

## **INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH SPECIALIZATION (EFFECTIVE FALL 2006)**

Interpretive methods of research and analysis play a role in educational research in two different senses. In one sense, they are used in many disciplines and fields as primary means to creating a narrative, to making meaning, or to making cultural or policy critiques. For example, in humanistic studies of education, such as philosophy of education and history of education, the interpretation of texts, events, human actions, narratives, and concepts forms the basis of inquiry. In these or other cases, the analysis of language can play a central role. In legal analysis in education, for example, the use of interpretive methods involves the analysis of case law, legislation, and administrative policy. In cultural studies or discourse analysis in education, the interpretation of culture, practices and artifacts, or language itself plays a central role in studying social patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and the dynamics of power. In some varieties of curriculum theory, the interpretation of textbooks and other materials plays a key role in explaining how society reflects judgments about knowledge and value in their curricular choices. In the history of education, the interpretive research specialization yields valuable insights regarding mastery of historical research methods (e.g., oral history, review of original source documents), but also in terms of knowledge about the major interpretive debates in the field that have shaped the scholarship and focus of historical research in education.

In the second sense, interpretive methods play a part in the application of any modes of research, whether quantitative, qualitative, or evaluative. Researchers often speak of “interpreting” the data, or “interpreting the results of statistical analyses.” In this more generic sense interpretive methods are not the primary research specialization: they are the one analytical skill along with many in a wider mode of inquiry. This specialization pertains to the first sense of interpretive methods, not to the second, more generic, sense.

The Interpretive Research Specialization:

1. Provide a foundation for student to be able to understand general methodological issues and problems in educational research;
2. includes basic course work in conceptual analysis, documentary and other kinds of discursive analysis, and epistemological analysis;
3. emphasizes coursework that connects method to disciplinary study;
4. help students develop critical and interpretive tools to be used to analyze both the limitations of educational research itself and substantive problems in the field of educational policy and practice;
5. prepare students to interpret and analyze a variety texts and other cultural artifacts, including but not limited to documents, curricula, discursive products, film, theory, policy, and law; and,
6. provides students develop skills that they will use as independent researchers using interpretive methods alone or in conjunction with other research skills.

*Students should become familiar with the methods used in the research in their area. They should discuss with their advisors, faculty, and other students current issues and topics for research. This requirement is meant as an introduction to research methodology, not the full methodological skill set required to be a successful scholar. Hence the following course requirements are a minimum, to be supplemented by further study. While, as noted, all research has an interpretive element, this research specialization is most useful for students in humanistic disciplines e.g., philosophy of education, history of education, curriculum theory, cultural or literary studies, or policy and legal*

*analysis. Prior to beginning work on this Research Specialization, students should take advantage of all opportunities inside and outside of the classroom to familiarize themselves with a variety of research methods in education.*

Successful completion of the **Interpretive Research Specialization** requires that students follow a two-stage process:

### **STAGE I - PRELIMINARY PLAN**

Before completion of their third semester of doctoral level coursework, students must submit a preliminary written plan (2-3 typed pages) that explains the following:

1. The student's reasons for choosing this particular specialization; and,
2. the coursework that will support the fulfillment of the requirement.

### **STAGE II- COMPLETED PLAN**

Prior to taking the preliminary oral examination, students must submit to the research specialization committee a completed plan in which the student provides: 1) a written argument; and 2) supporting evidence demonstrating research competence.

The student statement (5-6 pages) should illustrate how the skills developed through the completion of the Interpretive Research Specialization prepare them for the kind of research study they are proposing for their dissertation.

The student should also submit a paper or project that demonstrates competence in the use of interpretive methods and success in linking the method to substantive questions. The demonstration could take the form of a research project completed for independent study or a course; research published in a journal or presented at a conference, or other relevant demonstrations of methodological competence.

Advisors are strongly urged to read through students' work before submission to the Research Specialization Committee. Students should expect that the specialization committee will require at least 30 days to evaluate a completed plan.

**Coursework: Please keep in mind that all the required course options emphasize method. These are meant as a minimal framework for the development and mastery of research skills and competencies. They do not constitute the sum total of courses necessary to achieve mastery in a discipline or field.**

Students must satisfactorily pass four course areas:

**One** course that provides a foundational perspective on the general aims purposes of educational research. Courses that fulfill this requirement are

EPS 515 – Philosophy of Ed Research  
PHIL 475 - Philosophy of Social Science  
CI 550 - Methods of Educational Inquiry

**One** course in methods:

EPS/COMM 575 – Cult Studies and Crit Interp  
ENGL 500 - Introduction to Criticism & Research  
ANTHRO 472 Border, Latina-Latino Cultures  
CI 569 (ENGL 584) - Topics Discourse and Writing

C&I 509QRM Qualitative/Interpretive Methods & Research  
GWS 550 - Fem Theories Humanities  
GWS 570 - Fem Research Soc Sci or SOC. 520

**Two** courses on interpretive methods within either: a) a disciplinary or specialized field of inquiry; or

COMM 582 - Res Meth in Adv and Comm  
ARTH 593 - Theory and Methodology  
CINE 461 - Film Theory and Criticism  
CWL 590 - Contemp Crit Methods & Theory  
EOL 547 - Educational Law  
EPS 503 - Seminar in the History of Ed  
EPS 510 Traditions in Philosophy of Education  
EPS 512 Western Educational Classics  
EPS 517 - Ethics and Education  
EPS 513 Philosophical Aesthetics and Ed  
SOC 477 Sociology of Law  
SOC 501 Contemp. Soc. Theory  
C&I 590 Historical & Critical Issues in Curriculum Theory  
C&I 590 Critical Issues in Technology  
AFRO AM 479 Black Freedom Movement 1955-Present  
GSW 480 Gender Roles & Inter. Devl.  
GSW 432 Gender & Language  
GSW 435 Comodifying Difference

An interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary area of study (\*The following courses are suitable as well. The committee anticipates that these courses will be given permanent course numbers)

\*EPS 590AD1 Social Justice and the Politics of Difference  
\*EPS 590 AD2 Critical Theories of Education  
EPS 423 Econ of Ed. & the Political Economy