Miami University  
Department of Educational Leadership  
EDL 775 Theoretical Foundations of Educational Inquiry  
SPRING 2003

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A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Theoretical Foundations of Educational Inquiry is a seminar designed to help doctoral students explore some major discourses used in empirical educational research. It is based on the exploration of three basic discourses surrounding inquiry into educational activities. Each discourse will be examined to understand its major themes and concepts.

Goals of the Course

1. To introduce students to some important philosophical considerations in educational research.
2. To introduce students to three major discourses in empirical educational research.
3. To introduce students to the critical reading of texts from each of the major discourses in empirical educational research.
4. To encourage the student to engage in critical thinking about the nature of asking and answering questions about education.
5. To clarify for students the interactive relationship between the question they want to ask and the approach and method most appropriate to that question.

To accomplish these goals, the course will assume three important positions. (1) Education must be understood as primarily a social activity. (2) Students must actively participate in the process of their own and their peers’ education. (3) All statements of knowledge and value by students or the instructor must lay themselves open to critical dialogue.

IF IT'S NOT WORTH DOING, IT'S NOT WORTH DOING WELL
B. COURSE OUTLINE

I. STANDARD DISCOURSES

1/6  topic: Introduction to Course and Research Discourses  
background: Soltis, Jonas "Inquiry Paradigms" CSR  
Husén, T. "Research Paradigms in Education" IEE v9, 5051-5056  

1/13 topic: Positivism & Empiricism  
background: Bredo, Eric, “Positivism” CSR  
Johnson, M.K., R. Crosnoe, & G. Elder, Jr. CSR  

1/20 NO CLASS: Dr. Martin Luther King Day  

1/27 topic: Realism & Pragmatism  
background: TBA  
debate: House, Ernest, "Realism in Research" CSR  
example: Martin, Yvonne, "Sex-Role Orientation, Coping Strategy, and Prospective Women Administrators" CSR  

2/3 topic: Standard Research  
background: Kaplan, A. "Research Methodology: Scientific Methods IEE v9, 5043-5050  
example: Lee, Valerie, Helen Marks, Tina Byrd "Sexism in Single-Sex and Coeducational Independent Secondary School Classrooms" CSR  

2/10 topic: Research Evaluation #1 Class Presentations  

II. INTERPRETIVE DISCOURSES

2/17 NO CLASS TODAY/ CLASS HELD TOMORROW: M/T SWITCH DAY  

2/18 topic: Realism & Pragmatism in Interpretive Discourses  
readings to be assigned  

2/24 topic: Phenomenology & Hermeneutics  
readings to be assigned  

3/3 topic: Anthropology & Interpretive Research  
readings to be assigned  

3/10 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK  

3/17 Research Evaluation #2 Class Presentations  

III. CRITICAL (& "POSTCRITICAL") DISCOURSES

3/24 topic: Critical Research  
readings to be assigned  

3/31 topic: Postcritical Research  
readings to be assigned
C. ASSIGNMENTS

1. Research Evaluation (3 evaluations. Each 16%. Total 48%)
   Form a team of 2 persons. Each team will select one dissertation with the approval of the instructor. Each team will present 3 critiques of the dissertation—one critique for each of the discourses covered in this course. The team will write its first critique as a research note for the mythical Standard Educational Research Review, the second for the fictional Interpretive Research Quarterly, and the third for the incredibly monikered CAPER (an acronym for the Critical and Postmodern Education Review). Since the review boards for each of the three journals are fully embedded within the relevant discourse, your "research note" will need to be written within the discourse for an audience who is well versed in that discourse. The team will present an oral presentation which will NOT be a simple reading of the paper to be turned in. Although the oral presentation will be given in class, each member will receive a grade based on the team’s written essay. If individual grades are desired, then multiple essays will be accepted. Please avoid telling me what standard, interpretivist, or critical researchers "would" or "would not" do. You are passing yourself off as one who works in that discourse and are writing for those in that discourse. Make sure to cite evidence from the dissertation to support claims about it and from the literature to support claims from the theory. Point to the "missed opportunities" as well as those things that are clearly inappropriate or strong to those within the discourse that you are writing for.

2. Term Project (52%)
   (a.) Read some articles on an education (or other related) topic.
   (b.) Find an empirical problem (question) in the literature not satisfactorily resolved by your reading. (Maybe the problem was never recognized, maybe you question a basic assumption, perhaps it just needs a fresh viewpoint.) (c) Discuss the issue using each of the three discourses. (d) For two of the discourses discuss what unique or specific problems are created by your question; for the third discuss your problem in depth and create a preliminary research design. (e) This project needs to be written up so that each of the three section includes a statement of the research problem and a brief outline of the project.

3. Study Group (Pass/Fail)
   Form a study group. Meet at least once a week for at least one hour to discuss readings. You may wish to divide responsibility for the close reading of different articles amongst your group. At the end of the semester turn in a brief log of the study group. One log per study group.
D. READINGS

CSR = Copy Shop Reader: A collection of readings that can be purchased from the Oxford Copy shop


