
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INLS 781: PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

FALL 2019
MONDAYS, 1:25 – 3:55
MANNING 208

COURSE DESCRIPTION

During this course, each student will prepare a proposal for the work to be completed during the following semester for their master's paper / project (INLS 992).

INSTRUCTOR

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I.	Overview	VI.	Course Schedule
II.	Required Materials	VII.	University Honor System
III.	Inclusion and Student Support	VIII.	Students with Disabilities
IV.	Course Objectives	IX.	SILS Diversity Statement
V.	Grading		
	a. Research Proposal		
	b. Intermediate Assignments		
	c. Class Participation		

OVERVIEW

The final master's paper requirement at SILS gives you an opportunity to demonstrate that you are capable of:

- envisioning and carrying out a **sustained, coherent, and significant** process of work resulting in a tangible product;
- managing that process over several months; and
- presenting that work in written form.

There are two routes that you can take toward fulfilling this final requirement: you can focus on answering a question, or you can focus on solving a problem. (These are, of course, interrelated, but for the purpose of planning a master's paper this can be a useful distinction.) In either case, you will be required to present your work in the form of a substantial paper.

This course is designed to prepare you for your master's paper study or project by guiding you through the development of a **research proposal**. As part of that process, you will select and refine a question of study, conduct a literature review to determine what has already been done in your area of interest, secure a faculty advisor for your study, and determine and describe the methods you will use to conduct your study / answer your question. You should leave this course fully prepared to begin your study or project. You should also be able to repurpose components of the proposal you write here into the literature review and methods sections of your master's paper.

REQUIRED MATERIALS



There is one required textbook for this course, and we will read all of it together over the course of the term:

Punch, K. F. (2016). *Developing effective research proposals* (3rd Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

You should be able to get this book through the UNC bookstore or through an online retailer; you may be able to find a used copy from a student who has already taken this course! This text is also on reserve in the SILS library.

INCLUSION AND STUDENT SUPPORT

My teaching philosophy is grounded in relationships and shared meaning-making. This means that I believe people learn best when they are given the opportunity to construct their own understanding of content through authentic engagement with ideas and with each other. I strive to create learning environments that support and honor students' identities and prior knowledge. Who you are as a learner and as a person matters to me.

It is my intent that the diversity that you all bring to our class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. I have worked to include and develop course materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. With that said, research in our field, like most others, has been largely built on a foundation of work from privileged voices (read: white, straight, cisgender, non-disabled, American, male), and I acknowledge that there may be both explicit and implicit biases in the selection of materials for this course. Suggestions for improvements are always encouraged and appreciated.

I understand that you have lives outside of this course, and that sometimes experiences outside of your control may interfere with your class performance. If this happens to you, please reach out.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will:

- Express the functions of a research proposal.
- Explain the general framework of a research proposal and critique its component parts.
- Formulate a concise and focused research question.
- Design a literature review that supports and frames a research area.
- Select and justify the choice of research method(s) for a proposed study.



GRADING

In general, you should expect to earn a P (Pass) for this course, which represents work and effort that meets all stated requirements. The “H” grade is reserved for work that goes above and beyond stated expectations in some way. Course grade ranges are as follows based on UNC Registrar policy for graduate-level courses:

- H (Exceptional work that goes beyond the expectations for the course):** 95-100%
 - P (Work that meets all expectations of the course at an acceptable level):** 80-94%
 - L (Work that represents substandard performance in significant ways):** 70-79%
 - F (Performance that is seriously deficient and unworthy of graduate credit):** <70%
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RESEARCH PROPOSAL (60% OF COURSE GRADE)

The final deliverable for this class is a **proposal for a research study or project**. In general, your proposal will include the following major sections:

1. Introduction - provides an overview of the problem that you've identified, a specific research question and motivation for pursuing your chosen research study or project
2. Literature Review - synthesizes sources that already exist that are relevant to your intended research and (very importantly) what gap there is in the literature that you'll be addressing with your research. For a project, this section will be titled “Related Work.”
3. Research Design / Project Design - describes the data collection and analysis methods to be used to address the research problem/question.

Additional details about what should be included in your proposal can be found in the generic template documents provided in Sakai. The final proposal is due on **October 21st** and is worth 60% of your grade for the class. Your proposal should follow APA (6th Ed.) style for citations and formatting.

INTERMEDIATE ASSIGNMENTS (20% OF COURSE GRADE)

The assignments summarized below are designed to help you move towards the final proposal. Some of these assignments will be for peer review within class; others will be for my review only. You will turn all assignments in via the Forum tool in Sakai. **All intermediate assignments are due on Sundays** (the day before our class meets).

1. **Preliminary research topic:** a short document (maximum of one page), that elaborates your initial ideas about what you would like to pursue for your master's paper research. It should include topic area(s), questions that interest you and why you want to research this topic. Due September 1.
2. **Literature search strategy:** for the literature review, you will be searching for articles, chapters, proceedings, etc., that will "make your case." Post a description of what you have found, where (database, discipline) and where you will be looking next. In other words, describe what you are



currently doing for the literature search and any ideas of other avenues you will be exploring. Due September 15.

3. **Research question drafts:** The process of coming up with a research questions is iterative. You will start your literature search based on your initial thoughts, but as you proceed you may find that you are not finding what you expected and have to shift course. This happens; it is expected. Before you leave this class, however, you will need to have your research question locked down. I will have a lot to say about this in class. Initial draft question posted by September 9; finalized version posted by September 22.
4. **Literature review outline:** the structure of your literature review including section headings, summary of the content of each section and references to articles used to support that section. The literature review is designed to support why you are doing the research and why it has merit. As such, it includes an overview of the currently accepted understanding of a topic and why it is important, leading up to a 'gap', problem, or issue you have identified and want to study. Due September 29.
5. **Methods summary:** a template will be provided for you to fill out that will guide you through your choice of method(s), trustworthiness considerations, and justifications. Completed template due October 13.

You will continue to refine each of these items throughout the semester, and each will be incorporated into your final proposal in some form. **So please consider all of these DRAFTS – they do not need to be perfect when you submit them.**

PEER REVIEW (10% OF COURSE GRADE)

During our first class meeting, you will choose a peer review partner with whom you will work for the duration of the course. For each of the first four intermediate assignments described above, you will provide constructive feedback to your partner within one week of the assignment due date by posting a reply to your partner's forum post. In addition to reviewing your partner's work, I also strongly encourage you to read your other classmates' posts and comment on those when you have something potentially helpful to add to their work (replies to other classmates may be less detailed than replies to your peer review partner – that's completely fine!). For the final intermediate assignment (the methods template), you will provide feedback to your partner face-to-face during our last class session on October 14.

You will choose your own peer review partner based on whatever criteria is important to you, however I would encourage you to choose someone who is interested in a similar topic or intends to use a similar method to yours, since that will make it a bit easier for you to evaluate each other's work.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (10% OF COURSE GRADE)

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 six times. 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 keeping with UNC's definition of one credit hour, you should plan to spend approximately six hours each week outside of class working on assignments and completing readings and other out-of-class tasks.
- **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.
- **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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Prepare for Class	Assignments Due
8/26	Intro and Research Topics Read the course syllabus. Read (or review) the SILS Master's Paper Overview and Master's Paper Guidelines pages. Read Punch, Chapters 1 and 2	Preliminary research topic posted to Sakai forum by 9/1, 11:59pm
9/2	Labor Day – no class	
9/9	Scope, Research Questions, and Literature Reviews Find 2 mentor master's papers. Read Punch, Chapters 8 and 4	First draft research question posted to Sakai forum by 9/8, 11:59pm

Date	Prepare for Class	Assignments Due
	Read Webster, J., & Watson, R. (2002). Analyzing the Past to Prepare for the Future: Writing a Literature Review . <i>MIS Quarterly</i> , 26(2), Xiii-Xxiii.	Peer feedback on your partner's preliminary research topic due by 9/8, 11:59pm.
9/16	Literature Reviews Cont'd Read Punch, Chapter 5 Identify 2-3 potential master's paper advisors. Work on your literature review.	Literature search strategy posted to Sakai forum 9/15, 11:59pm Peer feedback on your partner's first draft research question due by 9/15, 11:59pm.
9/23	Study Design (Methods) Read Punch, Chapters 3 and 6 Contact potential master's paper advisor(s) and arrange a time to meet (if you haven't already done this). Work on your literature review.	Finalized research question posted to Sakai forum by 9/22, 11:59pm Peer feedback on your partner's literature search strategy due by 9/22, 11:59pm.
9/30	Study Design (Methods) Part II Read Punch, Chapter 7 Explore the SAGE Research Methods database for chapters, books, case studies, etc. related to the method(s) you anticipate using for your master's paper. Read at least one chapter or article about your method(s) (one that you have not read before for INLS 581 or another course). Begin working on your methods template.	Literature review outline due 9/29, 11:59pm Peer feedback on your partner's finalized research question due by 9/29, 11:59pm.
10/7	Dr. Rawson out of town. Meet with your peer review partner to work on proposal. Meet with your master's advisor if you haven't already done so. Peer feedback on your partner's literature review outline due by 10/6, 11:59pm.	
10/14	Proposal Workshop Read excerpts from Cottrell, S. (2014). <i>Dissertations and project reports: A step by step guide</i> . New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Begin work on putting the proposal pieces together into a cohesive whole. Come to class ready to work on this with your classmates.	Completed methods template due 10/13, 11:59pm



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.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

SILS DIVERSITY STATEMENT

In support of the University's diversity goals and the mission of the UNC School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces diversity as an ethical and societal value. We broadly define diversity to include ability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. 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 perspectives and experiences are valued
- Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from traditionally underrepresented groups
- Participate in outreach to underserved groups in North Carolina and beyond

The statement is our commitment to the ongoing cultivation of an academic environment that is open, representative, and reflective of the concepts of equity and fairness.

~The Faculty and Staff of the UNC School of Information and Library Science