EDFD 508-4S Educational Research Paper

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Course Syllabus, Project Rubrics and Course Calendar

Day and Time: This course does not meet regularly, but operates like an independent study.
Dates: July 6, 2015 – August 14, 2015 (and potentially through August 1, 2016)
Instructor: Joe Link
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DUE DATE

The research paper should be turned in by August 1, 2016. Please make arrangements to meet and review a final draft with me before you turn in the final copy. Please do not turn in the final copy without meeting with me first. I will not accept a final draft of the paper unless we have met first. (If you live outside the Greater Cincinnati area, we could substitute a meeting by phone instead). Please place the finalized research paper in my mailbox in the special education wing near the front lobby of the Cohen Building (in the middle of the art department). You should make two fancy copies of the research paper. Give one copy to me, and keep one for yourself. You keep your copy forever, and I will keep my copy forever. If you choose to turn it in during the summer semester, make sure to have it in my mailbox by August 14, 2015. If you choose to turn it in during the fall semester, make sure to have it in my mailbox by December 1, 2015. If you choose to turn it in during the spring semester, make sure to have it in my mailbox by April 1, 2016. Otherwise, I expect to see the paper in my mailbox by August 1, 2016. These due dates are important, because a number of things need to happen before your grade for EDFD 508 can be changed. I need to grade the paper first, and then I need to turn in a paper grade form. That form is submitted in paper (non-electronic) form and needs to be signed by numerous supervisors. The form is then turned over to the Registrar who has to process it. In general, it will take about 3 weeks after you turn the paper in for a grade change to occur. There are exceptions to this, of course, and if you get into a bind with the due date, contact me and we will talk it through and try to work it out. Regardless of when you turn the
paper in, you must meet me with me beforehand so that we can review a draft of the paper together.

**FINAL PAPER MEETING**

The instructor and student should meet when you have a completed draft of the whole paper. Please contact me as you are finishing the paper so that we can set up an appointment. I would like review a draft of the whole paper in your presence before you turn the final bound copy.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RESEARCH PAPER**

The research paper will be comprised of five chapters. The paper must use APA style, the typically accepted style in the field of education. The final copy of the paper should be turned using **black spiral binding, a thick black back cover, and a clear plastic front cover that shines through to the title page**. Staples and Kinkos, among others, provide these services. **You should make one fancy copy for yourself to keep, and give the second copy to me to grade. You keep your copy forever, and I’ll keep my copy forever.**

Your grade for the research paper is separate from the course, EDFD 507. The following is a rubric used to judge the components of the research paper as well as the research paper as a whole:
### ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH PAPER (Thanks to Dr. Flick for providing much of the information in the section).

Students should follow this research paper outline exactly. Use the subject headings provided here in your own paper:

**The Title Page**
The Title Page is the first page of your paper and it should show through the clear plastic cover. The Page should look like this:

[lots of space]
[Title of Paper]
[lots of space]
[“A Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements in”
“EDFD 507/508: Educational Research”
“Today’s Date”]
[lots of space]
[“By”
“Your Name”
“Xavier University”]
Make sure that the title of your paper is very specific. (For example, “A Study of Attitudes towards Music Instruction in a Middle School in Brown County, Ohio” is better than a title such as “Music Instruction.”). If you title is very general, it will give the reader a false impression that you are a renowned expert on this topic. A title with lots of specific detail conveys the sense that you a humble researcher who is investigating one small part of a very large area of study.

**The Abstract**
The abstract, or summary, is no more than 250 words and is a separate page placed after the title page, but before the table of contents. It is the last part of the paper to be written. It is a summary of the nature of your study, the problem, your methods and the procedures used, a brief overview of the findings and the conclusions drawn. A well-written abstract should persuade a potential reader that the paper is worthy of examination and provide a brief summary of the findings of the research study. *Keep in mind that most readers are concerned with the findings and results of your study and so make sure to highlight those in the abstract.* The abstract pages, if more than one, are numbered independently from the rest of the paper, and they are not mentioned in the table of contents.

**The Acknowledgements**
This page is a chance to thank all those who helped you put the research paper and those who supported you as you write it.

**The Table of Contents**
The table of contents includes pages on which the chapters begin as well as a listing of all subtopics in each chapter, as well as the start pages for the bibliography and the appendix.

**Chapter 1** (usually about 5 pages) *Begin numbering pages with Chapter 1.*

**Use these exact subject headings in Chapter 1:**

**Introduction**
The introduction provides general background or framework. It might include the historical background and the scholarly rationale you have used for investigating the general topic. It may include a personal anecdote about why you became interested in the topic. The introduction should engage our interest in your general topic and whet our appetite to hear more about the specific study you are going to conduct. It makes sense in this section to mention one of the key authors who has researched your topic. This will show that there has
been past scholarly interest in your topic. If you are going to use the first person (“I”) in this paper, this would be one of the few places appropriate to do so.

**Scope of the Topic**
The scope section is a general statement of everything you could ever hope to ascertain from the study. You will describe many more possible topics of study that you could ever actually investigate in the coming year. It is broader than the specific problem you will investigate with your study in Greater Cincinnati. The scope section is usually lengthy and is a continuation of what has been started in the introduction section. The scope section sets up the rationale for why this topic needs to be investigated further by describing unresolved questions there are related to your topic. Often, this section is written as a series of all the potential questions one might ask about your broad topic. The reader should be overwhelmed by how many possible research questions there could be relating to this topic. This section leads in nicely to the Problem section in which you will explain the one specific problem that you will be able to investigate. One way to think of this section: **The Scope section is very broad; the Significance section is very specific to your study.**

**The Problem**
This sections contains a statement of the core problem you will investigate in your research study (e.g. What do Greater Cincinnati area teachers think is the relationship between student GPA and financial success ten years after graduation?) and your hypothesis. The hypothesis is a proposition that the researcher is prepared to verify (e.g. The hypothesis of this study is that a majority of Cincinnati area elementary teachers believe that students with high GPA have higher average salaries over ten years than those with lower GPAs). A hypothesis is a calculated guess based upon previous experience. List the research problem and hypothesis separately and clearly label them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** **The Problem section consists only of two sentences – the research question and the hypothesis.** Nothing else goes in this section.

**Significance of the Study**
Why is your study to be conducted here in Greater Cincinnati needed? In what way will it contribute to knowledge in the field? How will it benefit principals and school leaders? Avoid vague and meaningless answers to these question like “the study has never been done before,” or “the study will be useful to practitioners in the field.” Be specific. How will it be useful? What beliefs will it provide that are not already available? The need for the study does not always have to be phrased in practical terms. Need can be established through logic, personal experience, or even through a statement from an authority in the field. The significance of the study is usually lengthy and is a continuation of what was begun in the introduction and
purpose sections. One way to think of this section: **The Scope section is very broad; the Significance section is very specific to your study.**

PLEASE NOTE: The Introduction, Scope and Significance sections are all fairly lengthy. I would recommend you write these as one complete essay, and then break it up into the appropriate three parts.

**Assumptions of the Study**
The purpose of this section is to clarify, define and limit your investigation. Assumptions are propositions that you do not intend to verify. They are statements of positions that you take for granted as self-evident. An assumption may not necessarily be correct, but it should be reasonable. It is reasonable to assume that the sun will rise at a certain time tomorrow, although this is not a certainty. List only those assumptions that are applicable to your study and essential to it. Typically, student will list at least 3 assumptions. You should bullet point these assumptions.

**Limitations of the Study**
Limitations are natural, unavoidable deficiencies in your study. An example might include the lack of a representative sample. Typically, students will list at least 3 limitations. You should bullet point these limitations.

**Operational Definitions**
Provide the reader with definitions for words or terms with which the reader is not likely to be familiar. Assume that the reader does not come from an education background. Operational definitions do not have to be the authoritative definition of a word. Rather, they are your working definition of a word for the purposes of this paper. Typically, students will list at least 7 operational definitions. You should bullet point these operational definitions. This section will look much like a glossary.

**Chapter II** (usually about 8 pages)

This section serves several purposes:
- Familiarizes you with work that has already been done in the field and work that is closely related to your proposed investigation.
- Shows how your study will fit into the general theoretical framework in your field and with the research of others, and gives you a chance to acknowledge those who toiled before you.
- Demonstrates how you will be making a unique contribution to the field.
- Helps the reader understand what types of research (opinion, case study, ex post facto, true experimental, etc.) have been conducted on your topic.
Chapter Two should be written as a coherent essay with an argumentative thesis about the current state of the literature on your topic of interest. Chapter Two will inevitably contain pages and pages of summary of articles, books, etc. Make sure to properly cite where you get the information you are paraphrasing. **Remember that the APA style of writing welcomes paraphrasing and tends to discourage the use of direct quotes.** (This may be different from the MLA citation style that you used as an undergraduate student).

Chapter II is also focused on describing the types of literature available on your topic (e.g. newspapers, editorials, popular magazines, case study research in scholarly journals, ex post facto research in scholarly journals, survey research in scholarly journals, experimental research in scholarly journals, etc.), but it is NOT a report on the topic itself. In Chapter II, be sure to comment on the quality of the literature (e.g. Is it mostly the opinions of various authors? Is it a case study? Is it mostly survey research? Is it quasi-experimental research? Is it true experimental research?) **It is critical that you answer this question: What is the current state of the literature on my topic of interest?** There is no right or wrong answer. Just make sure we know the types of writing, if any, that is being produced on your topic.

If you cannot find any literature on your topic of interest, broaden your topic of interest and do a literature review on related topics and then note how little literature there is on your original topic of interest. This Chapter should be able to stand alone apart from the research paper. Chapter II typically begins and ends with an argument that there is a gap in the research literature that you as the researcher intend to fill. Explain at the end of this section how your specific study will fill the gap in the literature.

Before writing this section, make sure you feel comfortable that you have exhausted the resources of several library databases. The use of these databases is an expected part of the process of writing this paper.

- Academic Search Complete
- PsychInfo
- ERIC (which will includ not only journal articles but also so-called “ERIC Documents” or “EDs”).
- Proquest and then click below on the search page on “Dissertations” (descriptions of and the first few pages of dissertations from across the country with some full-text dissertations as well)
- Electronic Theses And Dissertations (full text dissertations written in Ohio)
- OhioLink

Be certain you have looked at a cross section of journal articles, book chapters and ERIC documents, if possible.
Chapter III (usually about 4 pages)

This section is often the weakest part of the paper, because many writers have not thought through the procedures they will use to investigate their research problem. Chapter 3 lays out your research methodology step by step, so that any other investigator could replicate your methods. Consider these questions as you write Chapter III:

- How is your research design appropriate to your investigation of the problem?
- How will you address ethical concerns of working fairly and respectfully with human subjects?
- What is your population and sample, and how can you justify those selections?

Your choices of research design are generally limited in the course to surveying teachers and/or parents and/or the general public. If you choose to survey teachers, you should survey teachers from at least two school districts or two private schools. EDFD 508 students must write an informed consent statement to be communicated to the people participating in their study. To maximize our knowledge of what might go into an informed consent statement, students are required to complete a 2 hour online course offered by the National Institute of Health at http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php. Draft of the surveys and the informed consent statement must be approved by the instructor before the student commences the study in the community.

Students must work within the following research methodology:
- Collecting 100 surveys from teachers or parents at least two different field sites (e.g. two different school districts, two different Catholic schools, etc.). There are several free online survey generating websites that you may want to use:
  - KwikSurveys
  - Google Docs
  - Qualtrics
  - Types of Quantitative Research
- Or collecting 100 surveys through acquaintances in social media networks

Use these exact subject headings in Chapter III:

1. Purpose of the Study (this section will be an abridged version of what is in Chapter 1, most likely).
2. Setting – usually about 1 and a half pages – Using statistics from the Internet or another source, paint a picture for the reader about the community and schools in which you will
be conducting research. Any statistics you can find (median income, ethnic composition, etc.) is all relevant as the reader may not only anything about this community.

3. Data Collection – at least 2 pages – Lay out your methods in **extremely** detailed, step by step details. This section should be dry, objective and long. It may describe steps you feel are obvious to the reader; nevertheless, list out your steps anyway. You should list out not only the steps you will follow to conduct your study but also explain what you will do if you hit a roadblock (e.g. a principal does not give you permission to observe in a school that you had hoped to be in).

4. Data Compilation and Analysis – probably ½ page - Explain how you will use Microsoft Word, Excel, etc. to compile the data and how you think it will look when presented.

5. Summary of Chapter III – probably ½ page

Chapter 3 is often very detailed and dry. It may seem that the step by step methodology you lay out in Chapter 3 is obvious, but it is important that you lay out every step of your research study, no matter how trivial, so that it can replicated.

**Chapter IV** (length varies)

This chapter depicts the direct results of your research investigation. You present what you have discovered in words, charts, tables, figures, and other appropriate forms. Avoid presenting extremely large data sets or field notes which are better relegated to the appendix. Your findings in this chapter should be “objective”; another investigator using the same methods would come up with the same results. Please save any interpretive remarks you might want to make for Chapter V.

If you are presenting the results of survey research, make sure to make a graph for *every single survey question you asked*. (e.g. If you asked 12 survey questions, then you should make 12 graphs). For every Likert Scale question that you graph, make sure to write a boring explanatory paragraph that explains the graph. The paragraph should all include the mean and the mode of the Likert Scale question.

If you are presenting qualitative data such the results of open ended survey questions, consider giving the reader just the highlights of your field notes or open ended survey results. For example, out of 100 open ended comments on a survey, you might report the 15 most representative answers to the reader. Always, present these quotes in bulleted form and draw a text box around these results to increase their visual appeal.
Chapter V (usually about 5 pages)

Summary of Research Findings (usually about ½ page)
The summary includes an overview of your data as reported in Chapter IV.

Speculative Conclusions (at least 2 pages, may be much longer)
Conclusions are interpretations, inferences, and implications based upon the findings. Unlike the findings, which are “objective,” conclusions may vary. They are personal but still logically deduced. They represent an attempt by the investigator to explain the findings. In this section, the research may speculate on the results of the study as a whole as well as why specific observations or survey results turned out the way that they did.

Congruence with the Literature (at least 1 page)
Students should reference two or three of the authors mentioned in the literature review in Chapter II and explain how your conclusions are or are not consistent with the major authors in the related literature. When you mention these authors, make sure to remind the reader who they are and what they said. Also, cite them once again using proper APA style.

Recommendations for Future Research (usually about 1 page)
Researchers almost always make a call for further research in this field, since it would be brash to assert that this study was the final, definitive one on the topic. The researcher should suggest particular tangents or angles that future researchers might follow. In some cases, the writer may want to make specific policy or curricular recommendations based upon the findings, but only if they logically relate to the writer’s conclusions. The researcher might think of this section as a chance to overview a large research study that you would undertake if you were entering a doctoral program and where time and money for research might be more available than they are now.

References

The references include all the sources to which you have actually cited in the paper. Any other materials, which gave you general background knowledge, but which are not actually cited in the paper, do not belong in this section.

When you cite a general website, you should write the date that you “retrieved” the information on the website (e.g. “Retrieved on July 31, 2012”). It is not necessary to write the retrieval date for your online scholarly journal sources, which will likely comprise most of your references. It
is not necessary to list the “doi” numbers that are often found with citations in academic databases.

When you cite a document found on ERIC that is not a journal article but instead a government report or pamphlet or the like, make sure to include the ED number (ERIC Document Number) in your citation. (You do not need to include EJ numbers – those are for journal articles, and we know how to easily locate those).

Appendix (if necessary) – a copy of your survey, large sets of data, etc.