WED 561  
Research Methods  
Spring 2016  

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-3:00; Wednesdays 1:00-5:00; and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Research Methods” is a required course for all students pursuing the Master of Science in Education Degree with a major in Workforce Education and Development. The overall purpose of the course is to introduce basic vocabulary, concepts, and methods of educational research. Students learn the language of research, various methods for conducting research, how to identify and synthesize research literature, how to plan a research study that improves the practice of education or training, and how to formally report research findings. The more specific purpose is for students to develop a sample research proposal.

OBJECTIVES:

Upon the completion of the course, students will:
1. understand basic concepts and definitions of educational research.
2. select a tentative research problem that will be subsequently developed into a research proposal.
3. know and use library reference sources and services.
4. develop Chapter One of the research paper/thesis.
5. develop Chapter Two of the research paper/thesis.
6. develop Chapter Three of the research paper/thesis.
7. apply APA rules and guidelines related to writing formal research reports.
8. understand how to develop Chapter Four of a thesis.
9. understand how to develop Chapter Five of a thesis.

TEXTBOOK:


TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

IMPORTANT: Here is the tentative schedule of activities that students must complete. Students are expected to read the assigned chapter(s) from the textbook as well as other readings as assigned. Students will submit assignments by the due date to the SIU Online dropbox. Questions will be posted to the discussion board for each chapter. Each student must post at least three meaningful posts for each assigned chapter(s) during the week for that reading. Students may choose to answer questions that have been posted or start a new discussion.

January 23  Orientation and Expectations for Course  Familiarize yourself with SIU Online

January 24-January 30  Chapter 5  Assignment 1

January 31-February 6  Chapter 13  Assignment 2

February 7-February 13  Chapters 17, 18, and 19  Assignment 3  Online chat in D2L on February 9 at 1:00 CST

February 14-February 20  Chapter 16  Assignment 4

February 21-February 27  Chapters 6 and 7  Assignment 5

February 28-March 5  Chapters 8 and 9  Assignment 6

March 6-March 12  Chapter 14  Assignment 7

March 13-March 19  Break

March 20-March 26  Chapter 10  Assignment 8

March 27-April 2  Chapter 11  Assignment 9

April 3-April 9  Chapter 12  Assignment 10
April 10-April 16  Chapter 15
Online chat in D2L on April 13 at 1:00 CST

April 17-April 23  Work on Proposals

April 24-April 30  Proposals Due

April 30-May 1  Final Exam and Course Evaluation

COURSE PRODUCTS:
- Assignments .............................................................. 200 points
- Final Exam .................................................................... 100 points
- Research Proposal ........................................................ 100 points
- Discussion and Participation ........................................... 100 points

GRADING SCALE:
A = 450 to 500 points
B = 400 to 449 points
C = 350 to 399 points
D = 300 to 349 points
F = Below 300 points

ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UP POLICY:

Interaction with your instructor and students is an integral part of the learning process. Therefore, your participation in online discussion is required. Failure to participate will result in a reduction of discussion and participation points; each week’s participation and discussion is worth 10 points. Any missed discussions or assignments may be made up at a later date only if the student has been given advance approval by the instructor. Students failing to officially withdraw before the official drop date will receive a failing grade "F" for the course.

LATE WORK POLICY:

All assignments are required to be submitted to the instructor by the posted due date. Any assignments that are turned in after the due date, without prior approval from the instructor, will be reduced by five points for every day late. Please note that you must receive a B or higher to meet the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Workforce Education and Development.
RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

As a partial requirement for this course, you will develop and submit in written form a research proposal by the due date previously listed. The purpose of this assignment is to develop a draft manuscript of the final research project that you will be required to submit in order to complete the requirements for the Master’s degree. Therefore, you should prepare your research proposal in approximately the same format as the final research project. The proposal must be a minimum of 20 double-spaced pages in length and must include a minimum of 15 referenced citations to be considered acceptable. Deviations will result in a reduction of points.

The Department of Workforce Education and Development gives each student the option of completing a thesis, research paper, or a graduate project to satisfy the final research requirement. Most of the WED students choose to do the research paper which is an analysis and synthesis of literature (literature review) on one of the topics selected for WED 560. Therefore, that is how you will proceed in WED 561 unless you talk to me about doing a thesis or graduate project.

NOTE: Your proposal should be free of errors in grammar and punctuation, and should follow APA and SIU graduate school guidelines. Any error in these areas will result in a reduction of points.

RESEARCH PAPER

Directions: Prepare a three chapter research proposal in accordance with the outline shown below. You must follow APA and Graduate School formatting guidelines.

Title Page
Your research proposal must begin with a title page consisting of the title of the proposal, your name, and institutional affiliation. (Refer to the Graduate School template for proper formatting)

Table of Contents
Follow the title page with the table of contents. (Refer to the Graduate School template for proper formatting)

Chapter I – Introduction

1. Background
Write your reasons for considering this research project. Not always do projects spring from a student’s past experiences; but it is entirely possible, and quite probable, many do. This part is something like a tiny preface to the proposal. Therefore, you must exercise care not to write the statement of the problem here. Neither should you give any justification for the study here, because the actual problem has not been stated. You should begin by mentioning the experiences (and possibly frustrations) of other people
because of ignorance, handicaps, or an inability to cope with situations out of which they grew. The background gives the origin and not the definition of the problem.

2. Statement of the Problem
   This should be a very carefully worded statement that clearly states the problem to be solved. While the title should correctly identify the general area of the research, this section gives a more detailed or precise identification of exactly what is to be undertaken in this study.

3. Research Questions
   In this section, you simply state the major questions to be answered or hypotheses to be confirmed by a careful analysis of all data collected. If a research question is stated, you should avoid questions that can be answered by a simple answer of yes or no (An investigator might be inclined to ask, “if a relationship exists between two factors.” A better approach would be to ask, “to what extent does a relationship exist between two factors?”

4. Significance of the Problem
   In describing the significance of a problem, you should take care not to keep on defining the problem. This should have been done fully in the sections above, making for a more accurate presentation of the significance or importance of the problem here. It is also a mistake to mix this section with the background of the problem. In preparing statements for the proposal, one should give careful consideration to the various sections and fit each into its proper place. The significance and/or justification should be stated simply and as convincingly as possible, because this is the where the student has the burden of defending and justifying the expenditure of time the study is likely to require. If the problem is important, and if the results are likely to be valuable, no doubt it will be worthy of consideration.

5. Limitations and Delimitations
   After the problem has been stated, there may be cause for adding limiting factors in the study. However, the statement of the problem and the definition of it may be sufficient. Many limitations unforeseen at first may be discovered as one studies the problem and its scope. The limitations of available resources may narrow a study. The amount of source material may be so voluminous that the study would be more accurate and valuable to cover a selected area rather than a broad area. Regardless, the section on limitations and delimitations allows the researcher to present the procedure used for determining the scope of the study.

6. Definition of Terms
   To the investigator, certain terms used in the proposal may have specific meanings that are not apparent to those who will read the proposal or the research report. For this reason, it is often necessary to define certain terms in the manner that they are considered by the investigator. The investigator has the privilege of defining any given term in a certain manner for purposes of the study, provided that this specific meaning is clearly defined in the preliminary part of the research.
Chapter II—Research Method and Review of Literature

One of the most important steps in organizing and completing research is searching the literature related to the problem. Reading is done to help define and limit the problem, to get ideas of how others have approached similar problems, to develop hypotheses, and to discover what previous research is available.

Once the problem has been stated and you are planning the investigation, the reading changes to more specific topics. You should look for new approaches to the problem and to others who have identified similar problems. Knowing what others have done helps you avoid weaknesses of other studies and can save you from “re-inventing the wheel”. Reading must be done critically. You then must synthesize what you have read from the different sources.

To review the literature, you must read in your field to locate valuable data. Reading current literature first has advantages. From such an approach, you can develop a bibliography of what current investigators have read on the topic. Chances are, they have screened the literature and eliminated the less helpful studies.

Only original sources should be reviewed. Abstracts usually do not contain enough information about the procedures to allow a thorough evaluation of the study. Neither can you depend on a review done by another researcher. An organized approach to reviewing literature aids the researcher in locating information which will help the study.

The last part of this chapter should include a summary of the information presented in the chapter.

*Chapter II must include a minimum of 15 references.

Chapter III – Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Conclusions**

   In this section, you should draw conclusions based on the findings presented in your paper. Specifically, you will readdress your research questions and offer answers supported by your synthesis of the research findings.

2. **Recommendations**

   It is not uncommon, in fact it is probable, that you will find gaps in the research where questions remain unanswered. In this section, you will explain the gaps and make recommendations regarding the types of research that should be conducted to fill those gaps and provide answers. Recommendations should also be made regarding the real-world use of the information you have found.
References

Your research proposal must end with a list of the references included in your paper. You must reference 15 or more publications to be acceptable. (Refer to the APA Publication Manual for proper formatting).

WED 561 ASSIGNMENTS

You will submit your assignments to the dropbox in SIU Online. Each assignment is due by the last date indicated on the tentative schedule. Please place your name at the top of the page for your assignment and save the file as your last name and assignment number (i.e., if I was saving, I would save as Hagler 1). You will need to read the assigned chapter before completing the assignment. Each assignment is worth 20 points.

ASSIGNMENT 1 (Due by January 30)

First, in one paragraph, briefly explain your proposed topic for your research paper.

Second, even though most of you will be conducting a literature review as your final project, please imagine a research project that you could do if you had enough time/money to actually do primary quantitative research. In a second paragraph, briefly explain what that study would be. You will be using this study to answer the rest of the questions for this assignment.

Third, explain how you would apply the principle of MAXMINCON to your proposed study. Identify one way you would maximize systematic variance, one way you would minimize error variance, and one way you would control extraneous variance in your proposed study.

Fourth, identify one potential threat to internal validity and one potential threat to external validity for your proposed study.


Sixth, identify one potential ethical issue you might encounter as you conduct your proposed study.

ASSIGNMENT 2 (Due by February 6)

Pretend that you are going to conduct a qualitative research study related to your research paper topic.
First, explain a sampling strategy that could be used. Be sure to explain the site, participants, and methodology that you would use for sampling.

Second, explain one way you would address validity if you did your qualitative study.

Third, explain one way you would address reflexivity if you did your qualitative study.

Fourth, explain one ethical issue you might have to deal with if you did the qualitative study.

**ASSIGNMENT 3 (Due by February 13)**

For most of this assignment you will use the study you actually plan to complete for your research paper. You should be able to use your WED 560 work to help you complete this assignment.

First, write your statement of the problem.

Second, write the research questions you are planning to use for your study.

Third, write at least two paragraphs for the significance of your study.

**ASSIGNMENT 4 (Due by February 20)**

First, select a mixed methods research article that is related to your study. Attach a copy of the article to your assignment.

Second, briefly explain the methodology used in the study. Identify if the study was explanatory or exploratory and explain why you think it is that type of study.

Third, briefly explain two changes you might make to the study if you were to replicate the researcher(s) study.

**ASSIGNMENT 5 (Due by February 27)**

First, explain two reasons you might use a nonprobability sample instead of a probability sample for conducting research.

Second, provide an example of a proportional stratified sample that you might use in future research.

Third, provide an example of a purposeful sample that you might use in future research.
ASSIGNMENT 6 (Due by March 5)

First, pretending you are conducting the quantitative study you explained in assignment 1, write five questions that you might use for a survey/questionnaire.

Second, submit a revised version of the problem statement, research questions, and significance that you plan to use for your final paper.

ASSIGNMENT 7 (Due by March 12)

First, assume you are going to do the qualitative study you described in assignment 2. Identify the type of qualitative study it would be.

Second, answer the following questions:

- How would you gain access to the organization?
- Are there any documents and artifacts you would analyze? If so, what types of things (describe)?
- Who might you interview? How many people should you interview?

Third, write five interview questions that you might use for your study.

ASSIGNMENT 8 (Due by March 26)

A major weakness of many survey studies is low response rate. First, select one article from those you are gathering for your research study that had a low response rate.

Second, explain two things you would have done to possibly increase the response rate of that study.

Third, explain what the researcher(s) did to account for the low response rate of the survey.

ASSIGNMENT 9 (Due by April 2)

First, explain what one of the following designs means and describe one threat to validity for that design:

- Single-Group Posttest Only
- Single Group Pretest-Posttest Design
- Nonequivalent Groups Posttest-Only
Second, explain why single-factor randomized experimental designs are considered the gold standard for educational research and evaluation.

Third, explain what quasi-experimental designs are and why they are used.

**ASSIGNMENT 10 (Due by April 9)**

Submit the first two pages of your Chapter 2. The first section of the chapter should discuss your research methodology. Also, submit the reference page(s) with the references that you have cited in the first two pages of Chapter 2.

**Proposal (Due by April 30)**

Follow the instructions from above to complete the proposal.