ED 500 B: SEMINAR IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

2 CREDITS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
A capstone graduate seminar that gives the student experience with the kinds of research they may expect to encounter throughout a professional career. A file paper characterized by excellence in content and by a format appropriate to graduate level scholarship is required for the course. Prerequisite: Completion of ED 500A, Educational Research.

COURSE GOALS:
The goal of this course is to give students experience with the kinds of research they may expect to encounter or conduct throughout a professional career.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:
At the completion of the course students will:
Understand the principles and techniques of educational research.
Research the literature related to the identified problems.
Discuss the literature related to the identified problems.
Use the principles and techniques of educational research to confirm or revise conclusions of others.
Work independently and/or in small groups on a problem.
Form valid generalizations from the data used.
Complete a Master’s file paper or thesis using APA style.

CONTENT OF COURSE:
The Master of Arts in Education Degree offers the candidate the advanced professional and specialty knowledge needed for informed and wise practice as a teacher and educational leader. The writing of the graduate paper is intended to encourage the student to develop the competencies ascribed to the student’s program of study.

Your first task is to send me your proposal at your earliest convenience, and within one week, I will provide you with feedback. Once I accept your proposal, you can begin writing your paper. Some of you have completed this in 500B, so you simply need to put your work into the format below.

Your proposal is designed to organize your subsequent paper as well as to
orient me to your anticipated study. Below is the list of elements your proposal should contain. Your proposal should not exceed seven pages.

Overview
A one-paragraph summary of the study

Research Question(s)
Consider what Leedy and Ormrod (2005) wrote: "Research has one end: the ultimate discovery of truth. Its purpose is to learn what has never been known before; to ask a significant question for which no conclusive answer has previously been found; and, by collecting and interpreting relevant data, to find an answer to that question" (p. xxii).

This is the most important part of the entire research process!

What is it that you want to know that is not already clear in the literature? In other words, what is “bugging” you?
It has been my experience that most ED 500B students begin with a question that is too broad. Think of ways to narrow your problem into an authentic context. Try to solve a specific, significant, answerable question that relates to your practice.

Significance of the Study
A paragraph or two explaining why this topic is important and worthy of study

Outline of Literature Review
List the specific areas of research that you intend to review.
It is not necessary that your entire literature review be complete at this phase, though much of your work from 500A is likely to be applicable. Rather, you should explain the different areas that you will review and analyze. Identify the various subtopics and evidence you will evaluate in relation to the research question(s).

WRITING YOUR PAPER:
Most of you will utilize a Historical or Conceptual Research design (also known as a Comprehensive Review of Literature). Note, however, a Historical Research design requires you to do more than simply review the literature on the subject, which will be Chapter II of your paper.
In Chapter I, you will need to include the following:
A brief introduction of topic
An explanation the problem you are trying to solve. (State your research question explicitly).
Definition of Terms
Delineation of Specific Area of Study (Explain the context of your study)

Ch. II will consist of your Literature Review

In Chapter III you will need to do the following:
Identify research trends or patterns
Identify and explain opposing/refuting evidence
Synthesize the existing research into cogent answers to your research questions (be careful not to generalize beyond your problem however). Use the literature you analyzed in Ch. II to explore solutions to your problem.

In Chapter IV you will need to do the following:
Use the literature that you reviewed (Ch. 2) and the answers to your research question that you constructed (Ch. 3) to make recommendations for practice. In other words, provide specific, detailed advice for educators or administrators who are facing similar problems.
Explain in detail the types of research that still needs to be conducted on your topic. Explain the methodology (sample population, data collection, and data analysis procedures) that should be used. Be specific.

REQUIRED TEXT:
------------------ OR -----------------
Also, Check out the following link: http://www.nmu.edu/library/internetresources.htm It gives APA examples, plus you might find helpful information under the course and user guide for ED 500B.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION:

A letter grade will be assigned upon completion of the Master’s paper. If the paper is not completed during the semester of enrollment, students continuing to work on their Master’s paper who are not enrolled in another course at NMU may want to enroll in GD 593, Continuing Master’s Project (see: http://www.nmu.edu/gradstudies/).

ACCOMMODATION:

Students who have disabilities or extenuating circumstances that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon possible to discuss their individual needs for accommodation (e.g., religious holidays). Northern Michigan University seeks to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Further information is available from the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Disability Services at 1104 University Center (227-1737; TTY 227-1543). University Policy states that reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. http://www.nmu.edu/disserve/

PLAGIARISM:

Don’t do it. Quoting or paraphrasing from someone else’s work without citing a reference is plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, up to and including suspension from the university. For a thorough treatment of this subject see How Not to Plagiarize at: www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html

In The Craft of ResearchXE "Craft of Research" (University of Chicago Press, 1995), Booth, Colomb, and Williams offered this definition of plagiarism:
You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if your work were placed next to the source, it would be obvious that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow. (p. 167)

The following excerpts show the difference between plagiarism and paraphrasing according to the Booth et al. definition:

Original
from Severin and Tankard (1992)

There is evidence to suggest that newsmakers are becoming particularly savvy about placing items on the media agenda. When, for example, President Reagan was running for his second term, he took a tour to promote his administration’s record on environmentalism. The tour was full of photo opportunities, including the president standing on a fishing boat in the Chesapeake Bay and the president wearing a park ranger’s hat at Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. Even though some thought that the Reagan administration had a terrible record on the environment, many people were likely to see photos of the president in the ranger hat and make a positive link between Reagan and the environment.

Plagiarism XE "Plagiarism"
per Booth et al.

Evidence suggests that newsmakers are becoming keenly aware about placing items on the media agenda. When, for instance, President Reagan ran for his second term, he took a tour to promote his administration’s environmental record. The tour was full of photo ops, including Reagan on a fishing boat in the Chesapeake Bay and the president wearing a park ranger’s hat in Kentucky. Even though a few environmentalists said Reagan’s record on the environment was terrible, people who saw photos of the president in the ranger hat made a positive association between Reagan and the environment (Severin & Tankard, 1992, p. 224).

Acceptable Paraphrase
per Booth et al.

Severin and Tankard (1992) observed that a president has considerable power to form public opinion by using the media to his advantage. As an example, they cite President Reagan’s photo ops during the 1984 campaign, in which he was
shown visiting several remote national resources. Although environmentalists complained about Reagan’s record on the environment, “many people were likely to see photos of the president in the ranger hat and make a positive link between Reagan and the environment” (p. 224).

MISC. INFORMATION:

I will make every effort to respond to your comments and questions in a timely manner. Likewise, I intend to return responses to drafts of your paper within one week; however, circumstances may necessitate a longer response time.

All drafts of the papers must be submitted as a Word document with 12-pt font, Times New Roman.

Use one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and right margins. Use a 1 ½ inch margin on the left margin.

You are required to format all aspects of your paper using the American Psychology Association (APA) style. It is expected that you will submit drafts with proper APA citations and references.

It is your responsibility to write a paper that is free of mechanical, grammatical, and editing errors. (You may want to purchase a copy of Stunk and White’s Elements of Style). Typically, I will edit the first couple of pages for mechanical and grammatical errors and then expect you to edit the rest of your paper for the same types of errors. Please proofread and edit your work before submitting it to me. The majority of my feedback will center on your content, organization, analysis, and clarity of ideas. See the Writing Tips section at the end of this syllabus.

In anticipation of a FAQ, I have found that most successful papers in ED 500B contain at least 25-30 pages in the body of the paper exclusive of tables of contents, and other additions. Generally, at least 30 professional references support the contents of the paper.

I highly suggest you use a Flash Drive to back up your work. Save frequently and store your Flash Drive separate from your computer bag in the event it is lost or stolen.
TIPS FOR SYNTHESIZING YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW (CH. III):

For those of you using a Historical or Conceptual Research design (Comprehensive Review of Literature), you will treat the previous literature on your subject as data. You ultimate goal is to use those data to answer your research question(s). To do so, you will have to look below the surface of the data to discover what has not previously been discovered. This will require you to interpret those studies (data) in search of “discoveries, revelations, enlightenments, and insights” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 24).

As you write Ch. III, synthesize the studies you documented, described, and analyzed in Ch. II. The goal is to take a number of related studies on your subtopics and make sense out of them, looking for themes.

Consider the following examples:

Poor:

Corno (1992) sees motivation as having several components, including a goal orientation. Ames (1990) notes how important it is for teachers to understand student motivation to learn. If you don’t understand it, you can’t change it. One of the factors influencing student motivation is the parents. Lumdsen (1999) argues that parents have a great influence, as do Wlodskowki and Jaynes (1990). There is a lot more to consider.

Note the poor review exhibits several flaws. It simply lists reports without a synthesis. The writer has not made sense of the literature. Also, too many sentences begin with the researchers’ name and date of publication. In addition, the review uses language that is too colloquial.

Better:

Researchers have identified several major factors influencing motivation to learn. It is helpful to note that only one of those factors is external to the student, thus challenging those educators who believe that senior proms and football games are motivating to those not participating in them (Ames, 1990; Corno, 1992). One external factor influencing student motivation to learn is parents (Lumdsen, 1999; Wlodskpowski & Jaynes, 1990). Parental support manifests itself in many ways . . .
WRITING TIPS:

Below are some reminders as you write your file paper/thesis for ED 500B. It is expected that you will fix all of these yourself before submitting a draft.

Know the difference between plural and possessive.

That and which are different words. That is restrictive; which is not “Bonds that are issued by local school districts are usually tax-free, which means they may be good tax shelters.”

Data and criteria are plural nouns

Be aware of comma splices. You cannot connect two independent clauses (complete sentences) with a comma unless you use a conjunction.

Do not use contractions in scholarly writing.

Avoid pronouns in scholarly writing whenever possible.

Try to write nouns in the plural to avoid using he/she or his/her
Ex: In order to increase safety, students should store their backpacks in their lockers.
Not: In order to increase safety, each student should store his/her backpack is his/her locker.

Write your literature review in past tense
Ex: Johnson (2004) suggested class size has an impact. . .
Not: Johnson (2004) suggests class size has an impact. . .

Use the verb stated only when quoting an author directly.

Use direct quotes sparingly. Paraphrasing is generally better.

Do not use phrases such as “I think”, “I believe”, or “in my opinion.”
Use active voice, rather than passive, whenever possible.
Ex: Researchers should address the role of socio-economic status on early literacy development.
Not: the role of socio-economic status on early literacy development should be addressed.

Avoid clichés
Ex: The problem of student not having mastered their multiplication facts is the first of many underlying problems.
Not: The problem of student not having mastered their multiplication facts is just the tip of the iceberg.

Avoid personifying the research study. Studies are inanimate, so avoid using active verbs when the subject of the sentence is not a person
Ex: Smith and Jones (2007) determined that gender played no role in . . .
Not: The study determined that gender played no role in . . .

Avoid overly wordy sentences.
Ex: Smith and Jones (2007) found . . .
Not: Smith and Jones (2007) did a study and found . . .
Ex: Johnson (2007) compared teams of teachers who . . .
Not: Johnson (2007) conducted research to compare teams of teachers who . . .