IL 2990: Research Seminar

Syllabus (Summer 2021)

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| **Instructor:** | Emily Rainey, PhD |
| **Email:** | erainey@pitt.edu |
| **Class Meetings:** | Wednesdays, 4:30-7pm (synchronous) |
| **Office Hours:** | <https://calendly.com/emilyrainey/office-hours-mat> |

**Course Description**

Research Seminar is designed to provide support for preparing your MAT capstone project. This course will provide you with support as you continue to develop your ideas and plan from Disciplined Inquiry. Specifically, you will transform one or more of your portfolio entries from Disciplined Inquiry into a complete action research proposal that is situated in the literature base.

By the end of this class, you will:

* Have a working knowledge of approaches to classroom data analysis;
* Develop an action research proposal that is clear and meaningful to you as a new practitioner; and
* Prepare and formally present your project proposal with colleagues.

**Course Purpose**

Many first-year teachers feel that they are “swimming upstream” without clear principles or commitments guiding their work. However, the MAT program has offered you opportunities to deeply consider the principles and commitments that will guide your future teaching. You have articulated these principles and commitments in documents such as your teaching philosophy statement, and you have explored ways of integrating them into your planning and instruction.

This course is meant to further support your transition to your first year of teaching by equipping you with a practical, meaningful, clear action research plan that you can use. Action research is a powerful tool that teachers have for continuously improving our own instruction and effectiveness; many of the best teachers describe their professional activity as grounded in cycles of systematic inquiry. This is not out of reach for you as a first-year teacher, and, in fact, having a strong plan focused on an area of professional curiosity or a professional development goal will help you to make the most of your first year both for yourself and your students.

This proposal is an opportunity to make a careful plan for how you will engage in research as a first-year teacher. You should certainly draw upon the work you completed in Disciplined Inquiry, as well as the many concepts you learned and insights you had. However, you should also enter this course ready to refine your perspectives and create something new for a professional context that may still be unknown.

**Conferences for Action Research Studies**

The end product of this course is an action research plan that you will be able to refine and conduct in your classroom in 2021-22. After you collect data, you might consider applying to a state or national conference to share the results of your study with colleagues beyond your school. Here is a list of major state and national teacher conferences by subject area:

English:

* National Council of Teachers of English ([NCTE](https://ncte.org/))
* Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts ([PCTELA](http://www.pctela.org/))

Foreign Language Education:

* American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages ([ACTFL](https://www.actfl.org/))
* Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association ([PSMLA](https://www.psmla.net/))
* National Network for Early Language Learning ([NNELL](https://nnell.org/))
* Northeast Conference of the Teaching of Foreign Languages ([NECTFL](https://www.nectfl.org/))

Math:

* National Council of Teachers of Mathematics ([NCTM](https://www.nctm.org/))
* Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics ([PCTM](https://pctm.org/))

Science:

* National Science Teaching Association ([NSTA](https://www.nsta.org/))
* Pennsylvania Science Teachers Association ([PSTA](https://www.pascience.org/))

Social Studies:

* National Council for the Social Studies ([NCSS](https://www.socialstudies.org/))
* Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies ([PCSS](https://pcssonline.org/))

I recommend learning about your professional associations and joining them as a student member (while you still can!). Look up when and where the next annual conferences will take place, and make a note of any conference proposal deadlines you find. You can anticipate that these dates will be similar from year to year unless listed otherwise.

**Course Readings**

Our core text for the course is:

* [Phillips, D.K., & Carr, K.](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pitt-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1588692) (2014). *Becoming a teacher through action research: Process, context, and self-study.* 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

It is available as a free e-book through Pitt’s library system.

Your other reading will be self-directed and focused on expanding your familiarity with relevant literature for your project.

**Course Assignments**

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| **Assignments** | **Point Value** |
| Substantive participation in class and other course assignments | 40 |
| Drafted Powerpoint slide deck reflecting all feedback and course concepts | 10 |
| Final presentation of proposal to colleagues (via Zoom) | 10 |
| Final action research proposal reflecting feedback received (in the form of a Powerpoint slide deck) | 40 |
| **Total** | **100** |

**Course Policies**

**Preparedness and Professionalism**

You are expected to read all assigned readings and participate in discussions or activities for which the readings serve as a springboard. You will be expected to integrate aspects of readings into your work. You are expected to attend all class meetings.

Remember, this is a professional course as well as an academic course. As part of course participation you should be demonstrating that you are learning and applying general professional standards. Professionalism in education includes thinking about and representing students in asset-based ways and articulating critical feedback to colleagues constructively.

**Grading**

Grades will be assigned on the basis of both process and product. The grading scale is:

A+ = 100 points A = 94-99 points A- = 90-93 points

B+ = 88-89 points B = 84-87 points B- = 80-83 points

Below 80 = failure

**Late Assignment Policy**

The nature and pace of this course requires that you do not fall behind in assignments. Short extensions (i.e., 12 or 24 hours) may be granted when they are arranged with the instructor at least 24 hours before the due date.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a key component of professionalism. All students are expected to adhere to standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action. 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 at <http://provost.pitt.edu/faculty-resources/academic-integrity-freedom/academic-integrity-guidelines>.

Please note the following academic integrity issues related to plagiarism are especially relevant within the context of this program. You may not represent ideas, text, or other products/work that was created by others as being your own. When drawing from the work of others, it is important to provide appropriate and complete citations. Even when you have put the idea of others into your own words, be sure to cite the original pieces you are drawing from.

**Grievance Policy**

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. The rights and responsibilities of faculty and students are described in the University’s Academic Integrity Guidelines at:

<http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html>

**Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

I welcome students of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

**Accommodations**

**For Disability**

If you require special accommodations or classroom modifications, then please notify both me and Disability Resources and Services by the end of the first week of the term. The office of Disability Resources and Services is located in 140 William Pitt Union (412-648-7890 [voice or TDD]), and their website is at: <http://www.drs.pitt.edu>. If you have a physical, learning, or emotional disability, please let me know as early as you can so that I can accommodate you.

**For Religious Observances**

If a due date conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me of which dates will pose a conflict during the first week of class so we can make alternative arrangements.

**For Other Special Circumstances**

If there are extenuating circumstances that impact your success, please contact me as soon as possible to schedule an appointment so that we can discuss them.

**Course Schedule**

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| **Date** | **Weekly Topics** | **Do Before Class** | **Do After Class** |
| **How can I design a meaningful proposal for my first year of teaching?** | | | |
| Week 1  May 19 | * Course overview * What is action research and how could it be important to me in my first year of teaching? * Expand literature review for your project | Read:   * Syllabus | (Re)read:   * Key pieces from your literature search   Submit by midnight 5/23   * HW1 |
| Week 2  May 26 | * Create plan of action |  | (Re)read:   * Key pieces from your literature search   Submit by midnight 5/30:   * HW2 |
| Week 3  June 2 | * Develop research question * Determine primary and secondary data sources | Read:   * Ch 3 Phillips & Carr (pp. 69-100) | Submit by midnight 6/6:   * HW3 |
| Week 4  June 9 | * Plan data collection and analysis procedures | Read:   * Chs 4 and 5 Phillips & Carr (pp. 101-152) | Submit by midnight 6/13:   * ~~HW4~~ * Powerpoint draft |
| **How can I effectively share my action research proposal with colleagues?** | | | |
| Week 5  June 16 | * Share your drafted plan and receive feedback * Address feedback and comments in your plan | Read:   * Ch 7 Phillips & Carr (pp. 185-206)   Review:   * APA Guidelines   Bring a draft to class:   * Powerpoint draft | Submit by midnight 6/20:   * Powerpoint revised * Complete OMETs. Send proof of completion to Emily for 1 bonus point. |
| Week 6  June 23 | * Share action research study and receive feedback * Offer colleagues feedback on their proposals | Revise and prepare to present your Powerpoint | Submit by midnight 6/27:   * Final Powerpoint |

**Week 1 Homework**

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| **Problem Area and Research Question** | |
| What is your area of focus/problem area? | *What is the specific issue that you are working to address in your classroom or instruction? What are you worried about? What are you committed to improving?*  *How do others write about this problem or focal area? What are big ideas or themes related to this problem that you have found in your reading so far? (Include 2-3 citations and briefly describe them)*  *What are 1-2 key terms that are especially useful for describing the problem at hand? (Include 1-2 citations and the definitions of these terms)*  *Why does this issue matter to you? What are the stakes for you and for your students?* |
| What are approaches you could try that may help with the problem? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| What is your research question? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Data Collection Plan** | |
| What will your primary sources of data include? Why? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Data Analysis Plan** | |
| How will you analyze your data? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you triangulate your results? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you seek trustworthiness? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Personal Reflection** | |
| How do you think this project could support you in your first year teaching? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| What questions have been raised about the process of action research? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |

**Week 2 Homework**

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| **Problem Area and Research Question** | |
| What is your area of focus/problem area?  REVISED | *What is the specific issue that you are working to address in your classroom or instruction? What are you worried about? What are you committed to improving?*  *How do others write about this problem or focal area? What are big ideas or themes related to this problem that you have found in your reading so far? (Include 2-3 citations and briefly describe them)*  *What are 1-2 key terms that are especially useful for describing the problem at hand? (Include 1-2 citations and the definitions of these terms)*  *Why does this issue matter to you? What are the stakes for you and for your students?* |
| What are approaches you could try that may help with the problem? | *What are ways you could address the problem as the teacher and leader of your classroom? Focus on a pedagogical change or another aspect of your instructional practice that you could shift and study.*  *Which action will you prioritize and why? Consider articles you find that indicate promising approaches or other guidance. (Include citations for 2-3 pieces that support your decision. It’s ok if they are the same as above, and also fine if they are different; the important thing is that you’re consulting the literature to inform your decision making and then citing pieces that are truly anchor pieces for your work)* |
| What is your research question? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Data Collection Plan** | |
| What will your primary sources of data include? Why? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Data Analysis Plan** | |
| How will you analyze your data? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you triangulate your results? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you seek trustworthiness? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Personal Reflection** | |
| How do you think this project could support you in your first year teaching? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| What questions have been raised about the process of action research? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |

**Week 3 Homework**

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| **Problem Area and Research Question** | |
| What is your area of focus/problem area?  REVISED | *What is the specific issue that you are working to address in your classroom or instruction? What are you worried about? What are you committed to improving?*  *How do others write about this problem or focal area? What are big ideas or themes related to this problem that you have found in your reading so far? (Include 2-3 citations and briefly describe them)*  *What are 1-2 key terms that are especially useful for describing the problem at hand? (Include 1-2 citations and the definitions of these terms)*  *Why does this issue matter to you? What are the stakes for you and for your students?* |
| What are approaches you could try that may help with the problem?  REVISED | *What are ways you could address the problem as the teacher and leader of your classroom? Focus on a pedagogical change or another aspect of your instructional practice that you could shift and study.*  *Which action will you prioritize and why? Consider articles you find that indicate promising approaches or other guidance. (Include citations for 2-3 pieces that support your decision. It’s ok if they are the same as above, and also fine if they are different; the important thing is that you’re consulting the literature to inform your decision making and then citing pieces that are truly anchor pieces for your work)* |
| What is your research question? |  |
| **Data Collection Plan** | |
| What will your primary sources of data include? Why? | *What are the data sources that are most useful for answering your question?*  *How will each data source help you understand patterns related to your question?*  *How will your data sources complement one another?* |
| **Data Analysis Plan** | |
| How will you analyze your data? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you triangulate your results? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| How will you seek trustworthiness? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| **Personal Reflection** | |
| How do you think this project could support you in your first year teaching? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |
| What questions have been raised about the process of action research? | *LEAVE BLANK FOR NOW* |

**Week 4 Homework**

**Research Plan**

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| **Problem Area, Research Question, and Connections to Literature** | |
| What is your area of focus/problem area? | *What is the specific issue that you are working to address in your classroom or instruction? What are you worried about? What are you committed to improving?*  *How do others write about this problem or focal area? What are big ideas or themes related to this problem that you have found in your reading so far? (Include 2-3 citations and briefly describe them)*  *What are 1-2 key terms that are especially useful for describing the problem at hand? (Include 1-2 citations and the definitions of these terms)*  *Why does this issue matter to you? What are the stakes for you and for your students?* |
| What are approaches you could try that may help with the problem? | *What are ways you could address the problem as the teacher and leader of your classroom? Focus on a pedagogical change or another aspect of your instructional practice that you could shift and study.*  *Which action will you prioritize and why? Consider articles you find that indicate promising approaches or other guidance. (Include citations for 2-3 pieces that support your decision. It’s ok if they are the same as above, and also fine if they are different; the important thing is that you’re consulting the literature to inform your decision making and then citing pieces that are truly anchor pieces for your work)* |
| What is your research question? |  |
| **Data Collection Plan** | |
| What will your primary sources of data include? Why? | *What are the most useful data sources for answering your question?*  *How will each data source help you understand patterns related to your question?*  *Will you collect interviews, surveys, artifacts, other sources of data? If you plan to collect interviews or surveys, what key questions will you ask and why?*  *How will your data sources complement one another?* |
| **Data Analysis Plan** | |
| How will you analyze your data? | *What specifically will you look for/code for? Why? Connect back to your research question and use the same key words.*  *What tools (rubric, coding scheme) will you use? What will they help you see?* |
| How will you triangulate your results? | *How can you plan to look across multiple data sources to get a richer picture of what happened and why?* |
| How will you seek trustworthiness? | *Can you solicit insights from a colleague? Can you keep careful records of your process? Can you analyze in a systematic way that ensures you’re not simply reporting what you wanted to find? Other approaches?* |
| **Personal Reflection** | |
| How do you think this project could support you in your first year teaching? | *What could the project help you to accomplish next year?*  *How could the project help you be the teacher you seek to be?*  *Specifically consider goals of equity and justice in relation to your teaching.* |
| What questions have been raised about the process of action research? |  |

**Weeks 5-6: Final Action Research Proposal Powerpoint Guidelines**

Your action research proposal is a Powerpoint presentation. Your Powerpoint slide deck should include the following:

* **Introduction and Critical Question**
  + What is your area of focus/problem area?
  + What is your research question?
  + What do you hope to learn (about your own professional practice, about your students)?
  + What is the story behind this action research project? (Why are you interested in this area? What is your own experience with this area? How are your own values, beliefs, and sense of what “good teaching” is–especially those that you have cultivated in your MAT program—represented in this project?)
* **Literature Review**
  + What are the keywords and how are they defined?
  + What are the common themes in the literature related to this action research project?
  + What are the anchor texts for this project? Why did you choose them specifically?
* **Data Collection Plan**
  + From whom and when do you plan to collect data?
  + How will you collect data? What questions will you ask in your interviews/surveys? What artifacts will you collect (student work, classroom discourse)? What data collection tools will you use for your observations (video, audio, note-taking, dialog journal, observation protocol)?
* **Data Analysis Plan** 
  + How will you step outside of your role as the teacher to critically examine what your data say about your teaching?
  + How can you triangulate?
  + How will you approach the process of identifying patterns in your data that are responsive to your critical question?
  + How will you seek trustworthiness?
* **Personal Reflection**
  + Why is action research important to you?
  + What will the study you have proposed support you to accomplish in your first year as a classroom teacher?
  + What questions have been raised by this project?

**Final Action Research Proposal Rubric**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Honors (8)** | **Satisfactory (6)** | **Unsatisfactory (0)** |
| **Introduction and Question** | Explains the issue or problem you studied, why it is important to your teaching and why it is important to the audience in a compelling, clear, and original way. Includes clear specific research question that is related to the rest of the study. | Explains the issue or problem studied and why it is important to your teaching; includes clear, specific research question that is aligned to the rest of the study. | Does not explain clearly why the study is important to your teaching; critical research question is vague and/or not clearly aligned with the rest of the study. |
| **Literature review** | Literature review is coherent and points to the importance of your study; makes a compelling argument for your critical questions; cites at least 2-3 scholarly sources that are very relevant to the project and explains them in relation to the study and to each other; themes across the sources are identified. | Literature review is coherent and points to the importance of your study; argues for the importance of your critical question; cites at least 2-3 academic scholarly sources and explains them in relation to the study and to each other. | Literature review is not coherent and/or does not argue for the importance of the critical question; sources are not scholarly or too few; sources not explained clearly or clearly related to your study |
| **Data collection and analysis plan** | Study’s data collection process is described in full detail and linked back to the literature reviewed; analysis instruments are presented clearly; explanation of data collection includes justification of methods chosen as well as a relevant, concise, clear, and comprehensive description of data sources and collection procedures (number of students, frequency of observations, etc.); data analysis plan is clear, detailed, and justified; describes a plan for strengthening the trustworthiness of your findings through triangulation. All data collection and analysis tools are clear. | Study’s data collection process is described in full detail and linked back to the literature reviewed; analysis instruments are presented clearly; explanation of data collection is clear and detailed; data analysis plan is included; mentions how to strengthen the trustworthiness of your findings through triangulation. | Study’s data collection process is not clearly described or not aligned with the literature review; explanations of data collection and analysis are insufficient to give the reader a clear picture of your process and/or no attention is paid to trustworthiness or triangulation. |
| **Personal Reflection** | You make clear points about what the potential significance of the study will be; you include an insightful reflection about the relationship between the iterative process of action research and your own practice as a teacher, including the potential role of this proposal for your first year as a teacher. | You make some points about the potential significance of the study, but points may be somewhat vague or slightly misaligned in places; you describe the relationship between the iterative process of action research and your own practice as a teacher. | You make unclear or inaccurate statements about the potential significance of the study; you do not reflect on action research as a component of your professional practice or reflection is perfunctory. |
| **Style** | Style is engaging, personal, and original as well as clear, concise, and reflective. APA format is used correctly for references and citations. | Style is all or mostly clear, concise, and reflective; uses APA format correctly for references and citations. | Style is often unclear or unfocused; multiple errors in APA format appear. |