

Undergraduate Research Methods Course (AMST 392)
Spring 2012
Tuesdays, 12:30 – 1:50 p.m.
GFS 104

SYLLABUS

Course Instructors: Dr. Richard Andalon
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. & By Appointment

I. COURSE OVERVIEW

This undergraduate course provides a comprehensive introduction to research proposal writing, research methodologies, and foundational research theories and protocols. Students in the course learn about the cyclical nature of applied research and the iterative process of research writing. The course teaches students how to write a proposal, engage in independent studies, and work collaboratively with a mentor-mentee relationship with a USC faculty advisor. The curriculum is sequential, helping students to identify a study topic, formulate inquiry questions, organize a literature review, and select appropriate research designs and methodologies. Students use the proposal they develop to establish the foundation of a summer project and the basis of a final research paper that will be submitted at the end of the summer once the study is completed. By the end of the course, students will complete a proposal that includes an introduction, problem statement (significance of study), literature review, methods section, references, and a project timeline. At the end of the summer students will convert this proposal into a full research that will include the following sections: findings, discussion, conclusions, and references.

The course enrolls students majoring in the social sciences, humanities, natural and physical sciences, engineering, and professional fields. Throughout the course, students will learn how research projects can emanate from specific intellectual interests, recognized knowledge gaps in existing scholarship, or from personal experiences or community-related matters that have broad societal implications. In summary, the course helps undergraduate students become novice researchers, and it encourages them to continue looking for opportunities after the spring semester to further develop their research skills. This course, which is modeled after a graduate-level introductory research methods seminar series, prepares undergraduates for future research experiences, particularly at the graduate-level. Accordingly, students will also receive advising related to and opportunities to explore postgraduate programs.

II. COURSE FORMAT, OBJECTIVES, GRADING SCALE, & REQUIREMENTS

The course takes place once per week on Tuesdays from 12:30 – 1:50 p.m. Guest lecturers in the course include faculty, advanced graduate students, staff advisors, and program administrators. Blackboard contains the course readings, lessons, and corresponding PowerPoint Presentations. Course readings are selected chapters from some of the latest introductory research methodology textbooks, research journal articles, and specialized research training guidebooks. Students are required to post assignments on Blackboard using the following format: *Lastname_Session#*

Enrolled students will:

- Attend and actively participate in class sessions and related activities.
- Review course readings and PowerPoint Presentations prior to each session.
- Learn about the research process, including its guiding principles, common procedures, written fundamentals, and basic phases.
- Identify a research question, engage in a literature review, and become familiar with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- Complete all assignments and the required research proposal that will facilitate a summer research project and culminating final paper.
- Develop a mentor-mentee relationship with a faculty advisor/mentor that agrees to guide a research project.
- Receive preparation to engage in advanced, independent research at the undergraduate and graduate-level.

Students with a disability requiring special arrangements to facilitate course progress will receive such accommodations if they are registered with the USC Disability Services & Programs (DSP). DSP can be reached at (213) 740-0776 and they are located in Student Union 301.

The course is two to four units and may be taken for a grade or credit/no credit. **The grading and point system is as follows: A = 90 -100; B = 80 - 89; C = 70 - 79; D = 60 - 69; F = 59 and below.** Students are evaluated in the following areas and points are earned accordingly based on performance.

Attendance & Participation	15 points
Research Topic & Question(s) Due Date: 1/17/12	2 points
Faculty Advisor/Mentor List (2 – 3 potential faculty) Due Date: 1/24/12	2 points
Sample Research Proposals (2 – 3 proposals for reference) Due Date: 1/31/12	2 points
Introduction & Problem Statement (Significance of Study) Section (1 – 3 pages) Due Date: 2/7/12	5 points
Discipline Citation Format & References List (1– 3 pages) Due Date: 2/14/12	2 points
Literature Review Section (3 – 5 pages) Due Date: 2/28/12	5 points
Research Methodology Section (3 – 5 pages) Due Date: 3/27/12	5 points
Faculty Advisor/Mentor – Scholar Agreement Due Date: 4/3/12	15 points
Draft Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement (Significance of Study), Literature Review, Methodology, & References (8 – 16 pages) Due Date: 4/10/12	15 points
PowerPoint Presentation Slides (3– 6 slides) Due Date: 4/17/12 (Group A) & 4/24/12 (Group B)	2 points
Final Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement (Significance of Study), Literature Review, Methodology, & References (8 – 16 pages) Due Date: 5/1/12 – 5/8/12 (available submission dates)	30 points
Total	100 Points

III. COURSE TOPICS, SCHEDULE, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS

Session	Topic(s)	Date	Readings & Assignments
1	Review of the Course	January 10	Overview of the course, student expectations, & introductions
2	Overview of the Research Process	January 17	Reading: Chapter 1: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Chapter 1: Practical Research (Leedy, Ellis, Ormrod) Assignment: Research Topic & Question(s)
3	Research Topics, Questions, & Proposal Sections	January 24	Reading: Chapter 3-4: Craft of Research (Booth, Colomb, & Williams) Chapter 6: Practical Research (Leedy, Ellis, Ormrod) Recap on Proposal Sections: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement, Significance of Study, Literature Review, Methodology, References, & Timeline Assignment: Faculty Advisor/Mentor List (2 – 3 potential faculty)
4	Literature Review, Conceptual Framework, & Research Design	January 31	Reading: Chapter 2: Research Design (Creswell) Chapter 1: Qualitative Research Design (Maxwell) Assignment: Sample Research Proposals (2 – 3 proposals for reference)
5	Library Research & Resources	February 7	Reading: Library Research & References Guide (USC Libraries) Assignment: Introduction & Problem Statement (Significance of Study) Section (1 – 3 pages)
6	Research Ethics & Protocols Involving Human & Animal Subjects; Introduction to the Institutional Review Board (IRB)	February 14	Reading: Chapter 3: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Assignment: Discipline Citation Format & References List (1– 3 pages)
7	Research Methods Part I: Interviews, Focus Groups, Observation & Ethnography, Document & Text Analysis	February 21	Reading: Chapter 9: Research Design (Creswell) Chapter 9: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Assignment: Faculty Advisor/Mentor Update IRB Certification Course & Application Process
8	Research Methods Part II: Survey Development, Implementation, & Data Management; Introduction to Qualtrics Survey Software	February 28	Reading: Chapter 4: Surveys (Fowler) Chapter 8: Research Design (Creswell) Qualtrics Handout (Corstie-Massay) Assignment: Literature Review Section (3 – 5 pages)
9	Research Methods Part III: Quantitative Analysis & Statistical Procedures; Introduction to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)	March 9	Reading: Chapter 11: Practical Research (Leedy, Ellis, Ormrod) Basic Statistics & SPSS Overview (Corstie-Massay) Assignment: Review Sample Data Sets Set up Qualtrics Account & Sample Survey
Spring Recess March 12 – 17 – No Class Scheduled			
10	Research Methods Part IV: Qualitative Analysis, Data Collection Procedures, & Mixed Method Approaches	March 20	Reading: Chapter 10: Research Design (Creswell) Chapter 8-9: Analytic Techniques (Patton) Assignment: Faculty Advisor/Mentor Update IRB Certification Course & Application Process
11	Writing the Research Proposal	March 27	Reading: Writing Article/Guideline (Darley, Zanna, Roediger) Assignment: Research Methodology Section (3 – 5 pages)
12	Working with Faculty Advisors & Cultivating a Mentor-Mentee Relationship	April 3	Reading: Mentors, Faculty, & Advisors (University of Michigan) Assignment: Faculty Advisor/Mentor – Scholar Agreement
13	Presenting the Research Proposal Orally & Using PowerPoint	April 10	Reading: As assigned Assignment: Draft of Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement, Significance of Study, Literature Review, Methodology, References, & Timeline (8 – 16 pages)
14	Research Proposal Presentations (Group A)	April 17	Reading: As assigned Assignment: PowerPoint Presentation (3 – 6 slides)
15	Research Proposal Presentations (Group B)	April 24	Reading: As assigned Assignment: PowerPoint Presentation (3 – 6 slides)
16	No Class: Independent Study	May 1 - 8 (available submission dates)	Reading: As assigned Assignment: Final Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement, Significance of Study, Literature Review, Methodology, References, & Timeline (8 – 16 pages)

