I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A body of original scholarly work by an individual student. Involves the preparation of a research proposal, under the guidance of a thesis advisor, and its subsequent implementation. The final report will consist of the following sections: (1) Focus of the Study, (2) Review of the Literature, (3) Methodology of the Study, (4) Results of the Study, and (5) Discussion of the Findings. Both the proposal and the final report must be approved by a thesis committee, consisting of the thesis advisor, and two other faculty members. The thesis committee must be approved by the School of Education and Psychology. In addition, the student must complete an oral defense of the thesis before their thesis committee, School of Education and Psychology Director of Graduate Studies, the Dean of the School of Education and Psychology, and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The oral defense will consist of a visual presentation, followed by a question/answer session. Note: This course must be taken for a total of 6 hours prior to thesis defense.

II. PERSPECTIVE AND FOCUS OF THE COURSE

The Master’s Thesis is an independent piece of research that addresses counseling issues from a scientific perspective, within the context of contemporary society. It provides you with the opportunity to identify an important research problem, to delve into theory and prior research, to plan and implement a research design, to collect and analyze data, and to document your findings and conclusions in a cogent manner. Finally, it enables you to have a forum in which you present your research study before a professional audience and participate in its discussion. Throughout this process, you will work closely with your thesis advisor, as well as interface with the other members of your thesis committee.

III. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be better prepared to:

- Identify and clearly define a significant research problem or objective within an area of professional expertise. [CF 1a, 3a, 3d; CACREP I2; TN8]
- Critically examine and discuss literature relevant to the selected topic. [CF 1c, 3b; CACREP I1, I5, I1; TN 3]
- Evidence an understanding of differing research methodologies, including the strengths and weaknesses of each. [CF 1a; CACREP I2; TN 8]
- Select an appropriate design for a specific research problem or objective. [CF 3d, 4b; CACREP I3; TN 8, 9]
- Develop or select appropriate instrumentation for a research study. [CF 3c; CACREP I2; TN 7]
• Implement effectively a research design, collecting and analyzing pertinent data. [CF 2e; CACREP 13; TN 8, 9]
• Write a well-organized and appropriated documented scientific research report. [CF 4e; CACREP 14, J1; TN 11]
• Present, discuss, and defend the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of a research study. [CF 2e, 3b, 4a, 4c, 4e; CACREP 14, J1; TN 11]
• Exemplify in one’s own life the spirit of inquiry and scientific research. [CF 3a, 3d, 4c; CACREP J1; TN 1]

Note: Bracketed identifiers refer to proficiencies in the SEP Conceptual Framework, CACREP Standards, and TN Licensure Standards to which a given course objective contributes.

IV. COURSE METHODOLOGIES

This course is conducted as an independent research project under the guidance and supervision of a thesis advisor and committee. Course activities include a literature review, instrument/protocol development or selection, data collection and analysis, and the interpretation of findings, as well as a presentation and defense of the research study before a professional audience.

A Master’s Thesis requires a minimum of six (6) academic credits. Completion of the thesis is typically segmented into three two-credit blocks. In consultation with your academic advisor, you will devise a plan for the completion of your thesis in a manner that best fits your academic schedule.

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Course Textbook

There is no required text for this course. Rather, readings are based on literature germane to the topic of study.

Supplemental Readings


Related Websites

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). This website is the entry point for ERIC-related materials.
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/index.html U.S. Department of Education: Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Included in this site are various Education Department publications, educational statistics sites, and funding information.
http://www.ers.org/ Educational Research Service (ERS) serves the research and information needs of educators and the public.
http://www.aare.edu.au/ethics/aareethics.htm An online manuscript exploring issues regarding ethics in educational research.
http://www.mantex.co.uk/ou/a819/a819-03.htm Practical tips for identifying a research problem.
http://www.refdesk.com/ One of the most comprehensive reference sites anywhere on the Web.
http://www.ipl.org/ The Internet Public Library (IPL) is a public service organization whose activities include finding, evaluating, selecting, organizing, describing, and creating information resources and providing direct assistance to individuals.
http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm A site presenting various types of sampling.
http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/IAD/ The International Archive of Education Data supports comparative and longitudinal research.
http://www.nova.edu/ssss/Q8/Q82-3/presenting.html An in-depth article filled with tips for the qualitative researcher.
VI. COURSE ALIGNMENT

A. Incorporation of the Conceptual Framework and Professional Standards

This course is congruent with the School of Education and Psychology Conceptual Framework, delineated below, which is aligned, in turn, with the NBPTS Standards.

1. As a caring person, the candidate/school professional will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions by
   (a) demonstrating an ideal of fairness and belief that all students can learn
   (b) recognizing and respecting diversity, individual worth, and integrity
   (c) considering the influence of community, school, and family context
   (d) emulating the example of Christ-like service

2. As an informed facilitator of learning, the candidate/school professional will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions by
   (a) providing nurturing environments, services, and programs
   (b) demonstrating understanding of central concepts
   (c) demonstrating understanding of how individuals develop
   (d) meeting the needs of a diverse student population
   (e) using technology to enhance communication and student learning

3. As a reflective decision-maker, the candidate/school professional will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions by
   (a) demonstrating intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and strategic decision-making
   (b) using theory, based on scientific research, to enhance pedagogical and professional practice
   (c) using formal and informal assessments to make informed professional decisions
   (d) reflecting on professional practice

4. As a committed professional, the candidate/school professional will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions by
   (a) collaborating with peers and consulting with professionals
   (b) demonstrating professional, legal, and ethical responsibilities
   (c) participating in opportunities to achieve professional excellence
   (d) recognizing the value of health and a commitment to a lifestyle of wellness
   (e) demonstrating appropriate communication skills

Note: The → symbol indicates a specific proficiency of the SEP conceptual framework addressed in this course. NBPTS denotes the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

B. Incorporation of Diversity

This course addresses diversity within the context of research. If provides an opportunity to examine research topics related to diversity, and to interface with diverse populations throughout the research process.

C. Incorporation of Technology

This course focuses on the utilization of technology as a tool to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. Technology is also a key component in the effective communication of research findings and conclusions through presentations and publications, oriented to specific audiences.

D. Incorporation of Servant Leadership

Throughout the course, there is an ongoing emphasis on the utilization of research within the context of service. This includes identifying specific research problems that affect individuals and communities within a given society, and seeking to address those needs. Ultimately, research seeks to provide guidance regarding means through which a positive difference can be made in the lives of others.

In terms of leadership, the course assists professionals to become more efficient and effective leaders through the use of research, enabling them to become data-driven decision-makers.
VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Fundamentals

In this course, we wish to create a context that facilitates learning. The following are key elements:

Syllabus. This syllabus is designed to provide information about the structure, content, and requirements of the course. Please read it carefully and ask questions if something is not clear.

Academic Ethics. Academic integrity is an integral part of the educational process. In this university setting, we seek to nurture independent thought and to maintain a professional and Christian code of ethics that upholds our own personal integrity and that of the academic community. Consequently, dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable and will result in a failing final grade for the course. If you are uncertain if a certain course of action is ethical, please refer to the Academic Honesty Policy listed in the current academic Catalog or consult the instructor for specific guidelines.

Drops. Students not completing the course for any reason are required to submit an official drop notice to the Registrar’s Office prior to the deadline date. This is your responsibility. Failure to comply with this procedure may result in a failing grade for the course.

Special Accommodations. During short summer sessions, in keeping with University policy, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations should call Disability Support Services at 236-2574 or stop by Lynn Wood Hall, room 137, to arrange a confidential appointment with the Disability Services Coordinator (DSC) before or during the first three days of classes. (Students who request accommodations after the first week of class might not complete the process in time to receive accommodations for that session.) Legally, no retroactive accommodations can be provided. For more details, visit the Disability Support Services website at www.southern.edu/disabilitysupport. Accommodations for disabilities are available only as recommended by Disability Support Services. Students whose accommodations are approved will be provided confidential letters which students should review and discuss with their professors in relation to particular course requirements. Students taking online courses from non-campus locations may also contact the DSC through email at dss@southern.edu.

Course Evaluation. Near the end of the semester, you will need to evaluate this course. Southern Adventist University encourages all students enrolled in courses to complete course evaluations as part of the ongoing process of improving course delivery and academic standards. You may access the online evaluation at access.southern.edu. Log in using your SAU e-mail login and password, and then select Course Evaluation from Course Tools. All comments and evaluations are completely anonymous and the results are made available to professors only after grades are submitted to the Records Office.

B. Academic Credits 1-2

1. Generate ideas for your thesis.
2. Do library research in areas of interest including:
   a. Online databases such as PsycINFO; PsycArticles; AscA, ERIC, Educational Research Complete
   b. Professional Journals
   c. Be prepared to discuss these with faculty members.
3. Selection of Committee
   a. In consultation with the potential thesis chair, suggest a committee that will consist of at least two members of faculty from your area (including your thesis chair) plus a minimum of one other faculty member from outside your area of study.
   b. Preliminary consideration of thesis committee members, consider
      • Compatibility
      • Areas of expertise
      • Availability
   c. Submit “Master’s Thesis Committee Constitution” form to the SEP Director Graduate Studies.
   d. The Dean of the School of Education and Psychology, in consultation with the SEP Director of Graduate Studies, will appoint the committee chair and members.
4. Meet with these committee members individually to:
   a. discuss ideas;
b. request committee member’s guidance regarding how to narrow the general topic area down to a more specific research question.

5. Continue to meet with committee members individually. 
   a. Let them know where you are in your work.
   b. Ask for their advice.

6. Prepare Thesis Proposal, using the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (most recent edition) for guidance, including:
   a. introduction and statement of the problem;
   b. literature review and bibliography;
   c. methodology section including instrumentation and data analysis plan. (This includes meeting all ethical guidelines in dealing with human or animal subjects.)

7. Submit your thesis proposal to committee members.
   a. Proposal Defense: Your thesis chair will arrange a meeting with all committee members and the candidate will formally present the proposal to the committee.
   b. Suggestions for revisions will be made at the meeting.
   c. Modify the proposal as necessary.

8. Final approval of proposal
   a. Submit the final draft of your proposal to committee members.
   b. Working with your thesis chair, obtain final approval of the proposal.
   c. Formal approval of your Thesis Proposal is a contract between you and the committee relative to what you are expected to do. Efforts by a committee member or the candidate to alter what has been agreed upon will not be permitted without a formal meeting of the full committee.
   d. Complete Institutional Review Board application and approval process.
      - No data may be collected until the IRB application has been approved.
      - IRB application should be reviewed by chair prior to submission.

C. Academic Credits 3-4

1. Data collection – you must review your initial data with your thesis chair and possibly other committee members to insure that everything is running smoothly.

2. Begin data analysis. Consult with the data analysis specialist on your committee before commencing data analysis.

3. Complete data analysis.

4. Write the Results section.
   a. Be careful to meet the APA publication requirements in constructing figures and tables.
   b. Work closely with the thesis chair in preparing the Results section.
   c. Keep other committee members informed throughout the data analysis and results writing process.

D. Academic Credits 5-6

1. Write the Discussion section following the same procedure as you did for the Results section

2. Check with your thesis chair for the final date to submit the completed thesis for graduation that semester. The exact dates vary each semester but they are always at least four weeks before the beginning of the regularly scheduled university final exam period.

3. Continue consulting with the members of your committee, revising the Results and Discussion sections as necessary.

4. Final Approval
   a. Upon approval of your thesis chair, submit a defense ready copy of the completed thesis to the committee. Remember that your preferred time-line for completion cannot be imposed on committee members. Make allowance for completion of thesis to be longer than you might think it should take.
   b. Oral Defense of the Thesis Form: Receive authorization for Oral Defense of the Thesis by making sure this form is signed by the appropriate individuals.
   c. Deliver a copy of the thesis to each member of the committee, allowing approximately two weeks for the final reading of the thesis.

5. Final Oral Defense
   a. It is understood that no major changes in the thesis copy should be made after the authorization of the
Oral Defense and prior to the actual oral defense, except at the discretion of the full committee. The purpose of the oral defense is to determine if the candidate understands the work and its implications.

b. The SEP Director of Graduate Studies will schedule your oral defense with the members of your thesis committee, the Dean of the School of Education and Psychology, the SAU Graduate Dean. The defense must take place at least 2 weeks prior to the final exam period.

c. Procedure: 15 minute visual presentation followed by a 45 minute question session by thesis defense committee. d.

Invitees
- Thesis committee members, SEP Director of Graduate Studies, Dean, School of Education and Psychology, SAU Graduate Dean
- Announcements will be made encouraging interested faculty and students to attend as non-participating.

e. Following the Oral Defense, the Thesis Committee will enter executive session to render a verdict on the defense which will be: (1) Approval; (2) Approval with revisions; or (3) Not Approved.
- If approved with revisions, the Committee Chair must sign off on the implementation of any revisions.

6. Turn three copies of the approved thesis in to the SEP Director of Graduate Studies.

a. Requirements may change at any time. Be sure to check with the SEP Director of Graduate Studies to determine specific requirements at the time of your submission.

b. Double check to ensure that all of the formatting requirements have been met.

VIII. GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNING GRADES

This course is graded in qualitative terms:

- "A" indicates exceptional proficiency and will be awarded to those students who have done consistently superior work, evidencing high degrees of creativity and professionalism.
- "B" indicates advanced proficiency and is awarded for very good work that goes significantly beyond the minimum expected competencies.
- "C" indicates basic proficiency and is given for work that just meets the minimum competences.
- "D" indicates partial proficiency and represents work that does not meet minimum competencies in a number of aspects.
- "F" indicates not proficient and designates unacceptable work with serious deficiencies.

The defense of the thesis, which factors in the determination of the grade in the course, receives a verdict by the Thesis Committee of one of the following outcomes: (1) Approval; (2) Approval with revisions; or (3) Not Approved. If revisions are needed, the manner in which these are finalized may also play a role determining in the final grade for the thesis.
## IX. CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Generate ideas for your thesis.</td>
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<td>Do library research in areas of concern</td>
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<td>Preliminary consideration of thesis committee members</td>
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<td>Master’s Thesis Committee Constitution form submitted</td>
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<td>Write a preliminary draft of the Thesis Proposal</td>
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<td>Submit draft to committee members. All members must approve the proposal prior to data collection.</td>
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<td>Submit a final draft of your proposal to committee members</td>
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<td>Working with your thesis chair, schedule a meeting to receive final approval of the data collection.</td>
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<td>Complete Institutional Review Board application and approval process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection Begin</td>
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<td>data analysis Complete</td>
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<td>data analysis Write results sections</td>
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<td>Thesis chair’s review of results section</td>
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<td>Draft copies of review of results submitted to committee</td>
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<td>Write discussion section</td>
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<td>Submit “Oral Defense Thesis” form and receive authority for final oral defense of thesis</td>
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<td>Schedule final oral defense of the thesis with your thesis chair</td>
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