



The University of Georgia
College of Education
Department of Lifelong Education,
Administration, and Policy

Methods of Research in Education

ERSH 6200

Fall 2005

Syllabus

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Course Texts

Course texts are available on MBSdirect, an online vendor that many faculty members in our department use. The address is < <http://direct.mbsbooks.com/uga.htm> >. The two required texts are:

1. Fraenkel, J.R., & Wallen, N. E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (6th ed.; with CD and workbook). New York: McGraw-Hill. (With CD) (ISBN: 0-07-298185-7)
2. Merriam, S.B. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples and Analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.(ISBN: 0-7879-5895-6)

If you prefer to order elsewhere, feel free, but please pay attention to the shipping speed. Also, with respect to the Fraenkel and Wallen book: I urge you (a) to get the right edition and (b) to get the CD and workbook (past students have found them very useful).

Description of Course

This course is designed to enhance your understanding of educational research and to improve your ability to comprehend and use research reports. The course is designed expressly for Master's students in Adult Education and Human Resource and Organizational Development (HROD).

The course has two major phases, which together contain seven learning units; most units are two-weeks in length.

Phase I: Learning the Basics. The phase consists of four learning units dealing with the fundamental logic of research, literature searching,

the common types of educational research, and research concepts and terminology.

Phase II: Mastering Research Reports. This phase consists of three learning units, during which students will critique three articles drawn from the major journals in Adult Education and Human Resource and Organizational Development. Preparing the critiques will entail five major steps:

1. *Reading the article.*
2. *Learning about the specific research approach* used through reading the course texts and seeking additional resources on the Internet.
3. *Small group discussion* about the article's approach and its strengths and weaknesses.
4. *Writing the critique* while seeking input from the co-instructor and learning group colleagues.
5. *Submitting the final critique.*

Learning Formats

This on-line course will employ three learning formats as follows:

1. *Independent Reading of the Text.* Because of the online nature of the course, protracted lectures are not an option. Consequently, reading will be the principal learning format for the course. The texts we are using contain a variety of support materials on an accompanying CD, and the Internet is a valuable resource for research information. There is also an Online Learning Center that supports Fraenkel and Wallen's text.
2. *Group Discussions.* All units will include either a full group discussion or separate small group discussions. The structure and purpose of the groups will vary, but each discussion will be learning-oriented and highly focused.
3. *Portfolio Reviews.* As assignments are submitted, they will be graded to allow students to track their progress. Twice during the semester (at the end of Phase I and at the conclusion of the course), I will schedule a meeting with each student to provide oral feedback on their collected written assignments. The student can choose to conduct this meeting face-to-face or via telephone. To make telephone portfolio sessions possible, both the student and

the professor must maintain a single portfolio containing all submitted papers.

Course Requirements

- During Phase I, students will complete the assigned readings, participate in small group discussions, and submit four written assignments.
- During Phase II, students will complete the assigned readings, participate in small group discussions, and prepare and submit three critiques of research articles.

Course Communication

1. The WebCT email system is the preferred mode of communication.

2. All assignments must be submitted as MS-Word documents to the electronic drop box. Assignments must be uploaded first and then submitted electronically. You may choose to have the software send you a confirmation e-mail when you click to submit the assignment. Students must retain copies of all submitted papers for the portfolio review sessions and for resubmission in the event of a lost paper.

3. A roster will be posted to facilitate student-to-student communication outside the WebCT environment. To send an email, you can access the roster by using the browse button at the mail page.

4. Sometimes, email just isn't enough. If you need to talk with me via telephone during the course, feel free to call either of these numbers between 10am and 6pm, Monday through Friday. (No weekends, please!) If I'm not at the office when you call, please don't hesitate to use my home number; I often work at home when I have no appointments.

Office: 706-583-8098 Home: 828-507-0198(cell)
828-389-0378

5. If you would like to schedule a face-to-face meeting related to course work or course problems, please write or email for an appointment.

Discussion Forums

WebCT discussion forums will be used for class discussion.

1. The Main forum will be used for general, course-related communication.

2. The Learning Discussion Forum represents a major mode of learning in this course. Throughout the semester, learning discussion forums will be vital parts of most learning units. Here are some key characteristics of the learning discussion forums:

- All forums will be supported by the instructor or the co-instructor.
- All forums will be tied to specific learning units and will only be open to contributions for the scheduled time period.
- Some forums will be open to the entire class. Others will be restricted to members of small groups. The small groups will be constructed using random assignment; different groupings will be used for each learning unit.
- All forums will *require* a certain level of participation. Specific guidelines for each learning discussion forum will be spelled out in the directions for the individual learning units.

Please don't downplay the importance of the learning discussion forums in this course. Such forums can be an essential support—and a great comfort—in a course containing as many challenging readings as this one does. The forums will give you a chance to share ideas, learn from one another, and do some collaborative sense-making.

Grades and Grading

Students will receive grades for all submitted work, normally within two weeks of submission. Grades will be posted under the Communication icon of “My Grades” on WebCT. Unless there is a problem with a particular assignment, comments will not be provided at the time grades are posted.

Instead, students will receive substantive feedback orally during private, portfolio review sessions with the instructor. I consider detailed feedback to be critically important in a course as technical as this one—but it's impossible to write long letters to each student for each assignment. Consequently, I will devote most of my teaching time during Phase II to individual meetings; the co-instructor will take responsibility for most of the on-line teaching during that period. Each student will have two

portfolio review sessions during the semester, one near the course mid-point and one near the end of the course. The sessions will be scheduled at a convenient time, and the student can choose whether to meet via telephone or face-to-face.

Grading is based on 100 possible “course points” using the following scheme:

- 90-100 points: A
- 80-89 points: B
- 70-79 points: C
- Less than 70: F

Each assignment—and each unit’s discussion—is worth a specific number of points, as depicted below.

Phase	Learning Unit	Products	Course Points
I	1	Assignment #1: Essay on Research Discussion	7 points 3 points
	2	Assignment #2: Annotated Bibliography Discussion	7 points 3 points
	3	Assignment #3: Research Types Discussion	10 points 3 points
	4	Assignment #4: Technical Definitions Discussion	10 points 3 points
II	5	Critique of Article #1 Discussion	15 points 3 points
	6	Critique of Article #2 Discussion	15 points 3 points
	7	Critique of Article #3 Discussion	15 points 3 points

Grading is based on individual student “mastery” of the content rather than “on the curve.” Consequently, it is possible for all students to get an A in the course. *Assignments must be submitted on time. Failure to do so may result in lost points for that assignment.*

Special Needs and Special Accommodations

If you are having trouble with the course, please contact the instructor. Depending on your problem or question, you will receive assistance via email, telephone or face-to-face meeting. If you have special learning needs or need special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible.

Course Calendar			
Phase	Dates	Learning Units/Activities	
Phase I: Learning the Basics	Aug 24 – Sep 6	Unit 1: Getting Situated	
	Sep 7 – Sep 20	Unit 2: Locating Useful Literature	
	Sep 21 – Oct 4	Unit 3: Types of Research	
	Oct 5 – Oct 18	Unit 4: Learning Methodological Details <i>Co-Instructor: Dave Ruggless</i>	
Phase II: Mastering Research Reports	Oct 19 – Nov 1	Unit 5: Article Critique: Sandlin <i>Co-Instructor: Dave Ruggless</i>	Phase I Portfolio Sessions
	Nov 2 – Nov 15	Unit 6: Article Critique: Brewer & Clippard <i>Co-Instructor: Dave Ruggless</i>	
	Nov 16 – Nov 29	Unit 7: Article Critique: Van der Sluis & Poell <i>Co-Instructor: Dave Ruggless</i>	
	Nov 30 – Dec 7	Phase II Individual Portfolio Sessions	

Other Comments

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.