



IR 499 Research Writing & Methodology for Food & Sustainability Studies

Course Syllabus *Spring 2020*

Instructor: TBA
Credits: 2
Contact Hours: 30
Class Hours: TBA
Office Hours: TBA
Course Type: Faculty-Directed Research Course
Lab Fee: none

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize Food & Sustainability Studies Program students completing the Certificate Program 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 MLA (or in some cases 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. The course instructor will depend on the proposed research. For more information, contact Dr. Elgin Eckert (eeckert@umbra.org) and Dr. Elisa Ascione (eascione@umbra.org).

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. *identify* the steps in the process of organizing and drafting a report that poses a significant problem and offers a convincing solution;
2. *articulate* how to identify, track down, and use a wide variety of sources in the service of responsible research and scholarship;
3. *design* an appropriate research project and collect appropriate primary and secondary evidence;

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4. *carry out* that project to produce a paper using MLA documentation and manuscript form—polished enough to be submitted for publication—and to become familiar with other formal (APA, Chicago style) documentation and manuscript styles;
5. *list* key points of the mechanics of writing and hone editorial and proof-reading skills;
6. *critique* other student researchers' projects but with evaluative strategies and vocabulary to best serve other writers in a workshop setting;
7. *communicate* their research about various aspects of contemporary food systems using twenty-first-century tools while practicing systematic, ethical, and public-facing scholarship.

Course Materials

Readings

Lester, James D., and James D. Lester Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. New York: 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.).

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 Excellent
A-	90% - 92%	
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)

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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 Assignments (20%)—Students in this course will complete several practical assignments during the duration of this course.

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.

Presentation of Research Paper (30%)—Students will deliver a 15-minute academic conference-style presentation of their research papers to their fellow students.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation in all course activities is mandatory. Because this is a one-credit course with limited class meetings, students are allowed one “free” absence, which do not need to be justified. It is the students’ responsibility to save this absence in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen circumstances that may prevent students from being in class or attending a required activity). 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 or a required class activity, they are responsible for obtaining 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 course activities is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a required activity, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and the 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

Please refrain from computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices during class time or during course activities. Active class participation is part of students’ final grades. Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies.

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
- How to write for your reader
- Writing a draft

Reading

Lester, chapter 2

Practical Assignment

WEEK 3

Organizing Ideas and Setting Goals.

- Outlining

Reading

Lester, chapter 3

Practical Assignment

WEEK 4

Sources.

- Traditional sources and new media

Reading

Lester, chapter 4

Practical Assignment

WEEK 5

Gathering Information.

Reading

Lester, chapter 5 and 6

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WEEK 6

Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism.

Reading

Lester, chapter 7

WEEK 7

Reading and Evaluating Resources.

- Primary and secondary sources
- Finding reliable sources

Reading

Lester, chapter 8

SEMESTER BREAK

WEEK 8

Advancing Ideas and Theories.

The Completed Outline.

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

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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.