

## **ED 6902 – Introduction to Research in Education Course Outline**

### **Course information:**

Term:            Fall 2013  
Dates:           Sept. 5 – Dec. 4

### **Instructor information:**

Instructor:    Dr. Ellen Rose  
E-mail:         erose@unb.ca

### **What's the course about?**

Educational research is the process of gathering information in order to improve the quality of education by increasing our knowledge of how people learn and how they can best be taught. Therefore, this course is designed for all educators, not just those who are planning to write a thesis, on the premise that becoming an informed researcher and consumer of educational research is the key to improving your professional practice. If you are planning to write a thesis, this course will help you with the research practices and processes required for completion of the Masters degree.

### **What are the course goals?**

I want this course to offer you opportunities to:

- discover the characteristics of good educational research
- understand the differences between the major research paradigms: quantitative and qualitative, as well as mixed methods and action research
- develop research questions
- become familiar with various research designs
- review and critique educational research in your area of interest
- identify the appropriate research methodology for specific research questions
- write a draft research proposal
- explore the ethical issues inherent in conducting educational research

### **What textbook will I need for the course?**

*Introduction to Research* (this is an abridged, and cheaper version of MacMillan, J.H. (2012).  
*Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson).

You'll find this book to be a concise, thorough, easy-to-read introduction to educational research. Given time constraints, we won't be able to cover all of the book's content; therefore, we'll be using a special, discounted edition that includes only the chapters we'll be covering in class. However, the other chapters will be available online.

The only way to develop comfort with educational research—whether as a researcher or a critical consumer of research—is to read research articles. Therefore, particularly when we begin talking about research designs, I'll make sample research articles (many by UNB Education faculty members) available. I recognize that you are busy so I won't assign these readings, but it's to your benefit to skim or read these in order to enrich your appreciation of what educational research entails.

Most education writers and researchers use the APA (American Psychological Association) style manual. It can be ordered online and may be worth buying if you are writing a thesis. Otherwise, you'll find what you need to know about APA style in the links provided in the Research and Course Resources folder in D2L.

## What is the online learning process?

The course is divided into 14 sessions, all conducted via the Desire2Learn learning management system. **Sessions will begin on Monday and end on Sunday** (with the exception of the first session, which will begin on Thursday, and the final session, which will end on Wednesday). For each session, **follow the session instructions** posted on D2L (as PDF files in each session folder). After completing the required reading(s) for the session, and watching my video mini-lecture, you'll be expected to participate in a variety of learning activities—these are not graded assignments but tasks that will help you to meet the course objectives and prepare you to complete the assignments. Use the checklist for each session to ensure you've completed all the learning activities. Completed sessions will remain open but will be moved to the bottom of the discussion list, so the current session will always appear at the top.

There will be a variety of learning activities: individual, small-group, and whole-class. Although learning activities are not assessed, it's important that you participate in all of them as they're designed to help you master the course content. I will set up discussion areas for the small-group work, although you may prefer to use Chat or another communication method. Note that I can check in on small group discussions to make sure everything is on track, but if you decide to work alone, or to hold your small-group discussions outside of D2L, it's your responsibility to check in with me if you have any questions! You're not expected to produce formal reports or documents from the learning activities, but I will often ask you to share your results informally with the whole class.

Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. Participation means posting substantive contributions in threaded discussions, interacting during online discussions, and engaging in online activities and tasks. You should expect to spend about three hours a week in online discussions and learning activities, but please don't leave it all until the last day of the session! If you do, you will likely find yourself feeling lonely and frustrated rather than an integral part of the class. My expectation is that you will log on at least three times during a one-week session and post at least twice, but remember: *quality counts more than quantity!* A short, to-the-point posting is preferred by all to a long rambling one (see the Posting Protocol below).

### Posting Protocol

So that we can make the most of our interactions, please make sure that your posts are:

- *directly related to the discussion topic* (if you do post on a new topic, make sure you change the thread and the subject line to reflect the change)
- *made early on in the session*, not in a last minute scramble (if you leave all your participation to the last day of the session, you'll likely find yourself feeling lonely and frustrated rather than an integral part of the class)
- *in response to what others have posted* (once again, if you introduce a new topic, please add a new thread)
- *substantive* (substantive postings refer to the reading, expand upon points made in other postings, and somehow deepen the discussion; while positive, "I agree" is not a substantive posting!)
- *as concise as possible* (if you find a helpful resource for others, paste a link to it in your message rather than the entire text)
- *clearly written and error-free*
- *respectful of others' ideas and contributions*
- and above all *thoughtful* (one thoughtful post a week is preferable—for you and for your classmates—to five hasty, ill-thought-out contributions)

## Course Plan

Session 1 (Sept. 5-8)	<u>Topic:</u> Welcome to the course!
Session 2 (Sept. 9-15)	<u>Topic:</u> Introduction to educational research <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17 “Doing Educational Research”
Session 3 (Sept. 16-22)	<u>Topic:</u> Dissecting the research article <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 1, pp. 19-30
Session 4 (Sept. 23-29)	<u>Topic:</u> Research problems, questions, & hypotheses <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 2
Session 5 (Sept. 30 - Oct. 6)	<u>Topic:</u> Conducting the literature search <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 3, pp. 57-82 <b>*** Due Oct. 6: Research Problem and Question Assignment</b>
Session 6 (Oct. 7-13)	<u>Topic:</u> Writing the literature review <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 3, pp. 82-92
Session 7 (Oct. 14-20)	<u>Topic:</u> Research designs; reliability & validity <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 4; Horn et al
Session 8 (Oct. 21-27)	<u>Topic:</u> Quantitative research designs <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapters 5 & 6
Session 9 (Oct. 28-Nov. 3)	<u>Topic:</u> Qualitative research designs <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 7 <b>*** Due Nov. 3: Literature Review</b>
Session 10 (Nov. 4-10)	<u>Topic:</u> Mixed-methods research designs <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 8
Session 11 (Nov. 11-17)	<u>Topic:</u> Action research <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 9
Session 12 (Nov. 18-24)	<u>Topic:</u> Critical research <u>For this session, read:</u> “Dancing with Paradigms” (Doyle)
Session 13 (Nov. 25-Dec. 1)	<u>Topic:</u> Research ethics <u>For this session, read:</u> McMillan, Chapter 1, pp. 18-19
Session 14 (Dec. 2-Dec. 4)	<u>Topic:</u> Wrap-Up <b>*** Due Dec. 7: Research Proposal and Participation Self-Assessment</b>

## What is your mark based on?

### **1. Participation (15%)**

Near the beginning of the course, I'll ask you to download a Participation Self-Assessment form (in the Research and Course Resources folder). You'll use this form to keep tabs on your own participation. For each session except the first and last one, you should award yourself a single point for participation, *only if you complete all of the learning activities before the next session begins*. This may not seem like much but does add up over the weeks! You can also earn up to three more points (for a maximum of 15), depending on the overall quality of your participation (see the participation rubric, in the same document as the Participation Self-Assessment form). If sickness ever delays or prevents your completion of the learning activities for a particular session, please let me know and indicate this on your self-assessment form; I may pro-rate your participation mark accordingly.

### **2. Research Problem and Question (15%) (3-4 pages) DUE OCTOBER 6**

Identify an area or issue in the field of education that is of particular interest to you. Develop a problem statement, a related research question (and, if applicable, sub-questions). Then, using the criteria provided in the instructions for Session 4 and in chapter 2 of the McMillan text, explain why this is an important and researchable question. You'll find an example and some criteria for this assignment in the Assignment & Grading Criteria, Rubrics, and Examples folder.

### **3. Literature Review (30%) (6 - 10 pages) DUE NOVEMBER 3**

Complete an extensive literature search for your chosen topic (that is, the topic you identified in the first assignment), then use an appropriate format (e.g., chronological, thematic) to write the literature review. Be sure to focus your literature search on research studies (as opposed to opinion pieces). As you conduct the literature search, you may find that your research problem and question change—that's fine! You'll have a chance to rewrite your research problem and question for the final assignment. You'll find a rubric for this assignment in the Assignment & Grading Criteria, Rubrics, and Examples folder.

### **4. Research Proposal (40%) (15 – 20 pages) DUE DECEMBER 7**

With assignments 1 & 2, you've already written the first two sections of your research proposal. The third section is the research design, which specifies what data you will collect and from who, how you will collect it, and how you will analyze it. Once you've completed the research design, integrate it with your first two assignments to create a complete research proposal. You'll find a rubric for this assignment in the Assignment & Grading Criteria, Rubrics, and Examples folder.

#### Some Notes on Assignments:

I'm always available to answer questions—just send me an email! In addition, I will read and provide feedback on drafts of assignments, as long as they are sent *well before* the due date.

To submit assignments, please follow directions in the Session Instructions. Assignments should be submitted as DOC, DOCX, or RTF files. Please make sure your name is on your assignment!

Assignments should be submitted on the due date specified in this course outline, by clicking on the appropriate Dropbox link. If an emergency prevents you from meeting a deadline, please let me know.