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EDU 588.50: Action Research in the Classroom

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ACTION RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

EDU 588 - CRN 34632

Term: Spring 2021

Instructor: Greg Friedman, Graduate Teaching Assistant

E-Mail: gregory.friedman@umontana.edu

Phone: 406-880-0294 (cell)

Office Space: ED 308

Office Hours: by request

Classroom Space: Moodle Online Platform and periodic Zoom Meetings

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a three-credit web-based course designed for graduate students in the college of education to facilitate and document a change in the teaching and/or learning in the classroom or other educational environment.

Through readings and online discussions, students plan an individual research study to investigate a specific research question of interest to the learner. Students will follow *an* (not “the”) action research cycle and share results with peers through the web based course. Additionally, students are encouraged to share their findings with colleagues and seek publication of their research in appropriate journals.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES/CURRICULA

This is a core course for students completing an M.Ed. in General Curriculum Studies or an M.A. in Education. This course is an optional component of the course of study for other graduate degrees in the college of education. Work completed in this course can and should serve to support other coursework and requirements of the graduate degree being sought including, but not limited to, work towards other research classes and comprehensive exams or thesis.

COURSE OUTCOMES

This course will enable students to:

- Describe how action research informs teaching and changes teaching and professional practice.
- Formulate relevant action research questions.
- Write a literature review for an action research project.
- Implement the action research cycle – plan, act, and reflect – within their own classroom or learning environment.
- Demonstrate knowledge and make use of appropriate research methodology for conducting an action research project.
- Analyze and critique action research projects.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students will be assessed based on the quality of their work and online participation. Grading for the course will use the following holistic rubric (source: IB-DP Extended Essay). Most individual assignments will be graded against this rubric. Overall course grade will be determined by looking at each student’s body of work and online contributions over the course of the semester. Students are responsible for investing the time necessary to consider the issues at a level appropriate for a graduate student. I am always happy to discuss your performance against these criteria during the course of the class.

The course will entail completing five major assignments, one per unit of study, in addition to ongoing work throughout the semester and completing smaller assignments within each unit of study. There will be assigned readings throughout the course of the semester.

Grade A

Demonstrates sharp focus and good contextualization of the topic through very good knowledge and understanding; a high level of organization and an effective ability to assemble evidence/data/information in an intelligent and academic way facilitating analysis and evaluation, supported throughout by excellent communication, using language appropriate to the subject; clear insight and understanding leading to evidence of independent thinking; consistent, persuasive and effective argument.

Grade B

Demonstrates focus and contextualization of the topic through good knowledge and understanding; clear organization and structure and an ability to assemble evidence/data/information in an intelligent and academic way facilitating analysis and evaluation, supported throughout by good communication using language appropriate to the subject; some evidence of independent thought; some persuasive and effective argument.

Grade C

Demonstrates a satisfactory focus and partial contextualization of the topic through satisfactory knowledge and understanding; some degree of organization and structure and some ability to assemble relevant evidence/data/information, supported throughout by satisfactory communication, generally using language appropriate to the subject; work that is largely descriptive and with limited argument/analysis/ evaluation.

Grade D

Demonstrates limited focus and contextualization of the topic which shows limited knowledge and understanding; limited organization and structure and a limited ability to assemble evidence/data/information, hindered by unsatisfactory communication which generally does not use language appropriate to the subject; work that is largely descriptive with little evidence of argument.

Grade F (Grade E in IB-DP Extended Essay Language)

Demonstrates a lack of focus and lack of contextualization of the topic which shows minimal knowledge and understanding; minimal organization and structure and an inability to assemble appropriate evidence/data/information, hindered by unclear communication which does not use language appropriate to the subject; work that is ineffectively descriptive or irrelevant to the topic; no evidence of argument.

SPECIFICATION FOR ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are expected to be free of grammatical errors. They should be saved in a format that can be effectively posted on Moodle in the assignment section. Citations and references should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style of citation. For an in-depth review of APA formatting and style guidelines, please consult various online sources for the new (2020) APA guidelines.

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UNITS OF STUDY (ZOOM MEETING DATES NOTED IN BOLD)

Unit 1: Introduction to Action Research Major Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situating Action Research in the Context of Reflective Teaching 	Monday, January 11 - Wednesday, January 27
Unit 2: Action Research Proposal Major Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Question & Preliminary Literature Review 	Monday, February 1 - Wednesday, February 17
Unit 3: Doing Action Research “Right” Major Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology & Ongoing Literature Review 	Monday, February 22 - Wednesday, March 10
Unit 4: Action Research Data Collection and Summary Major Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of Findings & Ongoing Literature Review 	Monday, March 15 - Wednesday, March 31
Unit 5: Action Research Reflection Major Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclusions and Next Steps 	Monday, April 5 - Wednesday, April 21
Ongoing Graded Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Research Critiques (5) Weekly Independent and Collaborative Work and Reflection Conducting Action Research in your Professional Environment 	Monday, January 11 - Wednesday, April 21

ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406-243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification. I am also happy to work with you to make appropriate accommodations to support your learning journey even if you do not have a disability.

YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC) provides free and confidential support to survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, hate crimes, harassment, or other forms of discrimination. Our services include counseling as well as medical, legal, and academic advocacy. SARC is a confidential resource – contacting us does NOT mean that you are making a report to law enforcement or Title IX. You deserve to be safe, supported, and treated with care and respect. We also offer help to your friends, family, or partners. SARC is located in Curry Health Center, Room 108. Please visit us or call our office at 406-243-4429. Advocates are available on the 24-hour support line 406-243-6559.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PWJCE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is part of the human condition that we strive simultaneously to be self-sufficient individuals and respected members of larger social communities. Although we value personal autonomy, we are ultimately social creatures who need each other not only for companionship but also to bring meaningfulness and purpose to our lives. It is by belonging to such communities that many of our needs as humans are satisfied.

A learning community is a special kind of community that is sometimes created in the classroom or in an educational institution as a whole. It comes into being when everyone involved in the learning process shares a common purpose and commitment to learning. A growing body of research now supports the view that learning occurs best in communities. Because the concept of "learning community" has been used in many different contexts, it must be given a clear and precise meaning before it can be of value as a unifying theme. For our purposes, then, a learning community is one characterized by the following elements:

Integration of Ideas. Members of a learning community look beyond the traditionally segmented curriculum and think creatively about the interrelationships among subject areas. They work with a variety of fields of study and search for unifying themes that cross disciplinary lines. There is an emphasis on explaining realities and dealing with actual problems in contextual learning situations.

Cooperative Endeavors. In a learning community, knowing and learning are viewed as communal acts, and all members can learn from each other. There is a commitment to engage all learners cognitively and emotionally in acquiring and sharing knowledge that is personally meaningful. In the process, members create a culture that encourages personal responsibility and active commitment to the group and its learning goals.

Respect for Diversity and Individual Worth. By definition, a learning community embraces diversity, requiring and valuing the input of all voices present. The ethics of care and mutual respect are viewed as essential for supportive learning environments that enhance each member's self-esteem and foster risk-taking, creative conflict, and excellence.

A university provides an excellent example of the principle that learning occurs best in communities. When people gather purposefully to transmit knowledge and share ideas, a synergy is created that can result in learning of the highest order. Teachers and learners assume many roles, often shared, often overlapping, always interdependent. They respect each other in those roles. The community of learners is aware of the uniqueness of each other's background, and values this uniqueness as it contributes to the diversity of the whole. Ideas, too, are valued for their diversity as well as for their correspondence to current teachings and opinions. People delight in their opportunities to pursue and construct knowledge actively and cooperatively, regardless of age, academic status, cultural heritage, or interest. They discover together the connections among discrete subject areas and among people, ultimately coming to understand and value the importance of lifelong learning for full citizenship in a global society.

In all programs at both the basic and advanced levels, the teacher education community at The University of Montana prepares school personnel for elementary, middle and secondary school settings. Within the context of the learning community and embracing the emphases of integration of ideas, cooperative endeavors, and respect for diversity and individual worth, it is our goal to prepare teachers and school services personnel who demonstrate:

1. competence in their subject matter and an understanding of the interrelatedness of knowledge;
2. intellectual skills that lead to reflection, creativity, and risk-taking in their professional lives;
3. a sense of self-worth and a respect for the uniqueness and dignity of others;
4. communication skills in a variety of types of expression;
5. a spirit of cooperation and the ability to problem solve as citizens in a democratic society; and
6. a lifelong love of learning.

READINGS

The primary text for this class is a “light” text book and is freely available through the UM Library (link below). Additional assigned readings (some light and some heavy) will be provided through Moodle and should be supplemented by your own reading and research as you proceed with your own action research plan and individual study.

Costello, P. J. (2011). *Effective action research: developing effective thinking and practice*. London: Continuum.

[\(Link to Costello text through UM Mansfield Library\)](#)

last modified 8 January 2021, grf