Education 607
Contemporary Approaches to Educational Assessment
Winter 2015
Syllabus; Initial Version January 12, 2015

INSTRUCTOR
EDWARD SILVER
4115 SEB; 734-615-6580
EASILVER@UMICH.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 1:30-3:00 PM OR BY APPOINTMENT

APPRENTICE INSTRUCTOR
JOY JOHNSON
LJOYJ@UMICH.EDU

CLASS DAY/TIME/LOCATION
MONDAY; 4:00-7:00 PM; 4212 SEB

Course Focus

The headline reads, “Study finds math skills suffer in U.S.” This headline should provoke a number of questions that are central to educational assessment, such as the following: What math skills were assessed? How were they measured? Who was in the sample of students tested? Who were the comparative populations? What conclusions were reached, and what were the reference points for these decisions? What appropriate meaning and interpretation can be drawn from these results?

In the current educational climate that emphasizes high-stakes accountability, with frequent testing of students, developing an appreciation and understanding of the complexities of the design, evaluation and interpretation of educational assessment is paramount for all education professionals. In this graduate seminar we will draw on contemporary research papers, a range of existing tests, and multi-media resources to examine, understand, discuss and evaluate current theory, practice, and instruments associated with assessment systems used to evaluate learning.

This course has three main goals: 1) to acquaint students with essential concepts in educational measurement such as reliability, validity, error, and bias; 2) to provoke student inquiry into a number of important issues in the field including (a) assessment and accountability, (b) classroom-based assessment, especially formative assessment, (c) assessing students with special needs, (d) standards for educational assessment, (e) technology-based approaches to assessment, and (f) assessing teachers and teaching; and 3) to examine contemporary educational assessment practices in the United States with reference to policies and practices in other countries. The course is designed as a fundamental graduate seminar on the principles, analysis, interpretation and appropriate use of educational measurement approaches and test design; it is not intended for individuals interested in a statistics-based methods course.
Course Requirements

Expectations
This 3-credit course is organized as a seminar with an emphasis on activities and reflective dialogue on weekly materials by all attendees. The course will emphasize a forum for supportive, productive, and critical inquiry. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to complete readings or material review prior to the class discussion, and to participate actively in the design and execution of course activities. Students are expected to inform the instructors in advance of absences.

The critical review of course materials is an important component of the course. As an advanced graduate level course, the reading or critique activities required in preparation of the course sessions may be substantial. It is expected that students will come to class well-prepared, having read the material thoroughly in advance and willing to share their understandings in order to contribute to the learning of all class members.

Course Readings
• Additional assigned and optional course readings are available at the ED 607 CTools site.

To access the site, go to https://ctools.umich.edu and log in, using your uniqname and password. Click the tab for “EDUC 607 001 W15” and click on Resources. You will find the assigned class readings. Files on CTools can be printed or downloaded onto your computer.

Optional readings and resources that might be of interest to you, and that might be useful in pursuing various projects or activities, can be found in another folder named “Z.Optional additional readings.” These are not required

Grading Policy and Project/Task/Activity Descriptions
Your grade in the class will be determined on the basis of the instructor’s evaluation of the quality of your completion of the following projects/tasks/activities, and will be weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Written Reflections on Readings</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Assigned Tasks/Projects</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Synthetic Project</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Participation
The full participation of class members is critical to the success of a seminar course; refer to “Expectations” above. Prior to each class meeting, students are expected to thoroughly review the readings. During class sessions, students are expected to participate fully and respectfully in the discussion, with close attention to both making personal contributions and listening carefully to the contributions of others. Joy Johnson will prepare and make available a few guiding
reflection questions for assigned readings during the week prior to the scheduled class
discussion. It is not necessary for students to prepare written responses to these questions in
advance of the class discussion, but some students may find it useful to do so.

**Written Reflections on Readings**
Assessment reflections consist of approximately 2 single-spaced pages of observations,
thoughtful analysis, and original thinking provoked by and grounded in the readings done during
segments of the course, in response to the following prompts:

- *Identify no more than three things that you have noticed in the course readings for
weeks X-Y that you believe to be important. Briefly elaborate what strikes you as
important.*
- *Identify no more than two things that may have puzzled you in the course readings for
weeks X-Y, or one or two questions that the readings have provoked you to consider.
Briefly elaborate what strikes you as puzzling and worth pursuing.*

Written reflections are due by 12 noon on the due date. The due dates are February 9, 2015 for
reflections on weeks 1-5 and March 16, 2015 for reflections on weeks 6-10.

The instructor’s evaluation of the reflections will consider evidence of accuracy, originality,
insight, and clarity. At the discretion of the instructor, stylistic elements (e.g., grammar, sentence
structure, spelling) may also be considered.

**Assigned Tasks/Projects**
Each student is expected to complete two assigned tasks/projects/activities, each due at a
specified time during the course. Each is explained briefly below; further elaboration will be
given in class.

A) *Comparative Analysis of Test Content*
In this assignment, students will analyze and compare two different tests that purport to assess
the same or similar educational content or that assess the proficiency of the same or similar
populations with respect to some domain of knowledge or skill. Students have a choice about
how to complete this assignment.

Option CAT1 involves an analysis of tasks proposed by the instructor in the domain of
precollege mathematics. This option will involve a comparative analysis of several tasks from
the Programme in Student Assessment (PISA) and several drawn from The International
Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for the International Assessment of
Adult Competence (PIAAC). More details will be provided separately.

Option CAT2 is to propose a comparative analysis of similar size and scope to that in A1 but to
examine assessments of a student’s own choosing. For example, students might compare two
or more science or reading literacy assessments, assessments of college student learning, tests
designed to assess college readiness, or tests of English language competence. A student
wishing to choose this option should prepare a brief written description of her/his proposed
project, identifying the tests that will be examined and the focus of the comparative analysis,
and submit this description to Professor Silver no later than noon on February 3, 2015.
Proposals to pursue option A2 must be approved in advance.

Regardless of which option is chosen, students are required to submit the written report of this
assignment no later than noon on February 24, 2015. The instructor’s evaluation of the
assignment will consider evidence of analytic depth, accuracy, originality, insight, and clarity. At
the discretion of the instructor, stylistic elements (e.g., grammar, sentence structure, spelling) may also be considered.

B) *International Perspectives on Educational Assessment*

Much of the course will focus on educational assessment policies and practices in the U.S., but further insight and perspective can be gained by examining what is done in other countries. In this project, students will identify a country other than the United States, will research the policies and practices of educational assessment in that country, and will present the findings of their investigation to the class on March 23, 2015. Further details about the timing and format of the presentation will be provided.

Students have a choice about how to complete this assignment; a student may work individually or in partnership with another student. Each individual or student pair is expected to meet at least once with Professor Silver in advance of the class presentation to discuss the content. An additional meeting early in the research may be advisable if students would like assistance in structuring their investigation or in accessing potentially useful resources.

Suggested target countries for this project are: Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, and New Zealand. A student may choose a country not in this list with the permission of the instructor. A sign-up process will be made available, and selections should be made no later than Week 5. A country may be selected by no more than one student or pair.

The instructor’s evaluation of this task will consider evidence of analytic depth, accuracy, originality, insight, and clarity, as well as the visual appeal of the presentation and the extent to which the presentation links explicitly with key topics and themes treated in the course. At the discretion of the instructor, stylistic elements (e.g., grammar, spelling, PowerPoint display features) may also be considered. Students working in pairs to complete this assignment will receive the same evaluation; no attempt will be made to assess the relative contribution of each student in a pair.

**Final Synthetic Project**

In this project, students will demonstrate their knowledge of educational assessment by completing a task that requires both analysis and synthesis of concepts treated in this course. Students have a choice about how to complete the final synthetic project.

Option FSP1 involves an analysis of two or three brief essays or op-ed columns related to educational assessment in the U.S. In their analysis students are expected to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the argument presented in each essay/column, drawing on class readings and discussions. The analysis should identify points of connection with key issues and topics in the course as well as key issues or topics that are pertinent to the argument but absent from the essay/column. Students will then prepare an essay/op-ed of their own on a theme related to educational assessment along with a 3-5 page synthetic “white paper” that offers a more detailed argument, touching on multiple ideas treated in this course, with citations and sources to accompany the self-authored essay/op-ed. More details will be provided separately.

Option FSP2 involves an analysis and synthesis of similar size and scope to that in FSP1 but with a focus of a student’s own choosing. For example, a student might pursue in greater depth one of the topics treated in this course, or a student might investigate a topic pertinent to educational assessment that was not treated in the course. Other pathways might also be pursued. A student wishing to choose this option should prepare a brief written description of
her/his proposed project, identifying the topic/theme/issue that will be examined, describing the proposed analytic approach to be taken, and indicating how this analysis will then be used as a platform for the synthesis of other course material. The description should be submitted to Professor Silver no later than noon on February 24, 2015. Proposals to pursue option FSP22 must be approved in advance.

Regardless of which option is chosen, students are required to submit the written report of this assignment no later than noon on April 20, 2015. The instructor’s evaluation of the assignment will consider evidence of the depth, accuracy, originality, insight, and clarity of both the analysis and synthesis. At the discretion of the instructor, stylistic elements (e.g., grammar, sentence structure, spelling) may also be considered.