

ED 423A: Introduction to Research Design: Educational Administration and Policy Analysis

Course Credit: 3 - 5 units

Winter Quarter 2001-02

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Class Schedule

January 8th, 2001 - March 12th, 2002: Tuesdays 4:15pm – 7pm in 508A CERAS.

Course Overview

This course is designed for second-year doctoral students in APA who are preparing qualifying papers. The main objectives are to: explore a researchable topic through literature reviews; refine your skills in developing problem statements, research questions, and conceptual frameworks; enhance your analytical skills through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and working together in small groups; and draft the qualifying paper. The goal for this class will be for you to have turned in a draft qualifying paper for us to review.

Please Note: The final Qualifying Paper is to be turned in before May 21st at 5pm.

Weekly Topics and Readings

The content of class discussions and the pace of the course will in large part be determined by the interests, skill levels, and progress made by the class participants. We have provided a preliminary structure for the quarter based upon each component of the qualifying paper. Please note that we may need to revise the schedule of topics as well as the due dates for drafts.

Required Readings: Your main reading assignment will be to read extensively in those areas pertaining to your research topic. In addition, as we deem relevant, we will distribute exemplary QPs, dissertation proposals, and articles throughout the quarter.

Nature of Assignments

1. Weekly Preparation and Completion of Assignments Throughout the quarter, we will give several assignments that further the course objectives. For example, each student will serve as a reviewer / mentor for another student in the class; this responsibility involves responding to each of the sections of another student's QP as they are developed. (This should be done in one page of notes and 30 minutes with the other student.) Another assignment will be to do a 20-minute presentation of a key paper in your field of interest -- a published paper that has the components of a QP with data. We will provide more details on these assignments in class.

2. Active Participation in Class Discussion and Group Work

3. Paper: A draft of your qualifying paper should be turned in to us before **March 12th**. The paper should meet the general specifications of the qualifying paper in terms of length, form and substance. We are available for consultation with you on drafts throughout the quarter. You should also consult with your primary advisor on the content and direction of your QP interests.

4. End-of-Quarter Evaluations: We see evaluation as an ongoing process of giving feedback to each other. There are three end-of-quarter evaluation mechanisms. You have the option of requesting a Letter Grade or Satisfactory/No Credit, depending upon your preference. We would also like you to submit two brief assessments: one is to assess your role as learner and contributor to the class; the other is to evaluate our role and the course structure for next year's cohort. These are **due on March 12th**.

Detailed Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Tuesday Jan 8th **Setting the Stage: Introduction to Course Objectives and Overview of QP Components**

Come to the first class with your self-assessment and notes to give a five-minute presentation on your topic.

Week 2: Tuesday Jan 15th **Literature Reviews that inform Problem Statements and Research Questions**

Bring to class a list of references, a visual map of the domains of literature that inform your QP, and an outline of your literature review. The outline should be very substantive.

Week 3: Tuesday Jan 22nd **Linking Problem Statements and Research Questions**

Due Jan. 25th: Turn in Draft of Lit review for Problem Statement and Research Questions.

Week 4: Tuesday Jan 29 **Literature Reviews for Conceptual Frameworks**

Bring to class a sketch of your conceptual framework and map of literature that informs CF.

Week 5: Tuesday Feb 5th **Linking Conceptual Frameworks with Problem Statements and Research Questions**

This may take several iterations.

Due Feb 5th: Turn in Draft of Your Problem Statement, Research Question, and Conceptual Framework. Also submit this draft to your advisor. Advisor's comments are due back within ten days.

**Week 6: Tuesday Feb 12th Linking Conceptual Frameworks with Design and Methodology:
Part I**

Design Alternatives: the logics of inquiry, hypotheses, etc.

We will use some readings but relate the classroom discussion directly to issues in your qualifying papers.

**Week 7: Tuesday Feb 19th Linking Conceptual Frameworks with Design and Methodology:
Part II**

More on design alternatives and tradeoffs.

Logistics and ethics: access, human subjects, consent, etc.

Due Feb. 22nd: Turn in draft of your design and methodology description.

Week 8: Tuesday Feb 26th (Topics to be determined)

In-class Presentations.

Due Feb. 26th: If you have revisions based upon further reading and your advisor's responses, turn in revised version of problem statement, research question, and preliminary conceptual framework to us and to your advisor. Advisor's comments are due back within ten days.

Week 9: Tuesday March 5th Moving from QP to Dissertation Proposals: Plans for Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In-class Presentations.

Week 10: Tuesday March 12th Taking Stock: Next Steps

In-Class Presentations.

Final Paper and Assessments are to be turned in to us on March 12th.

Revised and Approved by APA Faculty - May, 2002

GUIDELINES FOR APA QUALIFYING PAPER

Goals of the Qualifying Paper

In recent years, the faculty have characterized the goals as follows:

- to demonstrate the candidate's proficiency in translating a research interest into a researchable plan
- to demonstrate the candidate's proficiency in conducting a thorough, critical review of relevant literature
- to demonstrate how the research question lends itself to investigation by discussing the research design and methods that are appropriate.

Contents of the Qualifying Paper

The major components of the QP are:

1. statement of research problem
2. statement of research question
3. conceptual framework
4. preliminary statement of methodology.

Each component has some major functions, and these are delineated below.

Together, the **statement of research problem** and **statement of research question** should:

- clarify the problem and the research question to be investigated
- show how the research question relates to the published literature on the topic (e.g., fills a gap, solves a puzzle, confirms an important finding, overcomes major conceptual or methodological limitations of previous research on the topic)
- justify the practical and/or theoretical importance of the question to be investigated.

The QP should include an extended **critical review of the literature** on the chosen topic, not a descriptive summary. In most cases, several literatures are relevant.

Note: In the past, some students (and some advisors) have preferred to have a separate section for the literature review, instead of incorporating literature throughout several sections of the QP. The student should consult with the advisor on this matter.

The critical review should:

- identify and comment on the theoretical or conceptual approaches that bear on the treatment of this topic
- distinguish clearly between objective and data-based literature and the prescriptive or advocacy literature on the subject
- synthesize the major findings and the conceptual and methodological features of prior research
- identify the major limitations of previous research on the topic
- identify and justify the elements of a conceptual framework.

A conceptual framework:

- identifies the relevant concepts and theoretical perspectives
- makes explicit the proposed linkages between concepts (e.g., correlational, causal) and justifies those proposed linkages using knowledge from prior research or practice
- shows the connection between the research question and data.

A **preliminary statement of methodology** should specify the research design and method(s) that are appropriate for addressing the research question. The statement should answer some basic questions, including:

- What data will be used (e.g., an existing data set? data you gather yourself?)
- Why are these data appropriate for investigating the research question?
- What are the advantages and limitations of this approach?

For the purpose of the qualifying paper, it is not necessary to provide an elaborate account of the steps for enacting the design. However, if a student wants to include a more developed statement about the research design and methods, the student may do so in an appendix, and the faculty reviewers will provide comments. If a student chooses this option, here are some additional questions that should be addressed:

- How will you gain access to this information? For example, through bibliographic research, interviews (with whom? about what?), observation (of whom? doing what?), questionnaire (to whom, about what?), or intervention (i.e. treatment).
- How will you demonstrate the reliability and validity of your evidence? For example, by repeated observation or interviews? by contrasting one set of evidence to another? by applying models to the evidence?

Format of the Qualifying Paper, Length and Due Date:

- Typed, double spaced, twelve-point font, conventional reference style
- Approximately 25 pages (references not included in determining length)
- Due spring quarter, on or before May 21, 2002. If not by this date, the student must petition for an extension.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE QUALIFYING PAPER

A. CLARITY AND IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEM STATEMENT

Is it clear what new knowledge is needed, what problems need to be solved, or what theory needs to be tested/developed, and why?

Has the writer connected the reader quickly with the research problem or question?

B. CLARITY OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Is it clear precisely what this study is intended to accomplish (e.g., is the purpose confirmatory, discovery or exploratory)? Is it clear how the study will advance our understanding of some education-related phenomena?

C. ADEQUACY OF LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Is the context and “intellectual ancestry” of this study described in a clear, comprehensive, and coherent manner?

Are the following things achieved?

- Conceptual framework is clearly identifiable with concepts and constructs defined
- Research question is linked to conceptual framework
- Literature review is appropriately critical and selective.

D. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

Is the proposed research design/methodology section clear? Is there a clear and convincing rationale for the appropriateness of the data? (See Section G. below.)

E. QUALITY OF WRITING

Is the prose clear, succinct, and coherent?

Additional considerations: Writes in a succinct manner, avoids repetition, integrates different parts of proposal, uses adequate citations, provides specificity without making the document overly lengthy.

F. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALIFYING PAPER

Not a summation or average of ratings of A-F, but an indication of the reader’s overall impression of the quality of the qualifying paper.

G. BEYOND THE QP, EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR DISSERTATION PROPOSALS INCLUDE

Research Design and Methodology of the Study

- Describes clearly the setting/context/intervention
- Describes clearly the methods for data collection
- Explains how data will be used to answer the research question
- Gives plan for selecting informants
- Shows clear fit between the design of the study and the methods for collecting data
- Describes steps to ensure validity and reliability of data, including consideration of such approaches as benchmarked variables and relationships and pre-testing.

Plan for Analysis and Interpretation of Data

- Includes plan for organizing and or preparing data for analysis
- Includes plan for treatment of data
- Explains relationship of analysis and interpretation of data
- Includes list of expected findings
- Generates potential alternative interpretations of the data
- Discusses anticipated limitations of study

PROCEDURE FOR SIXTH QUARTER REVIEW

The sixth quarter review is based upon the whole record: performance on the qualifying paper, performance in course work, and performance as a RA and TA (as applicable). In addition to submitting the qualifying paper, students will submit one or two analytical papers (with the instructors' comments) that they have completed for a class.

The qualifying paper will be reviewed by three faculty members. The student and the program advisor should identify the two additional faculty and arrange for their participation.

One of four judgments will be made about each student's qualifying paper:

- (1) accept as is
- (2) accept with revisions or addendum
- (3) revise and resubmit, or
- (4) unacceptable.

In cases where the faculty arrive at different judgments, the advisor can consult with the area chair to determine an appropriate course of action. If the judgment is to "revise and resubmit", the student will be given until the end of the fourth week of the summer session (or sixth week of a regular quarter) to complete the revision. During this period, the student is expected to work on his/her own with assistance as needed from the three faculty. The resubmission must be judged "acceptable as is" or "acceptable with minor revisions"; any other judgment will be viewed as constituting an "unacceptable" performance on the qualifying paper. Such judgments will be brought before the entire APA faculty to determine an appropriate course of action.