MED 608
Research in Literacy
Fall 2009

Instructor:
Kristi Jones
Malouf #122 kjones@westminstercollege.edu
832-2488 (w) 581-0274 (h)
Office Hours: Tues. 2-4, Wed. 1:30-2:30, Thurs. 2-4

Course Materials:
Required Text:
Boston, MA: Pearson Publishing Company

We will also use the following resources:
Classical and Contemporary Studies
Refereed Reading Journals
Electronic Databases

Course Description:
This course aims to engage students in the study of primary research articles in the field of literacy. Students will explore classical and contemporary research studies. Students will be instructed in basic research techniques to aid in their ability to conduct research and consume research reports. Articles relevant to students’ action research projects will be analyzed.

Course Objectives:
To guide you toward being able to:

- demonstrate a basic understanding of research terminology through articulating findings of studies.
- connect instructional shifts over time with classical and contemporary research in literacy.
- understand the power of research to impact practice.
- place an historical context on literacy research and design.
- develop a broad knowledge base of how to access literacy research to assist in guiding instructional and scholarly practice.
- compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative research identifying when and why each is more/less useful to accomplish particular objectives.
IRA Standards Addressed:

- 1.1 Refer to major theories in the foundational areas as they relate to reading. Candidates can explain, compare, contrast, and critique theories.
- 1.2 Summarize seminal reading studies and articulate how these studies impacted reading instruction. Candidates can recount historical developments in the history of reading.
- 1.3 Identify, explain, compare, and contrast the theories and research in the areas of language development and learning to read.

Course Assignments:

A. This course puts students in the position of locating research with the potential to impact their teaching. If anyone feels a need for a session on how to access research online, please see the instructor and we will schedule a session in the library. You will need to locate, read, analyze, and present two recent, primary pieces of research on a topic of your choice.

B. This course also aims to help you build a knowledge base of classical pieces that exemplify various theoretical perspectives on literacy. Throughout the semester, I will provide articles that will include classical studies.

C. Finally, the course is designed to guide you through a process of learning about the nuts and bolts of being a critical consumer of research. To achieve this goal, you will present two chapters on the mechanics of research and we will work together to analyze recent articles in the Reading Research Quarterly.

Assignment 1: In-Class Participation

In class, we will be engaging in activities throughout the semester. Because we will be accomplishing work integral to your overall learning in class, it is not going to be possible to do well in the class if you miss class.

10 points

Assignment 2: Research Design Chapters

Throughout the semester you will each read and present four times (two chapters from McMillan, one assigned article, and one primary research article of your choice).

For the two chapters from McMillan, type a two- to three-page paper with the following headings:

1. **Summary**: Summarize key points.

2. **Implications**: How does this information apply to your teaching?

3. **Synthesis**: Imagine a creative application of the parts of the article into a new whole—one that is original and productive. You might explain how the information could or couldn’t inform
your own research project. You might explain how the information will shape the way you read research articles.

4. **Hand-out:** You will need to prepare a handout for your classmates. The handout can be a bulleted list of vocabulary terms, findings, methods, tools, etc. As you present, classmates can fill in the definitions bulleted on the list to add to their research resource log (see below).

2 readings X 20 points = 40 Points
Per reading:

- 7 points for typed paper
- 7 points for presentation (including discussion questions)
- 6 points for handout of terms/concepts/methods/findings, etc.

**Assignment 3: Primary Research Article (of your choice) and Assigned Research Article**

1. **Written responses to research articles:**
   For the article of your choice, select an area of literacy that you want to learn more about (align this with your MED 679 project). I will give you the other article for this category. Type your responses to as many of the following questions that apply to the piece you read (response papers need to be two-three typed pages):
   
   1. What are the key points of this article?
   2. What is the author’s argument?
   3. How does this argument mesh with your prior knowledge/beliefs/experiences?
   4. How does this piece fit into the ongoing history of literacy research? Is the author responding to contradictory research? Is the author blazing a new trail? Is the author building support for existing research? What relevant work provided background for this work and what relevant work followed as a result of this piece?
   5. What methods/procedures did the author use? Can you think of more effective methods/procedures for addressing this issue? Critique the author’s methods identifying strengths and weaknesses (refer to research methods/procedures in the McMillan chapters).
   6. What evidence does the author have to support his/her argument?
   7. Do you agree with the author’s findings? Why? Why not?
   8. How does this study impact your professional work? Implications for your work?
   9. How would you like to have seen this study extended, or how would you extend this study?
   10. Comments, concerns, questions that arose as you read this article?

2. **Presentation:**
   Come to class with your typed (2-3 page) analysis (described above). Be prepared to summarize your article and your analysis in a conversational manner—please don’t read your analysis to us.
Know the article and your analysis well enough that you can present its essential points without reading to us. You will have 30 minutes to present your article.

3. Discussion Questions:
In addition to your 2-3 page written analysis, design two or three thought-provoking questions that probe the heart of the piece you read. Try to design questions that require the group to use their knowledge of research procedures. After (or during) the presentation of your article, lead the group in discussions organized around the questions you have designed. Please type the discussion questions on your analytical paper.

2 articles X 20 points each = 40 points

Per reading: 7 points for written analysis
7 points for presentation
6 points for discussion questions/facilitation

Assignment 4: Research Resource Log
As your colleagues present throughout the semester, you will need to keep a running log that will help you to become more research literate. Your log can include handouts provided by presenters as well as your own separate notes. I would suggest that you set up a binder for this information at the beginning of the semester. I will collect the binders at the end of the course.

10 points

Grading:
Attendance is critical for this class. One absence will result in the loss of points and if the absence occurs during a session where you are to present material, additional points will be deducted relative to the rubric above. A second absence will result in the loss of points (as described above), additional work to cover everything missed during the session. It will not be possible to successfully complete the course with any additional absences.

Grades will be computed on a percentage basis:
100-94 A
93-92 A-
91-90 B+
89-84 B
83-82 B-
81-80 C+
79-74 C
73-72 C-
71-70 D
Below 69 F
Course Schedule:

Session 1: Introduction to the course
Introduction to Research in Education, Ch. 1 McMillan

Session 2: Research Problems, Variables, and Hypotheses, Ch. 2 McMillan

Session 3: Subjects, Participants, and Sampling, Ch. 5, McMillan
“The Relation between DIBELS, Reading Comprehension, and Vocabulary in Urban First-Grade Students,” Riedel & Samuels

Session 4: Foundations of Educational Measurement, Ch. 6, McMillan
“Validity, Reliability, and Utility of the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement,” Carolyn Denton, Dennis Ciancio, & Jack Fletcher

Session 5: Types of Educational Measures, Ch. 7, McMillan
1. “Mapping the Landscape of High Stakes Testing and Accountability Programs,” Margaret Goertz and Mark Duffy
2. CNN.com report on NAEP Findings
You only need to read pp. 3-14

Session 6: Nonexperimental Quantitative Research Designs, Ch. 8, McMillan
“What Education Schools Aren’t Teaching,” Kate Walsh, Deborah Glaser, & Danielle Dunne Wilcox

Session 7: Qualitative and Mixed-Method Research Designs, Ch. 11

Session 8: Experimental Research Designs, McMillan, Ch. 9, ____________________________

Session 9: Self-Chosen Research Article______________________________

Session 10: Self-Chosen Research Article______________________________