

EDFN 500: Research Methods Western Kentucky University Spring 2020

General Information

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**This is my work number for the school at which I teach full time - please use only as a last resort*

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Catalog Description

The goal of this course is to help masters students in education learn how to use the methods and findings of educational research to address their professional needs, interests, and problems. They will learn about the nature of educational research, how to access and review the research literature about education, and how to read and evaluate articles that report research studies. Also, they will learn the range of methodologies that educational researchers use. Students will complete a course project that gives them the opportunity to select a problem of practice that interests them and write a review of research studies that are relevant to solving this problem.

Course Objectives

1. Learn how to conduct basic reviews of the literature relevant to a topic of interest in the student's field of study using both print and online resources.
2. Learn to read and interpret quantitative research designs.
3. Learn to read and interpret qualitative research designs.
4. Learn to read and interpret mixed-methods approaches to research.
5. Learn to differentiate the practices of action research and evaluations.

Course Description

As a graduate student, the skills that will serve you best relate to reading, understanding, and conducting research. This course is an introduction to those tasks. It is not designed to make you a researcher, and you will not get any practice in analyzing data to draw conclusions. There are no assignments that ask you to conduct inferential statistics or qualitative coding. The course is about being a good consumer of research and being able to conceive of the type of research that has the potential to move a scholarly conversation forward. This class is all about being an educated reader!

Required Resources

The following text focuses on research methods for educators. However, the research process is the same for other social sciences. The course will focus on the material that is applicable to anyone doing or reviewing social science type research on humans.

Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., and Borg, W.R. (2015). Applying Educational Research: How to Read, Do, and Use Research to Solve Problems of Practice, Pearson Loose-Leaf Version – Access Card Package (7th Edition). Pearson.

The text is available as an e-text for \$58.99 (see link below), or you can get a hard copy + the e-text either at the WKU bookstore or using the link below. It makes no difference to me whether you have the e-text, the hard copy, or both: Available at [Pearson Higher Education](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/product/ApplyingEducational-Research-How-Read-Do-and-Use-Research-Solve-Problems-Practice-Pearson-eTextLooseLeaf-Version-Acces/9780133831573.page).
(<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/product/ApplyingEducational-Research-How-Read-Do-and-Use-Research-Solve-Problems-Practice-Pearson-eTextLooseLeaf-Version-Acces/9780133831573.page>)

In addition, scholarly journal articles and internet readings will be assigned.

Grading

Each unit will consist of an assignment that is designed to further your understanding of the various aspects of social science research methods towards a final project. Furthermore, there are weekly discussions that will address current issues and research on various social science topics and their impact on society. Our semester will conclude with a larger project that addresses one of several possible problems of practice in education today.

Discussion Posts (10 @ 10 points each)	100
Assignment (4 @ 75 points each).....	150
Tests (5 @ 100 points each)	500
Final Project (1 @ 160 points)	150
Total	900

Grading Scale

- A: 810 - 900 points
- B: 720 - 809 points
- C: 630 - 721 points
- D: 540 - 629 points
- F: 0 - 539 points

Online Meetings

We will engage in five (5) online class meetings this semester utilizing [Zoom](https://zoom.us/home?zcid=2478) (<https://zoom.us/home?zcid=2478>). These meetings will be approximately half an hour (because the free account only lasts 40 minutes) and will discuss the nature of the projects as well as

address any questions that you may have from the work. These classes are optional but will count towards bonus points in the class. The dates of the meetings are listed in the tentative outline. The meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. CDT.

Description of Assignments

Discussion Boards

Each week, until the final project, there will be up to three issues related to current educational events to which you will be required to respond. Your response should be concise and research-based. This means that you must not only research your answer, but you should also **cite the resource(s)** that you used. It will be graded on the following rubric:

Criteria	0	1	2
Critical Thinking	Lacks insight into the content and no analysis is present.	Insight into content is present, but the analysis is commonplace	Rich in relevant content and analysis
Connections	Response supports a single idea with limited research, more opinion-based	Response connects some ideas with limited research on the prompt.	Response connects several ideas supported by research to the prompt
Uniqueness	Analysis of research/resource is not clearly present	Analysis of research/resources is limited and more opinion than fact.	Analysis of research/resources is unique and offers depth
Understanding	The response lacks analysis and citations.	The response has several ideas that lack analysis and/or citations	The response is complete with analysis and citations of resources used
Style	The response is disorganized, numerous grammatical errors, and lack APA style.	The response has some coherence, several grammatical errors, and correct APA style	The response has internal coherence, no grammatical errors, and correct APA style.

Assignments

This course will consist of four assignments that are meant to lead you to a greater understanding of how to read and synthesize research in a topic that is of interest to you personally. Each assignment is designed to lead you to a better quality final project. In practice, this means that you will be building on each assignment towards the final project. You will be allowed two submissions for each project. After the first submission, I will provide feedback on how you can improve it, then you can submit a finalized draft for the second submission. If I do not receive a second submission, I will keep the grade of the first submission. Each project and the rubric for each project are detailed below.

Annotated bibliography. For this assignment, you will create an annotated bibliography that provides an overview of three (3) research articles from peer-reviewed sources on a topic that interests you. They may be any mix of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. In an annotated bibliography, you provide a citation of an article and a paragraph that summarizes the review, method, and findings of the article. Think of it as a note-taking method for articles that you want to revisit later. You must use the following format

- Cover sheet and references
- APA-style citations and style of writing
- 1" margins on each side, 12-pt Times New Roman
- Put the page number on every page

This is an **example** outline of what you should include in your annotated bibliography.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of the article. *Title of Periodical*, volume number(issue number), pages. <https://doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyy>

Two to three sentences regarding the summary of the background research and goals of the research. A sentence or two that describes the method utilized by the researcher. One to two sentences that summarize the findings of the article.

This is an [EXAMPLE](#) of an annotated bibliography that I did several years ago. (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sKWfvM_cET0ioPBYmPU89KfKcIWTCXrQ/view?usp=sharing)

Critique of a Quantitative Article. For this assignment, you will need to find one *quantitative* article on the same topic as your annotated bibliography. You may not use any of the works in your annotated bibliography. You will write a 2-3 page (not including cover sheet or references) critical analysis of the theories, definitions, methods, evidence, and implications presented in your article with special attention to the methods. There is an excellent guide to writing a critical analysis from [Washington.edu](https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf) (<https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf>).

The rubric for the critiques can be found [HERE](#). I will be using the same rubric for all three critiques. (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xIGocBjSe2XkMBJUWNS8QlcbTcfe9laSqDV-hPm7JMA/edit?usp=sharing>) I will be using the same rubric for all three critiques

Critique of a Qualitative Article. For this assignment, you will need to find one *qualitative* article on the same topic as your annotated bibliography. You may not use any of the works in your annotated bibliography or your quantitative critique. You will write a 2-3 page (not including cover sheet or references) critical analysis of the theories, definitions, methods, evidence, and implications presented in your article with special attention to the methods. There is an excellent guide to writing a critical analysis from [Washington.edu](https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf) (<https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf>).

Critique of a Mixed-Method Approach. For this assignment, you will need to find one *mixed-methods approach* article on the same topic as your annotated bibliography and previous critiques. You may not use any of the works in your annotated bibliography or your quantitative or quantitative critique. You will write a 2-3 page (not including cover sheet or references) critical analysis of the theories, definitions, methods, evidence, and implications presented in your article with special attention to the methods. There is an excellent guide to writing a critical analysis from [Washington.edu](https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf) (<https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/CriticalAnalysisPapers.pdf>).

Tests

Tests will consist of 20 - 25 questions over the assigned readings from the text. These tests have a 1-hour time limit and must be completed in one sitting. You will have two opportunities to take each test. Each test is worth 100 points.

Final project

The final project will build upon your research efforts to this point. You will draft a research proposal based on your previous research and critiques to address a problem of practice in your field of interest. You will notice that your final project is a collection of some of the work in other projects. The final project is the collection of these works. The format of the paper should be:

- Typed double-spaced, with at least a one-inch margins on the right and left sides and at the top and bottom of the page. There is no maximum page limit.
- Put the page number on every page (including appendices or attachments, if any), at the right side, at least 3/4 inch from the top of the page.
- 12 pt, Times New Roman
- Type your name and the date, course title, and a brief, descriptive title of your paper on a cover page.
- Try to use all of the research that you have compiled to this point. You may, of course, add new research that you find as appropriate. In practice, this means that you should produce a proposal with a *minimum* of six (6) references.
- The total paper (not including cover sheet or references) should be between 5 and ten pages.
- Include a reference list giving sources for assertions, quotes, data, or materials you use that originated elsewhere. Use a consistent format, either the APA reference style that is described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*

Your research proposal should include the following sections:

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

- A. The purpose of this study is to . . . (State the purpose succinctly in one or two sentences)

- B. What previous research is your study most directly based on? (Select three to five publications that are absolutely central)
- C. How does your study build on previous research?
- D. How will your study contribute to educational research and practice?

Research questions, hypotheses, variables, and case delineation.

- A. List your research questions or hypotheses.
- B. If you propose to test hypotheses, describe briefly the theory from which the hypotheses were derived.
- C. If your study is quantitative in nature, list the variables that you will study. For each variable, indicate whether it is an independent variable, a dependent variable, or neither.
- D. If the study is qualitative in nature, describe the case features on which data collection and analysis will focus.

Literature Search

- A. List the search engines and indexes that you will use to identify relevant publications.
- B. List the keywords and descriptors that will guide your use of search engines and indexes.
- C. Identify published literature reviews (if available) relating to your study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- A. Describe the research design that you selected for your study: descriptive, group comparison, correlational, experimental, qualitative (case study or specific qualitative research tradition), evaluative, mixed-method, or action research.
- B. If your study is quantitative in nature, what are the threats to the internal validity of your research design? (Internal validity means the extent to which extraneous variables are controlled so that observed effects can be attributed solely to the independent variable.) What will you do to minimize or avoid these threats?
- C. If your study is quantitative in nature, what are the limitations to the generalizability (i.e., external validity) of the findings that will result from your research design? What will you do to maximize the generalizability of your findings? If your study is qualitative in nature, what criteria do you consider to be relevant to judging the credibility and trustworthiness of the results that will be yielded by your research design?

Sampling.

- A. If your study is quantitative in nature, describe the characteristics of the population that you will study.
- B. If your study is qualitative in nature, describe the phenomenon you wish to study and the cases that comprise instances of the phenomenon.
- C. Identify your sampling procedure and sampling unit.
- D. Indicate the size of your sample, and explain why that sample size is sufficient.
- E. Indicate whether the sample will be formed into subgroups, and, if so, describe the characteristics of the subgroups.

- F. If your study will involve the use of volunteers, explain whether their characteristics will affect the generalizability of the research findings.

Methods of Data Collection

- A. For each of the variables that you plan to study (see **Research questions, hypotheses, variables, and case delineation.C**), indicate whether you will measure it by a test, questionnaire, interview, observational procedure, or content analysis. Indicate whether the measure is already available or whether you will need to develop it.
- B. For each measure stated above, indicate which types of validity and reliability are relevant and how you will check them.
- C. If your study is qualitative in nature, indicate whether your data collection will focus on etic or emic perspectives, or both; state how you will collect data on each case feature that you have chosen for study (see **Research questions, hypotheses, variables, and case delineation.D**); and explain the nature of your involvement in the data-collection process.

Data-Analysis Procedures

- A. What descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, if any, will you use to analyze the data for each of your research questions or hypotheses?
- B. If your study is qualitative in nature, indicate whether you will use an interpretational, structural, or reflective method of analysis.

Ethics and Human Relations

- A. What risks, if any, does your study pose for research participants?
- B. What steps will you take to minimize these threats?
- C. Will the study need to be approved by an institutional review board? If yes, describe the approval process.
- D. How will you gain entry into your proposed research setting, and how will you get the cooperation of your research participants?

Timeline

- A. Create a timeline listing, in chronological order, all of the major steps of your study.
- B. Also, indicate the approximate amount of time each step will take.

The rubric for the project can be found [HERE](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vwr_kzJtFZ19RYVjaa6Wpb17FTYnB9Jm7FVVf_kHKcU/edit?usp=sharing)

Plagiarism (Important)

It is expected that each student will do his/her own work. Academic dishonesty, including any form of plagiarism or cheating, will not be tolerated. Be advised that student work may be checked using plagiarism detecting software. Our department (EALR) requires the following: Before receiving a grade in this course students will be REQUIRED to verify in writing (send me an email certifying compliance) that they have completed the Harvard Graduate School of Education online tutorial: Principles of Paraphrasing: How to Avoid Plagiarism in Three Easy Modules: [Harvard Plagiarism Tutorial](#)

(<https://www.pin1.harvard.edu/cas/login?service=https%3A%2F%2Fcanvas.harvard.edu%2Flog>)

in%2Fcas) Or, Indiana University's Plagiarism and Academic Integrity tutorial: [Indiana Plagiarism Tutorial](https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html) (https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html)

Student Policies:

The following sections are taken from the 15th Edition of WKU's Faculty Handbook:

Plagiarism

To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his or her own. One must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is referenced, is also plagiarism.

Cheating

No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment, or other projects, which is submitted for purposes of grade determination.

Disposition of Offenses

Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without the possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the University Disciplinary Committee through the Office of the Dean of Student Life for disciplinary sanctions. A student who believes a faculty member has dealt unfairly with him/her in a course involving academic dishonesty may seek relief through the Student Complaint Procedure.

Other Types of Academic Dishonesty: Other types of academic offenses, such as the theft or sale of tests, should be reported to the Office of the Dean of Student Life for disciplinary action.

Accommodation of Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room 445, Potter Hall. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

Affirmative Action

Western Kentucky University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or military service. Inquiries or comments regarding these issues should be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity/504/ADA Compliance, Western Kentucky University, 1906 College Heights Blvd., Bowling Green, KY 42101, Telephone (270) 745-5121, TTY (270) 745-3030.

Extra Help

The instructor will be available as the need is indicated. Students are encouraged to discuss any questions or problems with the instructor.

Course Adjustments

The instructor reserves the right to modify the course requirements, schedule, and syllabus. The syllabus and schedule for this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. No change will occur, however, unless proper and prior notice is given to students.

Semester Agenda

Date(s)	Topic
1//27	Class Begins
1/27-1/31	Read Ch 1 and 2 of the text - Using research and doing your own research
2/3	Online Class about Annotated Bibliography
2/3 -27	Read Ch 3 of the text - Literature Reviews
2/10 - 2/14	Read Ch 4 - Using search engines
2/14	Test Chapters 1-4
2/17	Online Class about Quantitative Critique
2/17 - 2/21	Read Ch 5-6 - Analyzing and evaluating quantitative work and descriptive stats
2/24 - 2/28	Read Ch 7 - Tests of significance
2/28	Test Chapter 5-7
3/2 - 3/6	Read Ch 8-9 - Practical Significance
3/16 - 3/20	Read Ch 10-12 - Statistical Research
3/20	Test Chapter 8-12
3/23	Online Class about Qualitative Critique
3/23 - 3/27	Read Ch 13
3/30 - 4/3	Read Ch 14-16
4/6	Online Class about Mixed-Methods Approach Critique

4/6 - 4/10	Read Ch 17
4/10	Test Chapter 13-16
4/13 - 4/17	Read Ch 18-19
4/20	Online Class about Final Project
4/20 - 4/24	Work on Final Project
4/24	Test Chapters 18-19
4/27 - 5/1	Work on Final Project
5/11 - 5/15	Work on Final Project

Assignment Agenda

Assignment	Due Date
Discussion Board	1/31
Discussion Board	2/7
Annotated Bibliography	2/14
Test Chapters 1-4	2/14
Discussion Board	2/21
Discussion Board	2/28
Test Chapter 5-7	2/28
Discussion Board	3/6
Quantitative Critique	3/20
Test Chapters 8-12	3/20
Discussion Board	3/27
Qualitative Critique	4/3
Discussion Board	4/10
Test Chapter 13-16	4/10

Mixed-methods Approach Critique	4/17
Discussion Board	4/24
Test Chapters 18-19	4/24
Discussion Board	5/1
Discussion Board	5/8
Final Project	5/15

Date Prepared and by Whom:

Course syllabus prepared November 19, 2019, by John-Patrick Clark