

EDP 641: Field Research Seminar

Instructors

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Combined Class Meetings (Faculty Presentation)

The Joint Ph.D. Program will sponsor a series of research presentations by members of the Program Faculty. These presentations will provide diverse examples of research topics and research methods. You will learn how investigators choose their research questions and how they choose useful methods to explore those questions. Equipping you to understand these choices--in reading published research and in planning your own research--is the central mission of EDP 641.

Your attendance at these research presentations is a requirement of EDP 641. These presentations will replace some of our regular class meetings. One combined class meeting is scheduled on December 9, 2010 at Rhode Island College and a combined meeting will be scheduled in the spring. When the Ph.D. Program's Co-directors announce the times of these presentations, we will adjust the class schedule accordingly.

OBJECTIVE: Research-Methods Literacy for Practitioner-Scholars

As graduates of the Ph.D. Program in Education, you will spend much of your time applying the perspectives and methods of social-science research to the complex questions facing American educational systems and practices. Success in this difficult work will require you to have high levels of receptive and expressive literacy in research.

Previous research on most topics has spanned a wide range of methods and strategies. While reading this research, you will encounter an empirical "Tower of Babel" whose researchers speak different dialects or altogether different languages. In order to make effective use of published research, you must be receptively multilingual. You must be able not only to understand the research of other investigators, but also to critique it.

Receptive literacy will be essential in planning your own research. In making your own research contributions--in your dissertations and throughout your post-doctoral careers--you will also need to become ever more expressively fluent in at least one empirical language. EDP 641 is designed to stimulate your receptive and expressive literacy in research methods, strategies, and tactics. It provides a forum in which to identify, explore, and refine the topic and tools of your dissertation research.

This is a long-term, cumulative, developmental process. Therefore, how you take advantage of the forum of EDP 641 will change a great deal as you move through the Program.

EDP 641 is designed to accelerate your individual growth-curves by providing a forum for collective-consulting on each other's research. If we pool the perspectives of our individual tunnel-visions, we can substantially enlarge the worldviews (conceptual and methodological) that each of us will bring to our own research questions.

In EDP 641's forum, you are encouraged to integrate the material from:

- the year-long Core Courses (EDP 610-611, 620-621, 630-631);
- courses in research methods (EDC 555, EDP 612, 613 and 615);
- courses in your individual Specialization Areas (including more advanced research-methods courses).

Students' Responsibilities in EDP 641

In each year of EDP 641, every student plays three different roles. On the first class meeting a schedule will be developed to assign class members to their weekly roles. Members should not be assigned to more than one role each week (responding to the research article and responding to their colleagues research is considered two roles).

(1) As a Presenter of individual research ideas, and dealing with materials distributed to one's classmates at the end of the previous class.

(2) As a written Respondent in preparation for an upcoming class, responding to either the Presenter's written research ideas (Pre-Dissertation Research) or commenting on the Presenter's research article.

(3) As a Recorder who takes detailed notes on the discussion between Presenters and other seminar members. This liberates Presenters from note-taking and lets them focus on the discussion.

With an additional weekly role:

(4) As an active and prepared Member of seminar. Active participation contributes to the objective of the seminar.

Presenters' Responsibilities

At the meeting before their presentation-class, Presenters have ready two documents:

- (a) A written introduction to a possible research topic for their dissertation – The paper should follow the “**Pre-Dissertation Research Guidelines**” found at the end of this syllabus.

This paper should be at least six pages (double spaced). It should also include a Reference Section using the format from the American Psychological Association's Publication Manual.

- (b) A data-based article--dealing with some aspects of their possible dissertation topic--published in a professional scholarly journal.

Both documents are presented to both instructors as hard copy prior to the end of the class meeting before the scheduled presentation.

Both documents are presented to the student members of EDP 641 in the medium of the presenter's choosing (e-mail, Wiki, WebCT, hard copy) prior to the end of the class meeting before the scheduled presentation.

At the meeting of the scheduled presentation

- (a) Presenters briefly summarize their review of literature(s) related to their own research interests; discuss some of the methods reported by published researchers to generate and analyze data; explain why they chose to share this particular article.
- (b) Other seminar members expand the discussion of strengths/weaknesses/ relevance of the published empirical article, drawing upon their own thoughts. methodology.
- (c) Using the preceding discussion as a springboard, the Presenter spends the remaining time on a more detailed overview of her/his current thinking about a possible research topic:
 - what s/he is thinking about investigating;
 - why this is important to the Presenter and to the field;
 - how s/he might gather and analyze data on the topic;
 - why choose these methods, as opposed to other methods found in the published literature.

Seminar members, drawing upon their own background and expertise provide feedback to widen the viewpoints of the Presenter.

Respondents' Responsibility

Respondents will be responsible for providing written feedback to the Presenter on the research article or research idea. Respondents should follow the guidelines "**Response to Research Article**" and "**Response to Colleague's Pre-Dissertation Research**" found at the end of this syllabus.

Prior to the beginning of the presentation, Respondents will provide a hard copy of their responses to both instructors and the presenter. They may also choose to post their responses by electronic medium to the rest of the class members.

Recorders' Responsibility

The Recorder takes detailed notes on the discussion between Presenters and other seminar members. These notes are then organized and presented to both instructors and the presenter no later than the next meeting date. It will be the decision of the section instructors if these notes should be presented as hard copy or electronically.

Responsibility of the Instructors

Instructors will provide written feedback to each presenter on their research ideas alternating between the two instructors.

In the context of a part-time program, EDP 641 is designed to create and nourish a thriving culture-and-community of research. In the short term, this is meant to equip and sustain students as they approach the Ph.D. dissertation and begin to meet its challenges. In the longer term, EDP 641 is also designed to cultivate those habits-of-mind that will contribute to data-based analysis and improvement of American educational systems and practices.

Grading

Consistent with the organization and the formative-developmental mission of EDP 641, it is graded "Satisfactory"/"Unsatisfactory." Consequently, grades in the six semesters of EDP 641 are not included in calculating your GPA (Grade-Point Average) in the Program.

NOTE: As with all doctoral programs at URI, the Joint URI-RIC Program requires, at the end of each semester, a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher in order to remain in good standing.

Attendance

Attendance and active involvement at all meetings of EDP 641 are expected. If you miss a meeting, you may make it up by attending a meeting of another section of EDP 641. In doing so, you should: get from the instructors the name of the student who will be Presenter at that meeting; get a copy of the Presenter's empirical article and summary of her/his own research; prepare to participate as a full-fledged Discussant.

Compliance with The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

URI and RIC are committed to full compliance. Any student who might need special consideration or accommodation in the course--for any sort of documented disability--should discuss those needs with the instructors as soon as possible.

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Pre-Dissertation Research Guidelines

In your 6+ page "Introduction to Pre-Dissertation Research," please include the following:

- Explain this topic's importance to the field and to you, given your particular context and interests. If you presented this research topic last year, what has changed from then to now?
- List some tentative research questions or hypotheses.
- What theories undergird this research?
- Summarize some of the published literature on the topic and how your proposed research will build upon it and/or offer some new angle or argument.
- Describe the research site/context. How did you develop relationships with the various constituents? What is your position there, and how do you anticipate this will affect the data you collect?
- What is your research design (independent and dependent variables, operational definition of variables, etc.)? How do you plan to select subjects?
- What data do you plan to collect? Be specific, for example, interviews, observations, etc. Who are your key informants? How do you plan to triangulate your data? If you are collecting survey or other numerical data, what are your variables and which measures (instruments) are you considering using?
- Where are you in regard to IRB/Human Subjects?
- What analysis procedures do you tentatively plan to use?
- Describe possible limitations, suggestions for further study.

Response to Research Article

Please consider the following as you read the research article your colleague has provided:

1. State the author's argument in your own words. Is the author attempting to add to or question existing research in the field? Comment on the effectiveness of his/her rationale for addressing this problem/making this argument.
2. Comment on the author's theoretical framework. In what ways does the framework support the argument and data gathering/analysis procedures? Name other theories that might be appropriate to consider.
3. Discuss the effectiveness of the literature review (research cited by the authors). If you can cite other areas of research, publications, articles or authors that might have enhanced the lit review, name them.
4. How effective were this author's procedures for finding and gathering data? Are there other procedures you would suggest? Are there other possible sources of data that would have been worth exploring, given the argument?
5. Discuss the author's analysis of her/his data. In what ways is this analysis an effective way to read the data? Are there other possibilities for getting richer, deeper, or just different, results? Name them.
6. How well does the author's data analysis support her/his conclusions? Are there implications for theory, practice, or policy that might have been overlooked? What next stages of research would be appropriate?
7. Comment on the effectiveness of the writing. In what ways did the author's choices regarding voice, organization, and writing style contribute to your understanding of the article? In what ways did the writing interfere with meaning?

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Response to Colleague's Pre-Dissertation Research

Because of the mix of cohort groups in this seminar, your colleagues' research ideas will be at various levels of thought and completeness. Please keep this in mind when responding to your colleague. Consider the following in writing your response:

1. State the argument in your own words. Is s/he attempting to add to or question existing research in the field? Comment on the effectiveness of his/her rationale for addressing this problem/making this argument.
2. Comment on the theoretical framework (if present). In what ways does the framework support the argument and data gathering/analysis procedures? Name other theories that might be appropriate to consider.
3. Discuss the effectiveness of the literature review. If you can cite other areas of research, publications, articles or authors that might add to the lit review, name them.
4. How effective are these procedures for finding and gathering data? Are there other procedures you would suggest? Are there other possible sources of data that would be worth exploring, given the argument?
5. Comment on the feasibility of the research ideas. Are they practical and doable within a reasonable timeframe?
6. Discuss your colleague's plans for analysis of her/his data. In what ways is this analysis an effective way to read the data? Are there other possibilities for getting richer, deeper, or just different, results? Name them.
7. How well does your colleague's data analysis support her/his conclusions? Are there implications for theory, practice, or policy that might have been overlooked? What next stages of research would be appropriate? (Note: this question may or may not be applicable, given the stage of research.)
8. Comment on the effectiveness of the writing. In what ways did your colleague's choices regarding voice, organization, and writing style contribute to your understanding of the article? In what ways did the writing interfere with meaning?