

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
MLIS 7700 Research Methods
SYLLABUS
Fall Semester 2011
Three Credit Hours

Instructor:
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Catalog Description

Prerequisite: MLIS 7000. An introduction to the various approaches to social science research and research methods. Students will perform small scale research projects and develop skills in the research uses of libraries and the needs of library patrons.

Draft MLIS Program Objectives (PO)

(submitted to Graduate Executive Committee Fall 2011)

Graduates of the MLIS Program will:

- PO 1. Perform administrative, service, and technical functions of professional practice in libraries and information centers.
- PO 2. Use existing and emerging technologies to meet system, user, and other needs in libraries and information centers.
- PO 3. Integrate relevant research to enhance their work in libraries and information centers.
- PO 4. Demonstrate professionalism in their work in libraries and information centers.

Learning Outcomes (LO)

Students will:

- LO 1. Recognize the inter-relationships of theory, research, and scientific inquiry (PO 3).
- LO 2. Discuss basic ethical issues associated with conducting research (PO 3, PO 4).
- LO 3. Distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methods (PO 3).
- LO 4. Identify the basic elements in the design of social research studies (PO 3).
- LO 5. Relate terminology, concepts, and processes of social research to studies conducted in the library and information science (LIS) field (PO 3).
- LO 6. Evaluate research methodologies from representative LIS research studies (PO 1, PO 2, PO 3).
- LO 7. Analyze research articles for ideas to be used in professional practice or to advise library patrons in their research endeavors (PO 1, PO 2, PO 3, PO 4).
- LO 8. Apply a systematic method for locating references in the research literature (PO 1, PO 2, PO 3).
- LO 9. Prepare a literature review according to a style used in research reporting (PO 3).
- LO 10. Propose a practice-based library or information science research project (PO 1, PO 2, PO 3).

Note that Learning Outcomes are associated with Program Objectives. Individual assignments, provided below, are in turn associated with Learning Outcomes.

Textbooks

Neuman, W. L. (2007) *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0205484379

Nahl, D. *Strategic Research Approaches for Reference Librarians*. Kendall-Hunt, 2000.
(This is a workbook – currently out-of-print. We have permission from the author to copy the content, so chapters are available in PDF format on the BlazeVIEW site for this course.)

Note: Please familiarize yourself with the MLIS policy that prohibits the use of VSU's Interlibrary Loan service for obtaining textbooks at http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/documents/ILL_Textbooks.pdf

Instructor Availability & Support

Check with your instructor for her/his policy on how frequently e-mail and telephone messages will be returned. By institutional policy, instructors are asked to communicate with students online through VSU accounts (BlazeVIEW and VSU e-mail). If you are registered for the course as a non-degree student, a VSU email account will be assigned to you for this semester.

All discussion posts and assignment submissions for this online course must be sent via BlazeVIEW. Your VSU email username serves as your BlazeVIEW login. The BlazeVIEW password requires at least one capital letter in it. See the section on "Technical Requirements" on this syllabus for contact information in the case you need technical help.

Faculty Recommendations

MLIS 7700 is a reading and writing intensive core course. Students report that they spend an average of 10 to 15 hours each week on assignments.

Taking MLIS 7700 with no more than one other course is strongly recommended. Students should schedule this course toward the end of their degree requirements.

Attendance

This is a Web-delivered course, with a non-mandatory two-day face-to-face, non-graded laboratory session to be held on the Macon State College campus. The workshop will be convened over a weekend. Dates and times are posted to the course calendar.

The sessions will provide hands-on activities that demonstrate the application of statistical methods and preparing the sections of a research proposal.

All other course communications, activities, and materials will be available exclusively through the BlazeVIEW web site and require weekly checks for assignments.

Course Activities Outline

The following list is a brief overview of the activities included in this course in order of their assignment. Look for complete instructions and grading criteria for each assignment on the BlazeVIEW course site. Note that grades for each assignment or course activity are associated with not only the quality of the response as a whole, but also with the comprehensiveness of coverage of each of the Learning Outcomes associated with the assignment.

Discussion Board 1 (Required, not graded)

Introduce yourself by answering the questions posted on the Discussion Board 1 in BlazeVIEW.

Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project (LO 3, LO 4, LO 8, LO 9)

Many courses on research methods save discussions of qualitative research for last. However, qualitative research lays the foundation for much of what happens in quantitative research. This exercise is designed to introduce you to elements associated with qualitative research. You will work in groups of three to investigate a construct currently of interest in the field of library and information science. To conduct your examination, you will use the tools of qualitative research (e.g., observations and a scan of the literature) to look for indicators that this construct is influencing library practice. Together, you will assemble a short, collaborative paper that reports your findings. An explanation of the construct and details on formatting the report and grading criteria will be on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Discussion Board 2 (LO 2)

Post your reactions to questions related to ethical issues. Questions will appear on Discussion Board 2.

Individual Exercise A: Recognizing Good and Bad Survey Methods (LO 1, LO 3, LO 4, LO 5)

You will be given sample survey questions and asked to identify flaws, correct problems, and re-write “bad” questions.

Individual Exercise B: Identifying Elements of Research Design (LO 3, LO 4, LO 6, LO 7)

This exercise involves identifying the basic components of qualitative and quantitative research design using excerpts from actual research articles in the library and information science literature.

Pre-requisite Drafts on Research Proposal Topic (LO 1, LO 2, LO 3, LO 4, LO 5, LO 6, LO 7, LO 8, LO 9, LO 10)

Select a research problem related to the field of library and information science and use it as the basis for drafting the parts of your final research proposal. Four documents showing your progress on developing your proposal must be submitted – one each week. These include a worksheet outlining the parts of your proposal idea, an abstract submitted to Discussion Board 3 for instructor and peer review, a literature review, and your research problem-questions-methods section. Submission of these drafts is mandatory. You will not be graded, but you will receive feedback from the professor on each draft. Your final proposal is worth 35 points. Not submitting a draft results in a 5 point deduction for each missed draft from your final proposal.

Final Project: Writing a Research Project Proposal (LO 1, LO 2, LO 3, LO 4, LO 5, LO 6, LO 7, LO 8, LO 9, LO 10)

Using your preliminary drafts and the feedback on this work, refine and combine your work into a research proposal that articulates how to investigate that problem. This is a proposal specifying what you would do if you had the opportunity to conduct research on your problem. You will not be asked to actually do the research. The final proposal must include: your abstract; a literature review; problem statement and research questions; explanation of the purpose of the research and its potential application; objectives or hypothesis; type of research approach proposed (e.g., qualitative or quantitative with details); and specifics on the proposed research design (e.g., procedures on selecting materials or participants, names of variables, and data collection and analysis methods). Details on formatting the report and grading criteria will be on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Assignment Calendar – see *BlazeVIEW calendar for specific dates*

Week of: Activities:

Week 1 Introduction to Inquiry

Read Neuman textbook: Chapters 1 & 2

Submit a post in response to Discussion 1. Required, not graded.

Read the assignment materials for Weeks 2 and 3.

Sign up for a group.

Weeks 2 and 3 The Nature of Qualitative Research

Organize and conduct the Read-Observe-Analyze Project

Draw upon your textbook and any other materials that you identify as germane to the assignment. Chapter 9 in Diane Nahl's workbook gives a simplistic, but informative overview on what qualitative research is and types of research (pp. 165-170).

Recommended starting points in the Neuman textbook:

Chapter 9 – section on content analysis (pp. 227-233) – for the Web site examination

Chapter 11 – section on observing and collecting data (pp. 287-296) – for library observation

Chapter 12 – section on using historical data (pp.312-317) – primary vs. secondary sources

You will find Background material, Project Guidelines, and a Handout on terminology in this week's folder.

Prepare your Group Report according to the formatting and grading criteria on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Submit your finished Group Report using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

One-day grace period

Later submissions lose points.

Week 4 Ethics in Social Research

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 3

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Submit your post answering questions about ethics to Discussion 2.

Later submissions lose points.

Week 5 Language of Quantitative Research Design

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 4 (pp. 91-103).

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Week 6 Survey Research

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 7

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Submit Individual Exercise A: Recognizing Good and Bad Survey Methods using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

Later submissions lose points.

Week 7 Experimental Research

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 8

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Week 8 Identifying Elements of Research Design

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 6

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Use this week to complete and submit Individual Exercise B: Identifying Elements of Research Design using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

Later submissions lose points.

Week 9 Measuring & Analyzing Data

Lecture will cover concepts and terminology from Chapters 5 and 10 in Neuman.

The Nahl workbook covers much of this same material in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

A face-to-face class makes explaining this part of research somewhat easier than trying to communicate these complex procedures in online meetings.

- Saturday's session (10 AM to 5 PM) will focus on variables, central tendency, measures, statistical expressions, sampling methods, and the concepts of validity and reliability.
- Sunday's session (10 AM to 2 PM) will focus on your proposal topics.

Be prepared to present a 5-minute overview (no more) of what you are thinking about covering in your research proposal. A rough idea is fine.

Attending these sessions is optional, but highly recommended. Participation both days is the optimal arrangement, but if you can only come on Saturday or Sunday, that is permitted.

Week 10 Proposal Worksheet

Prepare and submit your Proposal Worksheet to the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

See Nahl workbook for possible worksheet model.

This is mandatory for feedback.

Not submitting a Proposal Worksheet results in a 5 point deduction from your final proposal.

Comment on the Abstracts submitted to your Group.

Earn extra credit for substantive recommendations to your group-mates.

Due date: Wed. Mar. 23, 11:59 PM.

Week 11 The Abstract for Your Proposal

Prepare and submit your Abstract to Discussion 3.

This is mandatory for feedback.

Not submitting an abstract results in a 5 point deduction from your final proposal.

Comment on the Abstracts submitted to your Group.

Earn extra credit for substantive recommendations to your group-mates.

Week 12 The Literature Review

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 4 (pp. 64-84).

Get started on your literature review. Material in this week's folder will guide you.

Submit a draft of your literature review and your references list using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

This is mandatory for feedback.

Not submitting a draft of the Lit Review results in a 5 point deduction from your final proposal.

Week 13 Research Questions and Methods

Submit a draft of your research questions and proposed methods using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

This is mandatory for feedback.

Not submitting this draft results in a 5 point deduction from your final proposal.

Due date: Mon. Apr. 13, 11:59 PM.

Weeks 14 & 15 Polishing the Proposal

Prepare your Research Proposal according to the formatting and grading criteria on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Finals Week Submit your Research Proposal during this week using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

Graded Course Requirements

As a student in this class, you are expected to: (1) read or view all assigned background materials; (2) participate fully in discussion board activities; (3) submit all projects on time and according to the format designated by the instructor; and (4) conduct your research and composition according to the rules of academic integrity (see Academic Honesty section on pages 7-8 of this syllabus).

Discussion 1 (introduction) Required, not graded

Discussion 2 (ethics issues) 10 points

Discussion 3 (Abstract draft) Extra credit for feedback, if substantive

Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project 25 points

Exercise on Survey Methods 20 points

Exercise on Research Design 20 points

Research Proposal 35 points

(Not submitting your proposal worksheet and drafts of your abstract, lit review, and research questions/methods will result in point deductions from your proposal)

Final Grades based on Points accrued:

99-110 points = A

88-98 points = B

77-87 points = C

66-77 points = D

Below 66 points = F

No grade below a C will be credited toward a VSU graduate degree.

Because this is a core course, a student earning less than a C will be required to repeat the course.

Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the BlazeVIEW course management program. If you are a new BlazeVIEW user, go to the BlazeVIEW help pages at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/students.shtml>. Then return to the BlazeVIEW page and login using your BlazeNet email ID and password.

To meet all class requirements, you should be prepared to: (1) open and save or print all documents that are required background reading - this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer; (2) view all PowerPoints placed on the course BlazeVIEW site – these are saved to PowerPoint 97-2003; (3) participate in Live Classroom sessions – login links and instructions will be available through your BlazeVIEW course homepage; (4) check discussion groups as needed; and (5) keep electronic backup copies of each assignment and project you submit.

Unless otherwise stated, assignments must be submitted using a word processing program compatible with Microsoft (MS) Word. BlazeVIEW accepts documents in MS Word 97-2003 or MS Word 2007. Since MS Word 2010 is new, we shall see whether documents in this format upload easily. If you are using WordPerfect or sharing documents with classmates who have a different version of Word, save your documents in Rich Text Format (rtf). Documents that cannot be opened on VSU equipment will be returned to you for re-formatting.

The University's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hot line is 229-245-4357.

Academic Honesty

"Valdosta State University expects that graduate students will pursue their academic endeavors and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. All work that a student presents to satisfy course requirements should represent his or her own efforts, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of external sources."

Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Ethics. Please acquaint yourself with the full policy at

<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>.

It is your responsibility to make sure you understand how to avoid breaches of academic integrity. The instructor posts rules for citing, quoting, and appropriate use of resources for assignments that require written compositions, reviews, or commentary.

Noncompliance with rules on appropriate use of resources will result in zero credit for those parts of the assignment affected. If you are unsure about the parameters of an assignment, ask for clarification.

Asking librarians or staff in a library to provide answers or to conduct research to fulfill any part of a graded course requirement is an infraction of academic integrity. The same policy applies to contacting any free or commercial reference service for assistance with a graded assignment.

An overall grade of zero can be assigned to an entire paper or project if the instructor determines that its contents, or parts of its contents, were completed by a second party. This, of course, does not apply to group projects that require collaboration on a final product.

Distance Learning Support

The University's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hot line is 229-245-4357.

To ask questions about availability or location of VSU online resources, use the VSU Library's Live Chat or E-mail at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/ask.php>. You may also phone the VSU Library's reference service at (229) 333-7149.

Special Needs Statement

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of our institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin, or the handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as the Title IX section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with the professor at the beginning of the semester. Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

Student Agreements

By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to SafeAssign, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of SafeAssign at VSU see [SafeAssign for Students](http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml) (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml>).