

Course Proposal Summary

Ongoing proposal information

Spring 2026

Sue Staats

Curriculum and Instruction

Sue Staats is a professor of mathematics education and a cultural anthropologist who studies students' algebra dialogues. As an interdisciplinary scholar, she enjoys working with students across many disciplines and at all academic levels to develop their scholarly voices with both rigor and creativity. She spends the winter reading fiction, enjoys biking in the summer, and is currently training her kittens in ethical decision-making and household citizenship. (1/11/25 KB)

Making course inactive (2/24/17, JF). Making course inactive (2/24/17, JF).

Curriculum contact name	Curriculum contact email address
Katherine Boulware	boul0066@umn.edu

Basic Course Information

Effective term	PeopleSoft course ID	Effective date
Spring 2026	808386	Jan 20, 2026
Active/inactive status	Appear in course catalog?	
Active	Yes	
Institution	Campus	
UMNTC	Twin Cities	
College	Career	
TCED - College of Education and Human Development	Undergraduate	
Department		
Curriculum & Instruction (11197)		
Course subject code	Course number	
CI	1905	
Course name		
Formalized Curiosity: Introduction to Educational Action Research Methods		

Course name for transcript

Formalized Curiosity

Course description

Behind every positive social change, there's a story of people asking questions together. Asking and answering questions is an important part of the research mission of the University of Minnesota - but what does it mean to do research for the public good? As anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston explained, research is "formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." In this class, you'll learn how research can transform curiosity into action.

This class introduces you to action research, an approach used globally for educational and professional development purposes in schools, communities and workplaces. Action research values democratic participation, relationships, with the goal of positive social change. Our textbook explains action research as a Look, Think, Act cycle. The Look stage involves gathering information about a social setting through established research methods; the Think stage involves reflection and analysis of the information; and Act refers to proposing a change oriented response. You'll dig into the details of this cycle by learning qualitative research techniques including survey and interview design, text analysis, and systematic approaches to summarizing the information you gather.

At its core, action research is about improving civic life through collaborative, ethical inquiry. To this end, you'll learn fundamental ethical frameworks - from research ethics principles of consent and justice to broader philosophical approaches like virtue ethics and ethics of care. Through reflective activities and group processes, you'll examine your own social identities and values as they relate to ethical research practice. You'll learn systematic techniques of "poking and prying" such as interviewing, survey design, and thematic analysis, culminating in an action research proposal or research report. This hands-on experience will help you understand how to gather information, analyze it, and present it as the first step towards positive change.

This approach requires constant engagement with ethical questions: Whose knowledge counts? Who benefits from the research? How do we ensure our work serves the interests of a social group at the center of the research? By wrestling with these questions while learning to conduct ethical research, you'll develop both practical research skills and a deeper understanding of your role in creating positive change as a member of both our local and global communities. And you may feel invigorated to pursue further qualitative research activities during your undergraduate studies at the University of Minnesota.

Course Enrollment and Student Planning

Grading basis

A-F - A-F Grade Basis

Typically offered term(s)

Every Spring

Typical meeting pattern

Mondays and Wednesdays 11:15 to 12:30

Require consent to enroll

No Special Consent Required

Require consent to drop

No Special Consent Required

Are you proposing changes to prerequisites or corequisites?

No

Assign existing prerequisite or corequisite

undefined - undefined

Do you need to define a new prerequisite or corequisite?

No

Can students enroll in more than one section of this course in the same term?

No

Prerequisites and Corequisites (Crookston only)

Equivalencies and Cross-listings

Are you proposing changes to equivalencies or cross-listings?

No

Is this course equivalent to any other courses?

No

Is this course cross-listed with any other courses?

No

Credits, Instructional Time, and Repeats

Credits

Minimum credits

3

Maximum credits

3

Instructional time (hours)

Minimum instructional
time

3

Academic progress units

Academic progress units

3

Financial aid units

Financial aid units

3

Is this course repeatable?

No

What is the maximum number of times a student
could earn credit for taking this course?

1

What is the maximum number of credits a student
can earn from this course?

3

Course Characteristics

Course attributes

FSEM - FR SEMINAR (Freshman Seminar), ONL - ONLINE (Online may be available), TOP - TOPICS
(Topics Course)

Is this a topics course?

No

Will this course ever be offered online or
primarily online?

Yes

Is any portion of this course taught outside of the
United States?

No

Is this an honors course?

No

Is this a freshman seminar?

Yes

If this course uses community-engaged learning
(CEL) instructional strategies, indicate up to 5
CEL values.

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Components

Code	Name
LEC	Lecture

Primary and Graded Component Details

Primary component	Graded component
Lecture	Lecture

Student Learning Outcomes (Undergraduate Crookston, Duluth, and Twin Cities only)

Learning outcome Can Identify, define, and solve problems. How will the instructor assess the students' learning related to this outcome? Key assignments: Short case studies in textbook; development of research questions and methods for the final project.	How will this outcome be addressed in the course? Students identify social issues in educational settings that can be addressed through action research, developing skills to propose research-based solutions through collaborative inquiry.
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Learning outcome Can communicate effectively. How will the instructor assess the students' learning related to this outcome? Key assignments: Jigsaw discussions, research group discussions, final project write-up.	How will this outcome be addressed in the course? Students will develop novice-level skills in posing research questions, writing methods statements, and presenting research findings.
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Learning outcome Have acquired skills for effective citizenship and lifelong learning.	How will this outcome be addressed in the course? By engaging issues of research ethics and by understanding the civic potential and participatory dilemmas presented by action research, students will complete the class with improved abilities to conduct and evaluate qualitative research that address citizenship issues.
How will the instructor assess the students' learning related to this outcome? Key assignments: Learning details of qualitative research methods as tested in quizzes; ethics discussions and quiz responses; development of final project.	

Topic Details

Course Dependencies and Curricular Impacts

Course Proposal Details

Liberal and General Education

Are you proposing this course to meet a general or liberal education requirement?

Yes

Proposed Twin Cities Liberal Education Core

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Proposed Twin Cities Liberal Education Designated Theme

Civic Life and Ethics

This course is approved as a Core, effective

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This course is approved as a Designated Theme, effective

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Approved Twin Cities Liberal Education Requirement(s)

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Describe how the course meets Liberal Education Designated Theme course criteria

This course addresses a compelling contemporary issue: How can groups of people use university-developed research methods to improve their own social worlds? A research toolkit known as “qualitative methods” is accessible to anyone with training to use them. As our textbook demonstrates, qualitative research methods have fostered responsive, democratic civic engagement among teachers, workers’ organizations and community organizations around the world—from teachers in the U.S. and U.K., to workplaces in the U.K., to indigenous-led educational and community development in New Zealand and Australia. Aspiring to develop research for social change requires knowledge of distinct ethical approaches and continuous reflection on how ethics interacts with on-going research activities. Throughout the semester, you’ll develop a vocabulary for analysing distinct approaches to ethics, drawing from philosophical frameworks, university approaches to research ethics, and ethical positions commonly used in action research. You’ll use the Social Identities Wheel and textbook commentaries on “researcher positionality” to understand how people’s social and ethical attitudes influence qualitative research and its outcomes, both in negative forms that are commonly known as “bias” and positive forms that support collective decision-making and potential for socially beneficial outcomes. You’ll learn to create qualitative research tools—text analysis methods, observations, surveys, interviews—while noticing the ethical decision making that informs all your detailed choices in these research processes. You’ll tackle complex questions: How do we ensure research is truly collaborative? How can qualitative methods help us understand educational experiences? What makes research serve the public good?

The course assignments are designed to introduce you to the techniques of educational action research and gradually build your ability to analyze ethics and techniques of civic engagement underlying them. You’ll participate in several “jigsaw discussions” of methods throughout the semester in which you take responsibility for reading and reacting to an assigned section of a reading. You’ll enact the action research attitude of collective responsibility for community development by helping to facilitate a class discussion on your assigned section of the reading—sharing points that make sense to you and questioning ones that are unclear. Canvas quizzes will test you on the course content and include short responses to ethics in research case studies. In your final research project group, you will contribute through a series of guided discussion posts, including ethical analysis of your group’s research planning. The course culminates in a group action research proposal or research report where you’ll apply both ethical principles and qualitative research methods to real educational situations. This collaborative project introduces you to the possibilities that open up when researchers and communities share responsibility for improving their social worlds. Through this process, you’ll develop a deeper understanding of how qualitative research methods can be used ethically and effectively by groups working toward positive change, preparing you to engage with research opportunities throughout your university career and beyond.

Are you proposing this course to meet the Writing Intensive requirement?

No

This course is approved as Writing Intensive
No

This course is approved as Writing Intensive,
effective

Syllabus (All Rochester and Twin Cities Careers, Duluth 8xxx-Level)

Upload a syllabus from within the past 2 years

[CI 1905 - 2026.docx](#)