

Educational Studies 400: Senior Research Seminar

Trinity College Fall 2003
M 1:15-3:55pm Life Sciences 131
<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ>

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(revised October 2003)

Objectives:

The senior research seminar provides a capstone experience for majors in the interdisciplinary Educational Studies Program. Students build upon acquired skills and evolving interests to carry out an independent research project, fulfilling the senior exercise requirement. Weekly meetings offer a continuous forum for support and critical feedback from peers. In particular, seminar participants will:

- critically analyze various examples of qualitative, quantitative and historical research in education
- design and conduct an original, independent research project based upon primary sources
- present both oral and written versions of the final research project to peers and professors

Readings:

Two books to be purchased:

Michelle Fine, *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).

James Shulman and William Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Other reading will be made available in seminar or via Blackboard

The Seminar Paper Process:

During the first half of the semester, we will analyze several examples of research in educational studies, from pre-school settings to institutions of higher learning. All members of the seminar are responsible for completing the readings, reflecting on the questions posed by the professor, and fulfilling their assigned roles for the week.

Authors write a paper in response to an assigned question and distribute their writing to the entire seminar via email, by Sunday 9pm on the day before class. Good seminar papers respond to the question with an insightful argument, supported by direct evidence from the readings. Cover the basics, but also stretch your mind and abilities. Follow the advice offered by Ms. Frizzle from the *Magic Schoolbus*: "Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy."

Suggested length is 1-2 single-spaced pages (or less than 750 words). When quoting or paraphrasing an assigned reading for a seminar paper, write a simple in-line citation:

When ethnographer Michelle Fine's "naïve notions" of the dropout problem were "uncomfortably disrupted" by her observations, she reframed her entire research question (p. 4).

Facilitators lead a group discussion on an assigned paper for approximately 10 minutes of the seminar. Good facilitators read carefully and think ahead about how to spark a lively discussion on substantive issues in the seminar paper. For example, you may choose to:

- Call attention to a key sentence in the paper to clarify its precise meaning
- Dialogue with the author on why s/he followed path X rather than Y in the paper
- Propose an alternative response to the assigned question, and ask the seminar whether or not they find it more convincing than the author's response
- Identify counterfactual evidence from the readings which the author did not mention in the paper, and ask whether or not it challenges the author's entire argument
- Compare one seminar paper to another, from the same week or a previous week

The audience, or remaining members of the seminar, contribute to the discussion. **Everyone** reads and prints out a copy of the paper to bring to our seminar.

Distributing short seminar papers via Blackboard:

- Open Blackboard (<http://my.trincoll.edu>), go to Educ 400 Senior Research Seminar, then click on Discussion Board to read your specific question
- Write your short paper in a word processor application and save it on your disk.
- In Blackboard, click "Add New Thread."
- Copy and paste your short paper into Blackboard. Add a subject line and click submit.
- Please DO NOT post your writing as an attached document unless instructed to do so.
- If the technology fails, then distribute your paper the old-fashioned way: make 14 copies and place them on the table outside my office before the deadline, then inform all of us (via phone, telegraph, or carrier pigeon) that we may pick up our copies there.
- Papers are due on Sunday at 9pm on the day *before* seminar.

Final Exam

To evaluate comprehension and analysis of the common seminar readings as a whole, a one-hour essay exam will be arranged on a date during finals week.

The Research Project Process:

Each student designs, conducts, and presents an *independent research project* during the fourteen weeks of the seminar. Your project may investigate *any topic* related to educational studies, but it must focus on an original researchable question using *primary sources* and *appropriate research methods*. For example, you could do:

- *qualitative research*, such as interviewing or ethnography (where the interview transcripts or detailed field notes serve as primary sources)
- *quantitative research*, such as analyzing a dataset (the primary source), which you could construct on your own (via surveys, etc.) or obtain from official data sources (such as an educational or governmental agency)
- *historical research*, such as analyzing change over time in archival documents, periodicals, visual images, oral histories, etc.
- *or any combination* of the three

Since this seminar brings together students from multiple academic disciplines (including psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, political science, philosophy, and more), all work in our interdisciplinary seminar will be evaluated on a uniform set of criteria:

Research Project Criteria

- 1) Does the author pose a thought-provoking, researchable question (or hypothesis) and explain its significance to educational studies?
- 2) Does the author connect the question to the existing research literature and move beyond into new territory?
- 3) Does the author identify the most appropriate primary sources and research methods for this study?
- 4) Does the author present a clear and insightful thesis that directly addresses the research question (or hypothesis)?
- 5) Is the author's thesis persuasive? Is it supported with convincing evidence and analysis?
- 6) Is the paper (or presentation) well-organized? Are sources properly and consistently cited?
- 7) Does the author follow ethical guidelines for research?

Research Proposal 1

Write 1-2 paragraphs on research question and its significance (criteria 1).
DUE Sunday, Sept 7th at 9pm via Blackboard

Research Proposal 2

Write 2-page proposal of research question, its significance, and your primary sources and research methods (criteria 1, 3).
DUE Sunday, Sept 14th at 9pm via Blackboard

Research Proposal 3

If your research involves the collection of information from human participants, go to Trinity's Institutional Review Board (IRB) website (<http://www.trincoll.edu/comm/irb>), then download and complete the appropriate Word document (criteria 7).
DUE Sunday, September 21st at 9pm via Blackboard (post it as an attached document)

Research Proposal 4

Write a 3-5 page proposal of research question, its significance, literature review, and your primary sources and research methods (criteria 1, 2, 3).
DUE Sunday, September 28th at 9pm via Blackboard (post it as an attached document)

Individual Conferences

May be scheduled with professor at any time, but will be mandatory during the week of November 3rd. Be prepared to discuss progress of your research, submit a working title of your paper, and nominate at least 2 Trinity faculty/administrators who would be appropriate guest evaluators for your oral presentation on December 8th.

Thesis & Evidence Paper

Write a 5-page paper that restates your research question, its significance, your primary sources and research methods, and ADDS your working thesis and interpretation of one or more pieces of primary source evidence (criteria 1, 3, 4, 5).
DUE Sunday 9pm during your assigned week (either Nov 9th, 16th, or 24th) via Blackboard (post it as an attached document)

Public Research Presentation

Deliver a 10-minute oral presentation of your research paper-in-progress and respond to questions by peers and professors. A guest faculty member, nominated by the student, will conduct an evaluation based upon criteria 1-7 above. Visual aids (such as PowerPoint, overhead transparencies, etc.) are highly recommended. On Monday, December 8th.

Final Research Paper

Incorporate feedback from the oral presentation into a final draft, to be evaluated by the seminar instructor, using criteria 1-7 above. Suggested length is 15-20 pages, with an appropriate method for citing sources (such as APA, MLA, Chicago style, etc.)
DUE Monday Dec 15th at 12 noon. Submit one paper copy AND one digital copy (via email or diskette), to be made available on the Ed Studies website for future researchers.

Assessment

2 seminar papers (due on Sunday 9pm for weeks assigned below)	2 x 10 =	20 pts
Research Proposal 1 (due on Sunday, Sept 7th at 9pm)		comments only
Research Proposal 2 (due on Sunday, Sept 14th at 9pm)		10 pts
Research Proposal 3 (if applicable, due on Sunday, Sept 21st at 9pm)		comments only
Research Proposal 4 (due on Sunday, September 28th at 9pm)		10 pts
Thesis & Evidence Paper (by Sunday 9pm for weeks assigned below)		10 pts
Public Research Presentation (Monday, Dec 8th, with guest evaluator)		15 pts
Final Research Paper (Monday, Dec 15th at 12 noon)		35 pts
Final exam (to be arranged during finals week)		10 pts

Initially, the total number of points equals 110. When calculating the final grade, your lowest 10-point score will be dropped, resulting in an adjusted total of 100 points.

Be advised that adequate work earns a C, good work earns a B, and outstanding work earns an A in this class. Students are expected to engage in academic honesty in all forms of work for this course. If this is unclear to you, ask me for clarification.

Schedule your time wisely on your research project. In general, you should be:

- finalizing your proposal, IRB, and research logistics in September
- collecting primary source materials in October
- analyzing your evidence and writing your interpretations in November
- delivering your public presentation and final written draft in December

Attendance is mandatory for all seminar meetings, with exceptions granted only for documented medical or family emergencies. Any unexcused absence will result in a reduction of 5% from your final grade.

The penalty for overdue assignments will be 10% for every 12-hour period beyond the deadline, with exceptions granted only for documented medical or family emergencies.

Please notify me during the first week of the course if you require any special accommodations.

Seminar Sessions

Week 1: Sept 1

Welcome back lunch at Jack's home

Introduction to syllabus, weekly assignments, brainstorming on research projects

Preview of week 2 readings

Week 2: Sept 8

National Research Council, *Scientific Research in Education*. (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2002, pp. 1-6, 97-126.

David Berliner, "Educational Research: The Hardest Science of All," *Educational Researcher* 31 (November 2002): 18-20.

Molly Schofield, "Increasing Interracial Relationships," unpublished senior research project, Educational Studies Program, Trinity College, December 2002.

author 1 _____ facilitator _____

author 2 _____ facilitator _____

author 3 _____ facilitator _____

author 4 _____ facilitator _____

author 5 _____ facilitator _____

Research Proposal 1; Types of Research Questions; Peer review

seminar break _____

Week 3: Sept 15

Michelle Fine, *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

Lynn Olson, "Students to Investigate Causes for Achievement Gaps," *Education Week* 29 May 2002 <<http://www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=38students.h21>>.

Arielle Levin Becker, "Teens Identify Risk Factors: Dropout Rate Focus of Research," *Hartford Courant* 16 August 2003.

"Teens Use Research to Reduce School Dropout," Institute for Community Research <<http://www.incommunityresearch.org/news/pressreleases/pressaug13-2003.htm>>.

author 6 _____ facilitator _____

author 7 _____ facilitator _____

author 8 _____ facilitator _____

author 9 _____ facilitator _____

Research Proposal 2

Overview of Institutional Review Board (IRB): <http://www.trincoll.edu/comm/irb/>
Sample approved IRB forms

Dialogue with teens from the Summer Youth Research Institute, about dropout research, at Institute for Community Research, Hartford.

seminar break _____

Week 4: Sept 22

Reba Page, "Do-Good Ethnography: Review of Framing Dropouts" *Curriculum Inquiry* 24 (1994): 479-502.

author 10 _____ facilitator _____

author 11 _____ facilitator _____

author 12 _____ facilitator _____

Research Proposal 3; Connecting Research Questions and Appropriate Primary Sources

Workshop with librarian Jenny Groome on secondary source research tools in Ed Studies

seminar break _____

Week 5: Sept 29

Research Proposal 4
Peer review; Self-directed schedules

seminar break _____

Week 6: October 6 NO SEMINAR - continue work this week on your research projects

Week 7: Oct 13

James Shulman and William Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

author 13 _____ facilitator _____

author 14 _____ facilitator _____

author 15 _____ facilitator _____

author 16 _____ facilitator _____

author 17 _____ facilitator _____

author 18 _____ facilitator _____

seminar break _____

Week 8: Oct 20

Hal Scott, "What Game Are They Playing? A Review of The Game of Life." *Journal of College and University Law* 28 (2002): 719-755

Kent Smith and J. Hughes, "Athletes and Trinity College: Trinity's *Game of Life*." PowerPoint presentation by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, October 2003 (download from Blackboard).

author 19	_____	facilitator	_____
author 20	_____	facilitator	_____
author 21	_____	facilitator	_____
author 22	_____	facilitator	_____

Discussion with Kent Smith, Director of Institutional Research & Planning, Trinity College

Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Trinity College
http://caribou.cc.trincoll.edu/orgs_localirp/

seminar break _____

Week 9: Oct 27

Beth Bailey, "From Panty Raids to Revolution: Youth and Authority, 1950-1970," in J. Austin and M. Willard, eds., *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).

Dana Banks and Jack Dougherty, "City-Suburban Desegregation and Forced Choice: Review Essay of Susan Eaton, *The Other Boston Busing Story*." Unpublished draft, Oct 2003.

author 23	_____	facilitator	_____
author 24	_____	facilitator	_____

Telephone conference call with seminar and paper co-author Dana Banks, '03

seminar break _____

Week 10: Nov 3

Mandatory individual conferences with instructor on status of research projects

Week 11: Nov 10

Thesis and Evidence Papers

author A	_____	facilitator	_____
author B	_____	facilitator	_____
author C	_____	facilitator	_____
author D	_____	facilitator	_____
seminar break	_____		

Week 12: Nov 17

Thesis and Evidence Papers

author E	_____	facilitator	_____
author F	_____	facilitator	_____
author G	_____	facilitator	_____
author H	_____	facilitator	_____
seminar break	_____		

Week 13: Nov 24

Thesis and Evidence Papers

author I	_____	facilitator	_____
author J	_____	facilitator	_____
author K	_____	facilitator	_____
author L	_____	facilitator	_____
seminar break	_____		

Week 14: Dec 1

Comparison of two previous student research presentations on videotape

seminar break _____

Week 15: Dec 8

Public Research Presentations (schedule TBA)