School of Education

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research in Higher Education

Fall 2021 (3 Credit Hours)

Wednesday, 4:10 – 6:55 p.m.

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**Course Description**

This course prepares student to engage in assessment, evaluation, and research to inform their work in higher education settings. Students will learn various assessment, evaluation, and research terms and concepts, qualitative and quantitative assessment and evaluation strategies, research design and methodologies, and the ability to present and interpret results to inform education policies and programs. Additionally, students will conduct a research project and write the findings following standards used for publication. Research project results will be presented to colleagues at the university.

**Course Rationale**

This course assists students in their ability to explore critical issues facing higher education. Guided by the professional competency standards outlined by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2015), the content of this course aims to help students in their ability to move theory into practice through study applied to their own professional roles in higher education, and in improving their communication skills through the preparation of a research report. The goal is for candidates to demonstrate the ability to access, analyze, and apply appropriate information from disparate sources to problems associated with your work in schools and to improve higher education policy and practice by making data-driven decisions.

**Required Textbook:**

*No textbook required*. A selection of required readings will be available online through Moodle.

**Suggested Supplemental Books:**

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Biddix, J. P. (2018). *Research methods and application for student affairs.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Education research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th edition). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Schuh, J. H., Biddix, J. P., Dean, L. A., & Kinzie, J. (2016). *Assessment in student affairs* (2nd edition). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sriram, R. (2017). *Student affairs by the numbers: Quantitative research and statistics for professionals.* Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Wise, V. L., & Davenport, Z. R. (2019). *Student affairs assessment, evaluation, and research: A guidebook for graduate students and new professionals.* Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher, LTD.

**Course Objectives**

The mission of the School of Education at the University of Portland is to develop exceptional professional educators. The School’s Shared Values (Conceptual Framework) outlines characteristics of such an educator, and along with the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and relevant specialty area standards, it guides the design and objectives of this and all courses in the School of Education. The following Shared Values ([Conceptual Framework Principles](https://file.up.edu/Handlers/AnonymousDownload.ashx/Shared%20Values%20%28CF%29%20Matrices%20by%20Program.pdf?file=782beb2e)) will be addressed in this course:

* Lifelong Learning: Exceptional Educators are Lifelong Learners
* Communication: Exceptional Educators Communicate and Work Effectively with Others
* Theory into Practice: Exceptional Educators Fuse Theory and Practice

This research methods course is based on ACPA and NASPA professional competency of Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER), which “focuses on the ability to design, conduct, critique, and use various AER methodologies and the results obtained from them, to utilize AER processes and their results to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses in higher education” (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 13). Five principles are addressed in this course:

* **Principle 1: Terms and Concepts**. Know and be able to describe terms, concepts, and strategies, associated with assessment, program review, evaluation, planning and research. Disposition to view AER as an essential element for improvement at the unit, division, institutional, and professional levels.
* **Principle 2: Values/Ethics/Politics.** Know the value of assessment and the ethical principles associated with data collection, management, analysis, and reporting. Ability to use results towards continuous improvement; to follow institutional policies and procedures. Dispositions to navigate institutional politics effectively; to adhere to standards; and to sustain a culture of assessment.
* **Principle 3: AER Design.** Know theoretical frameworks that align with organizational outcomes, goals, and values. Ability to create learner-centered outcomes that align with divisional and institutional priorities; to design and lead a process-oriented strategy to address the assessment’s purpose or research questions. Disposition to think critically and systematically about questions and problems of practice.
* **Principle 4: Methodology, Data Collection, and Data Analysis.** Know strengths and limits of research methodologies. Ability to match methodology with purpose of assessment and guiding questions; to collect and analyze data. Dispositions to take a critical stance in collection and analysis of data; rigorous attention to detail; creative thinking.
* **Principle 5: Interpreting, Reporting, and Using Results.** Know how to interpret data in practical terms that are relevant to the institutional context. Ability to present results concisely in reports that are useful to a variety of audiences; to use findings to make informed decisions and to align resources. Dispositions to collaborate; to represent findings accurately and fairly; to share interpretations with stakeholders, including students.

**Technology**

This course requires extensive use of technology. It is suggested that candidates will have a laptop computer with wireless capabilities and Microsoft Office Suite. Microsoft Office is available to all candidates at no cost through Moodle.

The specific technology related competencies that will be developed through the course are:

* The use of Microsoft Word to include table building, editing through Track Changes, and some analysis tasks for qualitative research.
* Ability to access and use online statistical resources.
* Advanced level literature search capabilities using a variety of search engines, including Library access.

Direct instruction of these uses of technology will occur at appropriate points in the curriculum. Even though technology skills will not be assessed directly, each of the course assignments will assume the ability to use technology based on course instruction.

**Course Assessments**

Course assessments are designed to provide evidence that students have met course objectives and can demonstrate the relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the conceptual framework. Below is a brief description of each graded assessments in the course.

All School of Education courses include key assessments that are linked to program standards and provide program feedback for continuous improvement. When you complete a course assignment that is designated as a key assessment, you are required to upload that assignment to [Taskstream](https://login.taskstream.com/signon/). Key assessments are indicated by the phrase “Key assessment for Taskstream submission” below.

**Assessments:**

1. ***Group Research Project***: This key assessment will occur in various stages throughout the course, culminating with a final research paper to include five sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. Students will work on projects in groups of 3 and will submit **one** final paper as a group. We will spend time in class generating potential research topics based on your interests and addressing each section of the research project. Your paper will be approximately 20 pages long (excluding references) and have referenced approximately 20 articles. It must follow APA guidelines for both writing and references. The paper will be evaluated according to the rubric at the end of this document. Your paper must be in Word format, 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Upload the final paper to Moodle and Taskstream by June 24, 11:55pm.
2. ***Assessment Project***: Using data provided by the instructor, students will work in pairs to design and complete a mini assessment project during class time. Each pair will share their experience and results with their classmates.
3. ***Evaluation Project***: Using data provided by the instructor, students will work in pairs to design and complete a mini program evaluation project during class time. Each pair will share their experience and results with their classmates.
4. ***Final Project Presentation***: You will present your final research project findings to your classmates. PowerPoint or poster presentations are allowed. Presentations should last approximately 15 minutes plus 5 minutes for Q&A.
5. ***Participation***: Your active participation as a valued member of our learning community is essential to the success of this course. Your participation involves a timely and thoughtful reading of assigned texts and being physically and mentally present in class. Participation entails class attendance and engagement in group discussions and activities.

### Course Grading

*Due Dates*: Assignments will be uploaded to Moodle and/or Taskstream, unless otherwise specified. Extensions to assignment due dates stated in the syllabus must be arranged with the instructor via email. Late assignments will be reduced by 10%.

The following grading scale will be used on all assignments and in determining the final course grade:

94%-100% = A 87%-89% = B+ 77%-79% = C+ 67%-69% = D+

90%-93% = A- 83%-86% = B 73%-76% = C 63%-66% = D

80%-82% = B- 70%-72% = C- 60%-62% = D-

Final grades will be determined on the following basis:

* + Group Research Project 35%
  + Assessment Project 15%
  + Evaluation Project 15%
  + Final Project Presentation 25%
  + Participation 10%

Syllabus Schedule

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Reading(s) to be completed before class | Assignment(s) Due |
| CLASS 1  What is Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER)? Why is it important to higher education work?  GUEST PANEL: Presentation on AER happenings across campus | Ch. 1 – Status of Assessment, Evaluation, and Research in Student Affairs (Wise & Davenport) | **Complete online survey before class: Perceptions of Research**  Start thinking about a possible issue you would like to explore through your research project |
| CLASS 2  Selecting a research question  Conducting a literature review  Library research  LIBRARY LAB TIME | Ch. 2 - Reading Research (Biddix)  [How to Skim an Article](https://www.prchn.org/Downloads/Reading%20a%20Research%20Article%20Quickly%20and%20Efficiently.pdf) (linked on Moodle) | **Bring 3 possible issues for your research project to class.**  Groups will be assigned today based on research interests. |
| CLASS 3  Literature review continued  Annotated bibliographies  APA writing | Ch. 3 - Reviewing the Literature (Creswell) |  |
| CLASS 4  Writing an introduction  Identifying a literature gap  Writing a purpose statement | Ch. 4 – Specifying a Purpose and Research Questions and Hypotheses (Creswell)  OPTIONAL READINGS:  Ch. 3 – Framing Research (Biddix)  Ch. 2 – Identifying a Research Problem (Creswell) |  |
| CLASS 5  Research approaches  Qual & Quant designs | Ch. 4 –Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Designs (Wise & Davenport) |  |
| CLASS 6  Qualitative methods | Ch. 7 – Collecting Qualitative Data (Creswell) | **Rough draft of introduction and purpose statement due** |
| CLASS 7  Qualitative methods continued | Ch. 8 – Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data (Creswell) |  |
| CLASS 8  Quantitative methods | Ch. 9 – Learning Quantitative Research (Biddix) |  |
| FALL BREAK |  |  |
| CLASS 9  Quantitative methods continued | Ch. 7 – Basic Statistics (Sriram) | **Rough draft of literature review due** |
| CLASS 10  Instrumentation  -Surveys  -Focus groups  -Interviews | Ch. 9 – Developing and Selecting Instruments (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie)  OPTIONAL READINGS:  Ch. 8 – Interviewing Individuals and Groups (Biddix)  Ch. 12 – Survey Designs (Creswell) |  |
| CLASS 11  Reporting and evaluating research  Results and discussion writing | Ch. 6 –Interpreting, Reporting, and Using Results (Wise & Davenport) | **Rough draft of methods due** |
| CLASS 12  Designing & planning an assessment project  Understanding the institutional and political issues surrounding assessment | Ch. 2 – Designing and Planning an Assessment Project (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie)  Appendix – Designing & Implementing an Assessment Project (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie) | Assessment project completed in class |
| CLASS 13  Data presentation and visualization  IRB and research ethics  Peer editing time in class | [Giving Effective Conference Presentations](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-319-23174-7.pdf) (students will be assigned specific chapters before class) |  |
| CLASS 14  Program planning and evaluation  Accreditation | Ch. 5 – Program Outcomes & Program Review (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie) | Evaluation project completed in class |
| CLASS 15  Final presentations  Professional development resources and publication options | Ch. 7 –The role of AER in Professional Development & Identity (Wise & Davenport) | **Final research projects due. Presentations are due.** |

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| **Group Research Project**  **Grading Rubric** | | | | | |
|  | **Beginning (1)** | **Approaching (2)** | **Meeting (3)** | **Exceeding (4)** | **Comments** |
| **Introduction / Purpose Statement** | Topic and/or purpose statement is unclear and/or unsupported. | Introduction includes purpose statement but lacks clear supporting evidence. | Introduction includes argument that leads to purpose statement. Topic is defined and supported with evidence. | Introduction includes **logical** argument that leads to purpose statement. Topic is **clearly** defined and supported with evidence. |  |
| **Analysis and Synthesis of Research** | Analysis of literature is not sufficient. | Information is not adequately analyzed, critiqued, compared, or contrasted. OR Perspectives are biased, lack current relevance, or not empirical. | Information is analyzed, critiqued, compared, OR contrasted. Perspectives may feel biased, lack empirical details, or be dated. | Information is analyzed, critiqued, compared, and contrasted. Perspectives are balanced, references are current, and empirical research is included. |  |
| **Methods** | Methods section is not clearly written **AND** certain elements are missing (Research questions, sample information, data sources, and data analysis method(s) | Methods section is not clearly written **OR** certain elements are missing (Research questions, sample information, data sources, and data analysis method(s) | Methods section is well written but **lacks some details for easy replication**. All elements are included (Research questions, sample information, data sources, and data analysis method(s) | Methods section is written in a clear manner that could be easily replicated. All elements are included (Research questions, sample information, data sources, and data analysis method(s) |  |
| **Results/ Discussion** | Both results AND discussion section are not clearly written. Connections are not made between the results and the discussion section. | Results OR discussion section is not clearly written. Connections are not made between the results and the discussion section. | Results and discussion sections are clearly written. Some connections are made between results and discussion sections. Lacks cohesion. | Results and discussion section are clearly written. There are clear connections made between the two sections, and the two sections are cohesive. The significance and implications of the study are present. |  |
| **Organization** | Writing feels disorganizes. Missing headings and transitions. | Writing is mostly organized with headings OR transitions that guide the reader through relevant themes found in the literature. | Writing is organized with headings and / or transitions that guide the reader through relevant themes found in the literature. | Writing is **well-organized** with **headings** and **transitions** that guide the reader through relevant themes found in the literature, from general to specific. |  |
| **APA** | APA formatting not followed. | Some APA formatting. | Mostly APA formatting throughout. | APA formatting throughout, both in-text citations and reference list. |  |
| **References** | <10 references. | 10+ references. | 15+ references. | 20+ references. |  |