INLS 581
RESEARCH METHODS OVERVIEW
SPRING 2018
TUESDAYS, 6:00 – 8:45, MANNING 001

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OVERVIEW AND REQUIRED MATERIALS

An introduction to research methods used in Information and library science, exploring the design, interpretation, analysis and application of published research.

For this course, there is one required text:


***The first edition of this textbook is acceptable, however if you choose to use the older edition, please note that some chapter numbers will be different than those listed in the course schedule below. Use the chapter titles to help you make sure you’re reading the correct chapter(s).

This book is available for purchase at UNC Book Stores and online. It is also on reserve in the SILS Library. In addition, students will need to have a laptop computer capable of accessing UNC’s Virtual Lab software (virtuallab.unc.edu).

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Casey Rawson
Email: crawson@email.unc.edu
Office: Manning 002 (office hours by request)
COURSE OBJECTIVES

You may or may not become a full-time researcher after you graduate from SILS. However, regardless of your post-SILS career path, this course should help you stay aware of current best practice in your field, learn about and evaluate new trends as they emerge, assess your own professional practice, and effectively communicate with other professionals about “what works” in your job. In this course, I hope students will:

- have fun while exploring and learning about research methods.
- gain an understanding of the concepts and terminology used in ILS research and of the methods used to perform this research.
- become acquainted with different research specialties and approaches in ILS.
- improve their abilities to read, evaluate and appreciate research.
- develop their quantitative, logical and analytical thinking abilities.
- improve their ability to engage in discussions around the “big questions” of methodology.
- begin to develop their abilities to engage in research-based practice.

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that students learn best in an inquiry-based classroom environment in which they are given the opportunity to construct their own understanding of content through authentic engagement with ideas and with each other. My role is to facilitate your learning, not to impart knowledge; as such, there will be as little as possible “sit-and-get” instruction in this course. Some “lecture” is unavoidable, however during these periods of class time (which I try to keep under 15 minutes at a stretch), I want and expect you to engage with me by asking questions and sharing your (relevant) comments.

We will spend most of our class time on large- and small-group discussion and/or debate, thinking protocols, case studies, and self and peer reflection. We will frequently engage in small group activities, and I will ask you to move around the room quite a bit so that you work with as many different classmates as possible over the course of the semester. Every semester, I hear students say that their favorite classes are ones in which:

1. the instructor cares about the course and the students, and encourages feedback throughout the semester;
2. class time is used for authentic learning tasks (not lengthy summaries of the readings); and
3. all students participate fairly equally in class activities and discussions.

With your help, I will endeavor to create such an environment in this course.
ASSIGNMENTS

An overarching goal of any SILS course is to help prepare you to become not only competent professionals, but leaders in your respective fields. While I am happy to meet with you outside of class if you are having trouble with a particular assignment or other aspect of the course, you will be primarily responsible for establishing your own work schedules and internal deadlines and for locating and retrieving information to complete your assignments. Since meeting deadlines is an important professional responsibility, grades on late work will be lowered by a full letter. Any incidence of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an F for the course.

#1 – LAB ASSIGNMENTS (25%)

At seven points over the course of the semester, you will be assigned take-home “labs” that introduce, reinforce, or extend topics covered in class. The format of these assignments will vary and specific instructions for each will be provided to you at least one week ahead of the due dates (which are listed in the “Class Schedule and Readings” table at the end of this document). These assignments will be graded on a + / / - scale, with specific criteria for each assignment to be posted in Sakai. In general, you will receive a on the assignment if you satisfactorily complete all parts as assigned, a + if you go above and beyond the assignment requirements in some way (please note that it won’t always be possible to do this depending on the nature of the lab), and a - if you do not meet all of the assignment requirements.

#2 – RESEARCH REVIEW #1 (10%)

Regardless of whether you ever conduct a research study after your master’s paper (I hope you do!), in order to be a leader in your chosen career you will need to be able to read, evaluate, and appreciate research in your field. In this course, we will focus on reading research articles with an eye toward describing and evaluating the methods used by the researchers.

You will conduct two research reviews. For the first review, you will work with a group of your classmates to critique one SILS master’s paper from the Dean’s Achievement Award list (http://sils.unc.edu/about/awards/sils-achievement). You can find PDF versions of these papers online at http://tinyurl.com/SILSmyps.

You will form your group and collectively choose a master’s paper in class on January 23. You will then have two weeks to read your chosen paper before meeting with your group during class time on February 6 to discuss the paper and collaboratively assess its strengths and weaknesses. It is fine if you choose to focus this assessment on the topics we will have covered.
in class up to that point; it is also fine if you notice and want to discuss other issues with the paper that we have not yet covered.

Sometime between 2/6 and 2/13, you will meet again with your group during class time to record a video review of your group’s chosen paper (if you prepare with your group ahead of time, you might be able to record toward the end of the 2/6 class session). This review should be approximately 8-10 minutes in length and all group members must contribute to the review (i.e., everyone must speak on the recording). Start your review by briefly describing the research: what was done, why it was done, how it was done, what was found. This should be a neutral description without any commentary or analysis and should take no more than 2 minutes of your video time. Then, discuss the research. (I hesitate to use the word ‘critique’ because sometimes people think that means to shred something!) Your discussion should be balanced, pointing out what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Where you note weaknesses, try to suggest ways the study might have been improved.

You may check out a video camera from the SILS library to record this video if you like, however a cell phone video is also fine (as long as the audio is clear). When you’re done, post the video to our class Sakai site in the Forums area. The easiest way to do this is to upload the video to YouTube and then link it in Sakai (if you do this, you can set your video privacy to “unlisted” if you don’t want it to show up in public searches). Videos must be posted no later than 6:00pm on February 13th.

Finally, I would like you to watch and comment on at least one other groups’ videos (you are not required to read the papers these students reviewed). If someone asks you a question about your group’s review, please respond. Comment on or ask questions about the research presented in the review, not the quality of the review. Your comments / questions / responses should be posted by the beginning of our next class session (February 20th at 6:00pm).

#3 - RESEARCH REVIEW #2 (10%)

For this research review, you will work independently to write a two-page (single spaced) review of two articles published in an ILS journal or conference proceedings. Both of these articles should present original empirical research (no literature reviews, position papers, etc.). You might want to choose either two articles that both address a similar topic / research question using different methods, or two articles that address different research questions using the same method (you could choose two totally unrelated papers, but choosing papers that are similar in terms of either topics or methods should make your job easier).
Just as with the group review, you should start by briefly describing the research: what was done, why it was done, how it was done, what was found. This should be a neutral description without any commentary or analysis. Then, discuss the research. Your discussion should be balanced, pointing out what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Where you note weaknesses, try to suggest ways the study might have been improved. If you have chosen studies that are similar in either topic or method, you may compare and contrast their strengths and weaknesses. At the end of your review, on a separate page, please include full citations for each paper you have reviewed.

Once you’ve done this, you should post a message to the appropriate Forum in Sakai with a 4-5 sentence summary of your papers and a full citation for each no later than 6:00pm on April 3. **Attach your full research review to this forum post.** During the course of the week following the due date of the review, you should read and comment on two other people’s reviews (you are not required to read the papers these people reviewed). If someone asks you a question about your review, please respond. Pick reviews that discuss topics that interest you; it is okay if the review you want to read has already been read by many other people. **Comment on the research presented in the review, not the quality of the review.** Comments and responses should be posted no later than 6:00pm on April 10.

#4 – MID-TERM (15%) AND FINAL (25%) EXAMS

Exams!?! Yeah, I know ... scary. But they don’t have to be! It is important that you internalize some of the content of this class – remember, our primary goal is to gain familiarity with a wide variety of research methods, and exams are good assessment methods for evaluating knowledge of a range of topics and issues (versus a paper or project that would only show me what you know about one topic in depth).

You will take the mid-term exam at some point during the 24-hour period from 7:15pm Tuesday, 3/6 to 7:15pm Wednesday, 3/7. I will make the exam available to you online beginning at 7:15pm on 3/6 and you will have up to 75 minutes to complete the exam once you open it (we’ll only have class from 6:00 – 7:15 that day). All exams must be completed by **Wednesday, 3/7 at 7:15pm.** The midterm exam will cover material presented through the 2/27 class session.

The final exam will be a three-hour online exam, and you will all take that exam on **Friday, 5/4** (the registrar’s scheduled exam date for this course). You may take that exam from any location; the exam window will open at 8:00 am and will close at 10:00pm. The final exam will be cumulative and integrative (it will include material from the entire course).
Both exams will be closed-book and closed-note (that includes communicating with classmates during the exam time). The format of the exam questions will be varied. I like open-ended questions; in particular, I like to present stimuli (for example, a passage from a piece of research) and ask you questions about the stimuli (for example, what type of sampling was used). You will also have a few multiple-choice questions and statistics problems to work. We will go over sample exam questions in class.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (15%)

The ability to work successfully and communicate effectively with your colleagues will be vital to your career as a professional. Consequently, you must be thoughtful in your interactions with your peers and instructor. Your active participation in class is vital not only for your own learning, but for the learning of everyone in the class.

I believe that each of you has valuable experiences and contributions that will deepen and extend our understanding of the course content, both during class and online. Therefore, I expect you to be engaged in class. This does not mean that you need to raise your hand for every question in class - the quality of your participation matters just as much as the quantity, and when a handful of people dominate class discussions it is difficult for other students to fully engage. There are several ways to actively participate in class, and each will factor in to your class participation grade:

- **Attendance**: You are expected to attend class each week and to arrive on time. This is especially important for this course since we only meet once each week. More than one absence or repeated tardiness will result in a lower class participation grade.

- **Preparation**: Full participation in class will require that you have not only completed all readings, but also thought critically about them before coming to class. In your lab assignments, research reviews, and in-class contributions, I will look for evidence that you have engaged in thoughtful preparation for each class session. UNC’s definition of one credit hour is “not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week.” As this is a three credit-hour course, by this standard, you should be spending a minimum of 6 hours of time each week outside of class preparing for class and completing assignments.

- **Participation in class activities**: In addition to large-group discussion, this class will include individual, pair, and small-group activities, and I will look for your engagement in all of those activities. I understand that it is not always easy to jump into a large-group discussion; however, without a variety of voices and opinions, the quality of those discussions is significantly lowered. Take notes, ask questions, and above all,
actively engage your mind with the ideas we are exploring in class. Your completion of
the Citi Ethics course (Week 15) will also factor into your class participation grade.

- **Behavior:** Behave professionally. Be courteous to your instructor and classmates by
  refraining from conversing with others during lecture times, turning off all devices that
  might interrupt class, and using your electronic devices only to support class activities.

Since class participation grades can often be a “black box,” I will ask you to self-assess your
participation near the midpoint of the semester using the same rubric that I will use to grade
your participation at the end of the course.

**TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

Research on laptop use in higher education has shown that laptops used for course activities
can result in learning gains, but that in-class laptop use also can also lead to distraction and
decreased course satisfaction, understanding, and overall performance among students.¹ This
course will occasionally require the use of a laptop computer or tablet for class activities, and
you may wish to have digital copies of readings accessible to you during class. However, other
activities such as checking e-mail, social networking, etc. should be restricted to before and
after class and break times. You may find that taking notes on paper is easier and more
effective for this course.

**GRADING SCALE**

Based on UNC Registrar policy for graduate-level courses:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>(95-100) “clear excellence”, <strong>above and beyond</strong> what is required</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>(80-94) all requirements satisfied at entirely acceptable level (note: this is expected to be the median grade for this course)</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>(70-79) low pass; substandard performance in significant ways</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(&lt;70) failed; performance that is seriously deficient and unworthy of graduate credit</td>
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***Undergraduate grading scale: 95-100 (A), 90-94 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 70-79 (C, same +/- ranges as above), 60-69 (D, same +/- ranges as above), <60 (F).***

UNIVERSITY HONOR SYSTEM

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-administered honor system and judicial system for over 100 years. Because academic honesty and the development and nurturing of trust and trustworthiness are important to all of us as individuals, and are encouraged and promoted by the honor system, this is a most significant University tradition. More information is available at http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/honor.html. The system is the responsibility of students and is regulated and governed by them, but faculty share the responsibility and readily commit to its ideals. If students in this class have questions about their responsibility under the honor code, please bring them to me or consult with the Office of the Dean of Students. The web site identified above contains all policies and procedures pertaining to the student honor system. We encourage your full participation and observance of this important aspect of the University.

SILS DIVERSITY STATEMENT

In support of the University’s diversity goals and the mission of the School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces diversity as an ethical and societal value. We broadly define diversity to include race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation and physical and learning ability. As an academic community committed to preparing our graduates to be leaders in an increasingly multicultural and global society we strive to:

- Ensure inclusive leadership, policies and practices;
- Integrate diversity into the curriculum and research;
- Foster a mutually respectful intellectual environment in which diverse opinions are valued;
- Recruit traditionally underrepresented groups of students, faculty and staff; and
- Participate in outreach to underserved groups in the State.

The statement represents a commitment of resources to the development and maintenance of an academic environment that is open, representative, reflective and committed to the concepts of equity and fairness.

“The faculty of the School of Information and Library Science, Dr. Barbara B. Moran.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

“The Department of Disability Services (DDS), a part of the Division of Student Affairs, works with departments throughout the University to assure that the programs and facilities of the University are accessible to every student in the University community. Additionally, DDS provides reasonable accommodations so students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified may, as independently as possible, meet the demands of University life.” Visit their website at http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/ for more information.
A NOTE ON THE READINGS
All PDF readings will be downloadable from the Sakai resources folder for that day’s class session. If you encounter a link that won’t work or a file that won’t download, please contact me as soon as possible; you should also take the initiative in that case to search for the article yourself using the UNC Library’s website. Please have readings accessible during class (via your laptop / electronic device or in print). We’ll spend significant time in class discussing the readings indicated with a star (*) – be sure you read these extra carefully!

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td>Introduction to the course (and each other);</td>
<td>Course syllabus&lt;br&gt;Wildemuth, Chapters 1 - 3&lt;br&gt;Wilson, V. (2016). Conducting your own research: Something to consider. <em>Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 11</em>(1(S)), 18-21.</td>
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<td>Issues Common to All Studies</td>
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<td>Research Quality; Qualitative Approaches to Research</td>
<td>Thyer, B. A. (2001). Reliability and validity in quantitative measurement. In Thyer, B. A. The handbook of social work research methods (pp. 52-67).: SAGE.</td>
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<td>Research Quality; Qualitative Approaches to Research</td>
<td>Wilson, V. (2016). Research Methods: Triangulation. Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 11(1(S)), 66-68.</td>
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<td>Week 3: 1/30</td>
<td>Mixed methods research;</td>
<td>Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods</td>
<td>Come to class prepared to work with your</td>
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|           | Research Review #1 group work time         | *Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. (Chapter 10)  
*Tufecki, Z. Beyond the deficit model: Gender schemas, computing preferences, and I.T. career choices (grant application).  
| Week 5: 2/13 | Case studies; Experiments and hypotheses | Wildemuth chapters 5, 7, 11, and 12  
| Week 6: 2/20 | Surveys                                   | Wildemuth, Chapter 28  
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<td>Week 7: 2/27</td>
<td>Existing Content</td>
<td>Wildemuth, Chapters 17-18 &amp; 31</td>
<td>Lab 4: Content Analysis <strong>DUE MONDAY, 2/26</strong> by 6pm</td>
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<td>Week 8: 3/6</td>
<td>[Half class] Interviews and Focus Groups [Time out of class for midterm]</td>
<td>Wildemuth, chapters 25-27</td>
<td><strong>Mid-term exam completed by 3/7 @ 7:15pm</strong></td>
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<td>Week 9: 3/13</td>
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<td>behaviors increases both healthy and unhealthy behaviors. <em>Social Influence</em>, 1(2), 117--127.</td>
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