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INLS 581: Research Methods Overview

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Class time: Tues & Thurs 9:45-11 am / Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4 on [TEAMS](#)

This class will meet primarily in Zoom. To avoid uninvited guests the Zoom URL will change each week. The URL for the Zoom is posted under Lessons each week.

Professor: Francesca Tripodi, PhD

Office: Manning 202 (and on [TEAMS](#))

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 1-4pm

Email: ftripodi@email.unc.edu

If you are having trouble learning for any reason, please come and see me or the Dean of Students.

Course Description

This is an introductory course for graduate students learning how to conduct research in the field of information and library science. The course was created to allow students to engage in evidence-based practice so they can stay up to date with research in the field. Throughout the semester we will explore the design, interpretation, analysis and application of published research.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Identify which method (qualitative, quantitative and mixed) best matches the research question you want to ask.
2. Know the concepts and terminology used in ILS research.
3. Improve your ability to read, evaluate and appreciate research.
4. Develop your analytical thinking abilities.
5. Engage in discussions surrounding research methods (both design quality and analysis).
6. Identify the ethical concerns surrounding research with human subjects.
7. Expand your ability to engage in research-based practice.

Class engagement & expectations

On the first day of class, we will set our classroom expectations as a community. You will need a computer and an internet connection capable for Zoom meetings and accessing UNC's Virtual Lab

software (virtuallab.unc.edu). If you need assistance accessing these technical requirements, let me know immediately.

 [Classroom Expectations.pdf](#)

Evaluation

The most frequent grade for this class is P (Pass). P represents work and effort that meets all stated requirements. “H” grades are reserved for exceptional work. There are 180 total points available across all course assignments. 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): 171-180points
- P (Work that meets all expectations of the course at an acceptable level): 144-170points
- L (Work that represents substandard performance in significant ways): 126-143points
- F (Deficient performance unworthy of graduate credit): <126 points

I do not “round up” final grades – please don’t ask.

Student Support

Please utilize me as a resource if you are having difficulty with the material or there are outside circumstances impeding your ability to learn. You should also know that I am a mandatory reporter if you choose to confide in me. For those seeking professional help for mental health please contact the UNC student counseling center (CAPS) at [919-966-3658](tel:919-966-3658). 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.

Diversity & Inclusion

My intention as an educator is to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all learners. I work hard to include course materials and activities that promote diversity but SILS (and most disciplines in the academy) were founded by those from a privileged background. As such, I’m always looking for new scholarship by women, POC, LGBTQ+, and non-Western thinkers – please share resources you think would be useful. **Suggestions and improvements are encouraged and appreciated.**

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

Email Policy + Meetings

Unless you have an emergency that requires immediate assistance, I request that students only e-mail me to set up 1:1 meetings (via Zoom or Teams) or share interesting information (videos, news as it relates to class). I'm also open to meeting in-person provided we can meet in an outdoor space and wear masks. It's very difficult to explain course material via email and typically a meeting is best. **I'm always available during office hours (Tuesdays from 1-4).**

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty and trustworthiness are important to all of us as individuals and are encouraged and promoted by the honor system. More information is available at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/honor.html>. 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.

Course Assignments

LABS (4 POINTS EACH FOR LABS 1-6; 6 POINTS FOR LAB 7; 30 POINTS TOTAL)

At six 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 4-point scale. In general, you will receive 3 points on the assignment if you satisfactorily complete all parts as assigned, 4 points if you go above and beyond the assignment requirements in some way, and 2 or 1 points if you do not meet all of the assignment requirements. Specific assessment criteria may vary, since each lab is unique. A rubric will accompany each lab to explain the criteria for each point level. One point will be deducted for late submission.

The final lab will be a quantitative analysis practice set which will assess your understanding of the statistics concepts taught toward the end of the semester. This lab will be somewhat longer than the others and will be scored out of 6 possible points.

RESEARCH REVIEW (20 POINTS)

To gain practice critically evaluating study designs, data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings, you will work independently to write a four-page (double spaced) review of one SILS master's paper from the Dean's Achievement Award list (<https://sils.unc.edu/why-sils/excellence-exemplified/awards/sils-achievement>). You can find PDF versions of these papers online at <https://tinyurl.com/MPSSILS>. A full description of this assignment is posted under "assignments."

CLASS DISCUSSION FACILITATION (20 POINTS)

To practice the kinds of conversations you'll engage in at seminars and professional meetings, you will work in a small group of classmates to lead a 30-minute in-class discussion of one of the research articles highlighted in blue in our class schedule (below). Your discussion should include facilitated conversation related to that day's main topic (for example, interviews or data analysis), however, you may also choose to have students discuss other elements of the paper that you identified as thought-provoking, controversial, or confusing. A full description of this assignment is posted under "assignments."

EXAM (40 POINTS)

The beginning of this course covers a lot of topics that we want to be sure you thoroughly understanding. On Thursday, October 22 you must complete an online exam and will have up to 3hrs to complete the exam once you open it. All exams must be completed by Thursday, October 22nd at 11:59 pm. The exam will cover the material presented during the first ten weeks of the semester. *This exam 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 (open-ended, simulation-based, multiple-choice). The Tuesday before the exam we will have an in-class review session.*

RESEARCH QUESTION/SUPPORTING LITERATURE(40 POINTS)

The primary goal for this class is for you to have a basic understanding of how to conduct and evaluate research. The final project for this course will be iterative. Throughout the semester you will work in teams, individually, and in 1:1s with me to develop a research question that you think you

might want to pursue in the future. A full description of this assignment is posted under “assignments.”

CLASS PARTICIPATION (30 POINTS)

I take a considerable amount of time to prepare for this class and I expect you do to the same. This course - and life in general - is best when you engage. Your active participation in class is vital not only for your own learning but for the learning of everyone in the class. It's difficult to participate if you're posting to TikTok, sending Snaps, checking Instagram, shopping online, sending private Zoom messages to classmates, or engaging with people outside of class during class. A full description of how I grade participation is available posted under “assignments.”

Course Schedule

This course is organized by week. Here is the full schedule for your reference.

 [Tripodi Syllabus+Fall2020+Course Schedule.pdf](#)