider examples of questions.

WORKSHOP MODE: What are some researchable questions on a topic of your choice? Be prepared to state this in class.

Week 2 Introduction to Reviewing Research: Purposes and strategies for a literature review
April 13 WORKSHOP MODE: Refining your research questions and finding relevant literature

Readings:

Wiersma, Chapter 3: The Review of the Literature

*Light, D. & B. Pillemer, 1984. Summing Up: The Science of Reviewing Research. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-2, and 5 (pp. 1-49 and 144-159)

*Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998. "A critical analysis of the research on learning to teach," Review of Educational Research 68 (Summer) 2: 130-78.

Assignment #1 (due Week 2): For this first assignment, the task is to identify a researchable question on a topic of your choice. In a paragraph or two, identify the question, the problem from which it emanates, and the lines of research that it might it build upon and/or connect to? What design approach(es) to a study might be appropriate? (Refer to Wiersma Ch 1 if helpful.) What areas of literature may be relevant? (See page in Course Reader on Guidelines for Final Project.) We will discuss this in class.

Week 3
April 20

Issues in Reviewing Research: Literature reviews and their critique

Readings:

*Light & Pillemer, Chapter 6 (pp.160-173)

*Kagan, D. 1992. "Professional growth among preservice and beginning teachers," Review of Educational Research 62 (2): 129-69.

*Grossman, P. 1992. "Why models matter: An alternate view on professional growth in teaching," Review of Educational Research 62(2): 171-79.

*Dunkin, M. 1996. "Types of errors in synthesizing research in education, Review of Educational Research 66(2): 87-97.

Assignment #2 (due week 3): Select a study to evaluate and abstract. See pages in Course Reader on Abstracting a Study. In a brief memo (1 to 2 pages), answer questions 1 – 5.

Week 4
April 27

WORKSHOP MODE: Conceptualizing your problem and question given the literature; developing your literature review

Assignment #3 (due week 4): See page in Course Reader on Literature Review *Evaluation*. Evaluate a review of research in a field of interest to you, and submit a 3-page summary in which you answer these major questions: What is the purpose of the review? How were studies selected? How were they categorized? [That is, what are the major "bins" for the review?] How were they analyzed? What areas of consensus, disagreement, and uncertainty were noted? What conclusions were drawn? Did these seem defensible? Optional question to address: What burning questions are you left with after evaluating this review?

Week 5

WORKSHOP MODE: Developing literature reviews & conceptual frameworks

May 4

Readings:

*Becker, H. 1986. Writing for Social Scientists. Chapters 6, 7 and 8. University of Chicago Press.

Assignment #4 (due week 5): Refine your research question to reflect the progress in your thinking since Assignment #1. What are the categories of literature you have decided to examine in your review? Given what you have reviewed so far, how are you conceptualizing your problem and question? What are some key variables (dependent and independent) of interest? How do they interrelate? Draw a picture to depict these relationships. [This will change as you go. That's ok!] What areas (categories) of literature bear upon understanding the constructs and relationships at the heart of your study? How are you selecting among the publications you have collected, ensuring relevance to the research problem (and other components of your study), avoiding technical errors, and pulling it together?

Part II: Overview of Research Approaches – To Help You Critique Research

Week 6
May 11 Basic Design Issues: Reliability and validity issues in quantitative design, sampling, and measurement. AND Design Issues in Experimental Research

Readings:

Wiersma, Chapters 4, 12 and 13: Research design, sampling, measurement
Wiersma, Chapters 5 and 6: Issues in experimental and quasi-experimental designs

Assignment #5 (due week 6): Analyze an article included in Study Set 1 using questions provided in Course Reader.

Study Set #1:

*Antonio, A., M. Chang, K. Hakuta, D. Kenny, S. Levin, J. Milem. 2004. "Effects of Racial Diversity on Complex Thinking in College Students," Psychological Science 15 (8).

*Krueger, A. and D. Whitmore. 2000. "The Effect of Attending a Small Class in the Early Grades on College-Test Taking and Middle School Test Results: Evidence from Project Star." Working Paper 7656. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Week 7
May 18 Design Issues in Survey (Descriptive and Correlational) research

Readings:

Wiersma, Chapter 7: Survey research

Assignment #6 (due week 7): Analyze an article included in Study Set 2 using questions provided in Course Reader.

Study Set #2:

*Boyd, D., P. Grossman, H. Lankford, S. Loeb, J. Wyckoff. 2005. "How Changes in Entry Requirements Alter the Teacher Workforce and Affect Student Achievement." Unpublished ms.

Week 8
May 25 Design Issues in Qualitative research

Readings:

Wiersma, Chapter 8

Assignment #7 (due week 8): Analyze an article included in Study Set 3 using questions provided in Course Reader.

Study Set #3:

*Harry, B., K. Sturges, J. Klinger. 2005. "Mapping the Process: An Exemplar of Process and Challenge in Grounded Theory Analysis." Educational Researcher 34 (2):3-13.

*Shaw, K. 1997. "Remedial Education as Ideological Battleground," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. 19(3): 284-296.

Week 9 Ethical Issues in Research & WORKSHOP MODE: Discussion of Progress on Literature
June 1 Reviews

Readings:

Wiersma, Appendix 1: Ethical and legal considerations in conducting research

*Human Subjects Review <<http://humansubjects.stanford.edu>>

*AREA Statement on Ethical Standards <<http://www.aera.net/about/policy/ethics.htm>>

Week 10 Wrap-up on Literature Reviews
June 8

REMINDER: Literature Review due by 5pm on June 1st.

Summary of Written Assignments

Assignment #1 (due by Week 3): For this first assignment, identify a researchable question on a topic of your choice. In a paragraph or two, identify the question and the lines of research that it might build upon and/or connect to? What design approach(es) to a study might be appropriate? (Refer to Wiersma Ch 1 if helpful.)

Assignment #2 (due Week 3): Select a study to evaluate and abstract. See pages in Course Reader on Abstracting a Study. In a brief memo (1 to 2 pages), answer questions 1 – 5.

Assignment #3 (due Week 4): See page in Course Reader on Literature Review Evaluation. Evaluate a review of research in a field of interest to you, and submit a 3-page summary in which you answer these major questions: What is the purpose of the review? How were studies selected? How were they categorized? [What are the major “bins” for the review?] How were they analyzed? What areas of consensus, disagreement, and uncertainty were noted? What conclusions were drawn? Did these seem defensible? Optional: What burning questions are you left with after evaluating this review?

Assignment #4 (due Week 5): Refine your research question to reflect the progress in your thinking since Assignment #1. What are the categories of literature you have decided to examine in your review? Given what you have reviewed so far, how are you conceptualizing your problem and question? What are some key variables (dependent and independent) of interest? How do they interrelate? Draw a picture to depict these relationships. [This will change as you go. That’s ok!] What areas (categories) of literature bear upon understanding the constructs and relationships at the heart of your study?

Assignment #5 (due Week 7): Analyze an article included in Study Set 1 using questions provided in Course Reader.

Assignment #6 (due Week 8): Analyze an article included in Study Set 2 using questions provided in Course Reader.

Assignment #7 (due Week 9): Analyze an article included in Study Set 3 using questions provided in Course Reader.

You should be collecting relevant literature for your review. See page in Course Reader on Guidelines for Final Project. Final Literature Review due June 1st at 5pm.