

CEP 930
Educational Inquiry
Spring 2011
Wednesday, 4:10-7:00 p.m.

Instructors:

Amita Chudgar (EAD); amitac@msu.edu
Steven Weiland (EAD); weiland@msu.edu

Introduction

Educational Inquiry signifies a variety of ways of studying teaching, learning, human development, counseling, and the organization and administration of K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions. The course provides opportunities to reflect on, discuss, and write about educational research as it appears in recent examples from education and other fields.

We will explore the “how to” of research, particularly methods for observation, interviewing, measurement, and composition. And we will address matters of theory based on consideration of practices of inquiry. The course also includes attention to the impact of new technologies on scholarly communications.

The focus in the course will be on “text work,” including the composition by students of a paper representing the different features of a hypothetical research project. But as we study scholarly work we should remember that inquiry cannot be described simply by its methods. It is an activity where values matter, as do our identities as scholars and citizens, our beliefs about knowledge, and the ways we understand education and the world around it.

Why Do Educational Research, in What Forms, and with What Preparation?

The question behind the uses of any methods, to be addressed in this course, is “Why do educational research anyway?” In a PhD program in a college of education well known for its research it is fair to consider why we do it and what value it has. Such questions help to animate the study of methods and are, ideally, resources for building a vocation in research. For many productive scholars in all fields such questions make up part of their lifelong work.

In the past few years there has been considerable attention to the conduct and uses of educational research, much of it reflecting the debate about it as an “evidence-based” practice, or its status as a scientific activity. The debate is an important feature of the course.

The education of educational researchers is also a matter of interest in CEP 930. It will be a subject of discussion throughout the course, including consideration of the context of the new information and communications technologies, and the role of research in the academic vocations.

Assignments and Grades

Weekly assignments for reading, viewing, and discussion are identified in the schedule below. There will be a single and extensive writing assignment, an object of attention throughout the course. It is named a *Paper-in-Parts* to reflect its organization as an experiment in learning about research methods.

Detailed directions for the *Paper-in-Parts* should be considered part of the syllabus. They are available at the CEP 930 ANGEL website (under the “Syllabus, Online Resources, and Writing Assignment” tab). The assignment will be discussed regularly in class, including opportunities for small group discussions among students about their plans and progress.

Grades will be determined thus: Class participation 15%, Parts 1-4 of the *Paper-in-Parts* 15% each, and Part 5 and the “Afterword,” 25%.

Required Reading and Viewing

Books:

Dahlia Remler and Gregg Van Ryzin. (2010). *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Mary Kennedy. (2006). *Inside Teaching: How Classroom Life Undermines Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Alain de Botton. (2010). *A Week at the Airport*. New York: Vintage.

Patti Lather. (2010). *Engaging Science Policy: From the Side of the Messy*. New York: Peter Lang.

Film:

Nell (1994; Screenplay by William Nicholson based on the play *Idioglossia* by Mark Handley; Directed by Michael Apted).

Articles, Essays, and Web Resources:

The syllabus includes a variety of scholarly articles, book chapters, and other resources named in the schedule below. All are available online at the CEP 930 ANGEL site.

Resources at the CEP 930 ANGEL Site

Apart from the *Syllabus*, instructions for the *Paper-in-Parts*, and the online readings there are these other resources at the course website at ANGEL:

Just In: Surprisingly, academic research is often in the news, reflecting controversies about goals and methods. In recognition of how timely is our subject there will be a “Just In” folder at the ANGEL website. E-mail messages will alert students to new entries.

Symposium Wars: The past decade has been a particularly volatile one for educational research. The publication in 2002 of a report by the National Research Council (NRC) on *Scientific Research in Education* prompted a series of symposia sponsored by journals and associations to

debate the meanings and consequences of the NRC report. Our ANGEL site includes links to them. Students can read and browse among the many views to be found there according to their interests, and as questions arise in our course for which one or another symposium statement provides a useful response.

Online Student Forum: CEP 930 is a traditional face-to-face course but, as the syllabus demonstrates, we are making extensive use of electronic resources. And even a course which meets regularly can still make good use of asynchronous online discussion. Thus, at the CEP 930 ANGEL site a “Student Forum” provides an opportunity for students to communicate with one another about questions and problems in educational inquiry. For some students, online asynchronous participation in a course can be as fruitful as the conventional classroom form of it. There is no requirement that all students post. But those who find the format appealing are certainly welcome to use it. The Student Forum is accessible at the “Syllabus, etc.” and “Communicate” tabs.

Schedule

1. January 12 Introduction to CEP 930

What are the reasons for doing educational research? What do educational researchers need to know about “standards” for their work? How have methods been codified for academic and professional purposes? How should research methods be studied?

Readings:

Robert McClintock. (2007). Educational Research. *Teachers College Record* (March 28).

American Educational Research Association. (2006). *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications*. Washington, D.C.: AERA.

Review this recent example of the *Standards*: Richard Ingersoll and David Perda. (2010). Is the Supply of Mathematics and Science Teachers Sufficient? *American Educational Research Journal*, 47: 563-594.

American Educational Research Association. (2009). *Standards for Reporting on Humanities-Oriented Research in AERA Publications*. Washington, D.C.: AERA.

Review this recent example of the *Standards*: Eric Haas and Gustavo Fischman. (2010). Nostalgia, Entrepreneurship, and Redemption: Understanding Prototypes in Higher Education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47: 532-562.

Film:

Nell (1994; view the film prior to class where we will look at excerpts only; a “Study Guide to *Nell*” is posted at the course ANGEL site for this week).

2. January 19 Ways of Knowing and “Well-Made Research,” I (Continued on January 26)

Having reviewed general matters of research (purposes and methods) we turn to examples from the two different traditions of inquiry, generally referred to as “qualitative” and quantitative.” First, acclaimed neurologist Oliver Sacks writes a form of medical ethnography, based on a distinctive form of fieldwork, to explore unusual lives and work. Also for our consideration: What does it mean to identify a “good” research question? What are the roles of disciplinary and professional traditions and expectations in doing so?

Readings:

Oliver Sacks. (1995). A Surgeon’s Life. In Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven*

Paradoxical Tales (New York: Random House).

Remler and Van Ryzin, *Research Methods in Practice*, Chapter 1, “Research in the Real World.”
Alice Dreger. (2010). No Science, Please. We’re Anthropologists. *Psychology Today* (November 25).

Dan Berrett. (2010). Anthropology Without Science. *Inside Higher Education* (November 30).

Nicholas Wade. (2010). Anthropology a Science? Statement Deepens a Rift. *New York Times* (December 9).

3. January 26 Ways of Knowing and “Well-Made Research,”II

What are the conceptual building blocks of research and how do they differ in quantitative and qualitative methods? What is the role of theory? How are complex social realities represented via precise modeling and mathematical treatment? How is policy influenced by such work? We turn to examples from economics, including the work of the 2010 Nobel Prize winner Peter Diamond and his use of complex mathematical models and abstractions to explain the United States labor market.

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 2 (“Theory and Models”)

Giuseppe Moscarini and Randall Wright. (2007). An Interview with Peter Diamond.

Macroeconomic Dynamics, 11: 543-565. Also review Ingersoll and Perda (above, January 12).

Stephen Ellis and Chris Swoyer. (2008). Theory. In William Darity (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (2nd Ed). New York: Macmillan.

4. February 2 Looking and Listening in Schools

How can we learn about the “realities” of schooling even while we strive to reform education? What methods are best (e.g., observation and interviewing in fieldwork) for understanding what happens in teaching and learning, or the “ordinary” activities of schooling? How can we understand the work of individuals in the context of institutions, history, and social change?

Readings:

Mary Kennedy, *Inside Teaching: How Classroom Life Undermines Reform*.

Mary Kennedy. (2009). Solutions are the Problem in Education. *Education Week* (July 28).

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 3 (“Qualitative Research”).

PiP Part 1. Identify a subject or topic of study, and a research question. Due: February 4.

5. February 9 Samples, Surveys, and Observations

What is the role of “primary data” in educational research and where do we find it? How do we study “samples” and what kind of knowledge does such work produce? What is the role of generalizability in research? “Observing,” “watching,” “looking,” and “seeing”: Why do we have many terms for using our eyes, in fieldwork and other forms of inquiry, and what does that suggest about observational research?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 5 (“Sampling”) and Chapter 7 (“Primary Data Collection”).

Center for Writing in Digital Environments (WIDE). (2010). *The Writing Lives of College Students: A WIDE Survey and White Paper*. East Lansing, MI: WIDE.

Alain de Botton, *A Week at the Airport*.

6. February 16 Making Sense of Numbers, I (Continued on March 2)

What does it mean to measure something? What kind of knowledge comes from standard quantitative techniques used in educational research? What is the role of “secondary data” and where do we find it? How do we use it?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 4 (“Measurement”), Chapter 6 (“Secondary Data”), and Chapter 8 (“Making Sense of Numbers”).

Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, and Asim Ijaz Khwaja. (2008). A Dime a Day: The Possibilities and Limits of Private Schooling in Pakistan. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(3): 329-355.

7. February 23 Reflections on Research: Professional and Personal

In *Inside Teaching* Mary Kennedy probes the activities of teachers, and relations between their everyday work and the world of educational reform. For this session Professor Kennedy will visit class to help us get *inside research* from the perspective of someone who is renowned for her educational studies on several topics using variations of qualitative and quantitative methods. She will explain how she came to write *Inside Teaching* and how she understands her own methods, including the uses of theory and the application of software to qualitative data analysis.

Readings:

Mary Kennedy, *Inside Teaching* (“Appendix on Method”).

Mary Kennedy. (2001). Incentives for Scholarship in Education Programs. In W.G. Tierney (Ed.), *Faculty Work in Schools of Education: Rethinking Roles and Rewards for the 21st Century*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Mary Kennedy. (2009). Against Boldness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1): 16-20.

Mary Kennedy. (2010). Attribution Error and the Quest for Teacher Quality. *Educational Researcher*, 39(8): 591-598.

PiP Part 2. Explain how you will go about planning, organizing, and conducting the work necessary to learn what you want to know. Due: Feb 25

8. March 2, Making Sense of Numbers, II (Continued from February 16)

How do we analyze and interpret quantitative data? When we move from “descriptive data” what conceptual and statistical tools are needed for making sense of and using it? What questions and problems in research are addressed by the uses of “multiple regression”?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 9 (“Making Sense of Multivariate Statistics”).

Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, and Asim Ijaz Khwaja. (2008). A Dime a Day: The Possibilities and Limits of Private Schooling in Pakistan. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(3): 329-355.

March 9 SPRING BREAK

9. March 16 The Role of the Personal in Research and Scholarship.

Does the personal (the life and experience of the researcher) belong in written accounts of inquiry? If so, in what forms and with what limits? Is there a personal dimension to the choice and use of theory in research? Also: A review of the first half of the semester via examination of the interaction of quantitative and qualitative approaches in “mixed methods research.” What does “mixed” mean in such work? And what advantages derived from “mixing”—with what liabilities?

Readings:

- Daphne Patai. (1994). Sick and Tired of Scholars' Nouveau Solipsism. *Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 23).
- Ruth Behar. (1994). Dare We Say "I"? Bringing the Personal into Scholarship. *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 29).
- Edward Sosu, Angus McWilliam, and Donald Gray. (2008). The Complexities of Teachers' Commitment to Environmental Education. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 2(2): 169-189.

10. March 23 From Correlation to Causation

A common confusion in producing and using social science research is confounding correlation with causation. Simply because two things occur together, or even in succession, may not be sufficient to claim that they are causally related. While intuitively we may often think or "feel" that we know that X was responsible for causing Y, to establish causality beyond doubt in the social sciences is challenging. What does it mean to acknowledge this challenge and what kind of thinking and writing is required so that such knowledge can better inform our research and reporting practices?

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 10 ("Causation") and Chapter 12 ("Randomized Field Experiments").
- Sonalde Desai and Soumya Alva. (1998). Maternal Education and Child Health: Is There a Strong Causal Relationship? *Demography*, 35(1): 71-81.
- PiP Part 3. Explore what will be the place in your work of your personal history, experience, scholarly preferences, and professional aspirations. Due: March 25*

11. March 30 Experiments vs. Experience

Extending our attention to correlation and causation we consider two divergent approaches to research: a deeply personal yet empirically and theoretically ambitious study by the famed cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz along with examples of the clinical, scientific approach of conducting randomized controlled field trials.

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 13 ("Natural and Quasi Experiments")
- Clifford Geertz. (1973). "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books).
- What Works Clearinghouse: Procedures and Standards Handbook* (Version 2.0; December 2008). Read Chapter 2 (Section D) and Chapter 3.
- What Works Clearinghouse Quick Reviews*. Review any 3 studies, one consistent with WWC standards, one consistent with reservations, and one not consistent.

12. April 6 Politics and Ethics in Educational Inquiry

What does the national (and even international) context for education mean for research? What political questions influence policy and practice, including the activities of agencies and foundations? How do questions of research ethics influence practice and what is their role in the representation of inquiry?

Readings:

- Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 14 ("The Politics, Production, and Ethics of Research").

Martyn Hammersly. (2005). Should Social Science Be Critical? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 35(2): 175-195.

Patti Lather, *Engaging Science Policy: From the Side of the Messy*.

13. April 13 From Research to Writing

What historical principles and practices guide writing in educational research? What is distinctive to educational research in its understanding of its audiences and primary genres? Where in the process of research should writing have the attention of authors? What can apprentice researchers do to strengthen their abilities as writers?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin, Chapter 15 (“How to Find, Focus, and Present Research”).

Gary Fine. (1988). The Ten Commandments of Writing. *American Sociologist*, 19(3): 152-157.

Bem, Daryl J. (2004). Writing the Empirical Journal Article. In John Darley, Mark Zanna, and Henry Roediger, III (Eds.). *The Compleat Academic: A Career Guide*. 2nd Ed. (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre. (2005). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.). *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE).

PiP Part 4: Describe the theory (or theories) you expect to use in organizing research in the subject you are studying and in finding meaning and utility in what you will discover. Due: April 15.

14. April 20 Educational Research in the Digital Age

How should educational researchers adapt to the increasing digitalization of science and scholarship? What will scholarly journals and books look like in the future? What are the new roles of libraries and archives in research? What will be the impact of the “open resources” movement and electronic publishing on research and academic careers? MSU Education Librarian Kate Corby will visit class.

Readings:

James Evans. (2008). Electronic Publication and the Narrowing of Science and Scholarship. *Science*, 321: 395-399.

Andrew Jakubowicz. (2009). Beyond the Static Text: Multimedia Interactivity in Academic Journal Publishing in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Not). In Bill Cope and Angus Phillips (Eds.), *The Future of the Academic Journal* (Oxford, UK: Chandos).

Jonathan Shaw. (2010). Gutenberg 2.0: Harvard’s Libraries Deal with Disruptive Change. *Harvard Magazine* (May/June): 36-41, 82-83.

Angus Phillips. (2010). Blog to the Future: Journal Publishing in the 21st Century. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 42(1): 16-31.

15. April 27 Conditions and Prospects for Educational Research

What conditions—public, institutional, organizational, disciplinary, and financial—shape educational research today? How has educational research changed in the past two decades? How should researchers recognize them in planning and conducting their work? What changes—feasible and desirable—might influence educational research in the near future? Robert Floden, University Distinguished Professor of Education at MSU, will visit class to help us consider these and other questions.

Readings:

Carl Kaestle. (1993). The Awful Reputation of Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1) 22-31.

Robert Floden, et al., (2009). Learning from Our Differences: A Dialogue Across Perspectives on Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(7): 501-517.

Robert Floden. (2011). Speaking Truth to Policy and Practice. In Clifton Conrad and Ronald Serlin (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook on Research in Education* (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

PiP Part 5. Account for what you expect to do as a writer, or how will you represent in prose (and, as necessary, with figures), your research activities, the results of your work, and more. Include the "Afterword" as explained in the PiP directions. Due: May 2.