Introduction to Counseling Research
(COUN 6610)

Course readings:

There is no textbook that is used in this course. Rather, the instructor will provide to you course notes and journal articles pertaining to the course material.

Course description:

This is a survey course in which you will learn about common methods used by researchers to answer questions pertaining to counseling-related phenomena including quantitative and qualitative methods, action research, needs assessment and program evaluation. Consideration will be given to ethical and cultural factors which impact the research process. Finally, you will learn how to critically evaluate research that is published in counseling journals and develop first-hand knowledge of the ins and outs of research by conducting a research study in collaboration with your peers.

Note: You and your peers likely have varying degrees of knowledge and experience in research and statistics depending on where you completed your bachelor's degrees. Even though an undergraduate course in statistics is a requirement for admission into the Professional Counseling program, the instructor understands that statistics and research-related concepts can sometimes be intimidating if not overwhelming to students. Rest assured that this course incorporates basic statistical concepts and should not prove to be too difficult to understand. Please feel free to ask questions no matter how basic the question ("No question is a dumb question."). It is important that you and your peers are tolerant of questions asked regardless of your level of understanding.

Course objectives:

1. To understand the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession (CACREP Standard 8.a)
2. To learn how to use library resources such as electronic databases to identify counseling research articles and other resources
3. To understand the core features of qualitative, quantitative, single-case, and action-based research methods (CACREP Standard 8.b)
4. To understand statistical methods that are used in conducting counseling research and program evaluation (CACREP Standard 8.c)
5. To understand the principles, models, and applications of needs assessment, program evaluation, and the use of findings to effect program modifications (CACREP Standard 8.d)
6. To understand how research findings are used to promote evidenced-based counseling practice (CACREP Standard 8.e)
7. To understand ethical and culturally relevant strategies for interpreting and reporting the results of research and/or program evaluation studies (CACREP Standard 8.f)
8. To gain first-hand experience conducting a research study to aid in the development of research skills (including learning how to critically evaluate research) (CACREP Standard 8.b & c)

Course structure:

This is a "hybrid" course meaning that part of the course is spent in direct face-to-face contact with the instructor and your classmates while the other part is spent completing Internet-based and related activities. The class meets in person on the following dates:

- **Given Date**
- **Given Date (library)**
- **Given Date**
- **Given Date (research groups w/ the instructor)**
- **Given Date**
- **Given Date**

When the class meets in person, it will consist of lecture, discussion and small group activities. It is important that you participate in classroom discussions and work diligently on projects with your classmates.

The content of the online portion of the course is presented in "modules" which contain topic-specific material to be covered during a particular time period. For each module, you will read the information contained on the Introduction to Counseling Research website and complete any assigned activities associated with a module. These activities will usually entail responding to questions posed by the instructor on an electronic discussion board pertaining to the module material and/or readings for a particular week. **Make it a goal to complete the module and any associated discussion board activities by (or prior to) the date specified by the instructor.**

Course notes for the online portion of the course will be available by accessing the Introduction to Counseling Research website through D2L (i.e., https://elearn.mtsu.edu/), MTSU's portal to university-related materials. The instructor will save the course notes (and all other materials) as Adobe/.pdf files, thus **you will be required to have the most recent version of Adobe Reader installed on your computer in order to view and print the notes**. (NOTE: This program can be downloaded for free by typing the following URL into the address box of your browser: http://get.adobe.com/reader/).

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU CHECK YOUR E-MAIL ACCOUNT WITHIN THE INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELING RESEARCH WEBSITE SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK AS THIS IS THE PRIMARY METHOD OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND THE INSTRUCTOR! (NOTE: University e-mail addresses have automatically been entered into the course website by the Office of Information Technology and these are the addresses that must be used for the course. The instructor **will not** use any other e-mail address for communication purposes.) If at any time you feel you are having trouble keeping up, contact the instructor immediately so the problem can be addressed expediently.

Necessary student internet skills and equipment:

This is a "hybrid" course meaning that a significant portion of the course material and related activities is presented on a computer and completed outside of the classroom, respectively. It is important that you at least have minimal competence in the use of the internet and know how to send and receive e-mail messages and post messages to a discussion board in order to successfully complete this course. It will

be most convenient for you to use your own personal computer to complete computer-based assignments in this course. However, if you do not own a computer *or* cannot access course material with your computer (e.g., because of an old operating system or other computer "glitch"), then you may use a computer on campus that has internet access (e.g., BAS S137, library) or any other internet-accessible computer to complete assignments. This last point cannot be emphasized enough - if you are having problems with your computers you MUST find another computer to use to keep up with assignments/quizzes!

Troubleshooting assistance:

If you have problems accessing and/or using the D2L (i.e., Desire to Learn) Introduction to Counseling Research website, please contact the Instructional Technology Help Desk for assistance (615-898-5345 or help@mtsu.edu).

Evaluation of coursework:

1. Class participation. The instructor tracks student activities related to assigned discussion board interactions, lesson activities, and graded assignments. Personal on-line activities such as personal chatting with classmates or asking for advice from the instructor, etc. do not count as discussion board participation. You are minimally required to post a response to the discussion board by the due date specified by the instructor. In some cases, you will be required to participate more than the minimal amount in order to properly complete an activity. **The minimum amount of participation is to contribute to an online "classroom discussion" at least five times throughout the course of the semester.** Discussion questions are posted on the D2L website with the associated module materials.

In order to receive credit for class participation, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT TO THE INSTRUCTOR COPIES OF YOUR RESPONSES USING THE D2L/INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELING RESEARCH "DROPBOXES" IN ADDITION TO POSTING YOUR RESPONSES TO THE DISCUSSION BOARD. You must "drop off" a file which contains a copy of your response by the due date specified by the instructor. You should not post or drop off discussion board responses IN ADVANCE of the suggested date for a module! It only serves to confuse other students if you post a response for, say, Module 6 when everyone else is still posting responses for Module 2.

D2L Dropbox instructions:

After writing a response to a discussion question and prior to posting it to the discussion board, you should highlight and copy the response, create a new Microsoft Word file and paste the discussion response into the new document. The following format should be used to title and save the file:

Chris Quarto (i.e., your name).Module1Discussion (or whatever module the question pertains to)

e.g., Chris Quarto.Module1Discussion

Once the file has been created, you can post your response to the discussion board. Next, you can click on "Dropbox" on the menu bar of the course website and locate the folder corresponding to the module discussion question you just completed (e.g., "Module1.Research ethics") and upload the file into that specific dropbox.

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS: Simply writing a few words or a sentence and posting this to the discussion board does not constitute proper participation (e.g., "I agree with what Ernie said."). If it is apparent to the instructor that you are merely posting responses for the sake of earning participation points, and have not really thought about the issues at hand, then you will not receive credit for participation. The instructor is looking for well-reasoned thoughts, opinions, positions, and/or arguments pertaining to questions or the responses of classmates.

Discussion Board Scoring Rubric

5 points	**0 points**
Discussion board responses: • are made in time for others to read and respond • deliver information that is full of thought, insight, and analysis • make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations • contain rich and fully developed ideas, connections, or applications	Discussion board responses: • may not be made in time for others to read and respond • are rudimentary and superficial; there is little evidence of insight or analysis • contribute few ideas, connections, or applications • may be off topic

You are required to post to the discussion board and deposit into dropboxes responses to discussion questions associated with the following modules:

Section 1 Discussion Board Postings:

Post at least **one** response pertaining to one of these modules:

- Module 1: Research ethics
- Module 2: Statistics review I

Section 2 Discussion Board Postings:

Post at least **one** response pertaining to one of these modules:

- Module 4: Qualitative research designs
- Module 5: Mixed methods and evidence-based research

Section 3 Discussion Board Postings:

Post at least **one** response pertaining to one of these modules:

- Module 6: Action research

- Module 7: Needs assessment & program evaluation

Although you are required to post at least one response to each of the three sections above, you still must post five responses throughout the course of the semester. Each response that is deemed worthy of credit is worth 5 points. ***You may only accumulate 5 points per discussion topic/activity, although in some cases you may post more than one response to a particular topic/activity. You can earn a maximum of 25 points for discussion board participation.***

If you have not posted a response by the time, say, the Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation discussion board activity rolls around at the end of the semester and think to yourself, "I'll just post four different responses for this module so I can get all of my discussion points," you will only be eligible to earn points for ONE of your responses. Likewise, if you get to the end of the semester and attempt to post responses to discussion board activities that occurred earlier in the semester (i.e., after the deadlines specified by the instructor) OR post five responses that only pertain to ONE of the sections listed above, you will not receive credit for posting responses late/in this manner.

Responses to discussion board activities will account for approximately 10% of your grade (5 points x 5 discussion board responses = 25 points). Class participation points will be assigned as follows:

- 25 points – if you post to the discussion board 5 discussion board responses AND deposit copies of your responses in the appropriate dropboxes within the specified time frame and the instructor deems the postings worthy of credit. Discussion board postings must be distributed across the three sections as specified previously in order to receive proper credit.
- 20 points – if you post to the discussion board 4 discussion board responses AND deposit copies of your responses in the appropriate dropboxes and the instructor deems the postings worthy of credit. Discussion board postings must be distributed across the three sections as specified previously in order to receive proper credit.
- 15 points – if you post to the discussion board 3 discussion board responses AND deposit copies of your responses in the appropriate dropboxes and the instructor deems the postings worthy of credit. Discussion board postings must be distributed across the three sections as specified previously in order to receive proper credit.
- 10 points – if you post to the discussion board 2 discussion board responses AND deposit copies of your responses in the appropriate dropboxes and the instructor deems the postings worthy of credit.
- 5 points – if you post to the discussion board 1 discussion board response AND deposit a copy of your response in the appropriate dropbox and the instructor deems the postings worthy of credit.
- 0 points – if you fail to post any discussion board responses to the discussion board, if you fail to deposit copies of your responses in the appropriate dropboxes, and/or if the instructor deems that none of your discussion board responses are worthy of credit.

2. Quizzes. Three quizzes, each having a maximum of fifteen (15) possible points, will be administered throughout the course of the semester. Each quiz will have 15 multiple choice items. One point will be awarded for each correct response. The items on each quiz may encompass any course material covered

and any assigned readings prior to the time the respective quiz is administered (i.e., first quiz is non-cumulative and remaining two quizzes may be quasi-cumulative). (45 points possible)

Quizzes are posted on the Introduction to Counseling Research website and are open-note, open-book. ***You should write down your answers to questions on a piece of paper as you take quizzes so in the event of a "technical glitch" you can simply send the instructor copies of your answers.*** (ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT: Although there is no way the instructor can guarantee test security, you are to refrain from sharing quiz items with anyone outside of the class as some items may be used with other students in the future. You are in the process of developing your identity as a professional and it is important that you demonstrate a commitment to uphold ethical standards of the counseling profession.)

You will have 45 minutes to complete online quizzes. Once the 45 minute time period has elapsed, you are no longer able to submit answers, thus it is important that you keep track of how much time you have left as they take quizzes. In addition, you must submit all of your answers to quiz questions ***prior to*** the deadline set forth by the instructor on the website (i.e., if the instructor indicates that you have until 11:00 p.m. on a particular day to finish your quiz, then you should submit all of your answers by 10:59 p.m. or else D2L will not accept the answers and you will be out of luck). Quiz dates are listed in the course outline. Quizzes are available to take anytime within a 40 hour time period (between 6:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning and 10:59 p.m. on a Sunday evening). ***the instructor will not schedule special times for individual students to take quizzes. In addition, if you are unable to take a quiz online due to technological difficulties or whose scores do not appear/register properly under "Grades" after taking an quiz then you may submit your answers to the instructor by e-mail, but must do so within 24 hours of the posted ending time for the quiz!***

Quizzes will account for approximately 15% of your grade

3. Class assignments:

a. ***Analyzing quantitative research articles & understanding statistical results.*** You will be required to read five quantitative-based research articles and identify the 1) purpose/need for the study, 2) hypotheses/research questions, and 3) study design. In addition you will be required to 4) identify and describe the types of statistics used in the study as well as the meaning of test results and 5) evaluate the author's conclusions. The instructor will use the following rubric to evaluate your article analyses (you can earn a maximum of 2 points for each area):

2 points	**1 point**	**0 points**
• Provided accurate information and • Provided essential and concise details	• Provided some accurate and some inaccurate information and/or • Provided some essential and concise details	• Provided inaccurate information and/or • Did not provide essential or concise details

Each assignment is worth 10 points (50 points possible). Analysis of quantitative research article assignments will account for approximately 15% of your grade

b. Qualitative research article critique. You will be required to select one of three qualitative research articles (located on the course website) and critique it using guidelines provided by the instructor. The instructor will use the following rubric to evaluate your critique:

Element	**Possible # of points awarded**		
	Good	Fair	Poor
Title of the article, journal information Your name and date	1	0	0
Abstract/brief summary of article (Note: Please do not use the same abstract which may appear at the beginning of the article you reviewed. Read the article first and write an abstract/brief summary in your own words.)	3	1 - 2	0
Critique of core body of article a. How would you characterize this article? (practical, philosophical, a review, description of a program or curriculum, educational) b. Describe the central program, concept, or theme of the article. c. What type of qualitative research method did the researcher use to research this topic? d. Define the author's purpose in writing the article.	8 - 10	4 - 7	0 - 3

e. Provide key ideas defined in the article. f. Did the author cite theories, models, or approaches? g. Did the author present strengths and weaknesses? h. Did the author provide recommendations and/or criticisms?			
Your impressions/opinions of article a. Was the article fluent and easy to read? b. Why was the information important or not important to you? c. Can the information be used in a practical way? How so? d. Do you agree with the major points and premises? Why or why not? e. What is one idea that impressed you?	4 - 6	2 - 3	0 - 1
	Total possible points = 20		

This assignment is worth 20 points. The qualitative research article critique will account for approximately 5% of your grade

4. <u>Research project</u>. You and your classmates will work collaboratively in small groups to complete a quantitative-based research project. The project can be on a topic of your choosing as long as everyone in the group agrees to it. In order to make this a "doable" project, you will be required to use General Psychology students as research participants. The project should conform to the same general format as is used in articles that are published in professional journals (the instructor will provide you with guidelines). You and your fellow group members will be required to give an oral presentation of your study on the last day of class.

You may conduct a traditional "in-person" study in which General Psychology students come to a room to take part in the study or an online study in which students respond to an online survey. As a group, you will need to decide on the division of labor (i.e., who will be responsible for carrying out various parts of the project). Specifically, who will:

- locate articles (e.g., via PsychInfo database) & books to be included in the literature review?
- write the draft of the introduction and literature review?
- write the method section, which includes the design for the study?
- obtain permission from researchers to use questionnaires/rating forms/instruments which they developed for previous research studies?

- prepare/type documents required for research participants (e.g., informed consent form), which may include preparing questionnaires for online administration (if your group decides to conduct an online study)?
- enter data collected from research participants into a spreadsheet?
- run data analyses using an online statistics program – VassarStats (easy to use!)?
- write the results section?
- write the discussion section?
- prepare the PowerPoint slides for the oral presentation?

It is important that one group member not "go hog wild" and do most of the work; there should be a relatively equal division of labor among group members. Identify your strengths and proceed (e.g., Who is good at using a spreadsheet? Who has good writing skills? Who considers themselves capable of running statistical analyses? Who is good at using databases to locate articles? Who has good interpersonal skills, which are important when meeting with General Psychology students in person/making them feel at ease, etc.).

There are a total of 150 points that can be earned for this project (100 for the written product, 40 for the peer group ratings and 10 for the oral presentation). The research project will account for approximately 50% of your grade.

(Note: If you're anal like me and add up the percentages you'll find that they sum to 95% - that's because I was rounding up or down to provide you with more normal looking percentages as opposed to something like 17.2%).

Grading system:

There are a total of 290 points that can be earned in this course. **There is no opportunity to earn extra credit!** A standard grading scale will be used to calculate students' scores in the course as follows:

266 - 290	A
261 - 265	A-
252 - 260	B+
243 - 251	B
232 - 242	B-
223 - 231	B
214 - 222	B-
203 - 213	C+
194 - 202	C
185 - 193	C-
174 - 184	D+
165 - 173	D

153 - 164	D-
152 and below	F

Dropping this Course:

If you discontinue participating in class, (i.e., do not complete the required course work), but do not officially drop or withdraw from the course then you will receive a grade of "F." You may only drop the course within the course drop/add period.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have disability that may require assistance or accommodation or have questions related to any accommodations for testing, etc., then please contact the instructor as soon as possible. You may also contact the MTSU Disabled Student Services office (615-898-2783) with questions about such services.

Resources for Success in Graduate School:

- James E. Walker Library
- Distance learning librarian: Sharon Parente (sparente@mtsu.edu)
- University Writing Center
- University College (previously "Continuing Education & Distance Learning")
- Academic standards and integrity policies

Frequently Asked Questions:

Frequently Asked Questions may be found on the D2L website (link can be found on the menu bar).

Housekeeping rules and points for clarification:

1. Make-up quizzes are only allowed in the case of an emergency or illness. Forgetting to take a quiz during the specified time period, going out of town for a wedding, having to "work all weekend," etc. are not adequate justifications for making up a quiz. To make up a quiz, students should make an effort to contact the instructor **before the scheduled quiz.** Making up a quiz due to an illness or attendance at a funeral will require a doctor's excuse verifying the illness or a copy of the funeral program.

2. Students should save files of any written assignments that were submitted to the instructor. In addition, students should record their answers to quiz questions on a separate piece of paper as they are taking quizzes in the event a computer malfunction prevents them from submitting their answers to the D2L/ Introduction to Counseling Research website thus requiring them to e-mail answers to the instructor.

3. Students are urged to refrain from posting discussion board responses IN ADVANCE of the suggested date for a module.

Professional counseling dispositions

Students in the Professional Counseling program are required to demonstrate program dispositions (i.e., being collaborative, ethical, professional, reflective, self-directed, and critical-thinking students) in this class and in all other academic and professional endeavors. Information regarding students' demonstration of these dispositions may be communicated to program faculty and used as a component of the faculty's continuous evaluation of student progress. See Professional Counseling Program Handbook for details.

	Course Outline	
Session	**Topic**	**Readings**
1 **(Meet in person)**	• Orientation to course • Dyadic encounters and introductions • Science and research	
2 **(Online)**	• Research ethics (Module 1) • Discussion board activity	• Course readings
3 **(Meet in library – Room 264A)**	• Library Orientation • **Quiz #1 – due give date**	
4 **(Online)**	• Statistics review (Module 2)	• Course readings
5 **(Online)**	• Statistics review - continued (Module 2) • Discussion board activity	• Course readings
6 **(Meet in person)**	• Quantitative research designs	• Course readings
7 **(Meet in person at designated times)**	• Research groups meet with Dr. Quarto to discuss research ideas	
8 **(Meet in person)**	• Designing a research study • Threats to validity • **Quiz #2 – due given date**	• Course readings

9 **(Online)**	• Qualitative research designs (Module 3) • Discussion board activity • **Analyzing quantitative research homework #1 – due given date**	• Course readings
10 **(Online)**	• Mixed methods and evidence-based research (Module 4) • Discussion board activity • **Analyzing quantitative research homework #2 – due given date**	• Course readings
11 **(Online)**	• Action research (Module 5) • Discussion board activity • **Analyzing quantitative research homework #3 – due given date** • **Qualitative research article critique – due given date**	• Course readings
12 **(Online)**	• Needs assessment & program evaluation (Module 6) • Discussion board activity • **Analyzing quantitative research homework #4 – due given date**	• Course readings
• **Analyzing quantitative research homework #5 – due given date** • **Give date: last day General Psychology students are eligible to participate in research studies**		
13 **(Meet in person)**	• Research presentations or complete research projects	
14 **(Meet in person, if needed)**	• Research presentations (if needed) • **Quiz #3 – given date**	