

CEP 930
Educational Inquiry
Spring 2014
Wednesday, 4:10-7:00 p.m.

Instructors:

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Introduction

Educational Inquiry signifies a variety of ways of studying teaching, learning, human development, counseling, and the organization and administration of K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions. The course provides opportunities to reflect on, discuss, and write about educational research as it appears in recent examples from education and other fields.

We will explore the “how to” of research, particularly methods for observation, interviewing, measurement, and composition. And we will address matters of theory based on consideration of practices of inquiry. The course also includes attention to the impact of new technologies on scholarly communications.

The focus in the course will be on “text work,” including the composition by students of a paper representing the different features of a hypothetical research project. But as we study scholarly work we should remember that inquiry cannot be described simply by its methods. It is an activity where values matter, as do our identities as scholars and citizens, our beliefs about knowledge, and the ways we understand education and the world around it.

Why Do Educational Research, in What Forms, and with What Preparation?

The question behind the uses of any methods, to be addressed in this course, is “Why do educational research anyway?” In a PhD program in a college of education well known for its research it is fair to consider why we do it and what value it has. Such questions help to animate the study of methods and are, ideally, resources for building a vocation in research. For many productive scholars in all fields such questions make up part of their lifelong work.

In the past few years there has been considerable attention to the conduct and uses of educational research, much of it reflecting the debate about it as an “evidence-based” practice, or its status as a scientific activity. The debate is an important feature of the course.

The education of educational researchers is also a matter of interest in CEP 930. It will be a subject of discussion throughout the course, including consideration of the context of the new information and communications technologies, and the role of research in the academic vocations.

Class Format

Weekly assignments for reading, viewing, and discussion are identified in the schedule below. Each week we will consider a topic central to conducting independent scholarly work. The schedule includes for each work some questions to frame our discussions. Our weekly work will also address the primary assignment (the *Paper- in-Parts*, or PiP, as below).

Given the size of our group, we will conduct structured small-group activities in class each week. You

will be assigned to a group by class 2, and we will rotate the group at 3-4 times through the semester so you get to interact with peers from across the college.

Each week in class, we will devote the first 30 or so minutes to small group work where you will generate ONE question that has emerged from the readings and the online resources for that week. We will then spend time discussing and responding to these questions.

As you generate these questions with your group, your attention should be on generating questions that are ‘engaging’; striking a balance between your curiosities about the nuts-and-bolts of doing research, while inviting broader conversations about the process of educational and social-science research. These questions therefore would be questions that ask “What if” – not just “What”, “Why don’t we”- not just “Why”, “How about” – not just “How”.

We will devote another 30 minutes or so at the end of each class to small-group activity, this time with a focus on the *Paper-in-Parts*.

The Sequential, the Simultaneous, and the Recursive

In a recent essay on teaching, University of Virginia English professor Mark Edmundson said: “Every memorable class is a bit like a jazz composition. There is the basic melody that you work with. It is defined by the syllabus. But there is also a considerable measure of improvisation against that disciplining background.” We hope that CEP 930 will be “memorable” in some way. But we borrow from Edmundson the idea that a well planned and conducted course has a “basic melody” or “disciplining background”—in our case it is the sequence of elements of educational research and the PiP--against which there is some degree of “improvisation,” or welcoming the unexpected. There will also, inevitably, be some repetition, or, more precisely planned revisiting of essential themes as the course unfolds.

The calendar shapes a course as much as the interests of the instructors and students. Thus, the syllabus reflects—in linear fashion—the unfolding of a course during the weeks in a semester. As in other courses, there is a sequence of topics in CEP 930, representing relations among primary themes. In this case, the *sequence* also is organized according to the order of themes in the *Paper-in-Parts*. But linearity plainly has its limits, as essential questions of research methods cannot be neatly separated from one another. Accordingly, our course will allow for the *simultaneous* consideration of themes as they appear in course resources and are addressed in our small group work and class discussions. In this way, the course may also be said to be *recursive*, reflecting how we will introduce themes and then return to them with new resources and perspectives.

Assignments and Grades

There will be a single and extensive writing assignment, an object of attention throughout the course. It is named a *Paper-in-Parts* to signify its organization as an experiment in learning about research methods.

Detailed directions for the *Paper-in-Parts* should be considered part of the syllabus. They are available at the CEP 930 D2L website (under the “Syllabus, Online Resources, and Writing Assignment” tab). The assignment will be discussed regularly in class, including opportunities for small group discussions among students about their plans and progress.

Grades will be determined thus: Class participation 15%, Parts 1-4 of the *Paper-in-Parts* 15% each, and Part 5 and the “Afterword,” 25%.

Required Books and Other Resources

Books:

- Dahlia Remler and Gregg Van Ryzin, *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. (SAGE, 2010).
- Wendy Luttrell, *Schoolsmart and Motherwise: Working-Class Women's Identity and Schooling* (Routledge, 1997)
- Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* (3rd Ed.; University of Chicago Press, 2008) (available in an electronic version, and as a printable download, at the MSU Library)

Articles, Essays, and Web Resources:

The syllabus also includes a variety of scholarly articles, book chapters, and other resources named in the schedule below. All are available online at the CEP 930 D2L site.

Student Generated Resources:

A Database of Exemplary Research Articles with Structured Abstracts

There is one additional submission that we will like you to make by January 15, 2014, 12 p.m. This assignment will be due in Google Docs.

1. Before you begin using Google Docs through MSU please read [http://itservices.msu.edu/documents/LCT-Appropriate Uses of MSU Google Apps Education Edition 29 Aug 2009.pdf](http://itservices.msu.edu/documents/LCT-Appropriate%20Uses%20of%20MSU%20Google%20Apps%20Education%20Edition%2029%20Aug%202009.pdf)
2. Using your MSU id log into the Google Docs folder that we have shared with you "CEP930 Articles and Structured Abstract"
3. Complete the excel sheet that you will find in this folder with the relevant information
4. Create a sub-folder with your First and Last name
5. Within this sub-folder, update your article and your structured abstract

Through this submission we aim to generate a database of exemplary education articles, each accompanied by a brief structured abstract. The database will, we hope, prove to be a valuable in adding resources to complement those already included in the syllabus (as the course unfolds), and as background for classroom discussions and your work on the *Paper-in-Parts* assignment.

Selecting an appropriate article

The article has to be published in a peer-reviewed journal, preferably a highly regarded outlet in your field. The article should be an example of a study that is either asking a set of compelling new questions, or providing novel solutions to an enduring question using a novel dataset, novel analysis, and interpretation. The article may also distinguish itself by its language and organization, or expressive features that contribute to the article's readability and utility. If the article somehow manages to do all of the above then that is even better. What we are after are articles that would be exemplars of educational research studies. The kinds of study that we want to strive to produce through our dissertations, the kind of writing we hope to generate in our scholarly careers.

Writing the brief structured abstract

There are different ways to read a research article. You can read it as a 'reader', where you are simply taking in what the author is saying, underlining a few things that strike you as interesting and filing it away. You may read a research article as a 'critic', or a reviewer, where your purpose is to find major flaws in the article, have they asked the most relevant question, are they using the best source of evidence, are the analytical methods appropriate? You may also read an article as a 'producer of research.' The interest then is to understand the 'blue print' of the article. How this article is structured, what has gone

into putting it together. Can I ‘reverse engineer’ this piece, so that I will know in the future how to construct such an article myself? It is this position from which we invite you to read the article you select for the database. So as a part of this reverse engineering process, we want you to provide a 500 word structured abstract.

Begin the abstract by listing these details; the authors name, journal name, article name and three to five key words (these are often given by the journal, or you can think of these words that describe the key content of the article).

Next, please respond to the following five questions, devoting about a 100 words to each question.

1. What is the central question (or questions) this article attempts to answer (inform)?
2. What conceptual, theoretical, disciplinary framework(s) does this article use to review the literature, in identifying the question?
3. What is the primary source of data for this article? (Quantitative, qualitative, secondary data, primary data, interview, focus groups, document analysis, ethnography) ?
4. What are the main findings of this study (how does it respond to the first question)?
5. Should the research be continued, what additional questions would you ask to enhance/update it?

Schedule

1. January 8 Introduction to CEP 930

What are the reasons for doing educational research? Are some methods of educational research better than others? How does educational research compare to work in other fields? How can educational research be applied to schools and schooling? How can the effectiveness of such applications be evaluated? Does educational research need standards?

Reading:

Robert McClintock. (2007). Educational Research. *Teachers College Record* (March 28).

Film Screening:

“Middle School Moment” (PBS Frontline, 2012; 14 minutes):

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/education/dropout-nation/middle-school-moment//>

Additional resources

American Educational Research Association. (2006). *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications*. Washington, D.C.: AERA.

American Educational Research Association. (2009). *Standards for Reporting on Humanities-Oriented Research in AERA Publications*. Washington, D.C.: AERA.

2. January 15 Asking Significant Questions I

Having reviewed general matters of research (purposes, methods, and uses or applications) we turn this week and next to examples from the two different traditions of inquiry, generally referred to as “qualitative” and quantitative.” First, acclaimed neurologist Oliver Sacks writes a form of medical ethnography and narrative, based on a distinctive form of fieldwork, to probe unusual lives. Also for our consideration: What does it mean to identify a fruitful research question? What are the roles of disciplinary and professional traditions and expectations in doing so?

Readings:

Oliver Sacks. (1995). A Surgeon’s Life. In Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven Paradoxical Tales* (New York: Random House).

Remler and Van Ryzin, *Research Methods in Practice*, Chapter 1 (“Research in the Real World.”) and Chapter 3 (“Qualitative Research”).

Alice Dreger. (2010). No Science, Please. We’re Anthropologists. *Psychology Today* (November

25).

Dan Berrett. (2010). Anthropology Without Science. *Inside Higher Education* (November 30).

Nicholas Wade. (2010). Anthropology a Science? Statement Deepens a Rift. *New York Times* (December 9).

3. January 22 Asking Significant Questions II

What does it mean to ask a fruitful research question with the expectation that quantitative methods will be used to search for an answer? How do questions explored by quantitative research differ from those posed from a qualitative perspective? What questions and problems are particularly amenable to quantitative inquiry?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 8 (“Making Sense of Numbers”) and Chapter 9 (“Making Sense of Multivariate Statistics”).

Donald J. Boyd, Pamela L. Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff (2009). Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31, pp. 416-440.

Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), pp. 37-62.

4. January 29 Learning from Adult Students

How are looking and listening, or observation and interviewing, configured in order to be persuasive? How are what can’t be seen or heard—e.g., questions of history and other features of context—be made part of participant observation? What constitutes “participation” in research? Does the personal--the life and experience of the researcher--belong in written accounts of inquiry? If so, in what forms and with what limits?

Readings:

Wendy Luttrell. (1997). *Schoolsmart and Motherwise: Working-Class Women’s Identity and Schooling*.

Jennifer Platt. (2007). Participant Observation. In Michael Lewis-Beck et al, *Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

PiP Part 1. Identify a subject or topic of study, and a research question. Due: January 31.

5. February 5 Samples, Observations, Surveys and Primary Data Collection

What is the role of “primary data” in educational research and where do we find it? How do we study “samples” and what kind of knowledge does such work produce? What is the role of generalizability in research? “Observing,” “watching,” “looking,” and “seeing”: Why do we have many terms for using our eyes, in fieldwork and other forms of inquiry, and what does that suggest about observational research? How are surveys produced and what claims can be justified for knowledge and action?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 5 (“Sampling”) and Chapter 7 (“Primary Data Collection”).

Review this website;

<http://www.metproject.org/> In particular read: <http://www.metproject.org/downloads/met-framing-paper.pdf>

There is a brief related video (and some other interesting resources) here

<http://www.era.net/Default.aspx?TabID=14823>

Also see this related grant funding opportunity;

<http://www.era.net/ProfessionalOpportunitiesFunding/AERAFundingOpportunities/AERAMETDissertationFellowship/tabid/14966/Default.aspx>

Center for Writing in Digital Environments (WIDE). (2010). *The Writing Lives of College Students: A WIDE Survey and White Paper*. East Lansing, MI: WIDE.

6. February 12 Measurement, and Secondary Data

What does it mean to measure something? What is the role of “secondary data” and where do we find it? How do we use it? Why is it useful and what are its limitations?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 4 (“Measurement”) and Chapter 6 (“Secondary Data”).

Donald J. Boyd, Pamela L. Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff (2009). Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31, pp. 416-440.

Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), pp. 37-62.

7. February 19 Research Design I: Ethnography and Participant Observation

What goes into designing an ethnographic study? How do research goals and methods shape the design of a study? What is an effective ratio of looking and listening in qualitative research? What does sampling mean in qualitative research? How do researchers adapt to the conditions of a research project as it unfolds?

Readings:

Wendy Luttrell. (2000). Good Enough Methods for Ethnographic Research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 70(4): 499-523.

Gary Fine. (1993). Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3): 267-294.

8. February 26 Research Design II: Using Our CEP 930 Student-Generated Database

What can we learn from other research projects and project designs about how scholars go about their work? What do they reveal about their motives and methods? What can be inferred about the “decisions” they make in designing, organizing, and conducting their work?

Readings:

TBA: Articles selected from the student generated “Database”

PiP Part 2. Explain how you will go about planning, organizing, and conducting the work necessary to learn what you want to know. Due: Feb 28

March 3-7 SPRING BREAK

9. March 12 Storytelling, Subjectivity, and Advocacy

What makes for a good story in representing the actions and thinking of research subjects? What can stories gain from one another in multi-subject research? What is brought to research, and what is learned from conducting it, in the matter of subjectivity. How should the scholar appear in the written product of research? What does it mean to be “critical” in educational research? What political questions influence policy and practice, including the activities of agencies and foundations? How are questions of “social justice” made part of research? What is the role—if there is one—for advocacy in research? How do questions of research ethics influence practice and what is their role in the representation of inquiry?

Film Viewing:

The Philosopher Kings (2009; Directed by Patrick Shen): <http://www.hulu.com/watch/250162>

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 14 (“The Politics, Production, and Ethics of Research”).

Alan Peshkin. (1988). In Search of Subjectivity: One’s Own. *Educational Researcher* 17(7): 17-21.

Daphne Patai. (1994). Sick and Tired of Scholars’ Nouveau Solipsism. *Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 23).

- Ruth Behar. (1994). Dare We Say “I”? Bringing the Personal into Scholarship. *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 29).
- Laurel Richardson. (2013). Twelve Uneasy Pieces on Research and Therapy. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(1): 20-26.
- Martyn Hammersly. (2005). Should Social Science Be Critical? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 35(2): 175-195.

10. March 19 From Correlation to Causation

A common confusion in producing and using social science research is confounding correlation with causation. Simply because two things occur together, or even in succession, may not be sufficient to claim that they are causally related. While intuitively we may often think or “feel” that we know that X was responsible for causing Y, to establish causality beyond doubt in the social sciences is challenging. What does it mean to acknowledge this challenge and what kind of thinking and writing is required so that such knowledge can better inform our research and reporting practices?

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 10 (“Causation”) and Chapter 12 (“Randomized Field Experiments”).
- Chudgar, Amita, and E. Quin. (2012). Relationship between private schooling and learning: Results from rural and urban India. *Economics of Education Review*, 31(4), 376–39
- PiP Part 3. Explore what will be the place in your work of your personal history, experience, scholarly preferences, and professional aspirations. Due: March 21*

11. March 26 Experiments vs. Experience

How do researchers plan for work that represents and explains life in remote societies? What does a researcher need to know to study another culture? What does theory mean for the conduct of empirical work? How can numbers complement words in qualitative inquiry? How does a researcher convey an image of scholarly inquiry itself—its general conditions and what is required to do the work--while reporting on a particular research study?

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 13 (“Natural and Quasi Experiments”)
- Clifford Geertz. (1973). Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. In Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books).
- Joseph Maxwell and Kavita Mittapalli. (2008). Theory. In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*.

12. April 2 Theories and Models

What are the conceptual building blocks in research and how do they differ in quantitative and qualitative methods? What is the role of theory? How are complex social realities represented via modeling? How are policy and practice influenced by such work?

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 2 (“Theory and Models”)
- Susanna Loeb, Michelle Reininger (2004). Public policy and teacher labor markets: What we know and why it matters, *The Education Policy Center at Michigan State University* (specifically focus on chapter 2). Available here:
http://education.msu.edu/epc/forms/Loeb_et_al_2004_Public_Policy_and_Teacher_Labor_Markets.pdf
- Richard Ingersoll and David Perda. (2010). Is the Supply of Mathematics and Science Teachers Sufficient? *American Educational Research Journal*, 47: 563-594

13. April 9 From Research to Writing

What historical and disciplinary principles and practices guide writing in educational research? What is

distinctive to educational research in its understanding of its audiences, primary genres, and uses? Where in the process of research should writing have the attention of authors? What can apprentice researchers do to strengthen their abilities as writers?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 15 (“How to Find, Focus, and Present Research”).

Gary Fine. (1988). The Ten Commandments of Writing. *American Sociologist*, 19(3): 152-157.

Daryl Bem. (2004). Writing the Empirical Journal Article. In John Darley, Mark Zanna, and Henry Roediger, III (Eds.). *The Compleat Academic: A Career Guide*. 2nd Ed. (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

PiP Part 4: Describe the theory (or theories) you expect to use in organizing research in the subject you are studying and in finding meaning and utility in what you will discover. Due: April 11.

14. April 16 Educational Research in the Digital Age

How can educational researchers adapt to the increasing digitalization of science and scholarship? What will scholarly journals and books look like in the future? Are there other digital formats worth attention by academic researchers? What are the new roles of libraries and archives in research? What will be the impact of the “open resources” movement and electronic publishing on research and academic careers? MSU Education Librarian Jill Morningstar will visit class.

Readings:

James Evans. (2008). Electronic Publication and the Narrowing of Science and Scholarship. *Science*, 321: 395-399.

Andrew Jakubowicz. (2009). Beyond the Static Text: Multimedia Interactivity in Academic Journal Publishing in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Not). In Bill Cope and Angus Phillips (Eds.), *The Future of the Academic Journal* (Oxford, UK: Chandos).

Angus Phillips. (2010). Blog to the Future: Journal Publishing in the 21st Century. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 42(1): 16-31.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick. (2011). The Digital Future of Authorship: Rethinking Originality. *Culture Machine*, 12:1-26.

Peter Suber. (2012) Open Access Overview

Stacey Patton. (2013). The Dissertation Can No Longer Be Defended. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 11.

15. April 23 Educational Research: Conditions and Prospects

How has educational research changed in the past two decades? What conditions—public, institutional, organizational, disciplinary, technological, and financial—shape educational research today? How should researchers recognize them in planning and conducting their work? What changes—feasible and desirable—might influence educational research in the near future?

Readings:

David C. Berliner. (2002). Educational Research: The Hardest Science of All. *Educational Researcher*, 31(8): 18-20.

Carl Kaestle. (1993). The Awful Reputation of Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1) 22-31.

D.C. Philips. (2006). A Guide for the Perplexed: Scientific Educational Research, Methodolatry, and the Gold vs. the Platinum Standards. *Educational Research Review*, 1: 15-26.

Robert Floden, et al., (2009). Learning from Our Differences: A Dialogue Across Perspectives on Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(7): 501-517.

Presentations on research by COE faculty: Kris Renn (EAD) and Ken Frank (CEPSE)

PiP Part 5. Account for what you expect to do as a writer, or how will you represent in prose (and, as necessary, with figures), your research activities, the results of your work, and more. Include the “Afterword” as explained in the PiP directions. Due: May 2.