

**SPECIAL EDUCATION 3230**  
**Research Methods in Special Education**  
**Spring, 2006**

**Instructor: Douglas Fuchs, Ph.D.**

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Time: 3:35 - 6:25, Mondays  
Credit: 3 hours  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

The primary purpose of this course is to help you become a knowledgeable consumer of special- and general-education research. That is, when you complete this course, you should be able to read a research article and understand it. But more than this, you should be able to think critically about the work and determine whether the author's conclusions are warranted. You will also learn the differences between qualitative and quantitative research; and, in the quantitative research domain, you will learn about survey, correlational, causal-comparative, and experimental research.

**Course Requirements**

There are 5 course requirements. First, you must attend class. Second, you're expected to participate in class. Third, you'll take 3 quizzes to assess your knowledge of the required text ("Educational Research"). Fourth, you and another student from class (whom you will choose as a partner) will critique 3 research papers of my choosing. Fifth, you will write a research paper not to exceed 15 pages. I will describe the specific requirements of the quizzes, critiques, and research paper to you in detail. There will be no final exam.

The 3 critiques and 1 research paper should be typewritten on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, double spaced, with 1" margins, and in black type. Font size may not be smaller than 11-point. (In other words, do not use 10-point font or smaller.) For each critique, the page limit is 3 pages. For the research paper, 15 pages not including references. For the critiques and research paper, the cover sheet should indicate "Critique #1," or "Critique #2," or "Critique #3," or "Research Paper"; your name; and the date of submission. The critiques and research paper will not be accepted if they exceed maximum allowable length. Do not use a binder or folder; simply staple the paper at the upper left-hand corner.

### Grading

Maximum scores for each of the course requirements follow: (a) class participation – 10 points; (b) each quiz – 5 points (total: 15 points); (c) each critique – 15 points (total: 45 points); (d) research paper – 30 points. Maximum grand total: 100 points.

### Course Timeline

<b>Class</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	1-16		
2	1-23	Chapters 1-2 Overview and selecting a research topic	
3	1-30	Chapter 3 Preparing a research plan	NO CLASS
4	2-6	Chapter 4 Selecting a sample *Stanovich: Testimonials *Lorenzo's Oil	
5	2-13	Chapter 5 Selecting measures *Campbell and Stanley	Quiz #1
6	2-20	Chapter 6 Descriptive research	
7	2-27	Chapter 7 Correlational research	Critique #1 (Internal validity)
8	3-6	Chapter 8 Causal-comparative research	SPRING BREAK

<b>Class</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
9	3-13		NO CLASS
10	3-20	Chapter 11 Descriptive statistics	Critique #2 (Internal and external validity)
11	3-27	Chapter 9 Experimental research *Stanovich: Falsifiability	Quiz #2 (Not including chapters 12-13)
12	4-3	Chapters 12-13 Inferential research	
13	4-10	Chapters 14-15, 17 Qualitative research	Quiz #3
14	4-17	Chapter 20 Action research *Stanovich: Essentialism *Fuchs & Fuchs	Critique #3 (Internal and external validity)
15	4-24	Chapter 22 Evaluating research reports	Research paper

### **Honor Code**

Vanderbilt's Honor Code governs all work in this course. For each assignment, I will explain how the Honor Code applies. If you have questions, please ask me for clarification. Uncertainty about the Honor Code does not excuse a violation.

### **Required Readings**

Campbell, D.T., & Stanley, J.S. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L.S. (1998). Researchers and teachers working together to adapt instruction for diverse learners. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 13, 126-137.

Gay, L.R., & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Stanovich, K.E. (1998). *How to think straight about psychology*. New York: Longman.