IRLS506-001 Research Methods

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COURSE NAME, NUMBER AND PREREQUISITES:

Research Methods

IRLS 506 Section One

This is a core course for the SIRLS Masters degree; there are no course prerequisites.

Instructor: Margaret Higgins

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"IRLS 506 introduces research techniques and their application in social research, while emphasizing the need for good research design. At the end of the course students will have gained an appreciation of factors involved in research and an ability to critically evaluate research. Statistics will be addressed, with the emphasis being on developing a level of familiarity with statistical concepts. This course will not create statisticians: it will, however, provide a platform for discussion, with experts, of the statistics required for research." Three credit hours.

The course is taught face to face. Group discussions are a feature of the classroom, as are critical thinking and creative approaches to research designs. During the semester students will come to learn that there may not be one 'best' design: the problem being addressed dictates the design to use.

We have all been involved in research: answering surveys or taking part in experiments. We have all read research as reported in the media; we will ascertain the quality of the reporting and of the results (as conveyed to the public).

Students enrolling for this course need to understand that this is NOT a course that covers searching for material in a library or information center as a result of a user's request. This is a course that covers the scientific method of research.

There are usually about 15 sessions in this course, one per week, lasting for up to three hours (with a short break in the middle).

Learning materials are print based, apart from material the student may find online to augment the print.

Each week I will set readings from the text which will be based on the discussions we have been having that day (the
readings will consolidate learning); or they will be to ensure that students grasp a point that I will not be addressing directly. If I wish students to have some advance understanding of a topic on which I will be speaking, then in advance I will set appropriate reading material. Be warned - students will read and absorb quite a lot of 'Campbell and Stanley' (every Research Methods student's favorite!).

Students will be in touch with me via email, via telephone, via chatting before, during, or after class.

I hold an 'office' hour during the hour prior to class: location will be announced in the first lecture.

**Lecture Schedule** (subject to refinement as semester progresses)

Aug 24: General Introduction and Expectations


Sep 7: The Research Process

Sep 14: Fundamental Research concepts

Sep 21: Designs

Sep 28: Designs

Oct 5: Basic & Applied Research

Oct 12: Introduction to statistics

Oct 19: Introduction to statistics (cont.)

Oct 26: Qualitative Research

Nov 2: Qualitative (again)

Nov 9: Survey Research

Nov 16: Research & Decision Making

Nov 23: Review

Nov 30: In class Exam

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the course students should be able to
- identify, design, and implement research appropriate to their own working environment.
- identify well executed, reliable, and valid research
- identify research results applicable to their own working environment.

Aims of the course
To provide an understanding of the nature, role and value of scientific research.
To demonstrate the importance of, and need for, scientific research.
To familiarize students with a variety of research methods and designs
To enable students to interpret and evaluate research.

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:**

Note that the books listed below are readily available either from the publisher or via sources such as Amazon. Please acquire them prior to class.

Required Reading: Campbell, D & Stanley, J. (1963). Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research. Reprinted from Handbook of Research on Teaching. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally College Publishing Company. (Note: this is a classic work and is readily available from a variety of sources)

Required (and very enjoyable) Reading: Johnson, Steven. (2006). The Ghost Map: The story of London's most terrifying epidemic - and how it changed science, cities, and the modern world. New York, NY. Riverhead Books (Penguin Group (USA) Inc. This is a tale of research-on-the-ground. Riveting reading. Johnson's book is an easy and terrifically interesting read, and an inexpensive one. There will be an assignment on this work. Feel free to read it before class begins.

Optional but informative reading: Any issues of the publication Skeptical Inquirer: The magazine for science and reason. Published by the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry

I will be emphasising absolute and complete knowledge of the assigned text including Campbell & Stanley. Students will be reading and providing weekly written reviews of assigned chapters.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation (Worth 5%)

I expect input, and few students have failed to meet this expectation. The course is designed to encourage participation.

Paper 1

Due in class September 28th (Worth 15%)

Length: five double spaced pages, excluding references; 12 point font. Use the APA style. (Writing more, or substantially less, than 5 pages will incur penalties); Please write your name on the back of your assignment.

Value of Research:

Compare and contrast the value to society of Library and Information Science research with the value to society of research in another field of your choosing (astronomy? medicine? veterinary science?). Does research in the LIS field have value? If yes, why so. If not, why not? Does the research in the other field you have selected have value? or not? Explain and support your reasoning. (To be clear: I mean research done by academics, practitioners and students who are in their respective fields.) Please find research articles that illustrate and support your statements, and discuss how these articles support your views. Also present a brief critique of the research methods used in the research articles you have selected.


Due in class October 19th (Worth 15%)

Length: five double spaced pages, excluding references; 12 point font. Use the APA style. (Writing more, or less, than 5 pages will incur penalties); Please write your name on the back of the assignment.

Write a five page essay outlining in detail the research methods used by Snow and by Whitehead. Critique the methods, do not merely describe them. What were the strengths of their methods? The weaknesses? What does the book - their
research - tell us about how progress is made in society? What can we say about the reactions in society to their findings?

**Paper 3 Research Proposal**

**Due In class on November 16th (Worth 45%)**

Length 10 double spaced pages, excluding references, 12 point font. APA. (Writing more, or less, than 10 pages will incur penalties). Please write your name on the back of your work.

Writing a research proposal will provide you with the opportunity to give in depth thought to your topic of concern. The research proposal will be in report format, containing an introduction, background to the problem, a broad statement on the nature of the problem, a literature review, a theoretical framework in which the problem is placed, a statement of the hypotheses, and a methods section which includes such design details as the variables in the research, how the hypotheses could be tested / measured, which statistical tests are appropriate, and to whom the research results could be generalized. Note that I am not expecting a tremendously detailed proposal - just one that contains all the necessary elements of one. Examples of proposals can be found on line and also in many text books. In your assignment refer back to your Assignment One: i.e your evaluation of the value of LIS research to society, and explain how your proposed research adds value to society (or does it?).

**Examination In class. November 30th (Worth 20%)**

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Can be obtained by attending and writing a page of evaluation per each SIRLS Brown bag presentation. Each evaluation must contain a 'research methods' component (e.g. how was the research conducted? what were the results? what were some of the limitations of the research being discussed in the presentation?).

**COURSE, SCHOOL, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

**Academic Code of Integrity**

Students are expected to abide by The University of Arizona [Code of Academic Integrity](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/2708). *The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student's submitted work must be the student's own.* If you have any questions regarding what is acceptable practice under this Code, please ask an Instructor.

**Accommodating Disabilities**

The University has a [Disability Resource Center](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/2708). If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Disability Resource Center and request that the DRC send me, the Instructor, official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

**Assignment Policies**

Assignments will be handed in to me personally in class, on the specified date. If you cannot be in class on that particular day then please make arrangements with me to receive your work in another way - perhaps by email, for example. I do not accept late assignments, except by rare and special arrangement, and only if special circumstances pertain (medical reasons, for example).
Assignments will be returned to you personally, with myriad comments on them. Please note my earlier instructions about placing your name on the back of each assignment. Please also note my instructions about using APA style, and about font size. Advice about APA can be found online.

- Incompletes

The 1997-8 University of Arizona General Academic Manual, p.23 reads

The grade of I may be awarded only at the end of a semester, when all but a minor portion of the course work has been satisfactorily completed. The grade of I is not to be awarded when the student is expected to repeat the course; in such a case the grade of E must be assigned. Students should make arrangements with the instructor to receive an incomplete grade before the end of the semester. If the incomplete is not removed by the instructor within one year the I grade will revert to a failing grade.

**GRADING:**

A: 100 - 90  
B: 89 - 80  
C: 79 - 70  
Less than a C = 'fail'

Grades will be written on each paper.

**INSTRUCTOR NAME AND CONTACT ADDRESSES:**

Instructor: Margaret Higgins, PhD  
Tel: 520 623 4590 (work)  
Tel: 520 406 7813 (cell)  
Margarethiggins@yahoo.com (preferred email address)  
Higginsm@email.arizona.edu  
Office Hours: 5.30 - 6.30pm i.e. the hour before class (except on rare occasions)  

Class Location for Fall 2010: TBA  
Class meeting times: Tuesday evenings, 6.30 - 9.00
Courses

- Syllabi
  - Fall 11
  - Summer 2011
  - Spring 11
  - Fall 10
    - IRLS418/518 Information Quality
    - IRLS432/532 Online Searching Fall 2010
    - IRLS506-001 Research Methods
    - IRLS506-010 Research Methods for Fall 2010
    - IRLS506-011 Research Methods
    - IRLS515-010/011 Organization of Information (Fall 2010 Virtual, Cui)
    - IRLS520-010 Ethics for Library and Information Professionals (Virtual Fallis)
    - IRLS520-011 Ethics for Library and Information Professionals (Virtual Mathiesen)
    - IRLS521 Fall 2010
    - IRLS524 Information Resources and Services Fall 2010
    - IRLS550 Information Environments from Hispanic and Native American Perspectives
    - IRLS553 Issues in Culture & Information Technology (Draft)
    - IRLS561 Academic Libraries Practice and Administration
    - IRLS563 Readers' Advisory Services in Public Libraries
    - IRLS566 Small and Rural Libraries Administration and Practice
    - IRLS571 Introduction to Information Technology Atkinson
    - IRLS571-010 Introduction to Information Technology for Fall 2010
    - IRLS574 Digital Libraries
    - IRLS588-011 ISSUES IN INFORMATION RESOURCES: Intellectual Freedom
    - IRLS608 Fall 2010
    - IRLS671 Introduction to Digital Collections
    - IRLS675 Advanced Digital Collections (Fall 2010)
  - Summer 10
  - Winter 10-11
  - Spring 10
  - Winter 09-10
  - Fall 09
  - Summer 09
  - Spring 09
  - Winter 08-09
  - Fall 08
  - Archive of Old Syllabi

- Schedules
  - Core Courses
  - Course Delivery Options
  - Course Descriptions
  - Distributed Electives
  - Individual Studies: Internships, Independent Studies & Practica
  - Registration
  - Required first course: IRLS504
  - Suggested Courses by Specialization
Guided exploration

Click a term to initiate a search.

Audience
- for Students (92)
- for Faculty (28)
- for Alums (24)
- for Staff (17)
- for Prospective Students (7)
  more...

Course
- IRLS417 (2)
- IRLS418 (1)
- IRLS432 (1)
- IRLS470 (2)
- IRLS488 (6)
  more...

People
- Adjunct Faculty (152)
- Faculty (150)
- Staff (17)
- Friends (6)

Semester
- Fall 11 (29)
- Summer 11 (27)
- Spring 11 (30)
- Winter 10 11 (1)
- Fall 10 (20)
  more...

Task
- Choosing Courses (27)
- Advising (5)
- Applying (5)
- Registering (2)
- Submitting Final Paperwork (2)
  more...

Topic
- Index (33)
- Masters (33)
- Research (20)
- Knowledge River (16)
- News (14)
  more...

Related categories
Course: IRLS506
People: Adjunct Faculty » Higgins
Semester: Fall 10

Guided keyword