

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
MLIS 7700 Research Methods
Syllabus--Spring Semester 2007
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:
- Recognize the inter-relationships of theory, research, and scientific inquiry
- Discuss basic 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

Instructor checks his 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 this online course must be sent via WebCT Vista. In the case that we encounter technical problems with the WebCT Vista software, group e-mail assignments will be routed through BlazeNet. Opening and finding the MLIS 7700 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

Required: Neuman, W. Lawrence. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Allyn & Bacon, 2004. ISBN: 0205355781 (or 2nd Ed. ISBN: 0205484379) (Paperback)

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.)

Optional: Cresswell, John. *Research Designs: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd Ed. Sage Publications, 2002. ISBN: 0761924426 (Paperback)

Attendance

The course follows a Web-delivered format with two or three face-to-face sessions to be held on the Macon campus, Saturday (dates and times will be posted on the Calendar tool on WebCT Vista). The sessions will provide hands-on activities that demonstrate preparing the sections of a research proposal. 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 parts as outlined below (see Study Schedule for updates):

Part 1: Foundations

- Week 1: Doing Social Research (Ch 1)
- Week 2: Theory and Social Research (Ch 2)
- Week 3: Ethics in Social Research (Ch 3)
- Week 4: Reviewing Scholarly Literature and Planning a Study (Ch 4)
- Week 4: Writing the Research Report (Ch 14)
- Week 5: Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement (Ch 5)
- Week 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling (Ch 6)

Part 2: Conducting Quantitative Research

- Week 7: Survey Research (Ch 7)
- Week 8: Experimental Research (Ch 8)
- Week 9: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis (Ch 9)
- Week 10: Analysis of Quantitative Data (Ch 10)
- Week 10: Writing the Research Report (Ch 14)

Part 3: Conducting Qualitative Research

- Week 11: Field Research (Ch 11)
- Week 12: Historical-Comparative Research (Ch 12)
- Week 13: Analysis of Qualitative Data (Ch 13)

Part 4: Writing a Research report

- Week 14: Writing the Research Report (Ch 14)

Assignments & Quizzes

Specific assignments and quizzes along with due dates are listed in the Assignments and Assessments folder on the MLIS 7700 WebCT Vista course page.

Grading

Participation: 5%

Research Assignments: 30%

Quizzes: 20%

Research Article Reviews: 10%

Final Strategic Research Project: 35%

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- A – 91-100
- B – 81-90
- C – 71-80
- D – 60-70
- F – 0-69

Course Requirements:

Participation (5%)

1. The course is designed for online delivery.
2. Students should participate in face-to-face/online meetings to discuss and share their opinions of the week's topics, assignments, and readings.
3. Date and time information for online meetings will be made available on WebCT Vista.
4. All questions regarding content, assignments, quizzes, and readings should be posted to class discussion board on WebCT Vista.
5. Students are expected to answer or contribute to such questions posted by their classmates and it will be counted towards their grade.

Assignments (30%) & Quizzes (20%)

- Students will complete weekly assignments that provide an opportunity to demonstrate familiarity with the course content.
- Research Article review assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents through WebCT Vista.
- Collaboration on homework assignments is encouraged. You may consult outside reference materials, other students, or the instructor. However, your answers should reflect your understanding of the subject matter at the time of writing.

Self-test quizzes are designed to help students measure their understanding of the course content.

Readings & Discussions (10%)

The articles cover broad areas of qualitative and quantitative research. Readings will be made available to students as pdf files or links to original material through WebCT Vista.

Students are expected to write reviews for each article (double-spaced at font size of 12pt and up to 2 pages long) and their views about each article at the designated area on the message board for discussion.

Final Strategic Research Project (30%)

Final research project paper must include Introduction, Literature Review, Methods (proposed research methods and data-analysis techniques), and References sections. Try to limit your research paper up to 15 pages (double-spaced at font size of 12pt) and use the 5th edition of the APA (American Psychological Association) formatting and style guide to cite sources. (see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>)

- Students are free to choose the topics of personal interest.
- Instructor approval is required to start the Final Strategic Research Project.
- Research projects will be presented at the last class meeting (face-to-face or online).

The instructor may also provide a list of research projects for you

Submitting Assignments

Deadlines for each graded activity are clearly stated on the MLIS 7700 Course Calendar tool 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.

Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the WebCT Vista course management program. If you are a new Vista user, go to the WebCT Vista help pages at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/>. On the right margin are “Self Help” links. View the “Getting Started” tutorial first. Then return to the Vista page and login using your BlazeNet email ID and password.

To meet all class requirements, you should also be prepared to: (1) check the WebCT Vista course homepage several times a week, sometimes daily, if a course discussion is in progress; (2) locate additional course readings using the GALILEO databases and download or print these out (this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer); and (3) keep electronic backup copies of each assignment and project you submit.

All assignments must be submitted using a program compatible with VSU supported products. MS Word is the preferred document format. The OpenSource project makes available a free set of programs called the OpenOffice suite which includes a word processing program compatible with MS Word. You can download the entire OpenOffice Suite from the Web site <http://www.openoffice.org/>. WordPerfect 12 allows you to save your documents as Word

documents. If you are using a lower version of WordPerfect or the OpenOffice word processor, save your documents in Rich Text Format (rtf).

Distance Learning Support:

A VSU reference librarian, Ms. Shiloh Smith, is responsible for coordinating library services for off-campus VSU students. She may be reached by email at shismith@valdosta.edu or by phone at 229-245-3717. An online guide for distance education students is on the Odum Library Web site at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/services/distancededucation.shtml>. Chat reference is available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/ask.shtml> .

VSU Policies:

Please become aware of and be guided by these VSU policies.

- Access Office for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.valdosta.edu/ssp/index.shtml>
- Academic Dishonesty, p. 254 of Graduate Catalog, 2006/07:
http://www.valdosta.edu/catalog/0607/grad/grad_251-280.pdf
- Student Code of Conduct: http://www.valdosta.edu/stulife/handbook/pages_39-48.pdf
- Equal Opportunity Statement: <http://www.valdosta.edu/eopma/eos.shtml>
- Sexual Harassment: <http://www.valdosta.edu/legal/shp.html>
- Additional MLIS Policies: http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/

Student Agreement

Enrollment in this class signifies that the student has agreed 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 according to circumstances that may arise during the course of the semester.