

Loyola University Chicago  
School of Education

**CIEP 488: Action Research to Improve Teaching and Learning**  
Spring, 2018

**Instructor:** Laura Swanlund, Ph.D., LCP, NCSP

**Office hours:** By appointment

**Email:** lswanlu@luc.edu

**Time:** Online

**Required Text**

Efron, S. E. & Ravid, R. (2013). Action research in education: A practical guide. New York: Guilford Press.

Additional readings will be provided by the instructor.

**Course Description**

This course is designed to provide students with the foundational information on preparing for a school-based, action-research project. Students will learn the fundamentals of engaging stakeholders, defining the research problem, examining existing research about the problem, formulating research questions, conceptualizing a method to answer research questions, and preparing for appropriate data collection. While much of the information provided can be used to develop any kind of action research project, there will also be a focus, albeit limited, on assisting students with the development of their individual Doctoral Research Projects (DRP). However, students will receive primary assistance on their own DRP with their DRP chair.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Learn the fundamentals of school-based, action research
2. Learn how to set the stage for action research and define the research problem
3. Review literature relevant to the research topic
4. Formulate socially valid research questions that reflect social justice principles
5. Conceptualize methodology and data collection that aligns with the research question
6. Recognize legal and ethical considerations pertinent to the standards of practice in research.

**School of Education's Conceptual Framework**

The School of Education at Loyola University Chicago, a Jesuit and Catholic urban university, supports the Jesuit ideal of knowledge in the service of humanity. Social action through education is addressed within this course. We endeavor to advance professional education in the service of social justice, engaged with Chicago, the nation, and the world. To achieve this vision the School of Education participates in the discovery, development, demonstration, and dissemination of professional knowledge and practice within a context of ethics, service to

others, and social justice. We fulfill this mission and address diversity by preparing professionals to serve as teachers, administrators, psychologists, and researchers; by conducting research on issues of professional practice and social justice; and by partnering with schools and community agencies to enhance life-long learning in the Chicago area. This course will equip students with the knowledge, skills of inquiry, and ethics necessary to be professional and socially just researchers. The examples used in this course illustrate how educational research can illuminate issues of social justice. In addition, the research methods used in this course also add to students' ability to understand the diversity of perspectives that researchers use to address social problems. [www.luc.edu/education/mission/](http://www.luc.edu/education/mission/)

### **IDEA Course Objectives**

The Following IDEA objectives will be a primary focus of the course:

1. Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing
2. Learning how to find, evaluate and use resources to explore a topic in depth
3. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Each course you take in the School of Education is evaluated through the IDEA Campus Labs system. We ask that when you receive an email alerting you that the evaluation is available that you promptly complete it. To learn more about IDEA or to access the website directly to complete your course evaluation go to: <http://luc.edu/idea/> and click on **STUDENT IDEA LOGIN** on the left hand side of the page.

### **Diversity**

In concert with the conceptual framework for the School of Education, faculty and students will be expected to show respect and sensitivity to individual, cultural, social, and economic diversity. In this spirit, as we look at questions of organizational theory, instructional leadership and student achievement, it will be our challenge to create will and capacity within our schools so that all educational stakeholders can fulfill the promise of education.

### **Dispositions**

Professionalism, inquiry, and social justice are indicators of growth for different levels in the program. Dispositions will be assessed through Live Text and are not factored into your grade. Refer to the Dispositions rubric in Live Text for information about those assessed in CIEP 488.

### **IDEA Course Evaluation**

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### **Syllabus Addendums**

[www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/](http://www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/)

This link directs students to statements on essential policies regarding *academic honesty*, *accessibility*, *ethics line reporting* and *electronic communication policies and guidelines*. We ask that you read each policy carefully.

This link will also bring you to the full text of our conceptual framework that guides the work of the School of Education – ***Social Action through Education***.

### **Recommended Readings**

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

Stringer, E. T. (2014). *Action research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

### **Loyola Library Resources:**

Library Tutorials (e.g., searching for books, articles, etc.):

<http://libguides.luc.edu/c.php?g=49660&p=2505294>

**RefWorks** is an online tool to help you organize and store your library searches. Here is the link to register for an account (Free to Loyola students). You can also generate references pages in APA style. <http://www.refworks.com/refworks2/?r=authentication::init&groupcode=RWLoyolaUC>

**SOE Librarian:** Tracy Ruppman, the librarian for the School of Education, is an invaluable resource. Over the years she has supported countless students at all phases of their research endeavors. Tracy can be reached at [truppman@luc.edu](mailto:truppman@luc.edu), or via phone at (312) 915-6949.

### **Course Structure**

This class will have two primary components. The first units—introduction to action research and setting the stage for action research—are foundational. The first component is an introduction to participatory action research (PAR). PAR is an approach that is both a philosophy and a set of action steps. This introductory unit will place greater emphasis on the philosophy of action research. As will be detailed in your readings, PAR is quite different from traditional research. Central to PAR is the idea of doing research WITH rather than TO people. We will explore what this might mean both philosophically as relates to social justice and also more specifically in terms of your work in the field as school psychologists.

The second unit is focused on defining the problem of practice and preparing for the PAR. The weeks that we focus on this topic are designed to lay the groundwork for thinking through what is known about the topic, what the research question may be related to the problem of practice, and the corresponding research methodology and data collection procedures that align with the research question. Here we will discuss research methodology designs, validity and reliability of data sources, and the overall logistical considerations in conceptualizing an action research project. This portion will also help prepare you for the DRP, which will include a

conversation around choosing a chair and other essential considerations before beginning your proposal.

At this end of this course the goal is for you to have the conceptualization for your DRP. This will prepare you for the fall semester when you will begin writing the proposal and setting the stage to engage in the action research project.

### **Format of the online course**

The course calendar on page 8 details the topic, associated readings, and any assignments for that week. Here are some highlights of the schedule:

- Discussion questions and a screencast lecture for the week will be posted before Monday of that week.
- You post an initial response to the discussion by Thursday, and response to two peers by Friday
- The assignment for that week are due by Friday
- You will be provided feedback on the discussion and assignments by Sunday evening of that week. Therefore, each Monday is a fresh start to the new topic.

*I cannot stress enough how important it is to stay with the course timeline.* Everything builds in this course leading up to your conceptualization paper. This is why each week we start the topics on Monday and you receive feedback by Sunday. Please pay attention to the feedback. If you misunderstand a concept and do not read the feedback than you will have a snowball effect of not understanding the content, which will impact your assignments and concept paper.

There is no times where we meet as a group on-line. You are more than welcome to hand in assignments before the day it is due or complete the discussion requirements before Thursday. Make the weekly format work for your schedule.

All assignment information is fully posted in Sakai in the Assignments tab.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation Procedures**

Assignments must be completed on time and submitted by the times and dates indicated on the course schedule below. If you believe you will be late with an assignment, please email Laura to work out an alternative plan. If you do not work out a plan with the instructor, ten percent of the total points possible will be deducted for each day past the due date/time. All written assignments (unless otherwise specified) must be typewritten and conform to the writing style and formats specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition.

Course Requirement/Assignment	Due Date	Points Possible
Introduction	1/19	5
Discussions	Ongoing 7 x 5 points	35
Setting the Stage Outline	2/9	15
Stakeholder Interview	2/23	30
Literature Review Outline	3/16	20
Methods and Instruments overview	4/13	30
Project Outline	4/20	15
Concept Paper	4/28	50
<b>Total Points</b>		<b>200</b>

### Assignment details:

Introduction on Discussion Board: A portion of your participation grade will be based on the completion of a post to the Discussion Board introducing yourself to the class. This will consist of a brief description of yourself, your research interests, and your favorite restaurant. The information will help you connect with your fellow classmates. You do not need to respond to peers.

Discussions: During this course there will be 7 discussions on Sakai. You need to participate on the discussions, and I will be monitoring your written responses. I will post a “**Threaded Discussion**” questions for the week based on the chapter(s) and topic assigned. **Each student in the class will provide one thoughtful initial response to each threaded discussion and two responses to peers.**

Your responses to each of these questions should be brief (2-4 paragraphs) but thoughtful, providing evidence that you have read the required reading and thought about the material. It is a good practice to cite the reading to support your argument. Note that the threaded discussion section is not where you ask me questions; it is where you discuss the material with the class. The initial responses are due by *11:59pm on Thursday*.

In addition, each student must provide a brief response to two posts by peers. These responses should be 3-5 sentences in length, and provide a thoughtful analysis of the discussion thread. Posting a message saying “I agree with person X” with no additional elaboration or logical thought is not an acceptable message *The responses to peers are due by 11:59pm on Friday*.

**Please spread out your initial response and response to peers so that all conversations include a thoughtful analysis.** I will be monitoring the discussion threads and clarify

content throughout the discussion, as well as provide feedback at the end of the discussion.

Assignments: The following assignments will prepare you for the concept paper. Refer to the posted assignments and rubrics in Sakai for further details.

#### Assignment 1: Setting the Stage Outline

The purpose of this assignment is to set the stage for the potential research project. You will reflect on 3 essential steps before designing the research: the context of the research, seeking consensus from stakeholders, and establishing your role.

#### Assignment 2: Stakeholder Interview

The purpose of this assignment is to interview at least one stakeholder about a potential action research project. The goal of is to understand the stakeholder's perception of research needs within the setting, and to utilize their input to determine a potential topic area.

#### Assignment 3: Literature Review Outline

The purpose of this assignment is to begin examining the literature related to your action research topic. You will provide a diagram or outline that summarizes the overall topic area (main theme), and then subthemes from this topic.

#### Assignment 4: Methods and Instruments Overview

The purpose of this assignment is to help you start thinking about the potential methodology considerations for an action research project. The overview will be brief and provide the essential information about the methodology sections.

#### Assignment 5: Project Outline

The purpose of this assignment is to help you organize the outline of actions to consider before beginning the DRP proposal.

Concept Paper: The purpose of the final concept paper is to describe your thoughts and plans for beginning to work on the Dissertation Research Proposal. Here you will provide information on the research topic, site, scope, potential methodology, and ethical considerations. This is an opportunity for you to expand on your thoughts about the research project.

Percent of Possible Points	Grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+

73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
60-66	D
<60	F

**Livertext**

All students, except those who are non-degree, must have access to LiveText to complete the benchmark assessments aligned to the Conceptual Framework Standards and all other accreditation, school-wide and/or program-wide related assessments. You can access more information on LiveText here: [LiveText](#).

### Course Calendar

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>Readings Due this Week</b>	<b>Assignments due by 11:59pm on Friday. Discussion questions are posted by Monday. Initial response due by Thursday, two responses to peers by 11:59pm Friday.</b>
1 1/15	Introduction to the course	Syllabus	Introduction Post
2 1/22	Introduction to Action Research	1) Efron & Ravid- Ch. 1 2) Song et al.- Best Practices in Conducting School Based Action Research (posted to Sakai)	Discussion #1
3 1/29	Conceptualizing the research topic	See materials posted in Sakai	Discussion #2
4 2/5	Setting the stage for Action Research	Stinger Chapter 3 – posted in Sakai	Setting the Stage Outline due
5 2/12	Ethical Considerations and the IRB	Johnson & Christenson Research Ethics – posted in Sakai Belmont Report	Discussion #3
6 2/19	Introduction to the library and review of the literature	Library Resources posted in Sakai Efron & Ravid pages 17-31	Stakeholder Interview Due
7 2/26	Defining the Research Problem and Purpose	Efron & Ravid pages 13-17	Discussion #4
8 3/15	Spring Break		
9	Choosing a DRP Chair	TBD	Literature Review Outline Due



3/12			
10 3/19	Research Question	Efron & Ravid pages 31-38 Johnson & Christenson pages 95-101 – posted in Sakai	Discussion #5
11 3/26	Methods: Quantitative	Efron & Ravid- Ch. 3 Quantitative information posted in Sakai	Discussion #6
12 4/2	Methods: Qualitative	Efron & Ravid- Ch. 3 Qualitative information posted in Sakai	Discussion #7
13 4/9	Data Collection Tools (Instruments)	Standards of assessment reliability and validity posted in Sakai	Methods and Instruments overview Due
14 4/16	Preparing for the project and proposal	Efron & Ravid- Ch. 4	Project Outline Due
15 4/23	Q&A Work on Concept Paper		Concept Paper due Saturday 4/28