

# Syllabus

## IL 2290: RESEARCH SEMINAR IN EDUCATION

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research is a way of thinking and a way of doing. Research allows for systematic and rigorous approaches to investigating problems and deepening our understanding of issues important to the practice of teaching and learning. As a means for generating new knowledge, the research process has ethical considerations. In this course we will explore epistemological, methodological and ethical issues associated with the conduct of research. The course is structured as an intensive experiential seminar. Each student will conduct a small-scale study— from design to completed paper—and keep a detailed research process journal of his/her experiences. Most students will conduct classroom action research, though doing other types of research can be acceptable in this course.

This course serves as a capstone course for anyone seeking the MEd degree in the School of Education. Courses in research methodology and/or disciplined inquiry are established by the department as prerequisites to this course. This course synthesizes and deepens students' skills in, and understanding of, research as a valuable ongoing practice for educational practitioners. The outcome of the course is a thesis project and an oral presentation of the project to a select group of people in your school site. Writing the thesis is an organic process so be prepared to give and receive a lot of feedback and do multiple rewrites of your document.

### DESIGN OF COURSE OVERVIEW

The steps to writing a thesis are clustered into instructional modules in this course. Each module contains instructional resources and assignments to guide students in accomplishing that part of the research process. Though students will roughly follow the modules in sequence, the research process is not linear. Students will find that they will be working simultaneously in several modules. Students will also find that the time needed to work through each module varies for every individual.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Develop the disposition of a researcher: the ability to make evidence-based decisions; to take multiple perspectives to interrogate the data; and develop a knowledge of ethical issues
2. Formulate a reasonable research question
3. Search for literature and select relevant educational research based on the research question
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of methodological approaches based on the research question 5. Interpret the research based on the research question

6. Synthesize the educational research based on the research question
7. Determine data to collect that aligns with the question and develop a data collection strategy  
Collect relevant data
9. Demonstrate an ability to analyze data using appropriate analytic strategies to respond to their research question
10. Demonstrate their ability to interpret their data and reveal a new understanding of practice based on the problem they investigated

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Galvan, J.L. & Galvan, M.C. (2017). Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences (**7th Edition**). Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing. [WLR] ISBN-13: 978-0415315746

**NOTE:** Read the eBook version in Hillman Library, purchase a hard copy online, or rent an eBook version at: <https://www.vitalsource.com/products/writing-literature-reviews-a-guide-for-students-jose-l-galvan-v9781351858915>

Graff, G., Birkenstein, C., & Durst, R. (2015). “They say/I say” with readings. (**3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

**NOTE:** There is now a 4th edition of this book which we are NOT using, so you will be able to get the 3rd edition for a great price at Amazon and other online book dealers.

## COURSE EVALUATION

See **Assignments** in the course navigation menu for detailed instructions.

### EVALUATION

Item Evaluated	Point Value	Percentage of Final Grade
IRB Certification	10	~6%
Exercises	25	~12%
Proposal	15	~7%
Drafts	36	~17%
Final Draft	90	~44%
Journal Entries	15	~7%
Peer Critique	15	~7%
Total	206	100%

## GRADING SCALE

Grade	Points
A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	Less than 60

## GRADING POLICY

In this course, students learn by doing. Grades will be based on the completion of a series of assignments related to steps in the research process, on research journals students maintain as blog entries throughout the course, on critical colleague peer feedback, and on a final paper based on the individual literature review project. Every assignment is designed to help students develop their knowledge and skills as scholars. Grading them varies, however, with some grades based upon participation and completion of an assignment, whilst other grades are based upon the quality of the work done within the assignment. We urge students to consistently do their best work to maximize each assignment's contribution toward the quality of their final project. All assignments can be submitted via CourseWeb and grades will be tracked there.

### Assignments

In order to make the research process more manageable, we have segmented the process into steps. We have also segmented the writing for the paper into manageable sections. Students will regularly complete assignments that focus on targeted research skills and aspects of writing. For many assignments, students are directed to provide peer review to their colleagues prior to submitting them to the instructor. Students will post their completed assignments within CourseWeb for the instructor on each given due date. Each assignment is worth 5 points. Assignments receiving 4-5 points are considered satisfactory. Assignments

receiving less than 4 points are deemed unsatisfactory, need to be revised and resubmitted unless the instructor has specifically asked you not to do so.

**NOTE:** Students should plan to submit assignments on time to be eligible for full points. Students will lose points for each assignment that is not turned in on the given due date. (See CourseWeb for the schedule for when each assigned segment is due.) All documents should be in Word or should follow the specific assignment directions. If there is a valid reason that you must hand in a late assignment, you must discuss this with your instructor or you will not receive full credit for that assignment.

If followed, the course schedule ensures that students have the opportunity to submit drafts and get feedback from the instructor. Students will also be able to give and receive feedback with their critical colleague peers along the way.

### Field journals

Field journals will be kept using the journal in CourseWeb. This assignment is worth 15 points and will be graded at the end of the semester. Students should plan to write in their field journals *at least once a week*. Occasionally there will be specific prompts to focus student attention on some aspects of their experience throughout the research process: but generally, students should follow the directions given with the journal on recording the research process.

### Critical colleague peer feedback

Students will receive feedback and comments from their classmates as critical colleague peers. Small groups of students will be assigned to provide this feedback to each other. Your group will maintain a group space in CourseWeb for sharing, feedback and collaboration about your research data collection and analysis. In that space, each group member will create pages to post their raw data and field notes, drafts of participant consent forms, interview guidelines, and outlines for report chapters. Group members will provide critical feedback to each other. Participation is important as students rely upon feedback from each other to improve their research and writing. Providing regular insightful critique to your group members work is worth 15 points and will be graded at the end of the semester. As each of you provide constructive critique to each other, it further reinforces your understanding of that element within research: thus, all benefit and develop further capabilities as researchers.

Final edited papers will be due the last week of class. Final papers are worth 90 points and will be graded with a scoring rubric and assigned points. Drafts of elements of the final paper will be due throughout the semester in order to receive instructor and critical colleague feedback. Students can consult the guidelines on CourseWeb for expectations for each part of the paper. Any student who does not turn in a completed final paper by the due date must discuss their situation and review their grade options with the instructor.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE

Refer to the course **Schedule**.

## COURSE NORMS

Collaboration is highly valued and a regular practice in research communities of practice. In this course, all students are valuable sources of insight for each other. The main source of supportive feedback to each of you will come from fellow students serving in the role of a critical colleague peer.

Integrity and respectful interactions is essential both within our course and within research. It is expected that all students will treat each other with respect at all times. It is further expected that all students will comply with the student codes of conduct established by the University of Pittsburgh and the guidelines for Academic Integrity of the School of Education. Students are required to complete the Academic Integrity guidelines agreement found on CourseWeb. Additional University of Pittsburgh Policies and Regulations on disabilities and nondiscrimination are posted within CourseWeb.

Integrity and respect in research practice is a broader, ongoing exploration of issues, particularly since research has many processes and can take many forms. Students will begin their exploration of ethical issues by completing two IRB training courses on Research Integrity and on Human Subjects Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences and submitting their certificates of completion. Discussions will be ongoing throughout the course to guide students through ethical situations they encounter.

Though students will submit IRB certificates from the completion of their training courses, it is **not** anticipated that students will design literature review studies requiring IRB review or approval. Studies done in this course are expected to fall into the category of class assignments that provide practical application during the learning of research skills and processes. Certainly, the paper you produce in this course will serve as an example of your writing and research skill development. However, the work students do in this course is not designed to be publicly presented at conferences or submitted to journals for potential publication.

This course is intensive. Students have lots to accomplish in a short amount of time. The literature review process has many steps. We break down the review process into activities that students find are manageable and lead to a successful and enjoyable experience as scholarly practitioners. Budgeting your time to ensure that you accomplish all activities in this course will increase your satisfaction with your project's outcomes. *We cannot over emphasize how critically important it is for students to maintain steady effort each and every week in this course to make progress.* If you can see that complexities in your life are going to interfere with your making progress this term, please consider taking the course at a different point in time.

Students are strongly encouraged to follow the timeline closely so that their critical colleague peers and instructor can provide feedback on drafts and help them problem solve as challenges are encountered. CourseWeb is set up with resources and assignments (many aligned with the required textbooks) to help students with the various aspects of the literature review process. Other resources/assignments can be added to CourseWeb that are particular to the needs of the students enrolled.

Though this course is designed to provide extensive instructional resources and regular feedback, inevitably, student(s) may find they need additional guidance with unique situations they encounter in conducting their literature review. Students should plan to initiate conversations with their instructor via email to alert him/her to questions and challenges they are facing.

Though the course is intensive, we hope all students this term have as much fun learning and grappling with the importance of research in informing and shaping educational practice as students in prior terms have had. We are all in this together to improve our skills and expand our thinking.

## **PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy.

Please become familiar with definitions of [plagiarism](#). The University Librarians are a good resource if you have questions about plagiarism. It is very important that you understand how to avoid plagiarism in your papers.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, at 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible, but no later than the fourth week of the term or visit the [Office of Disability Resources website](#) as early as possible, but no later than the 4th week of the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

Blackboard is ADA Compliant and has fully implemented the final accessibility standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Please note that, due to the flexibility provided in this product, it is possible for some material to inadvertently fall outside of these guidelines.

## **COPYRIGHT NOTICE**

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials. See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and the [University Copyright Policy](#).