

## Course Syllabus

**COURSE NUMBER: COMM 5800 COURSE TITLE: Applied Research**  
**TERM: Spring, 2007 SITE: WEBH INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
**Dr. Paula Witkowski**  
**(314) 968-7070**  
**paulaw@webster.edu CREDIT HOURS: 3**

### **Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to encourage critical inquiry and collaboration among practitioners, administrators, researchers, and other professionals through action research. Action research is a type of applied research that contributes to the generation of principles and theories and applies them in an educational setting. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the educator in improving or refining his or her actions.

Students are oriented to action research as a natural component of professional development and reflective practice. Students explore action research methodology through applications to self-identified professional challenges and questions. Students learn to manipulate scholarly tools such as Internet search engines, participant observation, data analysis, and dissemination of findings.

Students are encouraged to identify and research a problem relevant to their professional practice. Students will design and conduct action research projects to better understand and improve issues such as classroom management, teaching strategies, learning outcomes, school improvement, curriculum, and professional practice.

### **1. Learning Outcomes:**

Schedule of required readings, class preparations and assignments, lectures, discussions, student presentations, out-of-class assignments and exams.

- January 16:** Course Introduction  
Introduction to Action Research: Chapter 1  
Identify a Focus  
Complete *Chapter 1 Reading Guide*
- January 23:** Institutional Review Boards: Meet in Computer Lab  
Finding & Refining a Focus: Chapters 2 & 3  
Complete *Reflective Writing Worksheet*: p.16  
Complete *Identification Form*: p. 18  
Complete *Rating Scale Worksheet*: p. 41
- January 30:** Articulation & Drawing a Theory in Action: Chapters 4 & 5  
Library Visit (6:30)  
Complete *Literature Review Planning Form*: p. 35  
(#1, 2, &3)  
Conduct an *Intuitive Regression Analysis*: pp. 55-57
- February 6:** Determining the Research Questions: Chapter 6  
Draft your *Research Questions* following the guidelines on pp. 86-89  
Building a Data Collection Plan: Chapter 7  
Complete the *Triangulation Worksheet*: p. 99  
Guest Speaker: Qualitative Research
- February 13:** Field Work
- February 20:** Field Work
- February 27:** Class Meets: Mock IRB Proposal Due
- March 6:** Class Meets: Literature Review Due
- March 13:** Spring Break
- March 20:** Analyzing the Data: Chapter 8  
Develop your *Instructional Timeline*  
Critique of Action Research Progress
- March 27:** Field Work
- April 3:** Turning Findings into Action Plans: Chapter 9
- April 10:** Reporting & Sharing: Chapters 10 & 11
- April 17:** Field Work
- April 24:** Field Work
- May 1:** Presentations

May 8:

## Presentations

**This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor**

### 2. RESOURCES:

Required Text: Sagor, Richard (2005). *The Action Research Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

### 3. EVALUATION: (basis of evaluation with explanation regarding the nature of the assignment and the percentage of the grade assigned to each item below)

Assessments	Links to Course Outcomes	Percentage of Grade	
Mock IRB Proposal	10%	Literature Review	20%
Chapter Assignments	15%	Action Research Design	10%
Presentation	15%	Final Report	30%

4. GRADING SCALE: 100-90 = A; 89-80 = B; 79-70 = C; 65-69 = D

**Attendance is mandatory. (Excessive tardies will be counted as an absence!) More than 1 absence will result in lowering your grade by one grade level. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of an unavoidable absence. It is also the student's responsibility to make up missed work and pick up any handouts or notes. Come to class prepared to discuss issues related to weekly topics.**

**Note: ALL PAPERS/PROJECTS MAY BE RETURNED VIA A SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE. PAPERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR PICK-UP IN THE SOE OFFICE.**

### 5. ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY:

**(You may use or modify this statement or create your own).**

**Students at Webster University are expected to practice academic honesty.**

#### **Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is intentionally claiming that another person's work is his/her own or implying that another person's work is his/her own (through inadequate or inaccurate citations of reference material.)

Students:

- Should not copy whole portions of text from another source as a major component of papers or projects.
- Should identify the title, author, page number/webpage address, and publication date of works when

directly quoting small portions of texts, articles, interviews, or websites.

- Should appropriately identify the source of information when paraphrasing (restating) ideas from texts, interviews, articles, or websites.
- Should follow the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Style Guide when referencing all research sources.

Consequences of Academic Dishonesty:

(Instructor may list specific consequences here)

For further information about the consequences of academic dishonesty please consult the Webster University Student Handbook.

#### 6. ACCESSIBILITY/ACCOMODATIONS POLICY:

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations contact the Director of the Academic Resource Center, Dr. Pat McLeese, at (314) 968-7495.

**WEBSTER UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**Vision:** “. . . We all must work to make this world worthy of its children.” (Casals, 1970)

**Mission:** The School of Education at Webster University provides its students with the knowledge, experiences, and practical tools that help them guide both themselves and others toward lifelong learning. The School of Education is a community of educator-scholars who apply critical reflections and creative energies to enhance learning in schools and other educational settings. The faculty strives to support this community by modeling effective teaching practices based on sound theory and research. Personalized approaches create a challenging, yet supportive environment that permits the risk-taking necessary for learning and growth. The School of Education encourages its faculty and students to work actively toward this end, keeping in mind that action must be rooted in visionary, yet realistic, thinking. This thought and action process underscores the development of an inner-directed self-understanding, an outer-directed global perspective, and an appreciation of human diversity that arises from both.

**Theme:** Developing a world of learners through knowledge, leadership, and life-long learning.

The universal mandala (a circle with intersecting vertical and horizontal lines) graphically represents the conceptual framework of the School of Education. The outer circle provides the framework for a “world of learners” in cultural settings. The two axes represent the theme components of knowledge, leadership, and life-long learning. These lines are broken to emphasize the fluid relationship of the goals and integrated concepts. Each quadrant represents one of the school's four goals for its candidates: to develop knowledgeable learners, informed instructors, reflective collaborators, and responsive educators.

## **Goals**

1. Education candidates will demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of pedagogy based on inquiry and scholarship.

### The knowledgeable learner:

- 1.1 knows content that supports conceptual understanding;
- 1.2 applies tools of inquiry to construct meaningful learning experiences;
- 1.3 identifies developmental factors in student learning; and
- 1.4 understands theoretical principles of effective instruction to plan learning experiences.

2. Education candidates will incorporate multiple assessment and instructional strategies to support effective educational practices based on research and theory.

### The informed instructor:

- 2.1 designs curriculum based on students’ prior knowledge, learning styles, strengths, and needs;
- 2.2 understands and uses a range of instructional strategies;
- 2.3 uses a variety of communication modes, media, and technology to support student learning; and
- 2.4 employs a variety of formal and informal assessments to monitor learning and modify instruction.

3. Education candidates will reflect on the roles educators take as leaders of change through collaboration with colleagues, students, and families in schools and communities.

### The reflective collaborator:

- 3.1 values and integrates reflection to grow as a professional;
- 3.2 promotes communication and collaboration with colleagues, families, and community leaders;
- 3.3 seeks relationships with families and students to support student learning; and
- 3.4 initiates change that benefits students and their families.

4. Education candidates will demonstrate respect for diversity through responsive teaching and learning that values individual differences.

### The responsive educator:

- 4.1 understands and responds appropriately to issues of diversity
- 4.2 acknowledges social and cultural contexts to create effective teaching and learning environments;
- 4.3 adapts instruction to the learner’s knowledge, ability, and background experience; and
- 4.4 identifies resources for specialized services when needed.

## **Dispositions:**

NCATE defines dispositions as “the values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. “ (Professional Standards, p. 53) There is significant value in focusing attention on qualities that make an effective teacher.

1. Understands and Respects Self
  - 1.1 Understands and respects that s (he) may be different from others
  - 1.2 Embraces an openness to change (adaptability, flexibility)
  - 1.3 Exhibits curiosity
  - 1.4 Engages in reflection
  
2. Understands and Respects Others
  - 2.1 Understands, respects, and responds appropriately to diversity in a variety of settings
  - 2.2 Exhibits empathy
  - 2.3 Commits to fairness and honesty
  - 2.4 Listens respectfully to other points of view
  
3. Understands and Respects Professional Communities
  - 3.1 Commits to professional behavior in university and school cultures
  - 3.2 Practices informed decision-making in university and school cultures
  - 3.3 Communicates and collaborates in university and school cultures
  - 3.4 Accepts academic rigor (willingness to work/ high expectations)
  - 3.5 Affects change with courage and confidence