

**ASE 579: Methods of Research
Summer II Semester, 2008
Course Syllabus**

Professor: Dr. Barbara Polnick
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Office Hours: By appointment

Class Meeting Times:

May 20, 5-8 PM (3 hrs)
May 21 -Field-based Activity-- HIPPERT & IRB Application (4 hrs)
May 22, 5-8 PM (3 hrs)
May 26-30 -Field-based Activity-- Meet with Thesis Chairs (3 hrs)
July 10, 9 AM - 4:30 PM (7 hrs)
July 15, 9 AM - 4:30 PM (7 hrs)
July 17, 9 AM - 4:30 PM (7 hrs)
July 18-20, -Field-based Activity-- Meet with Thesis Chairs (3 hrs)
July 24, 9 AM - 4:30 PM (7 hrs)

Class Location: Hall Academy, Aldine ISD, Houston, TX

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of the role of action research within educational settings. Primarily a "methods" course, a variety of techniques for collecting and analyzing data will be explored including nominal group, delphi, critical incident, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and participant observation. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative methods for analyzing and reporting data will be explored. Students will conduct an action research study and report their research through the development of a thesis.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

1. To increase content knowledge in the fields of action research and evaluation.
2. To understand the role of action research in education, specifically within a setting of English language learners.
3. To learn action research methods by reading, thinking, critiquing, and conducting an individual study, culminating in a thesis.

4. To stimulate interest in continuing to do action research as part of one's professional practice.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

Participants will:

1. Demonstrate understand of basic research concepts through discussions, quizzes and critiques.
2. Incorporate academic literature and research into action research using a variety of resources.
3. Critically consume data and research relevant to educational leadership.
4. Demonstrate understanding in the purposes of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodology.
5. Describe various research methods/designs (e.g., survey, experimental, correlational, and naturalistic).
6. Describe basic sampling considerations.
7. Obtain experience in implementing multi-method data collection strategies.
8. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various action research strategies and designs.
9. Become familiar with basic data analysis techniques.
10. Demonstrate understanding in the importance of ethics in research and the proper procedures to protect participants.
11. Demonstrate application of above concepts by designing and conducting an action research study on a problem found in schools/district.

IDEA (SHSU Faculty Evaluation Instrument) OBJECTIVES

Essential:

- Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends).
- Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.
- Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing.

Important:

- Learning to *apply* course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions).
- Learning to *analyze* and *critically evaluate* ideas, arguments, and points of view.

This course meets various professional standards for research and data-based decisions including those for SBEC and ELCC.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Mills, G.E. (2007). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher (3rd Ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B.I. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

PARTICIPATION

Each participant is expected to participate fully in all discussions and activities. The class is conducted in an informal manner- colleagues learning together. You have much to offer to this experience, and we learn from your sharing your experiences and recommendations. You will be working in several different groups for most of the activities.

Work Expectations

- ✓ All work must be of quality at a graduate level, including the incorporation of the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Writing Standards (found on the Department Website). This includes minimal grammar and mechanical errors as well as using *APA, 5th edition* format.
- ✓ All work is due on the date specified. Late work will not be accepted or awarded credit, unless special arrangements are made with the instructor of the course.

Attendance

Attendance is expected at all class sessions. Summer classes CANNOT be missed. If you know you absolutely must miss a class or come late or leave early, you may contract for a lower grade and meet the requirements for a B. Students who miss class time in the Summer simple are not eligible for A grades due to the intense and limited course time. Please be sure that all other alternatives have been explored before taking an absence. Do not notify the professor via email regarding an absence on the day of class, unless there is an extreme emergency.

Arriving to class on time is equally important. Entering the classroom after class has begun is disruptive to the learning environment. Three late arrivals of 15 minutes or more will count as one absence. Make every effort to arrive to class on time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: The professor(s) reserves the right to alter course requirements and/or the class schedule to better address the learning needs of the students.

1. Read all assigned material (textbook chapters, articles, documents, etc.) and come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss research topics assigned for the class period. Work to make your own unique contribution to the class community of learners.
2. Each student will design and conduct an action research study. It is expected that this study be conducted on the level of a needs assessment or a program evaluation focused on the needs of English Language Learners relevant to their school or district. All studies must be approved by the Chair of the student's Thesis Committee.
3. The presentation of the action research study will be carried out in the following two phases:
 - A. Action Research Study--Preliminary Report

Each student will prepare a written document of the general parameters in a preliminary report of his/her action research study. This will include a **statement of the problem or need**, the **research questions**, and a description of the **population** and **setting** upon/within which the study will be conducted. A short **presentation** to the class of the basic elements of the study

will also be included. A one-page synopsis (electronic or hard copy) of this information will be provided to each class member for review at least one day in advance of the presentation.

DUE DATE: July 15 & 17

B. Written Action Research Study Design Proposal with Oral Presentation (Thesis Chapters 1-3)

Students will prepare a written document specifying the entire design of their study. This document will articulate the **research questions** that drive the project as well as its **theoretical rationale**. It will include a **review of the literature** (referencing **theoretical framework** where appropriate) which addresses the issue at hand. It will enumerate the **data collection methods**, including any **instrumentation** validation used for the study and the **proposed method(s) of data analysis**. In addition, a **time-line for the completion of the study** will be included within this design phase of the study. Each class member is expected to review a brief synopsis and provide recommendations to other class members' proposals.

DUE DATE: July 24

GRADES

Approximately 2/3 of the grade earned in this course will be determined by the quality of the design and written presentations of the various phases of the action research study. Grades will be earned based on the point system below. The other 1/3 will come from quizzes, online activities and class participation.

10 Pts – Completion of the HIPPERT certification

10 Pts – Completion of the IRB application

40 Pts – Action Research Study--Initial Report

80 Pts – Action Research Study Design Proposal with Oral Presentation (Thesis Chapters 1-3)

30 Pts – Quizzes, Online Activities

10 Pts – Final Performance Event

60 Pts – Class Participation (critiques, discussions, in-class activities,) (6 face-to-face meetings x 10 pts each)

240 Pts – Total Possible Points

216 -- 240 = A;

192 -- 215 = B;

168 -- 191 = C

Students should do their best to complete the requirements of the course during the specified period of time (one semester).

SHSU STUDENT GUIDELINES

ACCOMODATIONS

If you need course adaptations or accomodations because of a disability, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. At any point in the semester if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel you could be performing at a higher level, consult with me. Students experience difficulty in courses for a variety of reasons. Help is available through the Writing Center at <http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/> , where you can get assistance in:

- a) researching the topic,
- b) selecting your evidence,
- c) organizing your ideas,
- d) developing your paragraphs,
- e) creating transitions,
- f) writing clear, grammatical sentences,
- g) editing your revised draft.

Students off-campus, may submit their papers through the SHSU [Distance Tutoring](http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/Distance.pdf) service at <http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/Distance.pdf>.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY-It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the University. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the University policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.html

STUDENT CONDUCT- Graduate students are governed by SHSU's policies related to student conduct. Any student with questions about grievances, ethical behavior, etc., should review the SHSU Graduate Catalog and the Texas State University System Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Student Services and Activities, Section 5 Student Conduct and Discipline. Those rules may be found at http://www.tsus.edu/pubs/Pubs/rules_regs.html. Particular attention should be paid to the sections on plagiarism and theft of library materials. Students should practice self-discipline in classes. Courtesy should be extended to all students. Thought should be given to the value of all conversation in class to all students in class. Classes will be more enjoyable and beneficial to all involved if graduate students conduct themselves as conscientious professionals.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY-All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic

experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty>

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY-Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf/www/aps/documents/861001.pdf>

COURSE CONCERNS- Please see the professor if there are any concerns before consulting the department chair or other program administrator.

STUDENT DISPOSITION SCALE- To meet the requirements of NCATE accreditation, students are required to respond to a self report scale that best describes his/her behavior in the courses that he/she is currently enrolled. The ratings are **3 = Target**, **2 = Acceptable**, and **1 = Unacceptable**. The **total number** of points that may be earned range from **1-18**. Points from **10-18** indicate that the student is performing on **Target**. **Nine** points indicate **Acceptable** performance. Points at **8 or below** indicate **Unacceptable** performance. The professor will review students' responses and **agree** or **disagree** with the findings. If the professor determines that the student has **Unacceptable** performance, it will be students' responsibilities to provide evidence that they have **Acceptable** or **Target** performance. This self report scale will be completed at the end of the semester.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM- Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must **not present a disruption** to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES- All cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices should be turned off during class, unless otherwise directed by the professor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1	Introduction to the course Defining action research
Session 2	The role of action research in Public Schools Developing a Focus-- Defining the Purpose and articulating Research Questions; Literature Reviews; Searches; Descriptive Statistics
Session 3	Research Methodology, Part I; Review Steps of Action Research; Review Chapters of Thesis; Integrations of Action Research and the Thesis
Session 4	Research Methodology, Part II; Discussion/Critique of Preliminary Proposals; Edit/Revise Purpose and Research Questions; Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection (compare/contrast)
Session 5	Data Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative (compare/contrast); Statistical Analyses
Session 6	Presentation of study designs (Final Action Research Study Design Due).