Course Description

This class is designed to help students learn to craft viable research questions and identify methodologies for studying those questions. Specifically, students will learn how to synthesize, organize and critically analyze the literature to in order to develop a viable research question. In addition, students will learn how to identify appropriate research designs to support the study of particular research questions.

The course is intended to help students solidify their knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to research design, research methods, and scholarly writing by applying and expanding them in the context of special education research. Students will review and analyze quality indicators for special education research, critique select special education research literature, and develop a preliminary research proposal.

Interactive discussions, readings, and written responses to readings will be used to structure course participation.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, learners will be able to:

1. apply indicators of special education research quality when analyzing research papers and drawing conclusions about their quality.
2. use knowledge and skills related to research design to examine and evaluate special education research involving group experimental, single-subject experimental, correlational, and qualitative designs.
3. select a topical area in special education, critically examine the research literature, and generate/refine research questions based on the literature review.
4. generate research/guiding questions and select appropriate designs and methods for addressing the research/guiding questions.
5. synthesize, critique, present, and write about research in special education.
6. write a research proposal by
   a. describing key aspects of the proposal process.
   b. identifying relevant research topics and writing a focused guiding/research question.
   c. writing a rationale and introductory material appropriate for inclusion in a proposal.
   d. conducting a comprehensive review of the literature and writing an integrated review of the literature.
   e. developing and writing a comprehensive method section.
7. present and defend a research proposal for peer review and feedback.

**Instructor and Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

As second year doctoral students, you are moving closer to becoming independent researchers. At this point in your professional career, it is important for you to take primary responsibility for your learning, as you should now have the tools and expertise necessary for pursuing, comprehending, critiquing, and integrating knowledge. These tools and abilities are necessary for successfully pursuing a dissertation, an endeavor that you will soon undertake.

Our experiences as both doctoral students and faculty members suggest that high expectations and a rigorous course of study combined with mentoring that fosters independence are key ingredients in developing the research skills you will need to become a scholar. As such, it is our responsibility to design a rigorous course that helps you access the necessary knowledge and skills you need to a more effective scholar, as well as provide the constructive feedback that will enable you to hone your research and writing skills. We see our roles in the class as coach, setting up the game plan, but then supporting you to run the plays.

In turn, it is your responsibility to take charge of your learning by
- preparing for all class sessions,
- asking thoughtful questions during class discussions,
- taking leadership in class discussions
- carefully considering the remarks of your peers
- making connections between readings,
- asking questions when you do not understand or need assistance
- working with your advisor to develop your research proposal question and rationale
- putting considerable thought into all written work
- editing written work carefully and ensuring that APA guidelines are followed

**Consistency with Program Mission**

The mission of the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida is to promote the successful inclusion of children and youth with disabilities and their families through excellence in the education of teachers and leaders, the generation of new knowledge, and the application of existing knowledge. The mission of our doctoral program fits within this larger mission. Our program is designed to prepare special education professionals who are knowledgeable, effective, reflective, and responsive and who are leaders in the field. These leaders are prepared to assume positions in higher education, research, program administration,
and direct service. Leadership implies mastery of knowledge, adherence to a code of professional ethics and values, and competencies in teaching, research, and service. The objectives for this course emanate from our leadership mission with a focused emphasis on research.

**Course Organization**

The course is organized under three major areas. The first area is devoted to (a) gaining or expanding knowledge and skills about what defines quality research in education, and in particular special education and (b) examining scholarly writing and recommended reporting practices in special education. Students are provided opportunities to apply and synthesize this knowledge. The second area considers various research designs and methods commonly used in special education. Students will work in small groups to study a research design in depth and to teach others in the class about key features of their assigned design. The group will also select an article (approved previously by the instructors) for their group to read prior to coming to class. This article will employ the design being discussed in class. Using an empirical study from the special education literature, all class members will explore and discuss the application of each design and provide a constructive critique of selected studies. The third area involves the development of a research proposal, which might set the foundation for the student’s dissertation in the doctoral program.

**Required Texts**


**Additional Texts/ Readings that Might be Helpful Resources**


Required Readings
(Note: Additional readings will be assigned as the course progresses)


**Dissertations**

**Qualitative**


**Single Subject**


**Group Design**


**Web Sites with Relevant Sources**

Evidence-Based Practice Centers
http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epc/
Class Participation

Students will work in small groups to study a research design in depth and to teach others in the class about key features of their assigned design. Using an empirical study from the special education literature, all class members will explore and discuss the application of each design and provide a constructive critique of selected studies. Students should also contribute to class discussions throughout the semester. (20 points)

Learning Assessments and Points Assigned to Each Assessment

Students will complete 6 learning assessments. Each assessment is designed to help evaluate the extent to which students meet course objectives. For most learning assessments, a rubric or list of criteria will be used to help inform grading. Students will be provided with the rubric or list of criteria to be used at least 1 week before the learning assessment is due. Students are expected to turn assignments in on the date they are due, any exceptions must be negotiated with the instructor. Students will not be allowed to take an incomplete in this class unless there are unusual extenuating circumstances.

Assessment #1: Dissertation analysis (This assignment can be done individually or in pairs). Students will review one of the dissertations in the syllabus. You will read the dissertation (focusing primarily on the first three chapters) and prepare a brief response (e.g., about 5 double-spaced pages). You will analyze the Introduction, Review of the Literature, and Method sections of the dissertation by responding to the guiding questions document posted online: (20 points)

Assessment #2: Research profile. Students will prepare a research profile. The research profile should be brief, not more than 1 page single-spaced (or 2 pages double-spaced). Include the goal; problem or topic to be addressed; a succinct summary of the most relevant work done previously, which provides a context for the research you are considering; a one paragraph rationale for the need for further study; a statement of the guiding or research questions to be addressed; the assumptions underlying your questions; and the potential contribution of additional research. This assignment will provide an opportunity for you to receive formative feedback on your research profile from the instructors and your classmates. (10 points)
Assessment #3 & #5: Review of manuscript submitted for publication. Students will write a manuscript review for a research paper selected by the instructors. Reviews should be prepared using the criteria discussed in class for evaluating this type of research and should address substantive, methodological, and stylistic elements. Reviews should be approximately two (possibly three), typed, single-spaced pages. Manuscript reviews will be evaluated by the instructor based on (a) comprehensiveness of the review, (b) accuracy/relevancy of the constructive criticism, (c) tone of the review, and (d) organization and flow of the review. (20 points each)

Assessment #4: Mini proposal: Draft Introduction and Literature Review. This paper should help you further with your research proposal. This mini proposal should include a working title, draft introduction, and preliminary literature review. It is anticipated that the mini proposal will be at least 5 to 10 double-spaced pages and will include appropriate citations, references, and tables or figures. Criteria used to evaluate this proposal will include: (a) focused introduction, (b) statement of specific guiding or research questions that are well-formulated, (c) integrated preliminary literature review, and (d) appropriate formats for citations and references. (40 points)

Assessment #6: Research Proposal and Research Proposal Presentation. The research proposal and presentation should follow the specific format provided. If needed, you can schedule individual sessions with the instructor throughout the semester to discuss the research proposal.

The research proposal will be based on your research profile and mini proposals. It should be approximately 25 double-spaced pages, with references and tables/figures not included in this page limit. If the proposal is intended to provide a basis for your dissertation proposal, you should work with your major advisor to develop the research profile and keep him/her informed as you develop the proposal throughout the semester.

For the research presentation, you should prepare a PowerPoint™ presentation and a one-page abstract of your proposal. You will present your research proposal to the class. Each student will have about 30 minutes to present his or her proposal (depending on the number of students enrolled in the course). Refer to the Proposal and Presentation Guide posted online (100 points proposal; 20 points presentation)

Points assigned for each learning assessment:
Assessment 1: 20 points
Assessment 2: 10 points
Assessment 3: 20 points
Assessment 4: 40 points
Assessment 5: 20 points
Assessment 6: Proposal (100 points); Presentation (20 points)
Participation: 20 points
Total Possible Points: 250
Grading

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92% or above</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>89-91</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>86-88</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>61 or below</td>
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Academic Honor Code

Students are expected to adhere to the academic honor code of the University of Florida as published on the University of Florida Web site at: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php

For this course, students should pay particular attention to the policies related to citing sources appropriately and avoiding plagiarism. Please ask the instructor if you would like some helpful references related to citing sources effectively and avoiding plagiarism.

Americans with Disabilities Act

As described on the UF Disability Resource Center Web site, “there is a strong commitment to equal education for all students at the University of Florida. The University will strive to be aware of and sensitive to the unique needs of all students. Student needs will be addressed through a lens of knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity to cultural, racial, religious, ethnic, and disability diversity.”

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Resource Center, and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from the DRC that verifies the need for academic accommodations and what type. This should be done before or within the first week of class. For more information about the Disability Resource Center contact them at

Disability Resource Center
0020 Reid Hall
Phone: (352) 392-8565
Fax: (352) 392-8570 Web site: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/
Note: Readings and Assignments should be completed by the date listed on the class schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 7</strong></td>
<td>- Introductions</td>
<td>- Review Course Requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Review of Syllabus</td>
<td>- Decide on a dissertation to read and critique (you can do this assignment in pairs; see list of potential dissertations)</td>
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<td>- Research interests form</td>
<td>- Obtain course texts</td>
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<td>- Guiding questions for reviewing dissertations</td>
<td>- Download and read chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 from the NRC publication Scientific Research in Education (Shavelson &amp; Towne, 2002) (<a href="http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10236">http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10236</a>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Begin discussion and analysis of a study</td>
<td>- Bring Butler et al. (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>January 14</strong></td>
<td>- What defines good educational research?</td>
<td>- Read required chapters from the NRC publication</td>
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<td>- What are some of the most pressing research issues in special education?</td>
<td>- Read Odom et al. (2005)</td>
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<td>- What is the research topic you intend to pursue?</td>
<td>- Bring the dissertation you intend to review; how does the researcher make a case for his or her study? What is the broader topic that the researcher starts with? What subtopics does the researcher move through in making a case for his or her study?</td>
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<td>- Why is your topic important in light of what you have read about good educational research?</td>
<td>- Read Butler et al. (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>January 21</strong></td>
<td>- Identifying Topics and Conducting Research</td>
<td>- Read Glatthorn &amp; Joyner: Chapter 2, 3, 10, 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Developing an Introduction, Literature Review, and purpose statement</td>
<td>- Read Boote &amp; Belle (2005)</td>
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<td>- Bring research topic you intend to pursue—NOT the methodology you want to use. Also bring research questions you are considering.</td>
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<td>- Bring copy of dissertation you intend to review</td>
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<td>Session</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings and Assignments</td>
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<td>January 28</td>
<td>- Developing a Method Section</td>
<td>- Glatthorn &amp; Joyner: Chapters 4, 11, 12</td>
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<td>- Bring copy of dissertation you intend to review</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>-- Group # 1:</td>
<td>- Manuscript submitted for publication assigned by instructor</td>
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<td>Group</td>
<td>- Group #1 (published article)</td>
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<td>Experimental Designs in Special Education</td>
<td>- Gersten et al. (2005)</td>
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<td>Research</td>
<td>- Snyder (2000)</td>
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<td>- Snyder &amp; Lawson (1993)</td>
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<td>- Lane (1999)</td>
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<td><strong>Learning Assessment #1 due: Dissertation critique</strong></td>
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<td>February 11</td>
<td>No formal class meeting</td>
<td>Independent writing and reading</td>
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<td>Work on literature review, refining</td>
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<td>guiding/research questions, and</td>
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<td>preliminary methods</td>
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<td>February 18</td>
<td>Methodological issues in experimental</td>
<td>- Smith, Daunic, Taylor (2007)</td>
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<td>designs</td>
<td>- LeLaurin &amp; Wolery (1992)</td>
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<td>- Randomization, manipulation, control</td>
<td>- Thompson (2007)</td>
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<td>- Statistical, practical, and clinical</td>
<td>- Snyder &amp; Lawson (1993)</td>
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<td>significance</td>
<td>- Will probably select a few articles to critique in class;</td>
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<td>- Effect sizes, confidence intervals,</td>
<td>no need to be prepared ahead of time.</td>
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<td><strong>Learning Assessment #2 due: Research Profile</strong></td>
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<td>Session</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings and Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 25</td>
<td>Group #2: Correlational Designs in Special Education Research</td>
<td>- Group #2 published article - Thompson et al. (2005)</td>
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<td>- Learning Assessment #3 due: Review of manuscript submitted for publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>- Learning Assessment #4 due: Mini-Proposal: Draft of Introduction and Literature Review</td>
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<td>- Learning Assessment #5 due: Review of manuscript submitted for publication</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Completing an IRB; Proposal Presentations</td>
<td>- Bring laptop computer, we will work on <a href="http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/">http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/</a> - Mertler &amp; Charles (2011) Ch. 1 - Complete peer evaluation form in class</td>
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<td>April 8 (CEC, AERA)</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Proposal Presentations</td>
<td>- Complete peer evaluation form in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Proposal Presentations</td>
<td>- Complete peer evaluation form in class; Learning Assessment #6: Final Research Proposal Due</td>
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