

# Methodological Approaches to Educational Inquiry

Y521

Spring 2016

Barbara Dennis

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays 1-3:30

**Phone:** 812-856-8142

**Email:** Please use the messaging system in CANVAS

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 3-5 and by appointment

## Course Description

This course introduces Ph.D. students to the controversies, approaches and processes of doing educational research. As an introductory course, the main purpose is to think about research. We will (1) begin our thinking about being researchers, (2) develop starting imagery of the research process and (3) think critically about the assumptions and modes of political operations and outcomes of doing educational research. This course should help you conceptualize the complex nature of engaging in research and the way in which we design inquiry. You will also begin to critically imagine what is involved in designing and conducting educational inquiry. The course *will not* teach you methods for collecting and analyzing data (knowing that this will be the first course in a series of courses you will take). Instead, this course will prepare you to critical assess the methods and methodologies you will learn about in future classes as well as prepare you think *about* methodology and its designs and complications. I will organize the course primarily through a series of controversies.

Research is inevitably, somewhat, political. The politics of research design and conduct is linked to the fields from which it emerges and the extent to which

those fields have developed as intellectual silos. Underlying assumptions about the nature of research and its value for the social world are carried forward in connection with basic assumptions about the disciplinary fields themselves. What this tends to mean is that people are placed in normatively-established scholarly contexts within which their questions, assumptions about validity, and so forth are cast. For this and other reasons, research cannot just be studied as if it is a neutral, knowledge-gathering endeavor. Ultimately, this course involves us in the *study of inquiry, research and methodology*. I will do my best *not to* teach you about research methods, but rather engage you in examining the field of research methodology for yourself. You will find yourself at the nexus of your field of study (whatever that substantive field, for example, counseling psychology) and the field of inquiry methodology.

In the United States there has been a long tradition of thinking of research as equivalent with the "scientific method" whereby following a rigorous set of procedures (aimed often at control) enabled the researcher to scientifically test a set of carefully articulated hypotheses. "Well, we've come a long way baby." By thoughtfully relocating the successes of the natural sciences to the social sciences we can think more clearly about how the social sciences can become more than a hypothesis testing regime. In education research, the ability to control and identify variables is weak, and the applicability of highly controlled findings to the real setting and to policy suspect, but not moot. One of the many basic challenges of inquiry in educational settings and toward educational interests in social science has to do with the relationship of research-produced knowledge and ordinary practice. We have to ask ourselves questions like: What do we do with rigorously produced enduring research findings, such as the correlation between poverty and educational attainment?

### **Readings**

#### **Text:**

Krathwohl, D. (2009). *Methods of Educational and Social Science Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Waveland Pr Inc. ISBN-10: 1577665767

There will be additional readings loaded into the resources tab in CANVAS. Those readings will be marked with an (E) in the syllabus so you will remember they are uploaded electronically. The course is reading intensive as you will find reading for most weeks to involve about 120 pages.

### General Web Resources

These links should facilitate your learning throughout the semester. There are explanations and examples that you will find useful.

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php>

<http://www.methodspace.org/>

### Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1/19	What is inquiry? The Nature of Methodology: What undergirds methodology? Scientific procedures? Epistemological paradigms? Interests themselves in terms of their ontological nature?	Hollis (E) Allison & Pomeroy (E) Optional: Greene (E)	
1/26	The Nature of Inferences as truth. In research, we make a host of inferences which indicate how we	Shaddish & Cook (E) Dennis 1 (E) Krathwohl 7, 11	

	link what we are studying and our findings with what we think of as the truth.		
2/2	No Class. Barbara in Uganda		
2/9	Objectivity: The Debates and Their Relevance. Potential bias in objectivity. Researcher positionality.	Montushi (E) Rosaldo (E)	
2/16	Subjectivity: The Debates and Their Relevance. Potential bias in subjectivity. Researcher Positionality.	Korth (E) Peshkin (E)	
2/23	Methods vs Methodology: Working against the qualitative/quantitative binary	Krathwohl 1, 2, 3, 4	Essay. You will upload a document to the file in the assignment tab in CANVAS.
3/1	The Nature of Inferencing: Revisited	Krathwohl 7, 11	
3/8	Ethics and Human Participants Sampling	Krathwohl 8, 9, 10 Larsson (E)	IRB exam score due. Upload emailed score to the file under assignments in CANVAS. You will have to copy and paste it to

			the body of the assignment page.
3/15	No Class. Spring Break		
3/22	Designing Studies I Questions, Interests, Hypotheses	Krathwohl 5, 6	
3/29	Designing Studies IIa: Flexible Designs and Loosening the Design Stranglehold on Methodology	Krathwohl 12, 13, 14	Researcher Profile. You will upload a document file to the assignment folder in CANVAS and include 2 exemplary electronic copies of research articles.
4/5	Designing Studies IIb: Qualitative approaches continued	Krathwohl 15, 16	
4/12	Designing Studies IIIa: Quantitative approaches	Krathwohl 17, 18, 19, 20	
4/19	Designing Studies IIIb: Quantitative approaches continued	Krathwohl 21, 22	Article Methodology Precis You will upload a document file to the assignment folder in CANVAS. You should also upload the electronic article

			files there as well.
4/26	Designing students IV: Integrating approaches	Krathwohl 23, 24, 25, 26	
5/3	Reflecting on the Practices of Research	Krathwohl 27, 28	

### **Course Grades and Assignments**

The grade in the course is comprised of two primary pieces: Participation and Assignments. Each will be described here.

#### **Participation**

Your participation in class includes your attendance, but is more than that. Each class session we will have activities and small group work to which you will be accountable and which you cannot make up if you are absent. There are 14 class sessions and each one will be an opportunity to earn 5 points. The cap for points in this category is 65, which means you can technically miss 1 class and still reach the cap. You may earn 5 points of extra credit by attending every class session. The extra credit will be added to the total points you earned in the class before figuring the grade. You are expected to come to class with the reading completed.

You will also have the opportunity to earn bonus participation points by contributing to the class learning through email, discussion forums or other out-of-class learning opportunities you make available to us as a group. You can earn up to 10 bonus points for this kind of participation, though the amount of points per activity cannot be easily delineated here, no one activity would earn more than 3 points and the distribution of points will be directly related to how extensive the engagement is. Providing us with an additional reading or online video resource through email would constitute 1 bonus point, engaging us in a discussion of said resource or an application of said research could earn 3 bonus points. These bonus points will be added to the total points you earned in the class before figuring the grade.

## Assignments

You will have 4 assignments each worth a variable amount of points.

Assignment	Description	Pts	Due Date
Essay	Please write a 3 page essay explaining the distinction and relationship of objectivity to subjectivity and the role this understanding plays in your conceptualization of social science. Reference at least 2 class readings.	15	2/23
IRB EXAM	Take (and pass) the IU IRB Citi exam (which is a series of modules). There are a number of tests/certifications offered. I want you to take the one titled "Human Subjects Research Course". If your score is 75% then you will be awarded 7.5. A passing grade is 70%. You will find the exam here <a href="http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/eo/eo_citi.html">http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/eo/eo_citi.html</a>	10	3/8
Researcher Profile	Select a researcher in your field whom you admire. This researcher should be an established scholar in your field publishing for at least 10 years. Read at least 5 research articles written or co-authored by scholar and spanning at least 10 years time. You will include 2 of these with your assignment. In your profile you will include (1) a description of the scholar and the scope of her work in general, (2) summarize the 5 research articles. (3) synthesize your understanding across the 5 articles by (a) locating the questions/interests and/or hypotheses, (b) comparing and contrasting methods and methodological orientation (including data collection and data analysis), and (c) looking for consistency or changes	30	3/29

	<p>across design or procedures, then (4) assess the work in terms of its development over time noting what has strengthened, remained the same, departed and speculate reasons why. At last, (5) note critiques on the level of methodology that either you or others in the field have identified.</p> <p>This profile should be about 8 pages long.</p>		
Article Methodology	Select one qualitative, one quantitative, and one mixed methods study of interest to you (these may be studies you have read for other classes) and prepare a one page precis for each describing the methodology and findings in plain terms like you might do at a party of friends who do not know research jargon.	15	4/19
Group Activity/Attendance		30	

### Grading

The total amount of points used to determine the grades is 200 broken down as follows:

- A >93%
- A- 90% - 92.9%
- B+ 87% - 89.9%
- B 84% - 86.9%
- B- 80% - 83.9%

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious offense in academic life. Please be sure you know the correct citing conventions to manifest your intentions to be a trustworthy scholar. When in doubt, cite fully.