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Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
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Office Hours:  Monday/Wednesday 9:10 – 11 AM  
And by appointment and online – just email  
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Course Description:  
This is a three-credit web-based graduate course for teachers designed to facilitate and document a change in the teaching/learning in the classroom. Through readings and online discussions, students plan an individual research study to investigate a specific research question of interest to the learner. Students will follow the plan, act, reflect cycle and share results with peers through the web-based course. Additionally, students are encouraged to seek publication of their research in appropriate journals.

Learning Outcomes:  
1. Students will be able to describe how action research informs teaching and changes teaching practice (Conceptual Framework #1 (CF1)).  
2. Students will be able to formulate relevant action research questions. (10.58.501.1b).  
3. Students will be able to write a literature review for an action research project (10.58.501.1k).  
4. Students will be able to implement the action research cycle – plan, act, and reflect – within their own classroom (CF5; 10.58.501.1j)  
5. Students will be able to analyze and critique action research projects (CF8).

Textbooks:  
http://books.google.com/books/about/Action_Research.html

OPTIONAL Materials  


Readings:


Evaluation/Assessment:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation/Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action research proposal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature review additions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Chapters I – V</td>
<td>60%</td>
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</tbody>
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Letter grades correspond to percentages as follows:

- A – 90% and above
- B – 80-89%
- C – 70-79%
- D – 60-69%
- F – Below 60%

Expectations: The University of Montana Student Conduct Code

*All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.*

*All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)*

Please be aware of the expectations for academic student conduct. If you have any questions related to this code, please ask.
Accommodations

Please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you need accommodations for learning in my online classroom or through Disability Services for Students (DSS). I am happy to help facilitate these needs.

A Definition of Community

It is part of the human condition that we strive simultaneously to be self-sufficient individuals and respected members of larger social communities. Although we value personal autonomy, we are ultimately social creatures who need each other not only for companionship but also to bring meaningfulness and purpose to our lives. According to Berman (1990),

*a community is a group of people who acknowledge their interconnectedness, have a sense of common purpose, respect their differences, share in group decision-making as well as in responsibility for the actions of the group, and support each other's growth* (p. 11).

It is by belonging to such communities that many of our needs as humans are satisfied.

A learning community is a special kind of community that is sometimes created in the classroom or in an educational institution as a whole. It comes into being when everyone involved in the learning process shares a common purpose and commitment to learning. A growing body of research now supports the view that learning occurs best in communities. Because the concept of "learning community" has been used in many different contexts, it must be given a clear and precise meaning before it can be of value as a unifying theme. For our purposes, then, a learning community is one characterized by the following elements:

- **Integration of Ideas**
  Members of a learning community look beyond the traditionally segmented curriculum and think about the interrelationships among ideas. They work with a variety of fields of study and search for unifying themes that cross disciplinary lines. There is an emphasis on ideas that either explain realities or help deal with real problems.

- **Cooperative Endeavors**
  In a learning community there is a commitment to engage students cognitively, emotionally, and psychologically in constructing knowledge that is active and personally meaningful. Knowing and learning are viewed as communal acts, and members are encouraged to assist each other to learn and grow. In the process a cohesiveness is created among members of the community that encourages a sense of personal responsibility and commitment to their group and its goals.

- **Respect for Diversity and Individual Worth**
  A learning community embraces diversity with respect to ideas, abilities, viewpoints, ages, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds. Diversity is valued and the inherent
worth of each individual is respected. The ethics of caring and mutual respect are viewed as essential for creating supportive learning environments that enhance each member's self-esteem and foster risk-taking, creative conflict, and excellence.

A university provides an excellent example of the principle that learning occurs best in communities. When people gather purposefully to transmit knowledge and share ideas, a synergy is created that can result in learning of the highest order. Teachers and learners assume many roles, often shared, often overlapping, always interdependent. They respect each other in those roles. The community of learners is aware of the uniqueness of each other's background, and values this uniqueness as it contributes to the diversity of the whole. Ideas, too, are valued for their diversity as well as for their correspondence to current teachings and opinions. People delight in their opportunities to pursue and construct knowledge actively and cooperatively, regardless of age, academic status, cultural heritage, or interest. They discover together the connections among discrete subject areas and among people, ultimately coming to understand and value the importance of lifelong learning for full citizenship in a global society.

In all programs at both the basic and advanced levels, the teacher education community at The University of Montana prepares school personnel for elementary, middle and secondary school settings. Within the context of the learning community and embracing the emphases of integration of ideas, cooperative endeavors, and respect for diversity and individual worth, it is our goal to prepare teachers and school services personnel who demonstrate:

1. competence in their subject matter and an understanding of the interrelatedness of knowledge;
2. intellectual skills that lead to reflection, creativity, and risk-taking in their professional lives;
3. a sense of self-worth and a respect for the uniqueness and dignity of others;
4. communication skills in a variety of types of expression;
5. a spirit of cooperation and the ability to problem solve as citizens in a democratic society; and
6. a lifelong love of learning.

Goals for Learning in Community: Basic Programs

In its undergraduate programs, the teaching education community at The University of Montana prepares candidates to teach in elementary, middle, and secondary school settings. In most schools, academic information continues to be the most valuable medium of exchange. That is, teachers are increasingly held accountable for their students' mastery of a discrete body of information. However, teachers whose careers will span the next thirty or forty years will live and work in the emerging post-industrial information age, characterized by rapid and unprecedented economic, political, and technological change. Shifts in national and world demographics already dictate pressing needs for awareness of diverse cultures and global inter-dependencies that are environmental, social, and economic. If we think it is important that our young people become active and responsible citizen-participants in the world of the next century, we must prepare teachers accordingly. We must recruit and cultivate talented individuals of high intelligence, who possess the skills and personality conducive to effective teaching, and have themselves developed a love of learning. We are committed to help prepare such educators.
Toward this end, the faculty of The University of Montana believes that an educational orientation is insufficient and outmoded if it is teacher-dominated, centered on discrete definitions of content, and directed primarily toward passive students learning in isolation. Therefore, we advocate shared inquiry, believing that the purpose of schooling must be the development of students who are increasingly able and willing to use information as a means for thinking and learning independently and cooperatively throughout their lifetimes, and who understand the importance of enhancing the self-worth and dignity of each member of the community. (UM Elementary and Secondary Student Teaching Handbook, 2008, pp. 5-7)