

**Undergraduate Research Methods Course (AMST 392)**  
**University of Southern California (USC)**  
**Spring 2014**  
**Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:50 p.m.**  
**GFS 222**

**SYLLABUS**

**Head Instructor:** Dr. Richard Andalon

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**Office Hours:** Tue. 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. & By Appointment with individual instructors

\*Pre-requisites: Sophomore or higher standing, departmental clearance, interest in research and graduate school, participant in the McNair Program

## **I. COURSE OVERVIEW**

This undergraduate course provides a comprehensive introduction to research methodologies, foundational research theories and protocols, and research proposal writing. Students in the course learn about the cyclical nature of applied research and the iterative process of research writing. The course teaches students how to work collaboratively and to maximize their time while in a mentor-mentee relationship with a faculty advisor and graduate student. The curriculum is sequential, helping students to identify a study topic, formulate inquiry questions, organize a literature review, and select appropriate research designs and methodologies. Students use the proposal they develop to establish the foundation of a summer project and the basis of a final research paper that will be submitted at the end of the summer once the study is completed. By the end of the course, students will complete a proposal that includes an introduction, problem statement (significance of study), literature review, methods section, references, and a project timeline. At the end of the summer students will convert this proposal into a full research that will include the following sections: findings, discussion, conclusions, and references.

The course enrolls students majoring in the social sciences, humanities, natural and physical sciences, engineering, and professional fields. Throughout the course, students will learn how research projects can emanate from specific intellectual interests, recognized knowledge gaps in existing scholarship, or from personal experiences or community-related matters that have broad societal implications. In summary, the course helps undergraduate students become novice researchers, and it encourages them to continue looking for opportunities after the spring semester to further develop their research skills. This course, which is modeled after a graduate-level introductory research methods seminar series, prepares undergraduates for future research experiences, particularly at the graduate-level. Accordingly, students will also receive advising related to and opportunities to explore postgraduate programs.

## **II. COURSE FORMAT, OBJECTIVES, GRADING SCALE, & REQUIREMENTS**

The course takes place once per week on Tuesdays from 12:30 – 1:50 p.m. Guest lecturers in the course include faculty, advanced graduate students, staff advisors, and program administrators. Blackboard contains the course readings, lessons, and corresponding PowerPoint Presentations. Course readings are selected chapters from some of the latest introductory research methodology textbooks, research journal articles, and specialized research training guidebooks. Students are required to post assignments on Blackboard and Dropbox using the following format: *Lastname\_Week#*. Course Texts (Available on Blackboard: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/>).

### Learning & Course Activity Objectives for enrolled students:

- Attend and actively participate in class sessions and related activities.
- Review course readings and PowerPoint Presentations prior to each session.
- Learn about the research process, including its guiding principles, common procedures, written fundamentals, and basic phases.
- Identify a research question, engage in a literature review, and become familiar with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- Complete all assignments and the required research proposal that will facilitate a summer research project and culminating final paper.
- Develop a mentor-mentee relationship with a faculty advisor/mentor that agrees to guide a research project.
- Receive preparation to engage in advanced, independent research at the undergraduate and graduate-level.

**The grading and point system is as follows: A = 90 -100; B = 80 - 89; C = 70 - 79; D = 60 - 69; F = 59 and below.** Students are evaluated in the following areas and points are earned accordingly based on performance. Topics, due dates, and point distribution noted. Within one week of completing assignment/activity, student will receive written and verbal feedback.

Attendance & Participation	10 points
Quizzes	10 points
Schutt questions 3 & 4 Due Date: 1/21/14	2 points
Research Topic & Question(s) Due Date: 1/28/14	4 points
Faculty Advisor/Mentor List (2 – 3 potential faculty) Due Date: 2/4/14	2 points
Ex. 1-9 p. 50 (Wilcox) Due Date: 2/4/14	2 points
3-5 Articles + 1 pg summaries for Lit. Rev. Due Date: 2/11/14 & 2/18/12	5 points
Activity 1 p. 354 (Schutt)—4 pgs. + notes Due Date: 2/25/14	5 points
Literature Review Rough Draft (3-5 pages) Due Date: 3/4/14	2 points
Ex. 1 –5 p. 170 *Extra Credit #10 p. 170 (Wilcox) Due Date: 3/11/14	2 points
Literature Review (7 pages) Due Date: 3/25/14	8 points
Research Methodology Section (3 – 5 pages) Due Date: 4/1/14	5 points
Draft Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement (Significance of Study), Literature Review, Methodology, & References (8 – 16 pages) Due Date: 4/15/14	5 points
Presentation Slides (3– 6 slides) Due Date: 4/22/12 (Group A) & 4/29/12 (Group B)	10 points
Final Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement (Significance of Study), Literature Review, Methodology, & References (12 – 16 pages) Due Date: 5/14/14	28 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 Points</b>

### III. COURSE TOPICS, SCHEDULE, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments</b>
1	Review of the Course	January 14	Overview of the course, student expectations, & introductions
2	Overview of the Research Process	January 21	Reading: Chapter 1: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Chapter 1: Practical Research (Leedy, Ellis, Ormrod) Assignment: -Discussion Questions 3 & 4 p. 24 Schutt-1 pg. each
3	Research Topics, Questions, & Proposal Sections	January 28	Reading: Chapter 3-4: Craft of Research (Booth, Colomb, & Williams) Chapter 6: Practical Research (Leedy, Ellis, Ormrod) Assignment: -Research Topic, Question, and significance—3-4 pages
4	Literature Review, Conceptual Framework, & Research Design	February 4	Reading: Chapter 2: Research Design (Creswell) Chapter 2: Probability & Related Concepts (Wilcox) Assignment: Ex. 1-9 p. 50 (Wilcox) Faculty Advisor/Mentor List (2 – 3 potential faculty)
5	Library Research & Resources	February 11	Reading: Library Research & References Guide (USC Libraries) Assignment: 3-5 Articles + 1 pg summaries for Lit. Rev.
6	Research Ethics & Protocols Involving Human & Animal Subjects; Introduction to the Institutional Review Board (IRB)	February 18	Reading: Chapter 3: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Assignment: 3-5 Articles + 1 pg summaries for Lit. Rev. IRB Certification Course & Application Process
7	Research Methods Part I: Interviews, Focus Groups, Observation & Ethnography, Document & Text Analysis	February 25	Reading: Chapter 3: Summarizing Data pp. 55-72 (Wilcox) Chapter 9: Investigating the Social World (Schutt) Assignment: Activity 1 p. 354 (Schutt)—2-3 pgs. + notes Faculty Advisor/Mentor Update
8	Research Methods Part II: Survey Development, Implementation, & Data Management; Introduction to Qualtrics Survey Software	March 4	Reading: Chapter 4: Surveys (Fowler) Chapter 4: Sampling Distributions and Confidence Intervals (Wilcox) pp. 93-118 Qualtrics Handout (Corstie-Massay) Assignment: Literature Review Rough Draft (3 – 5 pages)
9	Research Methods Part III: Quantitative Analysis & Statistical Procedures; Introduction to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)	March 11	Reading: Chapter 5: Hypothesis Testing (Wilcox) Basic Statistics & SPSS Overview (Corstie-Massay) Assignment: Ex. 1 –5 p. 170 *Extra Credit #10 p. 170 Set up Qualtrics Account & Sample Survey
10	Research Methods Part IV: Qualitative Analysis, Data Collection Procedures, & Mixed Method Approaches	March 25	Reading: Chapter 10: Research Design (Creswell) Chapter 8-9: Analytic Techniques (Patton) Assignment: (Midterm) Literature Review Due (7 pages)
11	Writing the Research Proposal	April 1	Reading: Writing Article/Guideline (Darley, Zanna, Roediger) Assignment: Research Methodology Section (3 – 5 pages)
12	Working with Faculty Advisors & Cultivating a Mentor-Mentee Relationship	April 8	Reading: Mentors, Faculty, & Advisors (University of Michigan) Assignment: Faculty Advisor/Mentor – Scholar Agreement
13	Presenting the Research Proposal Orally & Using PowerPoint	April 15	Reading: As assigned Assignment: Draft of Research Proposal: Introduction, Question(s), Problem Statement, Significance of Study, Literature Review, Methodology, References, & Timeline (8 – 16 pages)
14	Research Proposal Presentations (Group A)	April 22	Reading: As assigned Assignment: PowerPoint Presentation (3 – 6 slides)
15	Research Proposal Presentations (Group B)	April 29	Reading: As assigned Assignment: PowerPoint Presentation (3 – 6 slides)
Final	Final Project Due	May 14	Assignment: Final Research Proposal: Introduction/Literature Review, Research Question(s)/Problem Statement, Hypotheses, Methodology, Significance of Study, References, & Timeline (12 – 16 pages)

## Assignments and Readings

This course is meant to prepare students for research at the Graduate level; therefore, it is structured like a Graduate seminar research methods class. It is important to read the assigned chapters prior to coming to class since the lectures will assume that you are at least somewhat familiar with the day's topic. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are listed (and are often derived from the reading(s)). Assignments turned in late without prior approval will lose .5 points per day. If you anticipate the need to turn in an assignment late, it is your responsibility to contact the Instructor(s) prior to the due date.

Assignments should be typed and uploaded to Blackboard and Dropbox (see class Handout). For math problem sets, they should be typed as well and you must show your work for full credit.

**Course Textbooks, Articles, and other Readings (Available on Blackboard:  
<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>):**

Booth W.C, Colomb G.G., and Williams J.M. (2003) The Craft of Research: 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL.

Leedy P.D. and Ormrod J.E. (2005) Practical Research: Planning and Design—8<sup>th</sup> ed. Merrill Prentice Hall: New Jersey

Schutt, R.K. (2009) Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research—6<sup>th</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press: Thousand Oaks, Ca.

Wilcox, R.R. (2003) Applying Contemporary Statistical Techniques Academic Press: San Diego, Ca.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.