



# CEP 991a

CEP 991a Research Methods for  
Technology Rich Learning Environments

## **Please note: Provided as a sample only**

The following is provided to you as a sample syllabus for the course. Please note that instructors and dates are subject to change. Course contents, readings and assignments are likely to be updated and may vary. Please check with the current course catalogue <http://reg.msu.edu/> for details and contact the instructor of record should you have any questions.

### **Syllabus** **CEP 991A: Research Methods** **for Technology-Rich Learning Environments**

(Special Topics in Learning, Technology and Culture)

Summer 2012 (May 28 - July 20)

Instructor: Ralph Putnam ([ralphp@msu.edu](mailto:ralphp@msu.edu))

This course will focus on research methods for studying a variety of issues related to learning and teaching in online environments and classroom and other settings making use of computers and other current technologies. We will emphasize (but not exclusively) qualitative methods and methodologies.

The central goals of the course are

- to assist you in developing an understanding of the purposes, tools, assumptions, and limitations of qualitative research;
- to enable you to become a critical reader of research employing qualitative methods;
- to support your learning about particular qualitative methods used in research in education and educational technology; and
- to develop shared and individual collections of resources for learning about research methods and tools for carrying out research.

#### **Introduction**

When I was studying educational psychology in graduate school in the early 1980s, learning about research methods and methodology was relatively straightforward. We took a lot of courses in statistics and experimental design. We threw in a bit of ethnography to address the then-alternative approach to traditional quantitative research, but for the most part if it was research, it was quantitative. The research paradigms employed in educational research since that time have blossomed into what can seem a blooming, buzzing confusion. This diversity of method has enriched the scholarly discourse in education and educational technology, but it poses challenges for the novice researcher. The key, I believe, is to learn enough about the many research approaches being used today to be able to engage in the broad conversation about technology, education, and learning and immerse yourself in one or two particular research approaches to become competent in carrying out research.

Courses in research methods tend to be either broad overviews of research approaches (e.g., CEP 930) or in-depth forays into particular methods (e.g., CEP 932, 933, or a course in discourse analysis). My hope in this course is to provide a middle ground. We will be reading and learning about research approaches considered “qualitative” research to meet the need of becoming familiar with them. We will also be learning about and trying out specific research methods and strategies to help you develop research competencies (e.g., designing interviews, collecting online data, coding data). We will at best be able to have you stick your toe in the water of these methods; it is impossible in a class of students with diverse research interests to learn in depth all the methodological tools you will need for your research. Thus, another important goal of the course is to develop a rich and growing collection of resources to support you in learning about and carrying out research. Work on this together will allow you to dig in deeper with methodological issues that concern you and simultaneously create an informational resource for us all. The best image I have for this currently is an in-house wikipedia for educational technology research. As we progress through the summer, we can decide whether to keep our resource collection closed to people in the course or to open it to the EPET community or the research community more broadly.

#### **Course Activities**

- Reading and discussing chapters and articles about research methods and methodology, with an emphasis on coming to better understand qualitative research
- Reading and critiquing empirical studies that use various research methods, with an eye toward understanding the methods used.
- Trying out research strategies and tools, such as designing interviews and different approaches to coding data. We will do this work both in groups and individually.
- Working collectively and individually on building our educational research library/resource

## Assignments

### Critical Research Summaries.

For this course, a *critical research summary* is a summary and analysis/critique of the design and methods on an empirical study. These are similar to the research critiques you did in your first year, but focusing more specifically on the methods used. You will write three critical research summaries, one on studies chosen from a list and two on studies you select and have approved by the instructor.

### Method Toolkit Activities.

We will have several activities that involve carrying out some chunk of research design, data collection, or analysis. You will be working in groups on some of these, individually on others.

### Resource Rooms & Pages.

You will be contributing to our online educational research library/resource. We will be assigning *curators* for various resource rooms and pages.

### Reading Responses & Discussions.

You will be submitting brief written responses to some readings and participating in discussion forums about the readings. (Most of this activity will take place online after our two-week on-campus session ends.)

### Grading

Critical Research Summaries (3)	25%
Method Toolkit Assignments	25%
Contribution to Research Resource	25%
Reading Responses & Participation	25%

## Official Stuff

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.** The University's policy concerning academic integrity is covered in the Spartan Life booklet, General Student Regulations. According to the handbook, "...no student shall claim or submit the work of another as one's own. For more information about this and other scholarship issues, please consult the Spartan Life handbook: <http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/>

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

**1.01** claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.

**1.02** procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.

**1.03** complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.

**1.04** allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.

**1.05** alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.

**1.06** fabricate or falsify data or results.

Additional resources and information about what constitutes plagiarism may be found at <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html>

**Student disabilities.** Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, they should call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY).