

SI 840
Introduction to Research from a Methods Perspective
Winter 2019

Mark Ackerman

NQ 3380

(3645 CSE Building, but rarely there this semester)

Office hours: To be announced, likely to be after class on Fridays and 3-4pm on Mondays. You should feel free to talk with me. Just as a note, tho, Fridays before class are not good, and it's better/fine to drop me some email if you want to talk at some other time than office hours.

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Readings

We will use a variety of readings. The main book is:

Bernard, H. Russell. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 2nd edition*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 2012.

I will supplement this textbook with a number of other sources, including:

Little, Daniel. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. San Francisco: Westview, 1991.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*, 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003.

Kidder, Louise H., and Charles M. Judd. *Research Methods in Social Relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986.

Krathwohl, David R. *Methods of Educational and Social Science Research: An Integrated Approach*. New York: Longman, 1998.

Light, Richard J., Judith D. Singer, and John B. Willett. *By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1990.

We will also have a number of discussion papers, TBD.

Course Objectives

(Modified from G. Olson) The central focus of this course will be how to formulate and defend claims in the general domain of the human use of information systems (broadly construed). The intellectual agenda of the School of Information draws upon many referent disciplines, and twenty years in, we are still very much in the process of defining the parameters of this agenda. As a result, we need to examine research methods and their use in defending claims from a number of referent disciplines. We will of course look at a variety of research methods from the behavioral sciences. But we also need to be able to read and understand the argumentation of computer science, HCI, economics, and other areas, which have quite different styles of persuasion.

Learning objectives:

- Acquire a researcher-level appreciation for the various forms of methods, argumentation, proof, and claims of areas found in i-schools
- Be able to review and evaluate other areas' research *appropriately*
- Gain a better appreciation of the research process and the use of the various methods, especially with respect to one another.
- Know when to use what method for what kind of problem
- Learn how to evaluate others' research for candidacy, hiring, and tenure.

Course Projects/Assignments

Readings. The course is reading and writing intensive. You should be expecting to do approximately 100+ pages per week. We are surveying many, many methods.

You may discuss the readings among yourselves. However, any written papers must be individual work and *the details of your answer cannot be discussed with others*. Please see the School of Information's policies on plagiarism and cheating if this is not clear.

Papers. There are a number of 5+ page research designs. These will be structured, and they will be peer-graded and then graded by me. Additional instructions will be handed out later in the semester.

You will have as many attempts on each research design as you need; that is, I will mark up the first draft (and consider it a draft) and let you revise. Revisions will be scored from A-down, mostly because we'll be going over the answers in class. This is to allow you to master the material and not worry about grades. It does, however, assume good faith - papers that are incomplete or inadequate will be graded appropriately. You have to turn in your first draft by the deadline.

Exam. The exam is a standard in-class, closed-book exam over the readings. It will emphasize the methods, and it may include material from other readings. It will be short-answer/essay. Example questions will be handed out later in the semester.

Final design. The final design, given in lieu of a final paper or final exam, is a larger research design. You will write a 12-15 page paper laying out a research design/study combining multiple (3+) methodological techniques discussed in class.

For the final design (and any of the designs), you can use any reference source you wish, but you may not discuss the problem, the details of your analysis, or your solution with others.

If I think people aren't doing the readings, I may require weekly summaries of the readings.

Standard plagiarism rules apply in this course.

Grading

Class participation	20%
Papers	30%
Exam	25%
Final design	25%

Misc

Original work: Unless otherwise specified in an assignment all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts, statements, or phrases from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. Any violation of the School's policy on Academic and Professional Integrity (stated in the Master's and Doctoral Student Handbooks) will result in serious penalties, which might range from failing an assignment, to failing a course, to being expelled from the program. Violations of academic and professional integrity will be reported to UMSI Student Affairs. Consequences impacting assignment or course grades are determined by the faculty instructor; additional sanctions may be imposed by the assistant dean for academic and student affairs.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you think you need an accommodation for a

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disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; ssd.umich.edu/) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information that you provide in as confidential a manner as possible.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students, while acknowledging that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (732) 764-8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources. For a more comprehensive listing of the broad range of mental health services available on campus, please visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth>