

EDEC/EDMS 7650
Literature Review in Early Childhood/Middle School Education
SYLLABUS

Spring 2006
5:00 p.m.–7:45 p.m. Fridays

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College of Education Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the College of Education states that the college “prepares exemplary, reflective professionals to serve a diverse global community; it achieves that end through teaching, scholarship, outreach, and partnership at the local, national, and international levels.” This course supports the work of the college.

Overview of the Course

The course is designed to help you write a review of the research literature in an area you choose. There are additional requirements, but your main task is to complete the review.

The course builds on the following prerequisites: You already understand the nature of educational research, the purposes and procedures of the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, and the process of reviewing educational literature; in particular, you can find, read, and interpret research studies related to your professional interests. You also are familiar with university library facilities, including GIL, GALILEO, electronic journals, and the actual materials stored in campus library buildings.

The course is not about how to find literature in your area of interest; it is about how to select, from what you find, literature that is worthy of being included in a review and how to organize and write the review. You will receive feedback on your writing from each other as well as from me. I expect you to be willing to share your own writing with everyone in the seminar, and I expect you will take seriously the crucial task of reading and responding to the writing of your colleagues.

The class sessions will consist of your sharing and discussing your writing and your substantive progress on reviewing the literature in your area of interest. I am willing to meet with you individually outside of class to work on text you have written. Except for the final product you submit at the end of the course, every page you write that I read, I intend to read with you, in your presence, whether in class or outside of class.

I do not write or edit text joyfully; I suffer when I engage in writing and editing. This course represents my willingness to suffer over your text with you. You will hear much more about what should be revised or reconsidered in your text than you will about what you are doing well. I do not expect you to accept every bit of feedback you receive, but I expect you to take all feedback seriously.

I cannot overemphasize how important it is that you let go of your own writing enough to help your colleagues in the course with their writing. You represent the audience that will try to make

sense of each other's writing in the future, and you need to be a conscientious audience member in this course. You need to get over any reluctance you might have to tell someone that you do not understand her text or that you disagree with his interpretation of the research literature.

You will read—I mean *read*, not simply leaf through—most of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* in this course. It is not the only manual we could use; it does not cover every writing situation you will confront; and not all of its rules are appealing to me. It is, however, a widely used and very helpful guide. Good professional writing is a matter of being willing to work at it, and working at it includes both knowing when one should look something up and caring enough to look at such moments.

I expect you to show up every week, to engage faithfully in the process I have described, and to complete the more specific requirement described below.

Main Course Requirement

The most important course requirement is the completion of a written review of research literature in a particular area. The quality of the review will be the largest factor in your course grade (e.g., Does the review have a clear purpose? Is the review search-and-selection process presented? Are individual studies well described? Are studies linked in order to present clear and consistent research findings? Are conflicting findings discussed? Does the review include section headings, transitions, and summaries that help the reader? Is the review written in the form of an argument [or a story]? Is the review presented in APA style?). The ability to critique studies will be important not so much in criticizing studies you include in the review as in deciding which studies to include. That is, you should include only what you consider to be good studies and not include those studies you think are bad, where *good* and *bad* refer to the quality of the study and not to whether the conclusions agree with your own beliefs. The consequence of having to make such judgments is that you will have to read more studies than you actually include in the written review.

The review you submit for this course should be at least 25 pages in length and include at least 25 references that you have found, read, and synthesized into a coherent whole. (A review article or the literature review that is a chapter in a dissertation will typically have many more than 25 references.) Those studies you see as most important and relevant to your purpose should be described in detail in the review. Some studies may receive only a brief mention. The crucial point is that you include in your review only works that report research and only what you have read yourself. Do not simply use what another writer has said about a particular study, and do not include what you do not understand and cannot explain in your own words. The argument you make (or the story you tell) in the review must be uniquely yours. It is possible to quote, paraphrase, and summarize (with proper credit given) the works of others while telling a story that reflects your ideas and is substantially in your own words.

In addition to the journal articles that will make up the bulk of your references, your review should include at least one dissertation and one paper presented at a professional conference (ideally in 2005 or 2006). You may also cite two or three other reviews of the literature in your area, but, again, your review should make clear your own point of view. Reviews appear in

journals (e.g., *Review of Educational Research*), handbooks (e.g., *Handbook of Research on Teaching*), or other volumes (e.g., *Review of Research in Education*).

You will make a formal oral presentation of your literature review during one of the last two class sessions (April 21 or 28), and a paper copy of the final draft of the review is due in my mailbox in 427 Aderhold Hall by the date and time scheduled by the university for the final examination (Friday, May 5, at 7:00 p.m.). *Final drafts will not be accepted on the last day of class.* You are expected to use at least some of the time between April 28 and May 5 to work on and improve your review.

Other Course Requirements

Other course requirements are designed to help you complete the literature review on time and to write as good a review as possible:

- You must write at least two pages of new text with two new references each week to be shared with your fellow students and me.
- You must read published literature reviews and analyze their style and organization.
- You must read sections of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* that provide guidelines for expression of ideas, editorial style, and manuscript preparation.
- You must come to class and be prepared to participate. It is very important to me that you willingly receive feedback on your writing and thoughtfully provide feedback to others.

Grading

Your grade in the course will be based on the quality of your literature review and on the successful completion of the other requirements described in this syllabus.

Required Text

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.