

Niagara University
College of Education
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Instructor: Staff (TBA)
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A. Course Number and Title

EDU 595 Introduction to Educational Research (Middle Childhood, Early Childhood, Literacy, Special Education, Counseling, or Administration)

B. Number of Credits

Three (3) credit hours

C. Course Description

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the principles of research in education. Students will become effective consumers of educational research by analyzing the literature in a particular area of study and synthesizing the results into material that can be applied to diverse educational settings. Students will also develop practical research skills that they might use to assist them in their own professional development. Pre-service teachers and practitioners enrolled in this course will complete a field-based research project pertaining to their area of study.

NOTE: Pre-service teachers in the secondary education Grades 5-12 program explore research in middle childhood development and pedagogy and complete 50 hours of field experience in a middle childhood setting. Pre-service teachers in the elementary education Birth- Grade 6 program explore research in early childhood development and pedagogy and complete 50 hours of field experiences in an early childhood setting. Practitioners in the literacy, foundations, special education, counseling, and administration programs will explore research in their area of concentration and practice action research in their own professional setting.

D. Methods of Teaching

This course is framed within a constructivist perspective which embraces the belief that knowledge is socially constructed. Learning is viewed as a developmental process that is enhanced when students learn to view problems and issues from multiple perspectives, constructing knowledge from their own interpretations of numerous pieces of evidence. Teaching approaches are directed toward open-ended inquiry, critical thinking, and social interaction. Instructional methods will include whole class and small group discussion, individual and cooperative activities, presentations by the instructors and by the practicing and prospective teachers, internet and library searches, observations, interviews and action research.

In addition:

The graduate counseling programs have adapted their course work to be consistent with the **Council for the Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)**, the accrediting body for the counseling profession. CACREP has broken curricular experiences into Eight CACREP Core Areas. The Core Areas are as follows:

1. Professional Identity: Not addressed in this course.
2. Social and Cultural Diversity: *Addressed in this course.*
3. Human Growth and Development: Not addressed in this course.
4. Career Development: Not addressed in this course.
5. Helping Relationships: Not addressed in this course.
6. Group Work: Not addressed in this course.
7. Assessment: *Addressed in this course.*
8. Research and Program Evaluation: *Addressed in this course.*

Note: CACREP Core Areas not addressed in this course are addressed in other counseling courses.

Course Objectives

Practicing and prospective teachers will be able to:

- Define the terms associated with both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methods
- Identify problems associated with the gathering, implementing, and evaluating information.
- Conduct qualitative and/or quantitative research related to current educational issues.
- Analyse, apply, and evaluate the research.

E. Course Content

Chapter 1 Introduction to Research

Overview of qualitative and quantitative educational research

Chapter 2-8 Quantitative Research

Discussion of variables, hypotheses, and operational definitions, causal arguments, generalizability, descriptive and inferential statistics.

Chapters 9 Qualitative Research

Discussion of qualitative data collection

Chapter 10 Evaluating Research

Discussion and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research.

F. Required Text

Vierra, A., Pollock, J., & Golez, Felipe (1998). Reading Educational Research (3rd. ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Simon and Schuster.

G. Course Requirements

A. Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. **(Absent from 2 classes-final mark will be reduced a full grade. Absent 4 times will result in failing grade)**

- B. Complete assignments as scheduled and actively engage in class discussions.
- C. Complete all written assignments as required (APA style) and submit as directed.
- D. Search for research material using Ebscohost and library resources at Niagara .
- E. **Spelling, punctuation and grammar will account for 20% of each written assignment.**

H. Assignments and Grades

All assignments will be given a letter grade.

90-100 A	85-89 B+	75-79 C+	65-69 D+	Below 60- Fail
	80-84 B	70-74 C	60-64 D	

AUTOBIOGRAPHY 5%

It is to be typed, double-spaced and not to exceed 4 pages in length. It is to be a brief personal history (I do not expect you to share any information that you are not comfortable in sharing), including your educational and athletic achievements and goals. Conclude with your thoughts on how your autobiography affects your interpretation of educational research. i.e. Do your paradigms or previous educational/personal experiences influence the way you interpret research findings? Do you prefer quantitative or qualitative research?

RATIONALE

This activity allows me to better understand my students and provides the students with an opportunity to reflect on their paradigms concerning research.

COMPUTER EXERCISES (INTERNET) 30% total

- (1) E-mail (access your account, send & receive message) & print out a lesson plan (5%)
- (2) Cite and provide a brief description of 5 educational websites (5%)
- (3) Annotated Bibliography (**APA style**) of 3 qualitative research journal articles, 3 quantitative research journal articles, and 3 expert opinion journal articles using Ebscohost (Articles must apply to elementary education) (10%)
- (4) Review of journal article. This assignment will be a review of a **qualitative** or **quantitative** journal article relevant to elementary education and obtained from Niagara University's library sources. (This would include accessing the library's Ebscohost from NU's computer centre or off site). The review should provide the reader with an understanding of the following:
 - * The article's purpose and intended readership
 - * Its method of inquiry, including main sources for data. (For quantitative articles state the hypothesis, and variables).
 - *Its major ideas, concepts, and conclusions
 - *Author's biases and frames of reference
 - *Summary (strengths and weaknesses-your evaluation of its quality and value)

The review is to be no more than three pages in length. (10%)

RATIONALE

The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that all students have a working knowledge of the computer facilities and systems at Niagara University. As well, students will learn how to cite

electronic services using APA style, conduct research on the Internet, and understand the benefits and drawbacks of using lesson plans obtained from the Internet.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS (first)

15%

For the first set of group presentations, the class will be divided into 7 groups. Each group (approx. 3 students) will be assigned one of the 7 chapters related to educational research in the Vierra & Pollock text. Group members must present the information to the rest of the class and provide a hand out (overview) of the material covered. Approximately one hour is allotted for each presentation. Further details will be provided in class.

RATIONALE

The purpose of this exercise is to have students research a specific topic and then present their findings to the rest of the class. All students should also gain a better understanding of the key terms and types of educational research.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS (second)

15%

For the second set of group presentations, the class will be divided into 6 groups. Each group (approx. 3 students) will be assigned one of the 6 chapters related to motivation in the Wlodkowski text. Group members must present the information (from the chapter as well as other sources of research) to the rest of the class and provide a hand out (overview) of the material covered. Approximately one hour is allotted for each presentation. Class discussions will then analyze and evaluate Wlodkowski's views on competition, reinforcement, etc. Further details will be provided in class.

RATIONALE

The purpose of this exercise is to provide students with the opportunity to conduct further research (concerning motivation and classroom management) and present the material to their peers. All students should also gain a better understanding of the key motivational factors and motivational strategies as they apply to classroom management.

INTERVIEW

10%

An interview and written paper focusing on diversity issues in the classroom or another educational topic of interest to the student. e.g. It could be an ethnic or special needs student. The interview must be tape recorded and then written in a narrative format. E-mail interviews with a written summary are also acceptable. (typed, double spaced, 3 page minimum). Time permitting, the papers will be presented in class. Techniques will be discussed in class prior to the interview.

RATIONALE

This activity will introduce students to qualitative data collection. The interview is a very flexible assignment. Students have the freedom to select a topic and structure the interview according to their interests. The end result however should demonstrate an overall understanding of the interview process and a relevant topic in education.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

10%

This assignment requires students to conduct a non-participant observation and submit a typed report. A list of observation topics will be discussed in class. E.g. gender or cultural bias, motivational techniques, classroom management etc. The observation will then be typed in a narrative format with summary remarks.

RATIONALE

This activity will provide students with the opportunity to observe a classroom setting and reflect and report on the experience (Qualitative Research)

FINAL EXAM

15%

PERSONAL JOURNALS

Students are required to submit 2 personal journals (Feb 22 and March 7). Submissions should include views on the material and how it was presented.

RATIONALE

The purpose of this exercise is to have students reflect on classroom procedures and express their personal opinions. Students should also state their preferences and rationale e.g. cooperative/individual work, lectures/presentations, etc. As no marks will be awarded for the journals it will give students an opportunity to reflect on the use of journals and learning for the “love of learning”.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allender, J. (1986). Educational Research: A personal and social process. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, 173-194.

Diener, E., and Crandall, R. (1978) *Ethics in Social and Behavioral Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Garcia, G., and Pearson, P. (1994). Assessment and diversity. *Review of Research in Education*, 20, 337-391.

Goetz, J., and LeCompte, M. (1984). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. New York: Academic Press.

Hildebrand, D. (1986). *Statistical Thinking for Behavioral Scientists*. Boston: Duxbury Press.

Howe, K., and Eisenhart, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: A prolegomenon. *Educational Researcher*, 19, 2-9.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.) Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.