

Research Methods for the Social Sciences (RSMM) Proseminar Syllabus Model

(course will vary with instructor)
3850/3230:470

Pre-requisite: Completion of required coursework for the Research Methods Certificate Program or Permission of Instructor. Application of qualitative and/or quantitative research methods and analysis, and preparation of a scholarly research paper for presentation and/or publication. Seminar.

Course Description

The Research Methods Seminar is designed for students who have fulfilled the requirements for the Research Methods Undergraduate Certificate. The seminar will provide an interdisciplinary context within which students can pursue their research projects.

Students will demonstrate their ability to apply the methods they have learned to an empirical research problem of the student's choosing. The result of their projects, a scholarly research paper, will be presented in the seminar, and students are expected to submit their papers for presentation at a conference, such as the University of Akron's annual Conference on Undergraduate and Graduate Student Research or an appropriate disciplinary conference, or for publication in a scholarly journal.

The seminar will cover: 1) developing the research question; 2) ethics of research and protection of human subjects; 3) research design 4) data collection; 5) data analysis; and 6) writing for presentation and publication.

Required Reading:

Howard S. Becker, 1998. *Tricks of the Trade*. University of Chicago Press.

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Requirements/Expectations:

1) Research Proposal to be distributed and discussed in class; 2) IRB applications; 3) Progress Reports; 4) Final Research Paper (20-25 pages double-spaced); 5) Presentation of Research to the Seminar; 6) Submission of Research Paper for Presentation or Publication.

N.B. Numbers 1. and 2. above may be developed/submitted prior to the start of this course in some cases.

Schedule:

Week 1

Introduction to the course. Overview of the relationship between theory and methods. Discussion of research topic interest areas. Overview of Human Subjects Protection and the IRB process.

Assignment 1: : a) Pick a Specific Topic and Formulate a Problem/Question: Draw a short diagram showing the progression of your thought from a general interest to a general topic to a more specific topic to a research problem/question (see *The Craft of Research*, Chs. 3 and 4). Write a one paragraph summary on your proposed research topic. b) List of methods books and articles that have influenced your thinking about research.

Week 2

Writing the research proposal. Discussion of how to critically review sources and search for relevance to topic, how to identify gaps in literatures, possibilities for contribution to the existing literature. Review and discussion of proposed research topics. Sharing of methods books and articles.

Assignment 2: Write a **draft** proposal of your research, using your problem statement, a brief review of the literature, and the methods you will use.

Week 3

Methods, data, evidence, and making reasonable claims. Draft proposals reviewed and discussed in class.

Assignment 3: IRB applications filled out.

Week 4

Data collection process. Review and discussion of IRB applications and proposed methods of research.

Week 5

Working session: feedback on projects, progress, and problems.

Assignment 4: Progress Report on data collection.

Week 6-8

Lab Sessions: Working with Data using Computer Software

Assignment 5: Print out your initial data analysis with findings. Summarize your key findings to date.

Week 9

Data analysis, interpretation, drawing conclusions. Review and discussion of initial data analysis.

Week 10

Presenting the Research – discussion of presentation formats, expectations, strategies, and aesthetics.

Assignment 6: Write a **draft** your research paper.

Week 11 & 12

Peer Review – an overview of the process and practice peer review with research paper drafts.

Week 13 & 14

Revise & Resubmit Process – students make revisions based on the peer reviews.

Week 15 & 16

Student presentations to the seminar and members of the ARM (Active Research Methods) Consortium.