

# TLL 2405: Introduction to Action Research

## Fall 2023

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### Course information

**Meeting time:** Thursdays 1:00-3:30

### Instructor information

**Instructor:** Heather Hendry

**Email:** heh15@pitt.edu

### Required Text

Phillips, D. K., & Carr, K. (2014). *Becoming a teacher through action research: Process, context, and self-study*. New York, NY: Routledge.

### What is this course about?

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to action research as a method of improving their practice, developing their teacher identity, and initiating change. What is action research? Action research is a form of systematic inquiry that is conducted *by* practitioners to investigate *their own* practice with the overarching goal to improve, develop, and change their practice. Throughout the course, students will work collaboratively to: a) conceptualize the value, components, and purpose of action research; and b) practice how it is carried out utilizing various methods of data collection and analysis to critically examine and reflect on an area of focus related to their classroom. With the goal of critical investigation, reflection and *action*, action research fulfills the goals of social justice education by providing teachers with agency to address unjust systems, structures, and practices that could be hindering the growth and development of students. At the end of the course, students will construct a research proposal on an area of focus connected to their practice that seeks to provide more equitable and just opportunities for students. This discussion-based, interactive, collaborative course aims to create a community of practice that mirrors those that occur naturally in the field.

Throughout the course, students will be involved in four kinds of learning activities (the 4 C's):

- *Conceptualize* action research and literature research concepts by reading the textbook, reading supplemental articles, and viewing online video clips
- *Collaborate* with peers
- *Connect* action research concepts with authentic examples
- *Construct* parts of an individual or collaborative action research project proposal

### What will we do in this course?

*Develop dispositions for action research*

- Develop the dispositions of a researcher, consumer of research, and justice-focused change agent who is committed to equity
- Articulate personal beliefs as educators, recognize bias, and situate them within appropriate educational theories

- Discuss how action research is related to the goals social justice education (allowing teachers to critically investigate, reflect, and take action on inequities and unjust practices, structures, and systems)

#### *Understand action research and literature research*

- Review the origin of action research, its critical features, and its relation to other research methodologies
- Describe the action research process: thinking, acting, reflecting, rethinking
- Review literature research, its critical features, and its relation to other research methodologies
- Describe the literature research design

#### *Connect action research and literature research*

- Develop a research question for an action research proposal that is connected to the teacher-researcher's practice and to current literature in the field
- View how literature research can be used as data in action research to address questions that arise from practice

#### *Conduct action research*

- Collaborate with peers as a community of researchers
- Review, discuss, and participate in best practices for designing and carrying out the action research process
  - **Thinking:** Identify an area of focus that is justice-oriented and connected to an issue of practice, situate that focus within existing literature, and script an appropriate research question. Understand and honor the perspectives of the participants and aspects of the context. Deconstruct the teacher-researchers' background, perspectives and beliefs.
  - **Acting:** Enact various strategies for data collection and management to answer the proposed research question. Ensure data represents cultural proficiency honoring multiple perspectives and components of the teaching context.
  - **Reflecting:** Make meaning of the data that you collected utilizing cultural proficiency by viewing data through multiple perspectives from the teaching context (e.g. the teacher-researcher, literature in the field, participants, and peers).
  - **Rethinking:** Create a new understanding of practice from what is discovered from the data collected and the review of literature. Utilize this new understanding of practice to rethink and remake unjust systems and inequities.

#### *Conduct literature research*

- Review, discuss, and participate in best practices for designing and carrying out the literature research process.
- Practice interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation of research studies.
- Create a matrix of research studies on a particular area of focus.

## What types of assignments will be assigned?

**Connect assignments:** are individual assignments that are designed to help you **situate** and **connect** action research concepts within **actual examples**.

**Construct assignments:** are individual assignments that are designed to help you **apply** action research concepts to **construct** the parts of an individual or collaborative action research project proposal.

### ***Research project proposal and presentation***

Throughout the course, by completing your construct assignments, you will create drafts of portions of an action research project proposal that incorporates action research. At the end of the term, you will complete a final draft of the proposal and present this proposal on PowerPoint in class. You will be provided detailed guidance and a specific template for this action research project proposal.

## Course Evaluation

### **Assignments**

*Collaborate:* weekly discussion posts and class participation

*Connect:* Individual assignments

*Construct:* Individual assignments

Research Project Proposal

### **Points**

65 pts.

20 pts.

60 pts.

60 pts.

**Total:**

205 pts.

Date	Topic	Readings (Conceptualize)	Assignments
Week 1 Thurs., Aug. 31	<p><b>Establishing our Community of Practice &amp; Private theories about teaching, learning &amp; research</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> Who is in our research community? What is your image of a good teacher? What do you believe about teaching and student learning? What is research? What is action research? What is the role of literature in action research?</p>	P&C pp XI-XVI: “Introductory guide and invitation”	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 1 (in class):</b> Discussion of an “effective teacher in your content area” and a “effective researcher”</p> <p><b>Connect Assignment 1:</b> Self-Study 1.1: Personal Interview, P31</p>
Week 2 Thurs., Sept. 7	<p><b>Action Research Methods</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> What does it mean to “deconstruct”?</p> <p>What is the difference between quantitative and qualitative research? How does “mixed methods” research differ from action research?</p>	P&C pp. 9-38	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 2:</b> Discussion of the four types of teacher action research: Self-study, Ethnography, Curriculum analysis, and Design research (pp. 20-21)</p> <p><b>Connect Assignment 2:</b> In your own words, what is a student teacher-researcher? (one or two paragraphs, pp. 22-23)</p>
Week 3 Thurs., Sept. 14	<p><b>Areas of Focus for Action Research and Literature Research</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b></p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 39-44</p> <p>Donato (2003) (focusing on the “Purpose of the Study” of each case)</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 3:</b> Discussion of area of focus examples (problematizing the case studies)</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 1:</b> Graphic Organizer for Areas of Focus</p>

	<p>How can I investigate my practice?</p> <p>What are some areas of focus that I might want to describe, document, examine?</p>		
<p>Week 4 Thurs., Sept. 21</p>	<p><b>Reviewing Literature and Support from Distant Colleagues: Part 1</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> What is the role of reviewing literature in research?</p> <p>How do I effectively search the literature?</p> <p>What are my anchor texts?</p> <p>What is APA formatting?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 45-52</p> <p>Mills Chapter 3 (pp. 44-55)</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 4:</b> Discussion of how literature inform areas of focus</p>
<p>Week 5 Thurs., Sept. 28</p>	<p><b>Reviewing Literature and Support from Distant Colleagues: Part 2</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> What is the role of reviewing literature in research?</p> <p>How do I effectively search the literature?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 45-52</p> <p>Mills Chapter 3 (pp. 44-55)</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 5:</b> Discussion of search strategies</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 2:</b> Write up a draft of an introduction section and Reference List in APA style with at 6 sources</p> <p>Draft a critical question (in class)</p>

	<p>What are my anchor texts?</p> <p>What is APA formatting?</p>		
<p>Week 6 Thurs., Oct. 5</p>	<p><b>Critical Questions</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> How do I write a critical question?</p> <p>What are some ways to answer my critical question?</p> <p>What have I learned from distant colleagues about my area of focus?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 53-61</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 6</b> Discussion of critical questions</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 3:</b> Draft a critical question (in class) and begin to complete a matrix with 3 anchor texts</p>
<p>Week 7 Thurs., Oct. 12</p>	<p><b>Cultural Proficiency</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> What is cultural proficiency?</p> <p>How might cultural bias affect the research design?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 101-115 (including the self-studies)</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 7:</b> Discussion of cultural influences and how the contexts of our practice inform our research</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 4:</b> Add 3 sources to the matrix and critical question, and draft context statement</p>
<p>Week 8 Thurs., Oct. 19</p>	<p><b>Data Collection</b></p> <p><b>Thinking:</b> Why and how do I collect data?</p> <p>What are some data collection tools?</p> <p>What information do I need to collect to answer my critical question?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 69-79; Appendix E pp. 227-247</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 8:</b> Discussion of data collection</p>

<p>Week 9 Thurs., Oct. 26</p>	<p><b>Research Design</b></p> <p><b>Action Research Thinking and Acting:</b> What is Triangulation and what role does it play in action research?</p> <p>What is the design of my Interview/Survey protocol?</p> <p>How does it support my critical question?</p> <p><b>Literature Research</b> What is the story behind why you are doing your research?</p> <p>What does the literature say about the importance of your research topic?</p> <p>What else do you need to answer in order to investigate your critical question?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 79-94</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 9:</b> Discussion of interview/survey design: who you need to interview, which format you will choose, and what questions you will ask (see Appendix E6-E9 pp. 238-246)</p>
<p>Week 10 Thurs., Nov. 2</p>	<p><b>Data Analysis</b></p> <p><b>Acting and Reflecting:</b> What is the purpose of ongoing data analysis?</p>		<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 10:</b> Discussion of ongoing data analysis</p> <p>Discussion of criteria in literature such as theoretical framework, methodology, context, findings, references and how to</p>

	<p>How do I analyze interview data? What will be my criteria? How do I display interview data?</p> <p>What is an analytic memo?</p> <p><b>Acting and Reflecting:</b> How can I use literature as data?</p> <p>How do I synthesize the data (literature)?</p>		<p>show relationships between the literature using these criteria</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 5:</b> Organize literature research And begin to write up draft of main findings</p>
<p>Week 11 Thurs., Nov. 9</p>	<p><b>Data Analysis</b></p> <p><b>Action Research (Artifacts)</b> <b>Acting and Reflecting:</b> How do I analyze artifacts? What will be my criteria? How do I display artifact data?</p> <p><b>Acting and Reflecting:</b> Are you choosing useful articles? What articles should I include/exclude and why? How can I organize my articles?</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 131-144 Appendix H pp. 246-247</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 11:</b> Discussion of artifact: what type will you choose, why did you choose this type, and what information might you obtain related to your critical question (see Appendix E10 pp. 246-247). Discussion of findings from the first synthesis</p>
<p>Week 12 Thurs., Nov 16</p>	<p><b>Data Analysis (Observation)</b></p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 153-165 Appendix E1-E5 pp. 228-237</p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 12:</b> Discussion of observation: what will you plan, how will you record information, and</p>



	<p><b>Action Research Acting and Reflecting:</b> How do I analyze my observation? What will be my criteria? How do I display observation data?</p> <p><b>Literature Research Acting and Reflecting:</b> Are you focusing on your purpose as you write? Do your syntheses investigate the supporting questions?</p>		<p>what information might you obtain related to your critical question (see Appendix E1-E5 pp. 228-237)</p> <p><b>Construct Assignment 6:</b> Write up your proposed methods section and references list in APA style</p>
Week 13 Thurs., Nov. 23	<b>No class meeting</b>	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 14 Thurs., Nov. 30	<p><b>Data analysis (Reflection)</b></p> <p><b>Thinking and reflecting:</b> Do I note patterns among the articles? Can I make connections between different articles? What is an academic voice?</p> <p><b>Reflecting:</b> What is the purpose of our research?</p> <p>How is your research leading</p>	<p>P&amp;C pp. 166-172; Appendix H pp. 252-257</p> <p>Annenberg Learner <a href="http://www.sedl.org/loteced/communicate/n08.html">http://www.sedl.org/loteced/communicate/n08.html</a></p>	<p><b>Collaborate Assignment 13:</b> Discussion of the overall coherence of your research. Discussion of final project</p>

	<p>you towards a purpose?</p> <p>Do your findings support your critical question? If not, do questions need to be revised? Does extra data need to be collected?</p>		
<p>Week 14 Thurs., Dec. 7</p>	<p><b>Action Research Project proposal Presentations</b></p>		<p><b>Final Action Research Proposal due by midnight</b></p>

**\*\*Schedule is subject to change at any time.**

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## School resources and policies

### 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 Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

**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. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

**Statement on Classroom Recording:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

**TLL Departmental Grievance Procedures:** The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in TLL believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow this procedure:

1. The student should talk directly to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to the relevant program coordinator.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the associate chair of TLL (currently Dr. Tinukwa Boulder or Dr. Emily Rainey).
4. If needed, the student should next talk to the SOE associate dean of students
5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the student should file a written statement of charges with the dean's designated Academic Integrity Administrative Officer

## Class Policies

- **Attendance:** You are asked to come to class on time, attend all classes, and to be actively involved in class discussions and all other activities (See attached program attendance policy).
- **Assignments:** All assignments are due on the date listed on the syllabus and should be uploaded to Canvas by midnight.
- **Class time:** The time before, after, and during this class is dedicated to content relating to **THIS** course. Please do not use the time before, after, and during class to ask questions regarding other issues such as student teaching, assignments, and academic advising. I would be **HAPPY** to discuss these other issues during my office hours.

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## Class Attendance Policy for Students in World and Heritage Language Education (WHLE)

Class attendance is mandatory in *WHLE Education* programs, and it is expected that you arrive on time when class begins. Given the short amount of time for courses and the nature of classroom instruction in a professional program, missing one 3-hour class can result in serious deficits to your knowledge and can have effects on your understanding of future classes. In undergraduate general education courses, the emphasis is often on note taking, memorization, and multiple choice mid-term and final examinations.

Unlike undergraduate classes, ‘making up’ what you missed is not possible in a graduate course. Graduate courses require your active participation in class activities and discussion, your responsibility to a group for completion of projects, and your contribution to the class in terms of presentations and demonstration lessons. There is NO WAY to make up work missed in a graduate class. Please do not ask how to make up work if you have missed a class. There is no extra credit, no additional assignments, and no appointments with instructors for tutoring on what you missed.

For the above reasons, the following attendance policy has been established:

**1) You are permitted ONE EXCUSED ABSENCE per course per term.** An excused absence means that you have communicated with your instructor that you will miss or have missed a class and have the necessary documentation to allow your instructor to make a decision on whether the absence is excused or unexcused. It is NOT up to you to decide whether your absence is excused and simply telling the instructor that you will miss a class does not excuse you from the class. You must receive verbal or written confirmation from the instructor that your absence has been excused. The one excused absence will not have an effect of your final course grade. You are, however, responsible for finding out what you missed from other students in the class and lack of knowledge about course content because of an absence is not excusable or reasonable for a graduate student. If you do not receive confirmation from the instructor that your absence is excused, you may assume that your absence is unexcused and will have an impact on your course grade (see #2).

**2) Beyond the one excused absence, additional absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by one letter grade for every unexcused absence.** Keep in mind that in graduate school you may be required to re-take a course for which you have received a C. A grade of C is not an acceptable grade for a graduate student. The expectation is that you will do exemplary work in all your courses. A QPA of 4.00 should not be an unreasonable expectation for you. In the future, you will be seeking strong letters of recommendation for positions and mediocre work in courses does not permit an instructor to recommend you highly with no reservation.

**3) During the course of the semester, it is also possible that absence from class is required beyond the reasonable one absence policy.** In these cases, the absence must be excused by the instructor, must be documented, and will be given for only extenuating circumstances such as

death in the family or serious illness that requires medication and/or hospitalization (headaches, a slight cold, or fatigue do not count as serious illnesses). Excused absences will not be given for cars breaking down, traffic congestion, family obligations, doctor or dentist appointments, a planned family vacation, or delays at your school site. We all teach classes, work in schools, have family responsibilities, and deal with transportation issues. These matters must be planned for in advance so they do not interfere with your responsibilities as an intern and a graduate student. An excused absence beyond the first will not result in a lower grade if all work due or assigned for the class is completed.

**4) Two days of lateness or early exit exceeding by 30 minutes also count as one absence.** In other words, if you are late or leave early twice, it will count as an unexcused absence unless you have received verbal permission from the instructor to come late or leave early due to extenuating circumstances (see above). While it is understood that the parking situation is difficult at Pitt, please keep in mind that there is a limited amount of time for each class and class will start each day promptly at 2:30 PM. Chronic lateness of less than thirty minutes (i.e., being late on a regular basis) may also constitute an absence.