

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
MLIS 7700 Research Methods
SYLLABUS
Spring Semester 2014
Three Credit Hours

Instructor:

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(use BlazeVIEW email for course correspondence)

Office hours by appointment, online or via telephone. As a general rule I will be in my office from 8:00 am to 10:00 am, Monday through Friday.

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.

Grade Requirements

All students admitted fall 2011 and thereafter must earn a grade of “B” or better in these core courses: MLIS 7000, 7100, 7200, 7300, 7700, and 7800.

MLIS Program Objectives (POs)

Graduates of the VSU 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 needs in libraries and information centers.

PO 3. Integrate relevant research to enhance work in libraries and information centers.

PO 4. Demonstrate professionalism in their work in libraries and information centers.

MLIS 7700 includes an assignment called Writing a Research Project Proposal that fulfills the MLIS Program Objective 3. You will find it marked as “necessary to fulfill requirements for this course” on page 4 of this syllabus. You will need a subscription to LiveText and must submit the final copy of the Research Proposal to your LiveText account.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students will:

SLO 1. Recognize the inter-relationships of theory, research, and scientific inquiry (PO3).

SLO 2. Discuss basic ethical issues associated with conducting research (PO3, PO4).

SLO 3. Distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methods (PO3).

- SLO 4. Identify the basic elements in the design of social research studies (PO3).
- SLO 5. Relate terminology, concepts, and processes of social research to studies conducted in the library and information science (LIS) field (PO3).
- SLO 6. Evaluate research methodologies from representative LIS research studies (PO1, PO2, PO3).
- SLO 7. Analyze research articles for ideas to be used in professional practice or to advise library patrons in their research endeavors (PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4).
- SLO 8. Apply a systematic method for locating references in the research literature (PO1, PO2, PO3).
- SLO 9. Prepare a literature review according to a style used in research reporting (PO3).
- SLO 10. Propose a practice-based library or information science research project (PO1, PO2, PO3).

Textbooks

Neuman, W. L. (2012) *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson. ISBN-10: 0205762611. ISBN-13: 9780205762613.

Hollister, C. V. *Handbook of Academic Writing*. Association of College and Research Libraries, 2013. ISBN-13: 978038986486.

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

Assessment Portfolio and Your Subscription to LiveText

There are a number of assessments in the MLIS Program developed to meet ALA accreditation requirements on student learning outcomes. These assessments are part of all the MLIS core courses plus certain electives. LiveText is the software that the MLIS Program currently uses to keep track of these assessments, and all MLIS students are REQUIRED to purchase access to the LiveText system. The LiveText subscription is not tied to when you entered the program or to when you plan to graduate. If you purchased LiveText for a previous course, continue to use that account. If you do not have an account, instructions for subscribing to LiveText are on the course website. Once you purchase your subscription to LiveText, it is good for up to five years. You will also have personal access to other LiveText features you may find useful once you have your subscription. Please consider the purchase of your LiveText subscription as you would the purchase of any other textbook or piece of software required for a course.

Instructor Availability & Support

By institutional policy, instructors communicate with students online through VSU accounts (BlazeVIEW and VSU e-mail). Non-degree students receive VSU accounts as well.

All discussion posts and assignment submissions for this online course must be sent via BlazeVIEW. Your BlazeVIEW username and your Single Sign On (SSO) password serve as your BlazeVIEW login. The SSO started in summer 2013. If you have not reset your former BlazeVIEW password to the SSO, 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. All other course communications, activities, and materials will be available exclusively through the BlazeVIEW web site and require weekly checks for assignments. The instructor will schedule real-time instruction using Live Classroom as needed.

Assignments in Brief

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.

Discussion Board 1 (Required, not graded)

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

Discussion Exercise 1 (Required, not graded)

Read and evaluate a qualitative research article.

Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project

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

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

Using sample survey questions, you will identify flaws, correct problems, and re-write “bad” questions.

Individual Exercise B: Identifying Elements of Research Design

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

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; a second worksheet stating your research problem-questions-design-methods; a draft of your literature review; and an abstract submitted to Discussion Board 3 for instructor and peer review. Submission of these drafts is mandatory. 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

Using your preliminary drafts and the feedback on this work, refine and combine your work into a research proposal that articulates how to investigate the research problem you selected. This is a proposal specifying what you would do if you had the opportunity to conduct research on your problem. You do not actually do the research. The final proposal must include: Abstract; Literature review; Problem statement and research question(s); Explanation of the purpose of the research; Objectives or hypothesis; Type of research approach proposed (e.g., qualitative or quantitative design with details); Research design particulars (e.g., procedures on selecting materials or participants, names of variables, and data collection and analysis methods); and Potential application(s) or implication(s) of the proposed research. Details on formatting the report and grading criteria will be on the BlazeVIEW course site. **Successful completion of this project is necessary to fulfill requirements for this course.**

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 page 5 of this syllabus).

Discussion 1 (introduction)	Required, not graded
Discussion Exercise 1	Required, not graded
Discussion 2 (ethics issues)	10 points
Discussion 3 (Abstract draft)	Required, not graded
Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project	15 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)	

100 – 90 points = A 89 – 80 points = B 79 – 70 points = C

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

To be eligible to receive an A in this course requires completing every 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 or copied into a paper or project from a source without proper citing. 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.

Your final grade will be one of these letter grades:

Exceptionally exceeds minimum standards	A
Exceeds minimum standards	B
Meets minimum standards	C
Barely meets minimum standards	D
Fails to meet minimum standards	F

Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the BlazeVIEW course management program. Login using your old BlazeVIEW ID and the new Single Sign-On (SSO) 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** and will open in all higher versions; (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 attached documents in **MS Word 97-2003 or higher**. 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). The instructor returns documents that cannot be opened on VSU equipment.

Late or Missing Submissions

There are one-day grace periods for deadlines for all assignments. Projects submitted after that lose points. I use a progressive point deduction system whereby for the first late assignment, I will deduct 1 point per day. The second late submission will lose 2 points per day. If you submit late a third time, you will lose 3 points per day late, and so forth. If you inform me of extenuating circumstances **before** the deadline, we can work out a solution for submitting an assignment without penalty.

Completely skipping an assignment is not acceptable in graduate school. To be eligible to receive an A in this course requires completing every assignment and submitting within the specified deadlines.

A grade of Incomplete is not an option unless a non-academic situation interferes with completion of assignments after the option to withdraw without academic penalty passed (October 3). A petition for an Incomplete must be submitted with documentation to the professor at the time an assignment is missed. Withdrawal from a course after October 3 requires a petition to the VSU Dean of Student Affairs.

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.

The **Guide to Ethical Conduct** is a booklet created for VSU MLIS students (http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/documents/GuidetoEthicalConductWebversion.pdf). It contains guidelines on appropriate conduct and outlines the ethical principles that instruct the profession of library and information science. 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 breeches of academic integrity. The instructor posts rules for citing, quoting, and appropriate use of resources for assignments that require written compositions, reviews, or commentary.

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.

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 hotline is 229-245-4357. BlazeVIEW is powered by the Desire2Learn (D2L) course learning system. D2L provides 24/7 support 365 days a year. To contact D2L, go to <https://D2LHelp.view.usg.edu> or call the hotline at 855-772-0423.

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 Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 229- 245-2498 (V); 229-375-5871 (VP); and 229-219-1348 (TTY).

Student Agreements

Enrollment in this class signifies that you agree to abide by and adhere to the policies and regulations specified above. It is understood that the instructor may adapt or change this syllabus and the assignments contained within it if extraordinary circumstances arise during the course of the semester.

By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to TurnItIn, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of TurnItIn at VSU, go to <http://ww2.valdosta.edu/academic/turnitin.shtml>.

Assignment Calendar

You will find a week-by-week assignment calendar that highlights readings and activities and lists due dates for all assignments in the BlazeVIEW website.