**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH:**

**INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATIONS**

**(REF 601)**

**Fall 2014**

Instructor: Kamden K. Strunk, Ph.D. Phone: 601-266-6520

Class hours: Online, asynchronous Email: Kamden.Strunk@usm.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, 9:00AM-11:00AM Office Address: OMH 133

Wednesdays, 3:00PM-6:00PM

Or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

An orientation to the information, skills, and competencies necessary to understanding research in education, along with a rudimentary introduction to conducting research.

**COURSE OVERVIEW:**

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the research process specific to the behavioral sciences. Students will become familiar with the various methods and processes of research through hands-on exploration in areas of interest. The course will provide students with a foundation in research terminology and methodology. Students will be exposed to statistical software (SPSS) and have the opportunity to practically apply course content by conducting quantitative research projects. The course is intended to be applicable to students in all disciplines in which the study of human behavior is relevant.

**Required Course MATERIALS:**

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

Schutt, R. K. (2012). *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of social research* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Access to SPSS version 20.0 or higher is required for this course. You may use SPSS in the campus library in Hattiesburg or the Gulf Coast, or may choose to purchase a personal copy on your home computer. If you choose to purchase a personal copy, look for the Premium GradPack (NOT Base GradPack) is recommended. This can be leased for approximately $95 for 12 months or $55 for 6 months. It can also be purchased for slightly more.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To become a critical evaluator of published research.
2. To become familiar with the scientific method and be able to formulate original and testable research questions.
3. To become familiar with the ethics involved in preparing and conducting research.
4. To gain experience in conceptualizing, designing, conducting, and reporting on an original research study.

**Mode/Style of Teaching:**

The teaching style for this class is a four-domain holistic education model, wherein education is targeted toward the whole person. In this model the “whole person” is conceptualized as the body, mind, soul, and heart, or the “doing”, “thinking”, “creating”, and “feeling” functions. Weekly discussions and course projects are all designed to target these domains and functions to encourage development and growth in all of these areas. This class is also built on a constructivist and social learning model, wherein students are expected to learn from the textbook, from the instructor, and from each other. This is accomplished through a reciprocal social interaction process where students contribute their understanding and knowledge to each other, thus enhancing the overall understanding of everyone in the class and allowing everyone to construct a more complete base of knowledge than would otherwise be possible.

**Course Assignments:**

1. **CITI Training:** You must complete CITI ethics training. A portion of this training is required by the graduate school of all students, and a portion is required by the Institutional Review Board prior to conducting any research. To complete the training: Go to http://www.citiprogam.org/ and register as a new user, then login. There is a more detailed explanation of the procedure for accessing the training on Blackboard. You will be required to complete three modules: 1) SBR Faculty, Students, and Staff at the University of Southern Mississippi (Basic Course), 2) Basic Graduate Students (common RCR course), and 3) IRB module. Once you have completed the training, submit your CITI certificate as a PDF or Word document to Blackboard. If you have completed CITI training for another class or for research purposes: Ensure that your training has not expired, and ensure you have completed all three modules. The training must have been completed as a USM student. Then submit your completion certificate. This assignment is worth 50 points.
2. **Discussion Questions:** Each week there are discussion questions posted. These will help you to further your understanding of the text and think about the information presented in different ways. Each discussion question response needs to be 2 to 3 paragraphs in length. You may only respond to questions that have not been responded to until all questions have responses posted to them. Respond as early in the week as possible to allow your classmates time to read your thoughts and interact with you. **You will respond to three discussion questions per week, and posts are due by 11:59PM on Wednesday at the very latest.** Discussion question posts are worth up to 5 points each.
3. **Peer Responses:** You are also expected to respond to the posts of your classmates. This is part of the process described as cooperative learning. As part of your attendance requirement in this course, you will be reading all of the posts your classmates write. Then, respond to the posts that are most related to your work, and to which you feel you have something to add. Your peer response should be more than a simple agreement or disagreement, but should extend what your peer posted, add something from your own understanding or experience, or add additional information to what they have posted. Whenever possible, post your peer responses to a different question than you posted your discussion question response. This process allows more learning than would occur with any individual posting their own knowledge, or with any person learning individually, because it becomes a process of reciprocal, interactive, community learning. Remember to be respectful and professional in your peer responses. Peer responses should be a minimum of 1-2 paragraphs in length. Peer response posts are worth up to 5 points each. These responses should be posted as early and as often as possible, but **a minimum of three are required each week, and are due by Friday at 11:59PM at the very latest**.
4. **Original Research Project:** You will complete an original, quantitative research project. These projects are completed in small groups (3-5 people per group). Because many students take this course prior to completing a Statistics course, the expectation for analysis is minimal. However, you will search the literature in an area of research, construct a literature review that highlights the need for further study, construct a research question, design a questionnaire/survey, collect original data with human research participants, analyze the data, and write a manuscript. Your research project will also undergo review and approval by the Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. This project is completed in stages, which are further described in the Project Description. In total, this research project is worth up to 500 points.

**Grading Structure/Requirements:**

There are a total of 1000 points in the course, which means you can take your total points and divide by ten to determine your percentage grade in the course. The grading structure is as follows:

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| **Assignment Type** | **Total Points Possible** |
| CITI Training | 50 |
| Discussion Questions | 225 |
| Peer Responses | 225 |
| Original Research Project | 500 |
| **TOTAL POINTS** | **1000 points** |

The course is graded as follows: A = 100-91%, A- = 90.99-90%, B+ = 89.99-89% B = 88.99%-81%, B- = 80.99-80%, C+ = 79.99-79%, C = 78.99-71% C- = 70.99-70%, D+ = 69.99-69% D = 68.99-61% D- = 60.99-60%, F < 60%.

**LATE WORK POLICY:**

Late work is not acceptable in graduate work. However, if you find that you are falling behind in your coursework, it is of the utmost importance that you immediately contact your instructor. As soon as you know there is any problem, immediately contact the course instructor. This is the best way to stay caught up with the course, and to achieve the highest possible grade.

If you find that you need to submit late work **it is required that you contact the instructor before submitting any late work.** Any late work submitted without first contacting the instructor to discuss the work and form a plan for getting caught up to date with coursework will not be accepted. This is to make sure that you receive all information you need about which assignments will take priority in getting caught up, and what, if any, credit can be given to late work before beginning. Communication is the key in getting caught up if you find yourself behind on work, so call, email, or stop by, whatever you need to do to get in contact!

If any late work is accepted following communication with the instructor and establishment of a written plan, it will be worth a maximum of 50% of its graded point value. The exact percentage will be established in the written plan you make with the instructor.

**TENTATIVE Course Calendar:**

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| **Week** | **Readings** | **Content** | **Assignments** |
| 1  8/20/14 | None | Introductions | Post Intro  **Project Part One Due** |
| 2  8/25/14 | Ch. 1 | Introduction to Social and Behavioral Research | **Project Part Two Due** |
| 3  9/1/14 | Ch. 2 | Foundational Issues in Behavioral Research | **Project Part Three Due** |
| 4  9/8/14 | Ch. 3 | Ethics | CITI Training Due  **Project Part Four Due** |
| 5  9/15/14 | Ch. 4 | Defining and Measuring Constructs |  |
| 6  9/22/14 | Ch. 5 | Sampling Methods and Issues | **Project Part Five Due** |
| 7  9/29/14 | Ch. 6 | Design and Causal Inference | **Project Part Six Due** |
| 8  10/6/14 | Ch. 7 | Experimental Research |  |
| 9  10/13/14 | Ch. 8 | Survey Research |  |
| 10  10/20/14 | Ch. 14 | Quantitative Data Analysis |  |
| 11  10/27/14 | Ch. 15 | Report Research Results | **Project Part Seven Due** |
| 12  11/3/14 | Ch. 9 | Qualitative Research |  |
| 13  11/10/14 | Ch. 10 | Qualitative Analysis | **Project Part Eight Due** |
| 14  11/17/14 | Ch. 11 | Evaluation and Policy Research |  |
| 15  11/24/14 | None | **Thanksgiving Holiday** |  |
| 16  12/1/14 | None | **Final Project Due** | **Final Project Due (Project Part 9)** |

*Note:* Each week except Week 15 and 16, Three Discussion Question responses and Three Peer Responses are also due.

**Possible Changes to the Syllabus:**

This syllabus is your contract for production in the course. If changes are made to it they will be posted on Blackboard and announced in class or by email. No changes increasing requirements will be made as they might adversely affect your grade.

**Additional Information and Policies:**

Graduate study requires a high level of independence, accountability, and conscientiousness in order to achieve success both in their program and in careers that require graduate study. As such, a number of guidelines are helpful that make clear the expectations of graduate students.

1. Students are expected to adhere to the highest standard of academic integrity. Students are bound by and responsible for knowing the information contained in the policies set forth in the ESR Academic Integrity Policy and the USM Student Handbook. In no instances will lack of familiarity with these policies excuse a violation. Procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty and consequences can be found in the above-mentioned policies, and may range from a reprimand and opportunity to rewrite an assignment, a reduced grade, a ‘0” or “F” being awarded for the assignment, a “0” or “F” being awarded for the class, and recommendation for dismissal from the program, suspension, or expulsion from the university.

Violations of this policy include plagiarism in all forms and extend to the use of internet resources. Any information that originates from another source must be noted as such in student materials. Other forms of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, buying papers, copying paragraphs/pages of text/whole papers off the Internet, copying another student’s answers/papers, multiple submissions (e.g. “self plagiarism”), etc.

1. Students are expected to be in class for the entire class period every class meeting. If there is an unavoidable conflict (such as a professional conference that coincides with a class meeting) this should be communicated with the instructor as early as possible. In the event that you have a legitimate emergency that prevents you from attending class, you should: 1) contact the instructor by phone and/or email immediately upon learning you will be unable to attend class (this should be before the class meets), 2) take appropriate steps to catch up with in-class learning opportunities, 3) ensure that all of your work that was due during that class meeting makes it to the instructor before the class meeting ends (email it, have a friend drop it by the ESR office, etc.). In addition, students are expected to participate in online course requirements during the assigned timeframes as they are considered similarly to face-to-face participation.
2. Students are responsible for checking their USM email account regularly for course announcements and course-related communications.
3. This course uses Blackboard as a tool to manage course readings and other materials not included in the required texts for this course and for online course discussions. Students are expected to have a working knowledge of Blackboard in order to access materials and participate in online course discussion.
4. All individuals, students and instructor alike, are expected to adhere to standards of academic honesty, common courtesy, and respect for others. Free discussion, inquiry, and expression in class are encouraged. Behavior that interferes with either teaching or learning is not acceptable. Talking, ringing phones, eating, etc. can be extremely distracting; rude, impolite, or offensive behavior will not be tolerated. Students may be barred from class as a result of behavior that *in the opinion of the professor* negatively affects the learning/work environment. Since cell phones and pagers can be disruptive, except as provided for in advance, cell phones and pagers should be silent during class time.
5. If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies Mailing address: 118 College Drive #8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001; Telephone (610) 266-5024; TTY: (601) 266-6837; Fax: (601) 266-6035. Individuals with hearing impairments can contact ODA using the Mississippi Relay Service at 1-800-582-2233 (TTY) or email Suzy Hebert at Suzanne.Hebert@usm.edu.

**Project Assignment**

*Semester Long Project Description*

*Total Points 500 - 50% of overall grade*

This project will be a comprehensive semester effort. The components build on one another, with feedback from your instructor to improve your work. Please be sure to complete all components in order, in a timely manner, to receive feedback to make your project the best possible end product, and to ensure you receive the highest possible score in the final project. If you select a topic that is of personal and/or professional interest, this can be a project that adds value for you in exploring ideas and theories in a practical setting, and in which you create something you can take with you from this class into your career. You are required to select a topic related to your field of study.

The project involves two elements that you will engage in simultaneously: A thorough literature review, and an empirical research study. You will review the research regarding your topic to determine contemporary theory and empirical findings in the area, and develop a literature review that summarizes the current understandings in this area and areas in need of further development (i.e., where your study fits). You will also select appropriate data sources (i.e., survey methods) based on your research questions. You will conduct an appropriate study to help you answer some research question related to your topic. This may be discussed in meeting with your instructor, or developed independently.

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| Part | Due Date | Description | Points |
| Part 1 | Week 1  8/24/14  Sunday  11:59PM | By Sunday of Week 1, you will post your research interests and/or ideas on Blackboard. Post 2-3 ideas or interest areas, and explain them so that someone not familiar can understand what you are interested in studying. The purpose of this exercise is to help your classmates form groups. So, please respond to others’ ideas to help form common interests and gain clarity about how your ideas will overlap. | 15 |
| Part 2 | Week 2  8/27/14  Wednesday  11:59PM | On Monday, the instructor will post topics that were most popular, most discussed, and most actionable from the Week 1 posts. You will sign up for groups using Blackboard, and will indicate a 1st and 2nd choice. Group assignments will be announced via email and Blackboard announcement after the Wednesday deadline for expressing preference. | 15 |
| Part 3 | Week 3  9/7/12  Sunday 11:59PM | You will (as a group) write a formal project proposal. You will identify your topic, the goal of your project, the data sources you will use, and how you will budget your time to ensure all remaining due dates will be met (a project timeline). There are no formal length requirements; you will write enough to meet the requirements. You will simply express your topic, the purpose of the project, and identify your data sources (which journal articles, interview contacts, etc., you will use), and the timeline you’ll follow to complete the project. Keep in mind when proposing where you will sample your participants that you will need to plan to collect 150 between the group members.  Also, list at least 10 peer-reviewed sources you plan to use in your literature review.  Finally, list some tentative research questions and hypotheses for this study. | 50 |
| Part 4 | Week 4  9/14/14  Sunday 11:59PM | This week, you will submit an annotated bibliography of your peer-reviewed sources. You are required to have at least 15, but most students find that a successful project exceeds the minimum number of sources, as the literature in most areas numbers well above this minimum standard. Continue gathering literature until you are confident you have a grasp on the field of research you are interested in. Use APA style citations, followed by your annotation, and list the citations in alphabetic order. To save space, you can double-space the citation and single-space the annotation, if you so desire.  The annotations do not need to be extensive. They should be enough that, on reading one, you would know the key variables and findings. In other words, if you were to look at this bibliography in two or three years, you would know what these studies were about and would be able to incorporate them into a presentation, publication, proposal, or even dissertation or thesis.  Do NOT use the abstracts as annotations. They typically fail to capture the kind of information you will find useful. | 50 |
| Part 5 | Week 6  9/28/14  Sunday 11:59PM | You will submit a copy of the questionnaire you plan to use. Along with the questionnaire, submit a narrative describing the measures. For each construct you wish to measure, provide an operational definition (with citations!), a rationale for that definition, and a way in which you plan to measure it (with citations and rationale as appropriate). Include an explanation of why this will be measured, as relative to the literature you have reviewed and the research questions.  Any revisions suggested by the instructed must be fully addressed before submitting the IRB application for review. | 50 |
| Part 6 | Week 7  10/5/14  Sunday  11:59PM | Complete an IRB application for your study. Follow all directions included in the application form, and also be sure to follow the directions provided in annotated video IRB form on Blackboard. Following these directions closely and giving attention to detail will make the IRB application process as simple as possible. This step is NOT complete until the instructor approves the IRB form for submission to the Institutional Review Board AND the IRB approves a final version of the application. Keep in mind this may require several revisions – to be successful in future steps be attentive to the IRB process. | 50 |
| Part 7 | Week 11  11/2/14 | This week, you will turn in a copy of your data. That you will turn in an SPSS data file. In addition to the raw data, you will turn in a data analysis plan. Give a detailed plan of what you will do in analyzing your data, step by step, and why. | 45 |
| Part 8 | Week 13  11/9/14  Sunday 11:59PM | First draft of the paper. Note that this is **not** a ‘rough draft’ but a first draft. This is a full, complete, formal draft of the paper including all elements of the paper, addressing areas of feedback from the outline and previous project parts, and making a convincing argument. Be sure to look at the rubric for this draft. The first draft should not use first or second person anywhere. You should use appropriate APA style citations, include an APA style title page and headings, and a reference page in APA style. This is a formal paper that is the culmination of your research project.  It will include a full literature review that shows the need for your study, a formal statement of the research questions as positioned in the literature, a method section, a results section, and a discussion section. You may include tables and figures as needed, following APA style. | 100 |
| Part 9 | Week 16  12/1/14  Monday  5:00PM | Final draft of the paper. You will receive detailed feedback about your first draft. In the Final Draft, you will address all areas of feedback, and create an improved, polished version of the paper. This will be a convincing argument of motivational theory and practice in your topic area, and will utilize proper APA style, correct grammar, and correct spelling throughout. This draft of the paper should be of high enough quality that you would feel comfortable sending it in for peer-review at a conference or for publication as a representation of your work. | 125 |
| **TOTAL POINTS** | | | **500** |