

**SPECIAL EDUCATION THESIS/PROJECT AND SEMINAR (EDME 531-01)
SPRING / 2014**

Professor: Nancy J. Patrick, Ph.D.

Course Dates: January 12 to May 10, 2014

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Email: npatrick@messiah.edu

Office hours: Tuesday evenings or by
appointment

Faculty Availability via discussion page in Canvas, email, text, phone, or Skype (nancyjpatrick)

Contact: I will be checking in on the course several times per day (unless otherwise notified). I am also very willing and happy to communicate individually with students as needed.

If you have questions about the course (assignments, dates, expectations, etc.) please post the question(s) on the General Course Discussion page so that everyone enrolled in this course can benefit from the answers.

Please contact me via email only if your question is of a personal nature. If you contact me individually, my commitment is to respond to you in 24 hours or less on weekdays. If you have an urgent question on the weekend, you may contact me on my cell phone (717) 497-9846.

I have scheduled online "office hours" for Tuesday evenings. I am happy to talk on the phone, via the chat tool in Canvas, on Skype or in whatever way may be most convenient.

Faculty Expectations of Students

Preparation: At the beginning of the course you are expected to read the entire course syllabus, familiarize yourself with the course calendar and practice navigating the content in each of the Canvas tabs used in this course. Most of the course material is presented through modules and assignments will be uploaded via Canvas.

Instructional Time: The primary mode of instruction for this course is guidance and formative feedback given by the instructor on the thesis or project proposal, all drafts of the paper or project and on the final paper.

Non-instructional Time: Non-instructional time in this course includes the formulation a thesis hypothesis or project plan, the writing of the proposal, required research on the topic(s), conducting the research or completing the project, writing the drafts, editing the drafts and writing the final paper.

Asynchronous/Synchronous Learning: This course is primarily an experience of asynchronous learning, which means that you will work independently at your own pace within certain schedule constraints/limitations.

Announcements: Be sure to check Canvas regularly for announcements. Announcements are include important course information and in many cases are time sensitive. Any time I post an announcement I will also send an email notification for the announcement.

Course Description:

In addition to satisfactory completion, of course work, thesis or project will be a capstone experience for master's degree in Special Education. Students enrolled in the thesis/project will be enrolled in a concurrent seminar. The faculty member for this seminar will broadly guide the students' research efforts and facilitate peer review, collaborative problem solving, and integration of program objectives into the students' research questions, methods, and discussions. (Pre-requisite: EDME 545, Educational Research, and at least 24 EDME credits).

Program Objectives:

1. Analyze, evaluate, and respond to current trends and issues in education. L-1
2. Conduct quality research to address issues in student learning. L-4
3. Differentiate instruction to promote learning for all students. P-1
4. Use quality assessment data to inform instructional practices. P-2
5. Analyze, critique, and develop effective curriculum. P-3

THESIS OPTION: The thesis is an individual research paper that should meet the general requirements of a scientific publication. It allows for the treatment of empirical as well as purely theoretical or normative issues. The student will be fully responsible for deciding the topic/problem for discussion and method of investigation and for undertaking the research. The topic should lie within the area of concentration for those pursuing the master's only. Research can involve empirical data that may take some time to gather, analyze and document.

The instructor for the course EDME 531 advises the thesis. The instructor and the student choose one or two additional readers from the Messiah College Ranked Faculty. For research involving human subjects, the student must get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data gathering. Information about and forms for the IRB can be found at the following location: www.messiah.edu/academics/irb.

Course Objectives:

1. Identify a topic to examine within the field of Special Education; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.a.
2. Apply scientifically sound, thorough and precise thought to the topic for given period of time; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.b.
3. Complete the different stages in the research process. CWGEO 1.14.1.2.c.d.
4. Consider how one's faith commitments inform choice of research topic, research methods, and discussion of findings. CWGEO 1.14.1.4.a.

PROJECT OPTION: The project should address a practical problem in the field of Special Education and present a solution to the problem. In contrast to an academic thesis, the project may take the form of a curriculum plan for a specific course or a short article about teaching techniques for a teaching publication.

The instructor for the course EDME 531 advises the project. The instructor and the student choose one or two additional readers from the Messiah College Ranked Faculty. For research involving human subjects, the student must get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data gathering. Information about and forms for the IRB can be found at the following location: www.messiah.edu/academics/irb.

Course Objectives:

1. Articulate a relevant problem to examine within the field of special education; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.a.

2. Conduct a literature review to illuminate the problem; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.b.
3. Apply research methods to collect data on the problem and its potential solutions; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.c.d.
4. Create a solution to the identified problem; CWGEO 1.14.1.2.c.d.
5. Consider how one's faith commitments inform choice of research topic, research methods, and discussion of findings. CWGEO 1.14.1.4.a.

Textbook and Other Course Materials:Required

American Psychological Association. (2010). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Helpful APA Site: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch09_s1-0002.html

Recommended

Creswell, J.W. (2008). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Course Requirements:

The primary assignment in this course is the completion of the project or thesis paper. Within this broad task, students will be submitting the thesis or project proposal, multiple drafts of each chapter, and communicating very frequently with the thesis/project instructor advisor. The instructor advisor and student should meet face to face or via real-time video chat, or by phone, several times throughout the semester.

Though a timeline for completing the various portions of the thesis is suggested below, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to plan the thesis or project work, ensuring that it is completed at least two weeks prior to the end of the semester, allowing time for final review and presentation of findings. A formal presentation of the work completed is required with a project, but is also encouraged with a thesis.

Writing the Thesis Proposal

Deciding on your topic

1. Choose a topic of interest.
2. Begin your literature review (read articles on the topic). Investigate at least five sources. This should help you to narrow your focus.
3. Write your research questions. This is normally an overarching question and sub-questions.

Example:

Main research question:

Do rubrics help students with specific learning disabilities perform better on content area summative assessments?

Sub-questions:

- What are rubrics?
- Are rubrics used by the majority teachers in content area subjects?
- What types of rubrics are used?
- Are rubrics used to support students with specific learning disabilities?

4. Choose the type of research that will answer the questions you have about rubrics..
Here are some possibilities:

Ethnographic - attempts to describe group behavior and interactions in social settings. It relies on qualitative techniques especially observation and careful recording of events and social interactions.

Historical - attempts to describe and explain conditions of the past. It generally relies on qualitative data such as written documents and oral histories.

Descriptive - attempts to describe and explain conditions of the present. It relies on qualitative and quantitative data gathered from written documents, personal interviews, test results, surveys, etc.

Correlational - attempts to explore relationships or make predictions. It relies on quantitative data such as test scores, grade point averages, attitudinal instruments, etc. which can be correlated and shown that some relationship exists between or among them.

Action and Evaluation Research - attempts to determine the value of a product, procedure, or program in a particular (e.g., school, district) setting with the goal of improving same. Action and evaluation research does not attempt to generalize results for a broader population.

Causal Comparative - attempts to explore cause and effect relationships where causes already exist and cannot be manipulated. It relies on both qualitative and quantitative data such as written documents, interviews, test scores, etc.

Experimental - attempts to explore cause and effect relationships where causes can be manipulated to produce different kinds of effects. It relies mostly on quantitative data such as test scores and measures of performance.

Adapted from: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/edu/apiccian/edstat01.html>. See also:

<http://www.ecs.org/html/educationissues/research/primer/appendixa.asp>

5. Submit your THESIS PROPOSAL. This is a 3-4 page document outlining:
 - a. Your topic
 - b. Your research questions
 - c. A list outline of your methodology – the steps you plan to take in collecting and analyzing your research
 - d. The outcome you expect from your research – how you believe it will be useful to others
 - e. A listing of the 5 sources you have investigated.
 - f. Attachments: All complete documents for any information you will be soliciting (participant letters, questionnaires, interview questions, etc.)
6. Meet with your thesis advisor about your proposal. This can be via skype, or even via email, if face-to-face is not possible. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that your proposed topic is viable, and to give you permission to move forward with your research.
7. When your thesis proposal has been accepted, begin to move forward with your research.

Writing the Project Proposal

Deciding on your topic

1. Choose a project of interest. A project might be a set of materials such as a student workbook or a collection of teacher resources, or broad educational plan such as a curriculum or an outline for a school program.
2. Begin your literature review (read articles on topics that will provide you with the necessary background to create your project). Investigate at least five sources. This should help you to narrow your project focus.
3. Describe your project in a paragraph.

Example:

I will create a parent and child social skills summer curriculum to be used with children in my community who have autism spectrum disorders.

4. List the components that you will submit as part of your project

Example

I will submit:

- A student booklet with 25 summer activities that include adapted alternatives. Each lesson will be 2-4 pages in length.
- A parent's guide with step-by-step action plans for each of the 25 activities.
- Tips for methodology in the preface of the teacher's guide
- A checklist for evaluating each activity and measuring progress.

5. Submit your PROJECT PROPOSAL. This is a 3-4 page document outlining:
 - a. Your topic
 - b. A paragraph outlining your project
 - c. A list outline of the components of your project
 - d. The outcome you expect from your project – how you believe it will be useful to others
 - e. A listing of the 5 sources you have investigated.
 - f. Attachments: All complete documents for any information you will be soliciting (participant letters, questionnaires, interview questions, etc.)
6. Meet with your thesis advisor about your project proposal. This can be via skype, or even via email, if face to face is not possible. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that your proposed project is viable, and to give you permission to move forward with your literature review and project.
7. When your project proposal has been accepted, begin to move forward with your literature review.

Written Work:

It is important that your written work meet graduate level standards. Papers submitted digitally should meet the same criteria that hard copy papers must meet. Any paper you submit should look like you would want it to look if it were in printed form. Please follow these guidelines:

- A typical page of writing is 12 pt font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Only a full page of writing counts as a page.

- Use APA style for citations and referencing.
- All papers must have your name and the name of the assignment at the top, or on a title page.
- All papers should have titles.
- Longer papers normally require headings, following APA guidelines.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation are very important. Edit your paper well.
- Lack of clarity in writing, lack of coherence in organization or reasoning, and redundancy which extends the paper beyond its substance will all result in a lower grade. Creating and following an outline when you write can help you avoid some of these problems.

Feedback on written work:

My feedback on your written work is designed to help you develop in your thinking and writing. For this development to take place, it is important for you to understand the difference between feedback and editing. Feedback alerts you to the kinds of errors you are making; editing would correct those errors. For example, if you have errors in punctuating plurals and possessives, feedback will tell you that you have errors in this area, and editing would correct those errors for you. As another example, if you have a sentence that is unclear, feedback will tell you that a sentence is unclear; editing would change the sentence for you to make it clearer. My role as your instructor is to provide you with feedback, not edit your work. I will try to provide helpful feedback to you so that you can improve the quality of your papers, rather than repeating the same errors. It is your responsibility to find and use the resources you need to improve your writing. I suggest the “Purdue Owl” website as an excellent writing resource, and have a link to this site on our Canvas course home page. You may also choose to use the Writing Center at Messiah College.

It is your responsibility to look carefully at your returned papers, make sure you can see my comments (you will find my comments on your corrected papers, in Canvas), and initiate dialogue with me if anything is unclear. I welcome student questions or comments following up on my comments on your papers!

Thesis Grading Guidelines:

The grading of a thesis is unlike the grading of other writing assignments, because typically the advisor works with the thesis student on multiple drafts, with the aim of honing the thesis until the writing is exemplary. Because of this process, a grading rubric based on the final product can be problematic. A final exemplary product could be a result of a disproportionate amount of editing work done by the advisor. To ensure that the thesis is truly a student product, and that the grade awarded accurately reflects the student’s abilities, these perspectives and policies will guide the process:

1. The advisor’s main role is to comment on and guide the *content* of the thesis. Where language errors (grammar, spelling, punctuation and general structural clarity) are concerned, the advisor only marks errors as “grammar” or “edit” or in some cases “unclear”. The student is responsible for following up on this feedback, learning from it, and correcting errors. If the student is unable to make proper corrections based on this feedback, the student must find someone to work with him/her in editing the paper. The student may need to be prepared to pay for editing services. If this step is taken, the student is responsible for ensuring that he/she remains the source of all content, and that an outside editor is only addressing language errors.

2. The advisor can return any portion of writing to the student if 10 grammatical errors or problems with clarity have been identified, without reading or commenting further. This is an indication that the student needs to spend more time editing his/her own writing in its entirety *before* sending it to the advisor again.
3. The advisor likewise bears no responsibility for teaching thesis writers APA style. The advisor can merely tag a problem as “APA”, and the student bears the responsibility for learning what error has been made in APA style, and correcting it.
4. If more than five re-writes are required for significant portions of the thesis, whether for grammar, clarity, content or APA style, the maximum grade the student can receive is an A-. If the number of rewrites of any portion reaches 8, the maximum grade the student can receive is a B. If the number of re-writes exceeds 8, and a grade of B will not be possible, the student will be required to enroll in the thesis course for a second term, and also follow the Graduate Studies protocol for receiving help in improving writing.
5. These guidelines are intended to impress upon thesis writers the importance of careful and extended editing and writing, taking personal responsibility for their writing, and avoiding the temptation to view their thesis advisor as an editor of their work.

Drafts of Paper	40%
Final Paper	60%

A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
B+	87-89%	F	72 or <
B	83-86%		
B-	80-82%		

Course Policies:

Extra Credit- Extra credit points are not awarded in this course.

Late Assignments- All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the due date assigned. A 10% deduction in the points available for each assignment will occur for each day an assignment is late (unexcused). Failure to complete any assignment by the end of the course could result in the student failing the whole course.

Returned Assignments- Assignments will be returned to the student for review of the assigned grade. The assignment will include comments from the professor and an indication of the basis for the grade assigned. If students have questions about the grade assigned it is up to the student to contact the professor and set up a time to discuss the grade. Students may also ask for clarification about a grade through email to the professor within three days of receiving the grade for any assignment. All assignments will be reviewed, graded, and grades posted in the grade book a maximum of one week after the due date.

Program Policies:

Academic Integrity- The [Academic Integrity Policy for Graduate Students](#) is found in the graduate student handbook. Primary responsibility for knowledge of and compliance with this policy rests with the student.



Americans with Disabilities Act - Any student whose disability falls within ADA guidelines should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodations or equipment needs necessary to complete the requirements for this course. Students must register documentation with the Office of Disability Services. Contact DisabilityServices@messiah.edu, (717) 796-5382.

Library and Librarian Assistance - The Library is an obvious source of information for many of your class projects. Currently, Beth Mark is the specific library liaison assigned to the education discipline. Although any librarian is trained and prepared to assist you, Beth works specifically with education and is most familiar with the resources and databases that relate to this field. Do not hesitate to contact her if you are having trouble locating specific sources for your assignments, as she is more than willing to help you. For her specific work schedule, contact her directly at BMark@messiah.edu or by calling (717)796-1800, ext. 3590. [Click here for resources and databases that relate to this field](#)

The [Writing Center](#) is available to any graduate student who has a desire to improve his/her writing. The role of the center is to provide feedback (not editing) on written work. Feedback alerts you to the kinds of errors you are making, lets you know when something is not clear, and suggests that you have not fully supported an argument. Feedback does NOT correct your grammatical errors, rewrite your sentences, or provide you with the specific points to support your argument. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to find and use the resources you need to improve your writing but connecting with our Writing Center, either online or face-to-face, is a good place to start.

Student [technology recommendations](#) are found on the Information Technology Services website. These guidelines have been put in place to best equip you to have an optimal technological experience in our online programs.

[Technological support](#) for students is available during the days and times listed on the Information Technology Services homepage. Students also have access to technical support (i.e. tutorials, help functions, etc.) through the College’s portal, MCSquare, and through the College’s Learning Management System.

Statement of Copyright Protection- “The materials in this Messiah College course are only for the use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be further disseminated.”

Statement of Confidentiality - “Students may be asked to post written work and to engage in written dialog with other class members within an LMS. The student should be aware that although confidentiality within the course environment is encouraged, it is possible that users in and outside the course may have access to course content.”

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments Due for Thesis	Assignments Due for Project
Wk 1	Intro to course	Read all documents	Read all documents
Wk 2	Intro to course and research process	Research Proposal	Project Proposal
YOU MAY NOT PROCEED WITH ANY OF YOUR RESEARCH UNTIL YOUR PROPOSAL HAS BEEN APPROVED BY YOUR ADVISOR.			

Wk 3	Writing the Literature Review	Report on progress	Report on progress
Wk 4	Writing the Literature Review	Literature Review : draft	Literature Review: draft
Wk 5	Writing the Literature Review	Literature Review : final	Literature Review: final
Wk 6	Methodology	Methodology Chapter: draft	Methodology Chapter: draft
Wk 7	Methodology	Methodology Chapter: final	Methodology Chapter: final
Wk 7	Data Collection or Project Writing	Report on progress	Report on progress
Wk 8	Data Collection or Project Writing	Report on progress	Report on progress
Wk 9	Describing the findings or Project Writing	Findings Chapter: draft	Report on progress
Wk 10	Describing the findings or Project Writing	Findings Chapter: final	Report on progress
Wk 11	Describing implications of Findings or Project Writing	Implications Chapter: draft	Project: draft
Wk 12	Describing implications of Findings or Project Writing	Implications Chapter: final	Project: final
Wk 13	Introduction and Conclusion	Introduction and Conclusion: draft	Introduction and Conclusion: draft
Wk 14	Introduction and Conclusion	Introduction and Conclusion: final	Introduction and Conclusion: final
Wk 15	Final editing	Submit thesis	Submit project
Wk 16	Presentation	Presentation of thesis (optional)	Presentation of project (required)