TECH AS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

EDFN 5301 - Introduction to Research
Fall 2008
Instructor: Dr. Kakali Bhattacharya
Educational Administration and Research, FC 224

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-6:30 pm
Tuesdays 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Or by appointment

Course Description
This course is designed to be an introduction to the process of planning and implementing educational research using qualitative and quantitative methods. Our primary focus will be on designing quality research projects that demonstrate rigorous conceptual thinking. If the design is weak, your findings, and therefore your conclusions would also be weak, no matter how sophisticated your data collection or analysis might be. In this class, we will be discussing limits and possibilities of qualitative and quantitative methods in the research literature and how that can be applied to your individual research projects. It is more important to me that you understand the concept than memorize and regurgitate for me in midterm and final exams. Therefore, this class would be focused on testing your understanding, critical thinking, and application of concepts. To respond to different learning styles, this class will often depart from traditional lecture format and integrate discussion, active student participation, and games to make abstract concepts more relevant and meaningful.

Rationale
All educators are either practitioners or consumers of research. It is important that students of education know and understand the elements of research in order to be able to evaluate critically and/or conduct research to enhance one's skills and advance the knowledge of the field. This course will provide the student with a basic framework for understanding and evaluating educational research studies. It will also provide knowledge of the various types of research designs used in educational research and the procedures for conducting research studies. The course is applicable for all students who will make professional use of educational research or conduct research studies.

Textbook


Supplemental reading distributed electronically or in class when deemed necessary
Course Objectives

- Identify various forms of educational research approaches and designs
- Summarize and critique research articles
- Generate research purpose and questions
- Identify and implement appropriate sampling strategies for diverse research purposes
- Broaden the scope and understanding of scientific inquiry
- Identify and resolve of issues related to earliest stages of designing research
- Execute quantitative and qualitative approaches to research design, data collection, and analysis

General Expectations

1. This is a graduate level class and as such your conduct in class should reflect accordingly. This means that you will come to class prepared, complete all the assignments, and not request extra-credit assignments at the end of the semester should your grade be below your expectations. There will be NO extra credit assignments under any circumstances. We are in a multicultural learning environment. I expect that you remain aware of and sensitive to educational research issues emerging from multiple perspectives and integrate into your own as you construct your arguments in class and in your assignments.

2. This class requires you to invest time for preparation, assignments, and application of critical concepts in educational research. You will need to stay on top of things in order to perform well. If you are offering me multiple excuses for your inability to hand in assignments on time, attend all classes, and prepare adequately, then you should reconsider whether this is an appropriate time for you to take this class.

3. There are some basic competencies that I expect you will have in order to perform well in this class. These are:
   a. Ability to proof read your assignments before submitting
   b. Ability to cite references when making general and/or specific statements that are not entirely your own
   c. Ability to communicate effectively when you do not understand the instruction or expectations about assignments
   d. Ability to connect to the internet, download required materials, and post required materials as needed. I will not entertain excuses emerging from last minute computer troubles. So plan ahead and have back up plans in place should something go wrong.
   e. Should you miss a class or come in late, it is your responsibility to catch up on what has been covered during your absence. I will not repeat my instruction individually to people who are late, tardy, or absent during instruction.

4. This class is web-enhanced. This means all communication to the class will be done via emails. Please make sure that you check your university email regularly. Also, we will use Google discussion group to post discussion related to this class.
Specific Class Policies
The following outlines specific class policies in order to ensure a positive and professional learning environment.

1. Attendance and Participation
You are expected to attend and participate in all classes. Participation can include but not limited to, raising thought-provoking questions grounded in the class material, listening attentively to peers, not dominating discussions, and coming to class prepared. Because this class will cover a lot of material in a very short period of time, any more than one excused absences will cause a deduction of two percent point per absence from your final grade. You are responsible for materials covered during your absence. You may find out what was covered in class by consulting with your peers and looking up the material online.

2. Tardiness and Courtesy to Peers
I see us as professional scholars and therefore we should treat our learning environment with professional respect. Class will begin and end on time and anyone who arrives or leaves the class five minutes late or early respectively will be marked tardy. Two tardies will equal an absence. This does not mean that there cannot be any exceptional situation. Please come and talk to me if such situations occur by the following class periods. I will NOT negotiate attendance at the end of the term so it is your responsibility to make sure you communicate with me about your extenuating circumstances.

3. Pagers and cell phones must be turned off during class.

4. Special Accommodations
It is the policy of the Texas A & M Corpus Christi to accommodate students with disabilities pursuant to federal law, state law, and the University's commitment to equal educational opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in seating placement or in arrangements for examinations, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course with a letter from Disability Services in Driftwood 101 (361-825-5816). I will not be able to make accommodations without a letter from disability services.

Texas A & M Corpus Christi does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the recruitment and admission of students, the recruitment and employment of faculty and staff, and the operation of any of its programs and activities, as specified by federal laws and regulations. The student has the responsibility of informing the course instructor (at the beginning of the course) of any disabling condition, which will require modification to avoid discrimination. Faculty is required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.
5. Professional Conduct and Academic Honesty
Professional conduct is expected in this course. Professional conduct includes, among others, interactions with peer colleagues, faculty, timely completion of assigned tasks and responsibilities; adherence to professional ethical standards; and adherence to University policies regarding plagiarism. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic honesty will result in disciplinary actions.

All written work submitted must be the student’s original work and conform to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) available online and via their publications. This means that any substantive ideas, phrases, sentences, and/or any published ideas must be properly referenced to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency in the selling of term papers of other academic materials. It is the student’s responsibility to know all relevant university policies concerning plagiarism. Any documented cases of plagiarism can and will result in dismissal from the course with a failing grade, and may result in other more serious sanctions by the College of Education.

6. Diversity Statement
The department of Educational Administration and Research aspires to create a safe and diversity-sensitive learning environment that respects the rights, dignity, and welfare of students, faculty, and staff. Diversity means the fair representation of all groups of individuals, the inclusion of minority perspectives and voices, and appreciation of different cultural and socioeconomic group perspectives. We aspire to foster and maintain an atmosphere that is free from discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Departmental courses will strive to provide opportunity for all students to discuss issues of diversity including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

7. Assignment Expectations
All assignments are mandatory and must be typed, double spaced, written in Times New Roman 12 point font with 1 inch margins, and adhere to the guidelines as stated by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Assignments should be submitted on the due date before class begins. If you must miss a deadline, you must let me know before the due date of the assignment. Late work will only be accepted for half credit if completed by the following class meeting. No late work will be accepted after one class meeting from when the assignment was due. There will be NO exceptions.

If you fail to notify me of any problems associated with your work (grading error, missing graded assignment) within one class meeting after I have returned graded materials, then I will
not be able to negotiate an alternate arrangement with you. Therefore, stay on top of things, monitor your work, and make sure that you talk to me immediately if there are problems.

8. Exams
If you have to miss the midterm or the final exam due to extenuating circumstances, you must let me know before the exam date to make alternate arrangements.

9. End of Semester Negotiations
I will not entertain any end of semester negotiations about grades. However, I will support you in every way possible during the semester to ensure that you perform well in the class if you communicate any difficulties or concerns with the material with me. Therefore, I recommend that you take full advantage of a supportive learning environment designed to ensure your success. Your grade in the course is a direct reflection of your engagement in your own learning process.

Please understand that, despite the strict expectations outlined above, I do care about you as individuals and am always willing to listen and be flexible in order to help you have a successful semester if you are faced with unusually difficult circumstances. Please be in touch with me if you want a conference to explain your circumstances. I believe that most professors share this attitude, but often, we do not know enough about our students to be of help to them. Although it may seem difficult to reach out, it is up to you to seek support when you need it. **Do not wait** until you have accumulated absences, fallen behind, and failed to do the required work to discuss any personal difficulties that are affecting your performance.

**Grading Policy**
90-100 = A
80-89.9 = B
70-79.9 = C
60-69.9 = D
59.9 and below = F (fail)

**Course Requirements**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter reflections (2 x 5)</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research question/problem(s)</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of journal article</td>
<td>5 points</td>
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<td>Literature review &amp; Subjectivity</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td>Research design</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
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Chapter reflections
At the beginning of each class, except during midterm and final exams, you will be expected to post on Google group a reflection on the readings of the day addressing the following:

- three main ideas that you are taking away from the chapter(s)
- one thing that surprised you, or you didn’t understand, or a question that you might have of that reading(s)

These postings will be done on Google prior to class. I will not entertain any excuses about last minute computer troubles, crashes, etc. You will need to plan ahead of time and have an alternate plan should your computer crash or lose your assignment or fail to post your reflections. Failure to submit a reflection prior to class will be marked late and late penalties will be assigned to the reflection.

These postings can be a couple of paragraphs in length but need to be stated in your words instead of cutting and pasting from the text, notes, or from others’ post in order to avoid plagiarism. I am looking for your understanding and areas of difficulty in these reflections.

I will provide you with general feedback on your reflections and will provide a grade twice in the semester. This will give you an opportunity to align your reflections according to the expectations outlined in the Chapter Reflections Rubric.

Research question/problem(s)
During the entire session, you will be working on designing a qualitative or quantitative research proposal. As we go through the term, you will be completing individual parts of that research proposal, incorporate my feedback in your revisions, and eventually submit a research proposal in a topical area of your interest. In this assignment you will write a research question(s) or problem(s) about the topic that you might have an interest in knowing. Refer to the rubric for this assignment for more details.

Journal Article Online Review and Reflection
As consumers of educational research, I want you to develop a sharp eye for what would be considered good research. To that effect, in this assignment each of you will select one journal article (qualitative or quantitative) and review it’s strengths and weaknesses. Post the article summary and its methodological strengths and weaknesses online. Refer to the rubric for this assignment for more details.

Online Literature Review and Subjectivity Presentation
In this online (posted on Google group) PowerPoint presentation, you will highlight your subjectivities and the current research in the area of your interest to create a rationale for your study. Subjectivity refers to your exploration of your own assumptions about your research interest, why that particular topic appeals to you, and your personal and professional investment in the topic. For the literature review part of the presentation, you are expected to offer 5 primary sources of research article in your topical area, identify existing understanding
and state how your research proposal will contribute to this topical area. Refer to the rubric for this assignment for more details.

**Research Design**
In this assignment you will craft a plan for your research including, who you will study, how you will collect data, how you will analyze the data, and how you will represent the data. Think of this as a blueprint to your research – the force that drives the research. Refer to the rubric for this assignment for more details.

**Final Exam**
This will be a comprehensive final exam covering all topics from the beginning of the semester to the end. However, the exam will not test you on your ability to recall information based on memorization, but rather assess your understanding of the content covered. There will be a review session before the final addressing your questions. However, I will not pre-design a review session, so you will have to come to class with your questions to make use of our time.

**Course Calendar**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td><em>Activity: Understanding the nature of research</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>Chapter 1: The Process of Conducting Research</td>
<td>Chapter 2: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches</td>
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<td>September 16</td>
<td>Bhattacharya Handbook, Unit 1 and 2</td>
<td>Library tour and hands on application at Bell Library 4:45 pm</td>
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<td>September 23</td>
<td>Bhattacharya Handbook, Unit 3</td>
<td>Chapter 3. Identifying a Research Problem</td>
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<td>Chapter 5: Specifying a Purpose and Research Question or Hypotheses</td>
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<td><em>Activity: Write Research Problem &amp; Questions</em></td>
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<td>September 30</td>
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<td>Research question/problem(s) Due</td>
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<td>Bhattacharya Handbook Unit 4</td>
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<td>Chapter 8: Collecting Qualitative Data</td>
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<td><em>Activity: Journal article review</em></td>
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<td>October 7</td>
<td>Journal Article Online Review Due</td>
<td>Bhattacharya Handbook Unit 5</td>
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<td>Chapter 18: Action Research Designs</td>
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<td><em>Activity: Designing Action Research Studies</em></td>
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October 14
Bhattacharya Handbook Unit 6
Chapter 6: Collecting Quantitative Data
Activity: Subjectivity identification
Activity: Review of Literature

October 21
Online Literature Review and Subjectivity Presentations Due.
Activity: Review of concepts learned
Activity: Midterm Review

October 28
Midterm Exam

November 4
Bhattacharya Handbook, Unit 7
Chapter 9: Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data
Activity: Qualitative Data Interpretation

November 11
Chapter 11: Experimental Designs
Activity: Experimental Design Exercises

November 18
Bhattacharya Handbook, Unit 8
Chapter 7: Analyzing and Interpreting Quantitative Data
Activity: Game: Who wants to be a Super Researcher?

November 25
No in-class meeting. Online Assignment as “Surprise” Quiz
Chapter 13: Survey Designs

December 2
Bhattacharya Handbook, Unit 9
Activity: Research Design
Activity: Final Exam Review

December 9
Final Exam

December 12
Research Design Due

Any part of the syllabus can be changed based on class needs and instructor discretion. All changes will be notified to the students in writing. I reserve the option to widen the point range for letter grades.