

# INLS 691H: Honors Thesis in Information Science

School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Fall Semester 2019

**CLASS TIME:** Wednesday 12:20pm-2:45pm

**CLASS MEETING PLACE:** 303 Manning Hall

**INSTRUCTOR:** Mohammad Hossein Jarrahi, PhD

**PHONE:** 919-962-8364 (Office)

**OFFICE:** 200 Manning Hall

**EMAIL:** [jarrahi@unc.edu](mailto:jarrahi@unc.edu)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Each Tuesday from 2:00PM to 3:15PM or by appointment.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to critical research skills. The primary outcome of this course is a research proposal. This course must be successfully completed (i.e., with a grade of B or higher) by any student wishing to complete an undergraduate honor thesis.

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## STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The course structure is seminar-based and therefore does not involve traditional lecturing; it largely builds from a lot of class discussions.

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## SCHEDULE

You should regularly check the Sakai site for the course schedule and assigned readings for each class. Please Note: Course schedule may change. The Sakai version will always represent the official and up-to-date syllabus.

	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	Assignments
1	21-Aug	Introduction and overview		
2	28-Aug	The selection of a research design	Book CH 1	Submit research statement
3	4-Sep	Review of the literature	Book CH 2	
4	11-Sep	The use of theory	Book CH 3	
5	18-Sep	Writing strategies and ethical issues	Book CH 4	
6	25-Sep	Writing introduction and purpose statement	Book CH 5 & 6	Complete IRB training
7	2-Oct	Research questions and hypothesis	Book CH 7	

8	9-Oct	Quantitative methods	Book CH 8	Submit the lit review assignment
9	16-Oct	Qualitative methods	Book CH 9	
10	23-Oct	Mixed methods	Book CH 10	
11	30-Oct	Proposal development		
12	6-Nov	Guest panel of recent graduates		
	13-Nov	No Class (CSCW conference)		
13	20-Nov	Data science methods		
14	27-Nov	Thanksgiving (No Class)		
15	4-Dec	Final presentations and wrap-up		Individual presentations
	10-Dec	Final Paper (Due 1:00pm)		

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## COURSE MATERIALS and SAKAI

We will read chapters from *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (Third Edition), by John W. Creswell. I selected this edition (which is not the latest), so that you don't have to pay a high price for the book

Additional articles will be supplemented on Sakai. **So Students have to check Sakai for extra readings before every class.**

Sakai will play a central role in this course. The readings, handouts, this syllabus, and all other electronic information about the course (including your grades) will appear on Sakai. In addition, assignments should be submitted to Sakai.

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## PARTICIPATION AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Your participation and thoughtful discussion of the various exercises will make the class a successful learning experience; this is how you add value to your peers learning process. Since the class exercises and discussion are an integral part of the course, your attendance at every class is expected. If you will be unavoidably absent, please notify me before the class (or as soon afterward as you can).

Any late assignment will incur a penalty of 25% of the grade for each day late. If you have a recurring issue which causes you to repeatedly miss assignments, you will need to provide the relevant documentation from a medical practitioner, counselor, etc. If you are experiencing a personal problem, disability, or lifestyle issue that will interfere with your attendance and performance throughout the semester, I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible.

There is no educationally appropriate reason to be "facebooking," tweeting, or web-surfing during class time. You are welcome to use your digital device for note-taking and to support in-class work. As a common courtesy to us all, cell phones and other electronic devices should be on "silent" mode. You

should bring your laptops but they should only be used for class purposes (i.e., not for checking email, surfing the web, or working on other class assignments, etc.). Please note that points may be deducted from your participation grade for disruptive behavior such as texting, and inappropriate use of laptops, etc.

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## ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

In order to encourage participation in class activities, I have included an evaluation component for participation and involvement in class-time work. With reference to learning goals, the evaluation will include a set of group projects as well as individual integrative essays. Working on a system of 100 points total, different components will carry the following weights:

Reflections	20 points
Literature review assignment	30 points
Final proposal and presentation	40 points
Attendance / Participation / In-class Activities	10 points
Total	100 points

**Reflections:** These one-page (400-600 words) reflections should be critical, insightful, and tied to your own interests and research. Reflections are not simple repetition of the readings, but should include your opinion and critique. These are due Tuesday (before each class) 8:00pm. Address the following questions/points in your online portfolio:

1. What stood out for you? What did you learn? What did you like about it? What can you conclude?
2. Find and provide a summary of two research (empirical) articles that have applied the method/concept/principle. You should start by briefly describing the two research studies: what was done (how these two papers have used the method/concept/principle), why it was done, how it was done, what was found. Then, discuss the research. Your discussion should be balanced, pointing out what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the work/method. Finally, what is interesting about how they applied the method/concept/principle?
3. What is your critique of the method, its key principles, and its applicability? What is missing? What are the blind spots in how it deals with key research problems of the information professions?

**Research statement:** Students are expected to submit (before class 2) one page stating their functional area of interest, the research domain, significance of the research problem (why should we care as information scientists?), and expected method for studying the phenomenon.

**Final proposal and presentation:** In preparation for conducting a research study, you will need to make many decisions related to the study design, the sample to be included, the methods you will use for data collection, and the methods you will use for data analysis. Your proposal (which can later be revised as the Methods chapter in your thesis) should provide a detailed plan for the methods you will use in conducting your study. It should provide enough detail so that you could leave and a classmate could conduct your study in your absence, exactly as you intended, without having to ask you any questions

about what to do. You will present your proposal in the final class of the semester.

**Attendance and Participation:** The structure of this course is meant to engage and stimulate you. Your attendance and participation are therefore strongly encouraged, and will be rewarded. This includes attending classes, contributing to class discussions and activities, and working within your group. Your contribution will be judged not only on quantity, but quality and consistency as well. Your participation and attendance will fall in one of the following categories:

- a) You attend regularly and frequently have thoughtful things to say.
- b) You attend regularly and speak often (and on topic).
- c) You attend regularly but rarely speak.
- d) You attend sporadically and do not contribute.
- e) You have exceeded the maximum number of allowed unexcused absences.

You are required to attend all but one of the classes; in other words, you can miss one classes without penalty. But you still have to submit the reflection for that class.

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## LETTER GRADES

The numeric total will translate into a letter grade according to the following scheme:

Letter	Points	What it means
A	95-100	<b>Clear excellence:</b> Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials that surpasses course expectations. In INLS 585, this means that the student has contributed on a regular basis to the in-class activities and the discussion forums with insightful comments supported by professional literature beyond that provided by the basic required readings. Command and understanding of the subject is demonstrated in the written assignments and the mid-term examination. The H student initiates issues discussions, leads in summary and conclusions, and shares knowledge with classmates. Leadership and initiative are demonstrated throughout the semester.
A- B+ B B-	91-94 87-90 83-86 80-82	<b>Satisfactory:</b> Student performance meets designated course expectations, demonstrates understanding of the topics across the entire semester and supports this understanding with the required readings. The students participates in both in-class and forum discussions with relevant comments.
C+ C C- D+ D	77-79 73-76 70-72 67-69 60-66	<b>Unsatisfactory Work:</b> Student performance demonstrates incomplete or inadequate understanding of course material and/or is frequently absent.
F	< 60	<b>Failing:</b> Student may continue in program only with the permission of the dean
IN		<b>Work Incomplete:</b> A grade of incomplete may be taken only because of illness or special circumstances and only with the permission of the instructor.

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## UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES

**Student Religious Observance Policy:** UNC recognizes the diverse faith traditions represented and

supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these. A more detailed student policy can be found at <http://equalopportunity-ada.unc.edu/accommodations/religious-accommodations/> . Under this policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to religious observance. Please notify the instructor before the end of the second week of classes.

**UNC 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 you have questions about your 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.

**Diversity Statement:** If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Also, please contact UNC Disability Services at (919) 962-8300 or [disabilityservices@unc.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@unc.edu) at the Student and Academic Services Buildings, located in Suite 2126, 450 Ridge Road, to formally coordinate accommodations and services.

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.

**Acknowledgement:** This syllabus uses syllabi of the courses offered by Barbara Wildemuth, Casey Rawson and Jason Dedrick