

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
MLIS 7700 Research Methods
SYLLABUS
Spring Semester 2005
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.

Course Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, the students will be able to:

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

Instructor Availability & Support

Dr. Ondrusek checks her e-mail and telephone messages at least once daily throughout normal business hours (M-F, 9-5) and extends e-mail checks to at least twice daily and on weekends during those periods when graded assignments are pending. By institutional policy, instructors are asked to communicate with students online through VSU accounts (WebCT/Vista and BlazeNet e-mail). All discussion posts and assignment submissions for online courses must be sent via WebCT/Vista. In the case that we encounter technical problems with the Vista software, group e-mail assignments will be routed through BlazeNet. Opening and testing your BlazeNet account is, therefore, required. For instructions on using a student BlazeNet account, go to:

http://www.valdosta.edu/blazenet/email-trans/help_stu.html.

Textbooks

Babbie, E. *The Practice of Social Research*, 10th Edition. Thomson Wadsworth, 2004. Student Edition ISBN: 0534620280. A CD-ROM for Windows containing supplementary materials comes with this textbook, but I will not require any CD-ROM usage. So, a used copy of the textbook, with or without the CD-ROM, is fine. Make sure it's the 10th edition.

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 WebCT/Vista site for this course.)

Computer Equipment Needs

Instructional materials were developed on a PC Pentium 4 system with Windows XP. Documents require a word processor and Adobe Acrobat and video excerpts require speakers and the RealPlayer plugin available free from Real.com. Text-only alternatives will be available for content covered in video excerpts.

Attendance

The course follows a Web-delivered format with one face-to-face, non-graded laboratory session to be held on the Macon campus, Saturday, March 19th, 9am to 5pm. The morning session will provide hands-on activities that demonstrate the application of statistical methods described in Nahl's workbook, and the afternoon session will be devoted to group activities on developing action research strategies. All other course communications, activities, and materials will be available exclusively through WebCT/Vista and require weekly checks for assignments.

The course is organized into four modules with course materials (except for assigned chapters from the Babbie text) presented as outlined below:

Module 1: Introduction to Inquiry

- Week 1: What Is Science? What Is Research?
- Week 2: Theory Building and Elements of Social Research
- Week 3: "Self-designed" Observation Exercise (Peer Review Workshop)
- Week 4: Ethical Considerations in Research (Case Studies)

Module 2: The Structure of Research

- Week 5: Basic Elements in Research Design
- Week 6: Qualitative Design Examples
- Week 7: Conducting a Literature Review

Module 3: Quantitative Research Methods

- Week 8: Assessment Tools (Exploratory and Descriptive Studies)
- Week 9: Experiments (Explanatory Studies)
- Week 10: Collecting Data and Devising Outcome Measures
- Week 11: Hands-on Lab in Macon

Module 4: The LIS Action Research Project

- Week 12: Preparing Preliminary Proposal Material
- Week 13: Getting Funded and Getting Published (Peer Review Workshop)
- Week 14: Librarians as Researchers Wrap-up
- Week 15: Final Week for Action Research Document Preparation

Week-to-Week Assignments

Specific assignments along with due dates are listed in the Week-to-Week Assignments folder on the MLIS 7700 WebCT/Vista course page.

Graded Requirements

Group Discussion Posts and Peer Review Workshops	20%
Follow-up Questions and Exercises from Readings	25%
Research Article Critiques (1 Qualitative, 1 Quantitative)	20%
Literature Review and Bibliography	20%
Action Research Proposal	15%

[see the Graded Course Requirements document on WebCT/Vista for expanded explanations of these requirements]

Submitting Assignments

Deadlines for each graded activity are clearly stated on the MLIS 7700 Course Calendar posted on the course home page on WebCT/Vista. Missing a deadline for any activity will result in a reduction in your grade unless you can arrange a mutually acceptable alternative with the instructor.

Grading

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

Academic Dishonesty

"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 [VSU policy on academic dishonesty](http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/Academic_Dishonesty.html) at http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/Academic_Dishonesty.html.

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 not registered with the Special Services Program should contact the

Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty).

MLIS 7700 Research Methods
COURSE CALENDAR
Spring Semester 2005

Module 1: Introduction to Inquiry

Week 1: What Is Science? What Is Research?

January 10 - 16

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapter 1
- >Nahl Workbook, Chapter 1
- >Introductory Notes on “Why Study Research?”
- >Discussion Session Requirements

Research Exercises:

- >Follow-up Activity 1
- >Follow-up Activity 2
- >Practice Research Exercise

Discussion Session Postings:

- >Submit your “findings” from the Practice Research Exercise to Discussion Session 1 (Due end-of-day, January 17th)
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Week 2: Theory Building and Elements of Social Research

January 17 - 23

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapter 2
- >Nahl Workbook, Chapter 6 (pp. 89-98)
- >Introductory Notes on Elements of Research

Research Exercise:

- >Research Exercise 1, “Self-designed” Observation Exercise (Follow the steps Babbie outlines in “Deductive Theory Construction” pp. 52 - 53)
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Week 3: “Self-designed” Observation Exercise (Peer Review Workshop)

January 24 - 30

Discussion Session Postings:

- >Post findings from Research Exercise 1, “Self-designed” Observation Exercise to the Peer Review Workshop 1A Discussion Session (Due end-of-day, January 28th)

>Post reactions to the observations posted by classmates, both their research approach and findings, to Peer Review Workshop 1B Discussion Session (Due end-of-day, January 31st)

Week 4: Ethical Considerations in Research (Case Studies)

January 31 - February 6

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapter 3
- >Introductory Notes on Ethics Policies and Informed Consent
- >Ethics Issue Follow-up Topics and Guidelines

Video clips:

- >Print out the “Case Study Notes for Videos” document (located in the Week 4 folder)
- >Use these notes as a viewing guide for watching the video clips from two videos on social research ethics, *Secrets of the Wild Child* and *The Power of the Situation*. (located in the “Readings and Videos” folder):

Submit to Instructor:

- >An Ethics Issue Follow-up Report (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day, February 7th).
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Module 2: The Structure of Research

Week 5: Basic Elements in Research Design

February 7 - 13

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapters 4 & 5
 - >Introductory Notes on Reliability and Validity
 - >Elements of Social Research Design Terms
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- >Review these discussions in Babbie:
 - Inductive vs. Deductive Research Methods (Fig. 1-6, p. 26; Fig. 2-3, p. 51)
 - Purposes of Research (pp. 87 - 90)
 - Conceptualization and Operationalization (pp. 109 -110)
 - Aggregates (pp. 15 - 16)
 - Variables and Attributes (pp. 16 - 21; p. 134)
 - Elements of Social Theory (pp. 43 - 44)
 - Units of Analysis (pp. 94 - 100)
 - Time Dimension (pp. 101 - 106)
 - Concepts As Constructs (pp. 121 -122)
 - Indicators and Dimensions (pp. 123 - 124)
 - Single or Multiple Indicators (pp. 138 - 139)

Self-review:

(not to be submitted to instructor)

>Analyze the 10 summaries of social research studies in Babbie (pp. 106 - 107)

Graded Quiz:

>Using abstracts from 10 LIS research studies, identify the elements of social research as designated under each abstract. (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day, February 14th)

Week 6: Qualitative Design Examples

February 14 - 20

Required Readings:

>Babbie Textbook, Chapter 11

>Nahl Workbook, Chapter 9

>Ondrusek, A. L. (2003). The attributes of research on end-user online searching behavior: A retrospective review and analysis. *Library & Information Science Research*, 26, 221-265.
<Article, full-text available through Academic Search Premier>

>Virtual Demonstration: Finding qualitative LIS studies via an online literature search

>Qualitative Research Critique Requirements

Submit to Instructor:

>Critique #1: Qualitative Research Study (Graded Assignment, Due end-of-day, February 21st)

Week 7: Conducting a Literature Review

February 21 - 27

Required Readings:

>How to Use NetLibrary document

>Fink chapters (TBA)

>Introductory Notes on the Literature Review Process

>Interview-the-Researcher Profiles & Guidelines

>Nahl Workbook, Chapter 2

Complete Research Exercise 2 in Nahl Workbook

>Exercise 2A, pp. 25 - 26

>Exercise 2B, pp. 27 -28

Submit to Instructor:

>Exercise 2A and 2B worksheets (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day, February 28th)

Discussion Session Postings:

>Post interview questions to Discussion 2, "Interview-the-Researcher"
(Due end-of-day, February 28th)

Module 3: Quantitative Research Methods

Week 8: Assessment Tools (Exploratory and Descriptive Studies)

February 28 - March 6

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapter 9
- >Nahl Workbook, Chapter 3
- >Virtual Demonstration: Finding quantitative research studies online

Complete Research Exercise 3:

- >From Nahl Workbook, complete Exercise 3A (pp. 47 - 48), Questions 1, 2, 3, 4
(see Assignment Sheet)
- >Exercise 3B (see Assignment Sheet)
- >Exercise 3C (see Assignment Sheet)

Submit to Instructor:

- >Exercise 3A, 3B, and 3C worksheets (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day, March 7th)
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Week 9: Experiments (Explanatory Studies)

March 7 - 12

Required Readings:

- >Babbie Textbook, Chapters 8 & 12
- >Nahl Workbook, Chapter 4
- >Virtual Demonstration: Finding experimental research studies online
- >Tague-Sutcliffe, J. (1992). The pragmatics of information retrieval experimentation, revisited. *Information Processing & Management*, 28, 467-490. <obtain article on your own>
- >Quantitative Research Critique Requirements

Submit to Instructor:

- Critique #2: Quantitative Research Study (Graded Assignment, Due end-of-day, March 14th)
[Babbie's guidelines on Reading Social Research, Chapter 17, pp. 473 - 478 might be useful.]
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Week 10: Collecting Data and Devising Outcome Measures

March 14 - 18

Required Readings:

- >Nahl Workbook, Chapters 5 & 6 (Much of this material is a review of previous readings)
- Includes: Rating Scales (pp. 75 - 82); Output Measures for Libraries (pp. 82 - 83)
- Look over Exercise 5 (pp. 87 - 88) and Exercises 6A & 6B (pp. 107 109). We will use a template

similar to these forms to create sample proposals in next week's lab. If your research proposal idea is taking shape, try filling in these forms using that topic and consider "volunteering" your idea as an example to be used by the group to which you will be assigned as part of the lab activities.

>Nahl Workbook, Chapters 7 & 8

Includes background material that will help you follow the lab exercises in next week's lab.

Week 11: Hands-on Lab in Macon

March 19th

Room TBA

Morning Session, 9 AM to noon

Statistics Exercises

Afternoon Session, 1 to 5 PM

Working in groups, prepare an action research proposal. The proposal must: (1) address an area in LIS; (2) fit one of the strategic research areas outlined in Nahl's workbook (p. 69); (3) relate to one of the 5 purposes for assessment as outlined by Nahl (p. 32); and (4) follow a quantitative model (but may include qualitative measures). Topics will be provided by the instructor for those groups that do not have a preconceived topic.

Discussion Session Postings:

>Post your Action Research Proposal to the Peer Review Workshop 2A Discussion Session (Due end-of-day, March 25th)

>Post your reactions to the proposals posted by classmates, commenting upon elements such as choice of topic, research design, and analysis methods to Peer Review Workshop 2B Discussion Session (Due end-of-day, April 11th)

Spring Break

March 28 - April 3

Module 4: The LIS Action Research Project

Week 12: Preparing Preliminary Proposal Material

April 4 - 10

Review:

>Fink chapter (TBA)

>Style Guidelines for Formatting Citations

Submit to Instructor:

>Draft of Lit Review/Bibliography (Non-graded Assignment - Due end-of-day April 11th)

Week 13: Getting Funded and Getting Published

April 11 - 17

Required Readings:

>Babbie Textbook, Chapter 17 (pp. 485 - 491)

>Introductory Notes

>Granting and Funding Sources on the Web

Don't Forget!

Critiques of your classmates' Action Research Proposals must be posted to the Peer Review Workshop 2B Discussion Session by end-of-day April 11th

Week 14: Librarians as Researchers Wrap-up

April 18 - 24

Discussion Session Postings:

>Reactions to responses from librarian-researchers' interviews to Discussion Session 3
(Due end-of-day, April 25th)

Week 15: Final Week for Action Research Document Preparation

April 25 - May 1

Submit to Instructor:

>Literature Review and Bibliography (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day May 2nd)

Finals Week: Submission of Action Research Proposals

Submit to Instructor:

>Action Research Proposal (Graded Assignment - Due end-of-day May 5th)
