

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Department of Secondary Education

Course Outline
EDSE 511 – X50

RESEARCH THESIS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Winter Term 2013

Term Dates: January 9 - April 10, 2013

Class day and times: Wednesdays 5:00-8:00pm

Location: 218 Education South

Instructor: Dr. Diane Conrad

Office: 422 Education South.

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00-5:00 p.m. or by appointment

Course Prerequisite: EDSE 510

Course Description, General Content and Objectives

EDSE 511 is designed as a practical course to enable graduate students to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions that will help them prepare to engage with and conduct educational research.

In addition to building on insights gained from EDSE 510, the specific objectives of the course are for students to:

- conceptualize and design their MEd. Thesis. They will have the opportunity to: 1) read and reflect upon research trends, orientations, methodologies, ethics, data collection and data presentation; 2) consider their relevance for their particular area of research interest; and 3) move their final project forward
- to expand their knowledge of research methodology, research skills and plan the conceptual, practical and reflective components of their future thesis
- write a proposal that outlines objectives, questions, review of literature in the chosen area, methodology, data collection (if required) and proposed data representation and to receive feedback on their ideas. *The proposal will be further developed in consultation with your Supervisor in an ongoing manner.*
- consider such questions as:
 - What might a thesis look like?
 - What are my particular research interests? What is relevant to my professional world?
 - What might be a possible research site?
 - How might I be involved as a teacher/administrator-researcher?
 - Which research methodology might be best suited for my particular interest?
 - How will I collect data (if applicable)?

- What are ethical questions I need to consider? Do I require ethics approval? If so, how do I obtain this approval?
- What might a literature review look like?
- How might I analyze my data?
- What would be an appropriate way to include a reflective component?
- How do I locate myself in the research and reveal my own preconceptions and reflexivity?
- What possible forms of representation might be suitable for my study?
- At least four hours of this course will be focused on fulfilling students' graduate research ethics requirement.

See also Graduate Student Handbook 2012-2013

http://www.secondaryed.ualberta.ca/GraduatePrograms/~media/secondaryed/Documents/GraduatePrograms/graduate_handbook.pdf

This course curriculum can, to some extent, be negotiated by the students and instructors, so the outline can only be tentative. Changes can take place in content and evaluation based upon class discussion and negotiation.

Required Texts

Weis, L. & Fine, M. (2000). *Speed bumps: Student friendly guide to qualitative research*. New York: Teachers College Press.

There will be other assigned readings.

Recording Class Lectures: Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is permitted only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent of the instructor.

Additional Major Course Materials - NIL

Course Evaluation/Assessment

Information about the U of A grading system can be found at *the University of Alberta Policies and Principles Online (UAPPOL) website* at <http://www.uappol.ualberta.ca/>

According to the University of Alberta Grading Policy, “Grades reflect judgments of student achievement made by instructors and must correspond to the associated descriptor. These judgments are based on a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class.” In this course, your work will be evaluated using the general grading descriptors established by the University, as well as the more detailed assessment criteria that will be provided for specific assignments. Your grade on each assignment will be in one of three formats: a descriptor (excellent, good, satisfactory, etc.), a letter (A, B, C, etc.), or a number. When necessary, descriptor and letter grades will be converted into numerical equivalents in order to weight them properly and average them into a final course grade. Conversions between descriptors, letters, and numbers will be made in accordance with the University’s grading policy and the table provided. Your final course grade will be reported as letter grade. It will not be official until it has been approved by the Department Chair and posted on Bear Tracks.

Evaluation in EDSE 511 will consist of 3 graded assignments. There is no final examination in this course. Details of the assignments and grading criteria are provided below and will be discussed further in class. Each assignment will be evaluated based on the general grading criteria indicated below and the specific criteria set out for the assignment. Each assignment will be assigned a letter grade corresponding to the U of A Letter Grading System (Table A below). Letter grades for assignments will be translated into corresponding GPA equivalents for the purposes of weighting. You will be assigned a final letter grade for the course reflecting judgment of your achievement made by the instructor based on a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in the class.

General Grading Criteria

A-, A, A+ (Excellent) – displays excellent performance with respect to assignment learning objectives; exhibits sophisticated, original, creative thinking and demonstrates a capacity to analyze critically and synthesize information; presenting challenging and significant ideas; interpretations developed with insight; finely focused and clearly written/crafted

B, B+ (Good) – displays good performance with respect to assignment learning objectives; understanding/analysis is strong; well focused and clearly written/crafted

B-, C+ (Satisfactory) – displays satisfactory performance with respect to assignment learning objectives; understanding/analysis meets expectations; not consistently well focused or clearly written/crafted

C and below (Failure) – displays unsatisfactory performance with respect to assignment learning objectives; weak understanding/analysis evident; poorly focused and written/crafted

**U of A Letter Grading System
Course Grades Obtained by Graduate Students**

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value Equivalent
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
Satisfactory	B-	2.7
	C+	2.3
Failure	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
	F	0.0

Minimum Academic Standing GPA
Minimum course pass mark

Points Regarding Evaluation Procedures

- All written assignments **must be word processed** in Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced with 1 inch margins (or equivalent) unless otherwise negotiated with the instructor. Writing ability/style will be assessed along with the content. Particular details on assignments will be communicated throughout the course.

- Written assignments should adhere to APA or other acceptable style in format, citation and referencing.
- Late penalties will be assigned to assignments handed in after the due date. After 5 days, a grade of zero will be assigned. Exceptions due to extenuating circumstances must be approved by the instructor in advance.
- Information about the U of A grading system can be found at *the University of Alberta Policies and Principles Online (UAPPOL) website at <http://www.uappol.ualberta.ca/>*

GFC Policy states that:

- Instructors will allow students a reasonable time in which to complete an assignment, bearing in mind its weight.
- Instructors will mark, provide appropriate feedback, and return to students all term work in a timely manner.
- Normally term work will be returned on or by the last day of classes in the course, with the exception of a final major assignment (which may be due on the last day of classes), which will be returned by the date of the scheduled final examination or, in non-examination courses, by the last day of the examination period. All exceptions must be authorized by the Faculty Council (or delegate) in the faculty offering the course.

Important Reminders

Course Outlines

Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

Code of Student Behaviour

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Equity Statement and Inclusive Language Policy

The Faculty of Education is committed to providing an environment of equality and respect for all people within the university community, and to educating faculty, staff and students in developing teaching and learning contexts that are welcoming to all. In seeking to achieve a climate of respect and dignity, all staff and students must use inclusive language to create a classroom in which an individual's experience and views are treated with equal respect and value in relation to his/her gender, racial background, sexual orientation, and ethnic background. We are encouraged to use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language and become more sensitive to the impact of devaluing language in order to create a thoughtful and respectful community.

Recommendation to Students with Disabilities

Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental and physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Specialized Support and Disability Services, 2-800 Students' Union Building, 492-3381.

Bibliography of Recommended Reference Texts

Agar, M. H. (1996). *The professional strangers. An informal introduction to ethnography*. New

York: Academic Press.

- Agar, M., & Macdonald, J. (1995). Focus groups and ethnography. *Human Organization*, 54(1), 78-86.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for Education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd edition). Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd edition). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Conquergood, D. (2003). Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. In N. Denzin & Y Lincoln (Eds.) *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 397-414). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. (Available as an electronic book through U of A website).
- Conrad, D. (2006). Entangled in the sticks: Ethical conundrums of popular theatre as pedagogy and research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(3), 437-458.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Davies, M. B. (2007). *Doing a successful research project: Using qualitative or quantitative methods*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ellis, J. (2006). Researching children's experience hermeneutically and holistically. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 52 (3), pp.111-126.
- Foss, S. K. & Waters, W. (2007). *Destination dissertation: A traveller's guide to a done dissertation*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Gibbs, G., & Taylor, C. (2010). How and what to code, *Online QDA Web Site*. Retrieved October 1, 2011 from http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/how_what_to_code.php
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997) A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(3), 274-294.
<http://qix.sagepub.com/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/content/3/3/274.full.pdf+html>
- Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. In L. Brown & S. Strega, (Eds.) *Research as resistance: Critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 19-36). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.
<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/4354882/WUAARCHIVE>
- Lincoln, Y., Lynham, S. & Guba, E. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, Contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 97-128). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Locke, L., Spirduso, W. W. & Silverman, S. (2007). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*. London: Sage Publications.

- Mauthner, M., Birch, M., Jessop, J. & Miller, T. (Eds.) (2002). *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage. (Available as an electronic book through U of A website).
- Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 1-19.
- O'Donoghue, T. A. (2007). *Planning your qualitative research project: An introduction to interpretive research in Education*. New York: Routledge. (Available as an electronic book through U of A website).
- Putz, M. (2006). *A teacher's guide to the multi-genre research project: Everything you need to get started*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Richard, L., & Morse, J. M. (2007). *Read me first for a user guide to qualitative methodology* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ridley, D. (2008). *The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, United States of America: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

See: <http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/content.php?pid=67588&sid=633762>

Assignments

1. Summary of three Research Theses 20% Due: February 13, 2013

With the assistance of your Supervisor, select three theses to review: one in your subject area; one in any subject area using a different research methodology from the first one; and one that comes highly recommended by your Supervisor. Briefly summarize the objectives, methodology and findings of each thesis. Present a critical analysis in reference to the Department of Secondary Education's Thesis Requirements and Criteria, discussing its strengths and weaknesses, and what you liked and disliked about it as a "thesis." Analyze and comment on the kinds of questions/issues addressed in the project. Consider whether the methodology is suited to the topic and discuss the form(s) of data representation. Explain how the project has offered you new insight into the educational area under discussion. (You may wish to maintain the anonymity of the author). Please feel confident in moving beyond these suggestions of inclusion for your critique.

2. Developing and refining research skills 30% Due: weekly, as discussed in class

