

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE  
MLIS 7700 Research Methods  
SYLLABUS  
Fall Semester 2009  
Three Credit Hours

**Instructor:**

Anita Ondrusek, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
MLIS Program  
Valdosta State University  
Office Phone: 229-245-3742  
E-mail: [alondrus@valdosta.edu](mailto:alondrus@valdosta.edu)

**Catalog Description**

Prerequisite: MLIS 7000. An introduction to the various approaches to social science research and research methods. Students will perform small scale research projects and develop skills in the research uses of libraries and the needs of library patrons.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

- Recognize the inter-relationships of theory, research, and scientific inquiry
- Discuss basic ethical issues associated with conducting research
- Distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methods
- Identify the basic elements in the design of social research studies
- Relate terminology, concepts, and processes of social research to studies conducted in the library and information science (LIS) field
- Evaluate research methodologies from representative LIS research studies
- Analyze research articles for ideas to be used in professional practice or to advise library patrons in their research endeavors
- Apply a systematic method for locating references in the research literature
- Prepare a literature review according to a style used in research reporting
- Propose a practice-based library or information science research project

**Textbooks**

Neuman, W. L. (2007) *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0205484379

Nahl, D. *Strategic Research Approaches for Reference Librarians*. Kendall-Hunt, 2000.  
(This is a workbook – currently out-of-print. We have permission from the author to copy the content, so chapters are available in PDF format on the BlazeVIEW site for this course.)

**Note:** Please familiarize yourself with the MLIS policy that prohibits the use of VSU's Interlibrary Loan service for obtaining textbooks at [http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student\\_resources/documents/ILL\\_Textbooks.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/documents/ILL_Textbooks.pdf)

## **Instructor Availability & Support**

By institutional policy, instructors are asked to communicate with students online through VSU accounts (BlazeVIEW and BlazeNet e-mail). Dr. Ondrusek checks her BlazeVIEW course site regularly – daily when assignments are due. She checks her BlazeNet e-mail account daily, Monday through Friday during the hours of 9-5.

All discussion posts and assignment submissions for this online course must be sent via BlazeVIEW. Your BlazeNet login and password serve as your BlazeVIEW login and password. The BlazeNet login page is at <http://luminis.valdosta.edu/cp/home/loginf>. For instructions on using a student BlazeNet account, go to: <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/blazenet/>.

## **Faculty Recommendations**

MLIS 7700 is a reading and writing intensive core course. Students report that they spend an average of 10 to 15 hours each week on assignments.

Taking MLIS 7700 with no more than one other course is strongly recommended. Students should schedule this course toward the end of their degree requirements.

## **Attendance**

This is a Web-delivered course, with a two-day face-to-face, non-graded laboratory session to be held on the Macon campus, Saturday, October 24, 10 AM to 5 PM, and Sunday, October 25, 10 AM to 2 PM. The sessions will provide hands-on activities that demonstrate the application of statistical methods and preparing the sections of a research proposal.

All other course communications, activities, and materials will be available exclusively through the BlazeVIEW web site and require weekly checks for assignments. The instructor will schedule real-time instruction using Live Classroom as needed.

## **Course Activities Outline**

The following list is a brief overview of the activities included in this course in order of their assignment. Look for complete instructions and grading criteria for each assignment on the BlazeVIEW course site.

### **Discussion Board 1 (Required, not graded)**

Introduce yourself by answering the questions posted on the Discussion Board 1 in BlazeVIEW.

### **Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project**

Many courses on research methods save discussions of qualitative research for last. However, qualitative research lays the foundation for much of what happens in quantitative research. This exercise is designed to introduce you to elements associated with qualitative research. You will work in groups of three to investigate a construct currently of interest in the field of library and information science. One person will be responsible for a field visit to a library to look for indicators that this construct is influencing library practice. One person will analyze that same library's web site for evidence implying that same construct is "taking hold" in the library. One person will conduct background research on the construct. Assemble a short, collaborative paper that reports your findings. An explanation of the construct and details on formatting the report and grading criteria will be on the BlazeVIEW course site.

## Discussion Board 2

Post your reactions to questions related to ethical issues. Questions will appear on Discussion Board 2.

## Individual Exercise A: Recognizing Good and Bad Survey Methods

You will be given sample survey questions and asked to identify flaws, correct problems, and re-write “bad” questions.

## Individual Exercise B: Identifying Elements of Research Design

This exercise involves identifying the basic components of qualitative and quantitative research design using excerpts from actual research articles in the library and information science literature.

## Discussion Board 3 (Required, not graded)

This is a group activity. Submit an abstract of your research proposal for review by your group-mates. Read each abstract submitted by your group-mates and post reactions. Your abstract will **not** be graded. **Your reactions to the abstracts, if substantive, will count as extra credit toward your final grade.**

## Final Project: Writing a Research Project Proposal

Select a research problem related to the field of library and information science and prepare a research proposal that articulates how to investigate that problem. This is a proposal specifying what you would do if you had the opportunity to conduct research on your problem. You will not be asked to actually do the research. The proposal must include: your abstract (edited to include the recommendations made by your classmates and instructor in Discussion 3); a literature review; statement of purpose of the research and its potential application; objectives or hypothesis; type of research approach proposed (e.g., qualitative or quantitative with details); and specifics on the proposed research design (e.g., procedures on selecting materials or participants, names of variables, and data collection and analysis methods). Details on formatting the report and grading criteria will be on the BlazeVIEW course site.

## Assignment Calendar

<i>Week of:</i>	<i>Activities:</i>
Week 1 Mon. Aug. 17	<u>Introduction to Inquiry</u>  Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 2  Submit your post to Discussion 1.
Weeks 2, 3, 4 Mon. Aug. 24- Sun. Sep. 13	<u>The Nature of Qualitative Research</u>  Organize and conduct the Read-Observe-Analyze Project  Draw upon your textbook and any other materials that you identify as germane to the assignment.  Chapter 9 in Diane Nahl’s workbook gives a simplistic, but informative overview on what qualitative research is and types of research (pp. 165-170).

Recommended starting points in the Neuman textbook:  
Chapter 9 – section on content analysis (pp. 227-233) – for the Web site examination  
Chapter 11 – section on observing and collecting data (pp. 287-296) – for library observation  
Chapter 12 – section on using historical data (pp.312-317) – primary vs. secondary sources

You will find Background material, Project Guidelines, and a Handout on terminology in this week’s folder.

Prepare your **Group Report** according to the formatting and grading criteria on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Prepare your finished **Group Report** using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

**Due date: Mon. Sep. 14, 11:59 PM.**

One-day grace period (Tues. submissions by 11:59 PM accepted without penalty).

Later submissions lose points.

Week 5  
Mon. Sep. 14

Ethics in Social Research

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 3

View material on the course site in this week’s folder.

Submit your post answering questions about ethics to **Discussion 2**.

**Due date: Mon. Sep. 21, 11:59 PM.**

One-day grace period (Tues. submissions by 11:59 PM accepted without penalty).

Later submissions lose points.

Week 6  
Mon. Sep. 21

Language of Quantitative Research Design

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 4 (pp. 91-103).

View material on the course site in this week’s folder.

Weeks 7  
Mon. Sep. 28

Survey Research

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 7

View material on the course site in this week’s folder.

Submit **Individual Exercise A: Recognizing Good and Bad Survey Methods** using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

**Due date: Mon. Oct 5, 11:59 PM.**

One-day grace period (Tues. submissions by 11:59 PM accepted without penalty).

Later submissions lose points.

Oct. 7-9 MLIS faculty will be attending GA COMO.  
If you have questions about your progress in this course, schedule a consultation with your instructor on Oct. 5th or 6th.

Thur. Oct. 8 **Last day to withdraw from a class without academic penalty.**

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Week 8 Experimental Research

Mon. Oct. 5

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 8

View material on the course site in this week's folder.

Week 9 Identifying Elements of Research Design

Mon. Oct. 12

Use this week to complete and submit **Individual Exercise B: Identifying Elements of Research Design** using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

**Due date: Mon. Oct 19, 11:59 PM.**

One-day grace period (Tues. submissions by 11:59 PM accepted without penalty).  
Later submissions lose points.

Oct. 19 & 20 Fall Break

Week 10 Measuring & Analyzing Data

Wed. Oct. 21

The material on measurement and statistical analysis covered in the Neuman textbook in Chapter 5 and Chapter 10 is going to seem overwhelming.

The Nahl workbook covers much of this same material in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

A face-to-face class makes explaining this part of research somewhat easier than trying to communicate these complex procedures in online meetings.

**Oct. 24-25  
Face-to-face  
Weekend at  
Macon State**

Saturday's lecture (10 AM to 5 PM) will focus on *variables*, *central tendency measures*, *statistical expressions* (what the symbols and numerical values you see in research reports mean), *sampling methods*, and the concepts of *validity* and *reliability*.

The Sunday session (10 AM to 2 PM) will focus on your proposal topics.

Be prepared to present a 2-3-minute overview (no more) of what you are thinking about covering in your research proposal. A rough idea is fine.

Students from previous years reported that this weekend of lecture and guidance was valuable. Attending both days is the optimal arrangement, but if you can only come on Saturday or Sunday, that is permitted.

Weeks 11 & 12  
Mon. Oct. 26

Read, Cogitate, Prepare

Use these weeks to reflect on how you will relate what you have learned to your proposal topic.

Read Neuman textbook: Chapter 4 (pp. 64-84).

Get started on your literature review. Material in this week's folder will guide you.

Prepare and submit your Abstract to **Discussion Board 3**.

Don't forget – you can earn extra credit AND get feedback on your ideas.

**Due date: Mon. Nov. 9, 11:59 PM.**

One-day grace period (Tues. submissions by 11:59 PM accepted without penalty).

Later submissions are not eligible for extra credit.

Week 13  
Mon. Nov. 9

Literature Review & References

Submit a draft of your literature review and your references list using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool. This is for feedback. **The draft will not be graded.**

**Due date: Mon. Nov. 16, 11:59 PM.**

Submissions received by deadline get priority for review and early return.

Submissions received after the deadline will wait. You lose valuable time.

Weeks 14 & 15  
Mon. Nov. 16-  
Sun. Dec. 3

Writing Weeks

Keep working on your proposal.

Feedback on your lit review and reference list will be returned ASAP.

You will find Guidelines outlining requirements for the final project in this folder.

Prepare your **Research Proposal** according to the formatting and grading criteria on the BlazeVIEW course site.

Finals Week

Submit your **Research Proposal** during this week using the BlazeVIEW Assignment Tool.

**Absolute final deadline: Fri. Dec. 7, 11:59 PM.**

### **Graded Course Requirements**

As a student in this class, you are expected to: (1) read or view all assigned background materials; (2) participate fully in discussion board activities; (3) submit all projects on time and according to the format designated by the instructor; and (4) conduct your research and composition according to the rules of academic integrity (see Academic Honesty section on pages 7-8 of this syllabus).

Discussion 1 (introduction)	Required, not graded
Discussion 2 (ethics issues)	10 points
Discussion 3 (reviewing drafts of proposal abstracts)	Extra credit, if substantive
Small Group Exercise: Read-Observe-Analyze Project	25 points
Exercise on Survey Methods	20 points
Exercise on Research Design	20 points
Draft of Lit Review and References Bib	Required, not graded
Research Proposal	35 points

110 – 99 points = A      98 – 88 points = B      87 – 77 points = C

No grade below a C will be credited toward a VSU graduate degree.

Because this is a core course, a student scoring 76 points or fewer will have to repeat the course.

### Letter Grading

Your final grade will be one of these letter grades:

Exceptionally exceeds minimum standards	A
Exceeds minimum standards	B
Meets minimum standards	C
Barely meets minimum standards	D
Fails to meet minimum standards	F

### Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the BlazeVIEW course management program. If you are a new BlazeVIEW user, go to the BlazeVIEW help pages at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/students.shtml>. Then return to the BlazeVIEW page and login using your BlazeNet email ID and password.

To meet all class requirements, you should be prepared to: (1) open and save or print all documents that are required background reading - this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer; (2) view all PowerPoints placed on the course BlazeVIEW site – these are saved to **Powerpoint 97-2003**; (3) attend Live Classroom sessions or view archives – instructions on the BlazeVIEW homepage; (4) check discussion groups as needed; and (5) keep electronic backup copies of each assignment and project you submit.

Unless otherwise stated, assignments must be submitted using a word processing program compatible with Microsoft (MS) Word. BlazeVIEW requires the format for **MS Word 97-2003**. If you are using MS Word 2007, save it down to the 97-2003 format. If you are using WordPerfect or sharing documents with classmates who have a different version of Word, save your documents in Rich Text Format (rtf). Documents that can not be opened on VSU equipment will be returned to you for re-formatting.

The university's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hot line is 229-245-4357.

## **Academic Honesty**

"Valdosta State University expects that graduate students will pursue their academic endeavors and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. All work that a student presents to satisfy course requirements should represent his or her own efforts, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of external sources."

Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the *Student Handbook*, *Student Code of Ethics*. Please acquaint yourself with the full policy at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>.

It is **your responsibility** to make sure you understand how to avoid breeches of academic integrity. The instructor posts rules for citing, quoting, and appropriate use of resources for assignments that require written compositions, reviews, or commentary.

**Noncompliance with rules on appropriate use of resources will result in zero credit for those parts of the assignment affected.** If you are unsure about the parameters of an assignment, ask for clarification.

Asking librarians or staff in a library to provide answers or to conduct research to fulfill any part of a graded course requirement is an infraction of academic integrity. The same policy applies to contacting any free or commercial reference service for assistance with a graded assignment.

**An overall grade of zero can be assigned to an entire paper or project if the instructor determines that its contents, or parts of its contents, were completed by a second party.** This, of course, does not apply to group projects that require collaboration on a final product.

## **Distance Learning Support**

The university's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hot line is 229-245-4357.

To ask questions about **availability or location of VSU online resources**, use the VSU Library's Live Chat or E-mail at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/ask.php>. You may also phone the VSU Library's reference service at (229) 333-7149.

## **Special Needs Statement**

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of our institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin, or the handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as the Title IX section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with the professor at the beginning of the semester. Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

## **Student Agreement**

Enrollment in this class signifies that the student has agreed to abide by and adhere to the policies and regulations specified above. It is understood that the instructor may adapt or change this syllabus and the assignments contained within it according to circumstances that may arise during the course of the semester.