

**George Mason University
Graduate School of Education**

**EDRS 590 Sec AU1: Educational Research Methods for Special Populations
Summer 2004 - 3 credit hours**

Instructor	Dr. Edyth Wheeler	(703) 451-7353
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Class Meeting Dates:	May 26, 28; June 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 18	
On-line Dates:	June 12, others as needed	
Time/Location	8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m./Robinson A247	

Objectives

This course is designed to assist students in learning:

1. to interpret and evaluate research studies reported in professional journals;
2. to locate, critically describe, analyze and synthesize research findings in a review of the literature, becoming comfortable and critical consumers of research;
3. to plan, conduct, and report basic qualitative and quantitative research studies;
4. to explore applications of computer technology throughout the research process.
5. to apply their understanding of research to their future roles as teacher-researcher with a focus on studying children in context;
6. to use knowledge from current research in the field to advocate for young children, families and the profession as well as for best practices in teaching and learning.

Required Course Materials

Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D. J. (1999). *Studying children in context: Theories, Methods, and Ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mills, G. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill

Wright, D. B. (2002). *First steps in statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

George Mason University Teacher Research web site: <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/>

Recommended

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.).

Course Grading:

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| 1. Active Class and On-line Participation | 20% |
| 2. Building Your Understanding | 40% |
| • Critical Analysis of Research Studies (15%) | |
| • Statistical Assignments (10%) | |
| • Qualitative Assignment (10%) | |
| • Self-Study Analysis (5%) | |
| 3. Action Research Plan | 40% |

Description of Assignments:

Each student will be responsible for completion of the following assignments and activities in the areas indicated below. All assignments and activities will be due on the dates indicated in the course syllabus. All papers submitted, with the exception of the assignments where paper forms are provided, are to be word-processed. Papers should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only and are to have at least a one-inch margin on all sides. Standard fonts must be used. When references are used, APA format (5th edition) should be followed. Criteria for written work include: thoroughness, clarity, correct spelling and grammar, synthesis of course material, and understanding of issues.

1. Active Class and On-Line Participation: Class attendance and participation are crucial to your understanding of the concepts and completion of assignments. Each class member will be expected to take part in discussions and activities in every session. On-line discussion, field-based assignments, and library experiences will be an integral part of our learning. More than one absence and repeated tardiness will affect your course grade.

2. Building Your Understanding

a) Critical Analysis of Research Studies: This three-part assignment includes:

- **Articles for Class:** This assignment consists of locating and bringing to class copies of three research articles from peer-reviewed (refereed) research journals to be used for critical analysis. No more than one of the articles may be from on-line journals. Submit APA citations of your articles on-line (due dates in syllabus). The articles that you collect will provide examples of a variety of research designs (qualitative and quantitative). There is helpful information in your texts about on-line and in-person searches and a handout of journals in the field will be provided.
- **Critical Analysis of Quantitative Article:** For this paper, you will review a quantitative research article. Your reviews will consist of the APA citation and your well-supported reaction to the article, using the evaluation questionnaire to be provided. *Attach a copy of the article with your review.*
- **Critical Analysis of Qualitative Article:** This assignment will be another three-page paper for which you will review a qualitative research article. Your review will consist of the APA citation and the answer to these questions: “How do you know that this is a qualitative study? What characteristics of qualitative research are evident?” Be sure that the article is (a) primary research and (b) qualitative methodology. If you are not certain if the article you have found is an example of qualitative research, please bring it to class and ask. Review the discussion of these methodologies in your texts. Qualitative studies may be found in a number of journals, including *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. There are also journals devoted entirely to this approach. *Attach a copy of the article with your review.*

b) The Statistical Assignment: During the quantitative portion of this class you will be given an applications grid to complete as you learn about descriptive and inferential statistics. You will participate in cooperative learning experiences in this part of the course. There will be on-line opportunities for sharing statistical applications and demystifying the concepts.

- c) **The Qualitative Assignment:** This assignment includes your contributions to a hands-on qualitative data collection and analysis experience and a written reflection on your experiences and understanding of qualitative methods. Guidelines for this multiple-phase assignment will be provided. Class attendance is imperative for the hands-on learning of qualitative data analysis.
- d) **Self-Study Analysis:** Gather your dilemmas and journal from fall and spring. We will use this writing as the data that you will analyze as a form of reflective self-study as well as an opportunity to apply qualitative data analysis methods. You may get a head start on this assignment by typing what you have written into a Word document. We will discuss our next steps for this project in class.

3. **Action Research Planning: Literature Review, Question Formation and Methodology:** In anticipation of your 2004-2005 placements, we will explore the idea of teacher or action research and develop research projects to be carried out during your fall placement. Your research proposal will be a plan for studying a mutually decided-on topic related to young children, teaching and learning in the coming year. Action research plans will be developed by individual students on one or two general topics shared by the entire class. Each proposal will be presented to the entire class and to the fall semester faculty, as power point presentations, and submitted in writing and on disk to the instructor. The action research plan will consist of an overview, literature review, methodology, preliminary plan for analysis, a budget and a timeline. Specific and very detailed guidelines will be provided. Part of the assignment is **Peer Support Group Participation:** Each class member will be responsible to be an active member of a peer support group as we develop our literature reviews, questions and methodology. Each person will be expected to seeking input and constructive criticism from others in the group and provide drafts due to members of the group. Group members are responsible for providing meaningful support and thoughtful suggestions. **Drafts will not be graded must be submitted according to due dates in the syllabus.**

What You Will Do During the Fall and Spring Semesters

Your summer Action Research Plan will become reality during the fall as you implement and report on the research you have proposed. During the summer and throughout Year Two of your UTEEM experience, you will work with UTEEM faculty to continue developing your plan, conducting your research, analyzing your findings, and writing and presenting a report of your research. We will discuss the expectations for these projects at length.

Note: All George Mason University and Graduate School of Education policies apply concerning grading and academic integrity.

Course Schedule – Summer 2004

Date	Topic	Class Preparation
<p>Class 1 May 26 Wednesday</p>	<p>Introduction to Educational Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Is Research? • Why Am I Taking This Course? • Being a Consumer of Research and a Teacher Researcher • Teacher as Researcher: What Does Teacher Research Look Like • Different Ways to Ask Questions • Questions for Teacher Researchers to Ask • Locating Research Reports 	<p>Advance reading: Mills, G & W</p>
<p>Class 2 May 28 Friday</p>	<p>From Inspiration to Inquiry (From Wondering to Asking)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Problem • Review of Literature • Planning Teacher Research and Developing Proposals • Create peer support groups • Discuss topics for Action Research Plan 	<p>Mills Ch 1, 2 & 7; GMU website (all links) Enroll in the course Blackboard site? Make your first trip to the library and bring at least one primary research article to class. Library Adventure Initial exploration of topics of interest using resources from your reading.</p>
<p>Class 3 June 2 Wednesday</p>	<p>Research Designs: Studying Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative and Qualitative Designs and Traditions • Ethics in Research • Role of the Researcher • Planning Your Teacher Researcher Project 	<p>G & W Chap 1-5 Mills Appendix 4; Chap 4 (pp. 90-96) Begin focused literature search on teacher research and related topics. We will share sources. Submit APA citation of at least one primary research article on-line.</p>
<p>Class 4 June 4 Friday</p>	<p>Data Collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Quantitative Designs • Making sense of published studies • Research in Your Practice (test scores and work samples) • Validity and Reliability • Peer support group meetings • Stats Workshop 1 	<p>G & W Chap 6; Mills Chap 3; Wright Chap 1-4 Bring in another research article. This one must be an example of a quantitative research Submit APA citation of your article on-line. Submit outline of literature review so far.</p>

<p>Class 5</p> <p>June 7 Monday</p>	<p>Data Collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative: Field Work; • Interviews with Children and Adults • Ethnographic Interview Experience • Questionnaires; • Observation; Field Notes • Document Analysis • Validity and Reliability 	<p>G & W Chap 7; Mills Chap 3; Tamivaara & Enright Spradley handouts</p> <p>Critical Analysis of Quantitative Article</p> <p>Bring in a third research article. This one must be an example of a qualitative research. Submit APA citation of your article on-line.</p> <p>Continue literature search on teacher research and related topics.</p>
<p>Class 6</p> <p>June 9 Wednesday</p>	<p>Data Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative: Analytic Induction and Constant Comparative • In-class qualitative data analysis experiences • Peer support group meetings • Stats Workshop 2 	<p>G & W Chap 8; Mills Chap 5 Wright Chap 5-7</p> <p>Critical Analysis of Qualitative Article</p> <p>Submit preliminary outline of proposal methodology</p>
<p>On-Line Session</p> <p>June 11 Friday</p>	<p>Self-Study Analysis of 2003-04 Experience</p> <p>Library, Writing and On-Line Peer Support Groups</p>	<p>Work on self study and proposal</p> <p>Asynchronous on-line time</p>
<p>Class 7</p> <p>June 14 Monday</p>	<p>Data Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics • Peer support group meetings • Stats Workshop 3 	<p>G & W Chap 9; Mills Appendix C & D; Wright Chap 8-10</p> <p>Submit draft of proposal</p> <p>Submit Self-Study Analysis narrative</p>
<p>Class 8</p> <p>Jun 16 Wednesday</p>	<p>Research and Real Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Research for professionalism and advocacy • Planning Your Own Research • Revisiting What We Have Learned • Peer support group meetings 	<p>G & W Chap 10; Mills Chap 8</p> <p>Submit APA Group Learning Project Worksheet</p>
<p>Class 9</p> <p>June 18 Friday</p>	<p>Becoming Teacher Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Research Proposal Presentations • Culminating Experiences 	<p>Written proposals and Power Point presentations are due. Submit paper copy and PC-format disk with Word and Power Point files.</p>