



IR 400: Research Writing & Methodology Workshop

Course Syllabus

Fall Semester 2019

Instructor: Brooke A. Porter, Ph.D.

Credits: 2

Contact Hours: 30

Office Hours: Immediately following class

Course Type: Faculty-Directed Research Course

Lab Fee: None

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with the basic methods and techniques of research writing while also providing them with a workshop setting and faculty support to complete an on-going project. The course will focus on such issues as developing a thesis statement, writing a prospectus, finding source material (books, articles, internet resources, etc.), generating an argument, writing and revising a rough draft, and APA documentation of sources.

To accomplish this goal, each student will write a 12-15 page research paper during the term to be decided in cooperation with the professor of one other course taken by the student or with the faculty mentor of their Independent Research Project. From the development of a thesis statement to the editing of the final draft, the student will compose this research paper under the direction of the course instructor and in consultation with other students in the class. Depending on the chosen topic, the student may also work with a faculty advisor in the pertinent discipline—from Umbra or from the student's home institution. Students pursuing honors theses or independent research projects may develop more extended papers to fulfill individual requirements. The course is also available to creative writing students working on projects requiring extended research.

Course Objectives

During this course, students will:

- become familiar with the process of organizing and drafting a report that poses a significant problem and offers a convincing solution;
- learn how to identify, track down, and use a wide variety of sources in the service of responsible research and scholarship;

- produce a paper using MLA documentation and manuscript form—polished enough to be publishable—and to become familiar with other formal (APA, Chicago style) documentation and manuscript styles;
- examine some of the best past and current writing by scholars;
- review the mechanics of writing and hone editorial and proof-reading skills; and
- develop evaluative strategies and vocabulary to best serve other writers in a workshop setting.

Course Materials

Readings

Greider, T., & Garkovich, L. (1994). Landscapes: The social construction of nature and the environment. *Rural sociology*, 59(1), 1-24.

Lester, James D., and James D. Lester Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. NY, NY: Pearson, 2015.

Further Readings (available in the Umbra Institute Library)

Hacker, Diana and Barbara Fister, *Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age*, 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2011 (or an equivalent text covering basic grammar, punctuation, spelling, composition, etc.).

Porter, B. A., and H. A. Schänzel, *Femininities in the Filed: Tourism and Transdisciplinary Research*. Bristol, UK: Channel View, 2018.

Assessment

Preparation and Participation	20%
Practical Exercises	20%
Final Research Paper	30%
Research Paper Presentation	30%

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Grades are based on preparation/participation, practical assignments, a final research paper and a presentation of the research paper.

Preparation and Participation (20%)

Students are expected to do all reading assignments before the assigned date to contribute to classroom discussions.

Practical Exercises (20%)

Students in this course will complete several practical assignments during the duration of this course.

Final Research Paper (30%)

The final research paper grade will be based 50% on the grade given by the instructor during the research paper, 50% by the professor of this course.

Research Paper Presentation (30%)

Students will deliver a 15-minute academic conference-style presentation of their research papers to their fellow students.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is **mandatory**. Students are allowed **one “free” absences**, which do not need to be justified. **It**

is the students' responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class). Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. **Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.** Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Academic Integrity

All forms of **cheating** (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and **plagiarism** (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate **respect** for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that **cell phones** must be turned off before the beginning of each class. **Computers and other electronic devices** cannot be used during class lectures and discussions except with prior permission of the instructor.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction of the Course.

Writing from Research.

Reading

Lester, chapter 1 (in-class)

WEEK 2

Finding a Topic.

- How to go beyond reading about problems to drawing a problem out of it
- Posing good questions for your research to answer
- Styles and structures of academic writing

Reading

Lester, chapter 2

Practical Assignment

WEEK 3

Landscapes

Readings

Greider, T, & Garkovich, L., Landscapes: The Social Construction of Nature and the Environment, 1994

Practical Assignment: exploring worldviews

WEEK 4

The non-interchangeability of Methods and Methodology

Sources.

- identifying appropriate research approaches
- identifying appropriate research methods

WEEK 5

Self-reflexivity and research.

- Literature reviews and referencing
- Gendered biases workshop

Reading

N/A

WEEK 6

Sources in the era of fake news

- Reviewing the literature Primary and secondary sources
- Understanding and avoiding plagiarism

Reading

Lester, chapter 4 & 7

Practical Assignment

WEEK 7

Literature Reviews: Reading and Evaluating Resources.

- Primary and secondary sources
- Finding reliable sources

Reading

Lester, chapter 8

Practical Assignment: The pyramid of topics

SEMESTER BREAK

(OCTOBER 21-25)

WEEK 8

Advancing Ideas and Theories.

- Handling data
- Analyzing data
- Interpreting data

Reading

Lester, chapter 9

WEEK 9

Academic Language.

- Avoiding sexist and biased language

Visuals in Research.

In-class Workshop on Outlines.

Reading

Lester, chapter 10 and 11

WEEK 10

Introductions and Conclusions.
In-class Workshop on Papers.

Reading

Lester, chapter 12

WEEK 11

Revising, Proofreading and Formatting.
In-class Workshop on Papers.

Reading

Lester, chapter 13

WEEK 12

Electronic Research Projects and Conference Papers.
● Presenting your research
In-class Workshop on Papers.

Reading

Lester, chapter 18

WEEK 13

In-class Workshop on Papers.

WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS AND SPECIAL ACADEMIC EVENTS

Conference-style Presentation of Research Paper.