

**EDA 651: FOUNDATIONS OF INQUIRY<sup>1</sup>**  
**As taught by**  
**Susan J. Scollay, Ph.D.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GENERAL EXPECTATIONS:**

This course provides an overview of the basic issues and general procedures involved in conducting and evaluating various forms of systematic inquiry in education and educational administration. It focuses upon the major traditions in educational research, the epistemological paradigms upon which they are based, and their major methods, designs, and techniques. This course provides the foundation for the systematic inquiry and research strand of the educational administration and school leadership doctoral program. As such, it includes concepts, perspectives, and vocabulary that students will need and use throughout their doctoral study and hopefully well beyond completion of the degree program as well.

By the end of the course, students are expected to be conversant with the major traditions of disciplined inquiry in education and their supporting paradigms as well as with their strengths, limitations, and relative applicability in the investigation of various educational issues. In addition, students are expected to:

- a) use the vocabulary of systematic inquiry and research correctly;
- b) discuss the basic values supporting the major paradigms and epistemologies of inquiry in an informed fashion;
- c) select and defend the appropriateness of research traditions, methods, and designs for given topics of inquiry;
- d) critique and evaluate the research of others; and
- e) discuss intelligently the basic issues and concerns involved in conducting high quality, rigorous, and meaningful systematic inquiry in the field of educational administration and leadership.

**REQUIRED COURSE READING:**

Three texts and several articles are usually required in this course. Recently required texts include the following. See References below for typical methodological and research-based articles.

- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2000). Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction, 5th edition. New York: Longman.
- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Washington, D.C.: APA.
- Rosen, L. J. & Behrens, L. (2000). The Allyn & Bacon Handbook, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**MAJOR COURSE TOPICS:**

Overview: Understanding Systematic Inquiry in Education and Educational Administration:

- Basic Purposes: Exploration, Description, Explanation, Prediction
- Basic Concepts: Knowledge, [t]ruth, Reality, Objectivity, etc.
- Basic Concerns: Rigor: Reliability, Validity, Generalizability/Applicability, etc.
- Basic Processes: Question/Problem Identification
- Methodology and Method Selection
- Data Source Identification
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis and Interpretation
- Explication of Meaning
- Adding to the Body of Knowledge and Understanding

The Roles of Theory and the Literature in Systematic Inquiry

The Scientific Tradition & the Positivistic Paradigm

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<sup>1</sup> This outline is for informational purposes ONLY. It describes the general parameters of the course as it is usually taught. See the current instructor for more specific details and/or variations from what is offered here.

An Overview and Brief History of Quantitative Inquiry  
 Underlying Values and Concerns  
 Common Uses and Types of Questions  
 Basic Processes  
 Popular Data Collection Methods and Analysis Techniques  
 Experimental Research & Design  
 Descriptive Research, Designs and Techniques  
 Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology  
 Analysis and Critique of Published Examples  
 Ethical Issues

The Naturalistic Tradition & the Interpretativistic Paradigm  
 An Overview and Brief History of Qualitative Inquiry  
 Underlying Values and Concerns  
 Common Uses and Types of Questions  
 Basic Processes  
 Popular Data Collection Methods and Analysis Techniques  
 Field Study and Ethnographic Research  
 Case Study Research  
 Historical and Other Analytic Research  
 Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology  
 Analysis and Critique of Published Examples  
 Ethical Issues

Evaluation, Policy Analysis and Other Forms of Inquiry  
 Overview  
 Policy and Legal Analysis, most common uses, strengths, and limitations  
 Educational Evaluation, most common uses, strengths, and limitations  
 Educational R&D, most common uses, strengths, and limitations  
 Analysis and Critique of Published Examples  
 Ethical Issues

Ethical, Policy, and Legal Issues in Academic Inquiry

Forms and Issues in the Written Reporting of Research

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

#### **OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**

The primary out-of-class assignment is a series of written, critical analyses of published empirical research. The details of these analyses will be provided in class and written guidelines will be distributed. Other out-of-class assignments may be made during the course of the semester, and if so, students will be given ample time and assistance to complete them successfully.

Unless otherwise indicated in class, all out-of-class assignments should be typed and include your name, assignment title, and work due date (and submission date, if different). Format, presentation, and citations of material must follow APA style.

#### **IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**

Regular Class Sessions: As noted above, students are expected to have read **and** thought about all assigned readings for each class session **before** the class meets. This assignment provides the basis for useful and meaningful class discussions. In addition, there will most likely be some small group work. There may be written tasks (e.g., short quizzes) undertaken during regular class sessions, and students are required to participate in and contribute substantively to all of these.

Final Examination: The semester's last class session will be devoted to a written, in-class final examination. This examination will be comprehensive and cover the major content of the course. This will be a closed-book examination, and it will provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate both your mastery of the course content and your ability to extrapolate from and apply that content.

## COURSE GRADING CRITERIA AND PRACTICES:

Student performance in this course will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- \* Command of the concepts, issues, and information discussed in class and the assigned readings;
- \* Maturity, depth, and sophistication of thought, including the abilities to analyze, synthesize, apply, and extrapolate from, course content;
- \* Clarity and completeness of expression, including precision and accuracy of language usage and correctness of grammar, punctuation, and spelling in written work; and
- \* Willingness to participate in --as well as the quality and thoughtfulness of contributions to-- class discussions.

Given the purpose of the course and the nature of its content, I intend the out-of-class assignments to be developmental learning experiences. Thus, I will take progress in the development of student command of the material and improvement in student performance as evidenced by written work into consideration in the determination of the final course grade.

Determination of final course grades will be made according to the Graduate School grading protocol will be based upon the following \*:

Critical Analyses	= 45%	A (90 -- 100)	= <u>High</u> Achievement
Class Participation	= 10%	B (80 -- 89)	= Satisfactory Achievement
Final Examination	= 45%	C (70 -- 79)	= Minimum Passing Performance
*If other assignments are made during the semester, this distribution will be altered accordingly.		E ( < 70)	= Failure

## REFERENCES

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- Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives. Theory into Practice, 31:2, 87-99.
- Palmieri, P.A. (1983). Here was fellowship: A social portrait of academic women at Wellesley College, 1895-1920. History of Education Quarterly, 23:2, 195-214.
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