INLS 781: Proposal Development

**Instructor: Amelia N. Gibson**

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**Office: 205 Manning Hall**

**Class meetings: January 12-Feb 25, Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30 – 1:45 pm, 014 Manning Hall**

**Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30pm; Wednesdays 2-3pm; and by appointment**

**Course Overview**

**Course description:**

During this course, each student will develop a proposal for the work to be completed during the following semester, in the master's paper/project (INLS 992). It is assumed that class members have taken the prerequisite course, INLS 581. This is a 1.5 credit course.

This class is a 1.5-credit hour course designed to help students develop a complete research or project proposal as the precursor to their master’s paper or project. By design it is more of a collaborative mentorship between each student and the professor, but the class periods will include peer learning, small group work, and limited lecture and discussion. All work, both in-class and out-of-class, is geared to further each student’s individual proposal. Each student, then, will be pursuing unique – though related – areas of interest, and the class period will serve as time to share questions, ideas, and problems. This is a “flipped” classroom approach, so please come to class each week prepared to work further on your own project and bounce ideas off your colleagues and professor.

**Textbook and readings**

The required text for the course is: Punch, K.F. (2007). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. Sage. We will read the entirety of this book and use it to structure our work together.

In addition, we will read several chapters from: Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*. Libraries Unlimited. It may be useful for you to have a copy of it available for your own use. It will also be available on reserve at the SILS Library.

**Assignments and Grading**

The course grade will be based on the completed proposal (50%), intermediate deliverables that will scaffold you to the proposal, and class participation (15%).

**Master's Paper/Project Proposal (50%)**

The primary purpose for this course is for each class member to develop a strong and workable proposal for a research study or project to be completed during INLS 992. The finished proposal will consist of the following three chapters:

* Introduction: provides a rationale for pursuing the research problem/question
* Literature review: synthesizes what we already know about the research problem/question
* Methods chapter: describes the data collection and analysis methods to be used to address the research problem/question.

These three chapters will be developed iteratively during the course, with peer and instructor review and feedback. They will be combined in the final proposal.

**Intermediate Deliverables (35%)**

Intermediate deliverables are intended to scaffold students as you develop your “final” proposal. The specific due date for each assignment is listed on the class schedule. The chapters and their drafts (and other intermediate deliverables) are listed here:

* First Day Assignment: Introductions and First Thoughts (1/12) *(2pts.)*
* Selection of advisor (1/26; 2/2)*(5 points)*
* Advisor contact/discussions *(2 pts.)*
* Assignment 1, Introduction chapter
  + Preliminary research question and glossary, for peer review *(2 pts.: 1 for timely submission; 1 for review)*
  + Preliminary research question and glossary, for instructor review *(1 pts)*
  + Introduction chapter draft, for instructor review *(5 pts)*
* Assignment 2, Literature review/background chapter
  + Literature review search plan, for peer review *(2 pts.: 1 for timely submission; 1 for review)*
  + Literature review search plan, for instructor review *(2 pts.)*
  + Literature review chapter draft, for peer review *(2 pts.: 1 for timely submission; 1 for review)*
  + Literature review chapter draft, for instructor review *(5 pts)*
* Assignment 3, Methods chapter
  + Methods chapter draft, for peer review *(2 pts.: 1 for timely submission; 1 for review)*
  + Methods chapter draft, for instructor review *(5 pts)*
* Final proposal (Introduction chapter, Literature review/background chapter, Methods chapter)

**Class Participation (15%)**

There will be a variety of ways in which each class member can participate in this class, including participating in in-class discussions (general and team-based), by providing comments and suggestions on the drafts created by other class members, and by posting relevant comments and questions on the online discussion forum.

**Library and lab resources**

You will be using SILS [library](http://sils.unc.edu/library) and [lab](http://sils.unc.edu/it-services) resources during the course of the semester. Please remember that many of your fellow students also need to use the same material. Follow the proper checkout procedures and return materials promptly to be a good SILS citizen.

**The Honor Code**

The UNC Honor Code, which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized aid in the completion of assignments, is in effect in this class. The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance gives examples of actions that constitute [academic dishonesty](http://instrument.unc.edu/instrument.text.html#academicdishonesty).

There are some specific guidelines for this class.

* I encourage you to discuss the issues raised in class or by the readings with each other. Class time will be used for this purpose, but such discussions are also appropriate outside of class meetings.
* You may give and receive assistance regarding the use of hardware and software, including statistical analysis software.
* You will be expected to read and critique your classmates' work, as noted on the class schedule. While this activity may also give you ideas for your own work, each student's proposal is expected to be unique. If you have any questions about the influences of your classmates' thinking on your own work, please discuss them with me.

**Other course policies**

* You are encouraged and expected to participate in discussions, both during class sessions and on the Web-based discussion forum.
* Reading assignments should be done before class so that you can ask questions and participate in discussions.
* All cell phones and other devices (other than laptops) should be turned off during class; there should be no text messaging during class.
* If there is something you don't understand, ask a question! If you don't want to ask during class, come to my office.
* Homework assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. This policy includes reviews/critiques of each other's work

**Schedule**

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| **January 12: Introductions and Course Overview**   1. Read Course Syllabus.   Punch, K.F. (2007). *Developing Effective Research Proposals.* Sage.   1. Chapter 1, Introduction, p. 108 2. Chapter 2, The proposal -- Readers, expectations and functions, p 9-18   **During class:**   * Overview of course; whole class discussion of initial ideas about master's paper |
| **January 14: Identifying a Research Question**  Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information & Library Science*. Libraries Unlimited.   1. Wildemuth, Chapter 2, Developing a research question, p11-20 2. One of the following:    1. Wildemuth, Chapter 3, Questions originating in library and information practice, p21-26    2. Wildemuth, Chapter 4, Descriptions of phenomena or settings, p27-32    3. Wildemuth, Chapter 5, Testing hypotheses, p33-39    4. Morgan & Wildemuth, Chapter 6, Questions related to theory, p40-47   **During class:**   * Additional discussion of possible ideas to pursue in master's paper * Begin work on Assignment 1, Preliminary research question, in consultation with peers |
| **January 19: Positioning the question within a particular area**  **Reading/Preparation before class:**   * + Initial reading for research question; selected by students (bring one strong example to class, to share with peers)   + Bring to class one example of a past master's paper that could serve as a model for your work   **During class:**   * Form peer review groups, based on content/topic focus of research question * In groups, discuss research examples and their relationship to the prospective research question   **DUE: Assignment 1, Preliminary research question, due for peer review (comments and suggestions to be returned by January 21)** |
| **January 21: Selecting and Working With a Research Advisor**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * + Review faculty expertise; identify 2-3 potential research advisors   + Skim/read abstracts of at least 2 recent publications of each candidate advisor   **During class:**   * General discussion of ways to work with an advisor * Group discussion of potential advisors and their potential support for the research * Draft list of instructor email addresses and draft introductory text   **DUE: Return peer comments and suggestions for Preliminary research question assignment.** |
| **January 26: Databases/Search lab**  **During Class:**   * Searching workshop (bring laptop to class)   **DUE: Assignment 1, Preliminary research question, due for instructor review**  **DUE: Make first contact with potential advisor(s)** |
| **January 28: Reviewing the literature within the area**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * Webster, J., & Watson, R.T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly, 26*(2), xiii-xxiii. [[UNC libraries](http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/4132319)] * **During class:** * Group discussion/critique of literature search plans (bring laptop to class) * General discussion of concept maps and outlines as tools for organizing a literature review * Begin individually developing a concept map or outline, in consultation with peers   **DUE: Assignment 2, Literature review search plan, due for peer review during class session** |
| **February 2: More Literature**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * + Punch, K.F. (2007). *Developing Effective Research Proposals.* Sage.     - Chapter 3, A general framework for developing proposals, p19-29     - Chapter 4, Some issues, p30-44   **During class:**   * + Group review of literature searching progress, outline/concept map/draft progress   + General discussion of proposal format   **DUE:** **Literature review search plan, due for instructor review**  **DUE: Submit name of advisor and copy me on email agreeing on topic** |
| **February 4: Finalizing the research question**  **During class:**   * Review of progress in identifying an advisor (report from first meeting with potential advisor) * General discussion of data collection methods: strengths and weaknesses * Exercise: Possible data collection methods * Writing time (if available**)** |
| **February 9: Selecting a method: data collection**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * Punch, K.F. (2007). *Developing Effective Research Proposals.* Sage.   + Chapter 5, Methods, p45-58 * Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information & Library Science.* Libraries Unlimited.   + One chapter selected from Part IV. Methods for Data Collection   + If appropriate, one chapter selected from Part III. Research Designs and Sampling   **DUE: Assignment 1, Introduction chapter draft, due for instructor review** |
| **February 11: Selecting a method: data collection; Ethical considerations**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * Two additional readings on the data collection method of interest; selected by students   + One reading should be a description of the method and how to use it, e.g., from a methods textbook   + One reading should be an example study applying the method in a way similar to the way in which the student expectsto apply it   **During class:**   * + Group discussion of strengths and weaknesses of data collection method selected   + General discussion of research ethics and ethical treatment of study participants; optional IRB workshop to be scheduled |
| **February 16: Selecting a Method: Data Analysis**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * For those working with qualitative data:   + Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information & Library Science.* Libraries Unlimited.     - Zhang & Wildemuth, Chapter 30, Qualitative analysis of content   + Additional readings to be identified by instructor * For those working with quantitative data:   + Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information & Library Science.* Libraries Unlimited.     - Wildemuth, Chapter 33, Descriptive statistics     - Wildemuth, Chapter 34, Frequencies, cross-tabulation, and the chi-square statistic     - Wildemuth, Chapter 36, Correlation     - Crystal & Wildemuth, Chapter 37, Comparing means: *t* tests and analysis of variance   **During class:**   * In-class exercise on data analysis |
| **February 18: Defining and recruiting a sample**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information & Library Science.* Libraries Unlimited.   + Read one:     - Wildemuth, Chapter 13, Sampling for extensive studies     - Wildemuth & Cao, Chapter 14, Sampling for intensive studies * **During class:**    + General discussion of sampling and recruitment issues   + Group discussion of sample size and challenges for recruitment   **DUE: Assignment 2, Literature review chapter draft, due for peer review** |
| **February 23: Putting the Plan Together**  **Reading/preparation before class:**   * Punch, K.F. (2007). *Developing Effective Research Proposals.* Sage.   + Chapter 6, Writing the proposal, p59-74   + Chapter 7, Tactics, p75-86   + Appendix 2, Questions to guide proposal development, p144-146   **During class:**   * General discussion/review of proposal writing techniques * Individual writing time * Individual review with instructor; focus on methods   **DUE: Assignment 3, Methods chapter draft, due for peer review**  **DUE: Return peer comments on literature review** |
| **February 25: Moving from a plan to a project/study**  During class:   * General discussion of the proposal as a plan for conducting the research * Resolving any unsettled questions: Q&A * Individual writing time * Individual review with instructor; focus on methods   **DUE: Assignment 2, Literature review chapter draft, due for instructor review**  **DUE: Methods chapter draft comments and suggestions returned** |