INLS 778

Research Methods and Proposal Development

Course page accessible via canvas.unc.edu

Course Description

During this course each student will prepare a proposal for the work to be completed during the following semester for their masters paper/project (INLS 992). Students will also receive an introduction to research methods used in information & library science, exploring the design, interpretation, analysis and application of published research.

Details

- Wednesdays, 10:10am - 12:55pm
- Manning 304
- Course page in Canvas

Instructor

Casey Rawson, Ph.D.

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Office: 215 Manning

Office Hours: bit.ly/rawsonoffice

She / Her / Hers

Overview

This course has a dual purpose: first, to help you understand the basics of LIS research with the expectation that you will employ this knowledge to engage in evidence-based practice as a professional; and second, to prepare you to design an original research study that you will conduct and report on as your master's paper work. To that end, all assignments and course activities are intended to help you gain both practical experience and conceptual understanding of a wide range of methods commonly employed in our field.

Course Objectives

In this course, you 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.
- efficiently **read**, critically **evaluate** and **appreciate** research.
- improve your ability to **engage in discussions** around the "big questions" of methodology.
- **articulate** the functions of a research proposal and its component parts.
- **formulate** a concise and focused research question that will guide your master's paper work.
- **design and develop** a literature review that supports and frames a research area.
- **select and justify** the choice of research method(s)for a proposed study.

Required Materials

The main text for this course will be the ***SAGE Research Methods Project Planner***, available online via the UNC Library and linked in Canvas (you will need to sign in using your ONYEN to access this resource). We will all read the foundational topics of this planner, and you will also read the sections that are relevant to your chosen research methodology.

All other course readings will be linked within Canvas within each week's lesson page. In addition, to complete the literature review and methods sections for your final proposal, you will use the SAGE Research Methods database along with other UNC Library resources to find additional chapters and articles that relate to your chosen research or project methodology and to your topical area of interest.

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, able-bodied, 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. This is especially true as we continue to deal with the COVID pandemic. If this happens to you, please reach out. I will do my best to work with you to ensure that you can succeed in the course and that you are aware of SILS and university resources that might help you more generally. One place to find such resources is the Dean of Student's Student Support page: https://odos.unc.edu/student-support.

Grading

Except for the final proposal and the class participation component, all assignments in this course are designed as **formative assessments**: they are aimed at evaluating learning as it is happening (as opposed to measuring what you have learned at the end of a unit or course). With that in mind, only your final proposal and class participation will have numerical grades associated with them. All other assignments will be marked for completion, but not graded. You will, however, get feedback on your work, either in the form of an answer key released after the due date or individual feedback on the assignments that lead up to your final proposal.

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,** while the "L" grade is assigned for work that represents substandard performance in significant ways. Descriptions of general expectations for individual assignments are provided below, and you can also access rubrics for the final proposal and class participation assignments in Canvas.

Assignments

Assignments in this course fall into four main categories:

1. **Lab assignments**: Labs (5 total) are designed to give you hands-on experience with the methods we are learning in the course. In general, labs related to a particular method will be completed *before* we discuss the method in class and will serve as a foundation for our in-class activities. With that in mind, it is important that you complete all labs by the listed due date so you will be prepared to engage in class. Labs will be graded for completion only (full credit or no credit) and, where applicable, answer keys will be shared after the due date for each lab.
2. **Proposal development assignments:** Assignments in this category (4 total) are designed to facilitate your progress toward the final research proposal. These assignments will be submitted in Canvas, and you will receive individual feedback on them from both the instructor and your peer review partner. As with the labs, these will be graded for completion only.
3. **Final proposal:** The final deliverable for this course is a proposal for a research study, which you will implement next semester in INLS 992 under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Examples of high quality proposals from previous semesters of this course will be provided to

you. Your proposal will include an introduction, comprehensive literature review, a methodology section describing the data collection and analysis methods to be used in your study, and an impact and limitations section. Most students find it easiest to follow APA (6th or 7th Ed.) style for citations and formatting. Another style is acceptable if you prefer, however if you plan to use another style, please let me know. A rubric will be provided describing H-, P-, and L-level work on the final proposal, and this assignment will be graded on a 0-100 scale.

4. **Class participation:** This course moves quickly and relies on active student engagement. Lectures are pre-recorded to leave as much class time as possible free for discussion and small-group activities. For these reasons, it is *essential* that students commit to both adequate preparation for each week's class session and full engagement with all in-class activities. 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.

Course Schedule

The table on the next page provides a simple overview of each week's course topics and assignments due. Lecture videos and readings will be accessible within each week's lesson page and are not listed here to keep this chart at a single page so you can print it to keep it handy throughout the semester. However, an expanded table listing each week's readings and lecture videos is available on Canvas if you prefer the more detailed format.

Important Policies

COVID, Masking, and Zoom: Masks are optional, however I strongly encourage you to wear one if you are experiencing *any* symptoms (even if you're "sure it's just allergies"). I plan to open the windows in our classroom (weather permitting). If you are ill or have to be out of town, you may attend class via Zoom no more than twice over the course of the semester. Please note that because our class involves a lot of small group activities, Zooming in is not a great substitute for being there in person. However, it is better than nothing!

Communications: Email is my preferred mode of communication, and I try to respond to student messages within one business day. I do not check my email at night or on weekends.

Printable Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Assignments Due
August 23, 2023	Intro; Research Philosophies and General Methods Vocabulary	Complete pre-course survey and read the course syllabus
August 30, 2023	Research Questions; Sampling	Proposal assignment #1: Preliminary ideas post (estimated time to complete: 20 minutes)
September 6, 2023	Research Ethics and IRB Workshop	Lab 1: CITI Ethics Course (estimated time to complete: 2 hours); peer feedback on preliminary ideas post
September 13, 2023	Research Quality in Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Studies	Proposal assignment #2: First-draft research question(s) (estimated time to complete: 20 minutes)
September 20, 2023	Literature Reviews	Come to class prepared to search for literature related to your chosen topic(s); peer feedback on first-draft RQs
September 27, 2023	Data Collection 1: Surveys	Lab 2: Surveys (estimated time to complete: 1 hour)
October 4, 2023	Data Collection 2: Interviews & Focus Groups; Observation	Lab 3: Observation (estimated time to complete: 1 hour)
October 11, 2023	Data Collection 3: Content Analysis	Lab 4: Content Analysis (estimated time to complete: 30 minutes)
October 18, 2023	Data Collection 4: Experiments and Think-Alouds; Case Studies	Proposal assignment #3: Lit review outline (estimated time to complete: 2 hours, not including literature search time)
October 25, 2023	Data Collection 5: Diaries; Participatory and Action Research	Lab 5: Diaries (estimated time to complete: 1 hour, spread out over the course of one week); peer feedback on lit review outline
November 1, 2023	Proposal workshop and mini-conferences	Come to class prepared to work on your literature review and/or your methods template
November 8, 2023	Data Analysis 1: Qualitative Coding	Continue work on your literature review
November 15, 2023	Data Analysis 2: Quantitative Analysis Part 1	Proposal assignment #4: Methods template (estimated time to complete: 3 hours)
November 22, 2023	**No class: Thanksgiving Break**	
November 29, 2023	Data Analysis 3: Quantitative Analysis Part 2	**Optional** quantitative analysis lab and answer key released in Canvas
December 6, 2023	Drop-in Office Hours	**Final proposal due 12/14 at noon.**

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. **In addition to this official pathway for accommodations,** please know that I am happy to work with you to make sure this course meets your needs regardless of whether you have a documented disability. If there is anything I can do or provide to you that would better facilitate your learning in this course, please let me know.

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