

University of Southern Maine
Department of Human Resource Development
School Psychology Program
SPY 751: Advanced Research Seminar

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Course overview:

Using an individualized format, this course examines research techniques appropriate for educational and clinical settings. The research techniques covered in the course emphasize a problem-solving assessment methodology with a particular focus on research related to improving academic skills and reducing problem behaviors in school-age students. Students conduct a literature review, design a study, and present it in a formal presentation to their dissertation committee. This course is graded Pass/Fail, with an approved dissertation proposal necessary to pass the course. This course is taken in the semester before conducting the dissertation study and is a prerequisite for SPY 759: Psy.D. Dissertation.

Connections to SEHD Core Values:

1. *Democracy* – to enact and elicit inclusive dialogue, freedom of expression, and participatory decision-making that includes respect for and consideration of multiple views and perspectives within the best practices and ethics of school psychology.
2. *Civility and Caring* – to attend to the health of our learning and working communities through maintaining constructive communication, protecting individual dignity, and exhibiting empathy, compassion, and openness in all aspects of school psychology practice.
3. *Equity and Diversity* – to seek understanding about, engage inclusively with, and foster the voice and visibility of individuals of all identity groups and perspectives participating in school psychology practice.
4. *Social Justice* – to speak for and empower people who are disenfranchised and work towards enactment of just and ethical practices in school psychology within a more just society.
5. *Ethical practice* –to engage in and insist on the highest level of professional practice of school psychology, including the implementation and use of APA and NASP ethical guidelines and practices.
6. *Scholarship* – to gain, create, teach, and apply knowledge and skills using methods of research and inquiry that reflect the diverse range of accepted practices within our various academic and professional disciplines and which incorporate the most recent body of scientific findings related to school psychology practice.
7. *Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement* – to engage ourselves and our various external partners as learners in our respective fields, use formative feedback, and adjust our practices for mutual and continuing professional growth and for the embodiment of just and equitable best practices in school psychology.

Course Outcomes:

The student will develop competency in:

1. Reviewing and critiquing of school psychology research methods and procedures;
2. Applying appropriate research methods that are matched to the specific research question(s), target behaviors, settings, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of school-age students;
3. Reviewing and applying appropriate ethical decision-making with regard to the use of applied research in educational and clinical settings;
4. Evaluating the results of research data according to a problem-solving framework to refine and improve outcomes for all students.

Course materials:

Course web site on the Blackboard courseware system: www.courses.maine.edu

The following texts are available from the University of Southern Maine Portland Bookstore, from book websites, or from the publisher:

Required:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Ed.). Washington DC: Author.

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Florence, KY: Cengage Publishing

Special Needs:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Also make an appointment with the Office of Support for Students with Disabilities at 780-4706.

Assessment of Student Achievement:

All assignments, except where noted, should be typed, double-spaced, and written according to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 6th Edition. All assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus or as indicated by the instructor. Late assignments will not be eligible for full credit and one point will be deducted from the total points awarded for each day late, unless the student has made arrangements with the instructor to turn in the assignment at a later time. Typically, late assignments will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances. This course is graded Pass/Fail. Students must design, present, and obtain approval of a dissertation study in order to pass the course.

Emergency and weather closing procedures

If students need to know whether the University campuses are open, and, if closed, when they will re-open can be obtained from the USM Storm Line at 207-780-4800.

Course Activities and Assignments

This course is individualized and self-designed, based on the goal of helping students to design, write, and defend a dissertation proposal. There are four assignments for the course:

1. **Select a research topic.** Students will discuss with the instructor (advisor) a range of possible research topics and select one that matches the student's interests and advisor's expertise.
2. **Form a dissertation committee.** Once a topic is selected, the student works with the advisor to form a dissertation committee according to the guidelines in the Psy.D. Program Handbook.
3. **Write a dissertation proposal.** Students will read the guidelines for dissertation proposals, as well as additional readings assigned by the instructor and write a proposal which contains the following elements:
 - Literature review
 - Research question and research hypothesis
 - Method, including
 - Design
 - Participants
 - Setting
 - Materials
 - Procedures, including schedule
 - Data analysis methods
 - Anticipated results
 - Appendices with study materials such as teaching scripts, stimuli, etc.
4. **Present the proposal for approval.** Once the draft proposal is approved by the instructor (advisor) it will be sent to the student's dissertation committee for review. When all members of the committee agree that it is ready, the student will arrange with the committee members to present a formal proposal at which the committee members will decide whether the proposal is approved. In cases where the committee finds that the proposal needs more work, the student will revise and re-submit the proposal until it is accepted. Students should note that USM faculty are on contract from 1 September through 31 May each year. They are not contracted to work in the months of June, July, and August and any work performed then is entirely at the faculty member's discretion. Except under extraordinary circumstances, dissertation proposals and defenses are not held during June, July, and August. Students must plan their research carefully and take into account the time needed for faculty review prior to a defense as well as faculty contracts and availability.