

## Fairness in Testing Course Description

**Course Instructor:** Dr. Linda L. Cook

**Course Title:** Fairness in Educational Testing

### Description

Test fairness has been a topic of central importance to test developers, test takers, and those who use test scores for many decades. The notion of what constitutes fair assessment has evolved over time and has psychometric, societal, and legal connotations (Willingham & Cole, 1997). More recently, fairness has come to be thought of as a critical component of the definition of valid interpretations of test scores. That is, unless one can be assured that a test score is a bias free measure of an individual's knowledge, skills, or abilities, the interpretation of the score for a particular use cannot be considered valid (Camilli, 2006).

The course will begin by developing a conceptual framework for what we mean by fairness in educational assessment. The development of this framework will include a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of fairness. Also included in this discussion will be some of the historical and legal factors that have shaped fairness policies in the United States.

After the development of a conceptual framework for a fairness discussion, the course will focus on key practical implications of this framework. Fairness in test design and development, and test administration will be discussed. Another important practical aspect of fairness in testing that will be described is the comparison of scores across different tests, modes of administration, grade levels, and across different languages and different populations. The course will finish with a discussion of the *Fairness in Testing* chapter in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014).

### Prerequisite Skills or Knowledge Needed for Course Participation

This course requires only a minimal familiarity with basic measurement concepts and vocabulary. The target course participants are educational researchers including advanced graduate students, early career scholars, senior educational researchers and practitioners who are interested in improving their understanding and knowledge of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.

### Course Format

This course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and hands on activities. Course participants will be given time to discuss the meaning of test fairness and to discuss examples of fair practice in testing. Students are welcome to bring with them examples of fair or unfair testing practices that they would like to discuss with the group.

## Learning Objectives

Following completion of the course, students should have a basic understanding of:

- Different concepts of fairness in educational testing
- The ideas represented by selected underlying philosophies of fairness
- How to design, develop and evaluate a fair test
- Key issues associated with comparing test scores across modes of administration, grade levels, languages, and populations
- The Standards found in the Fairness chapter of the 2014 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*

Participants will be able to:

- Explore the literature on fairness in educational testing with a basic level of understanding
- Evaluate whether or not principals of fairness have been adequately addressed in the design, development and administration of a test
- Evaluate whether comparisons of scores from tests given in different modes of administration, across grade levels, to different populations and in different languages, can be interpreted fairly

## References

Camilli, G. (2006). Test Fairness. In R. L. Brennan (Ed.). *Educational Measurement* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education. (2014). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Willingham, W. W. & Cole, N. S. (1997). *Gender and fair assessment*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.