

Senior Journalism Thesis Seminar
JOR 495, 02025
Fall, 2010
Monday 12:45 and Wednesday 14:10 p.m.
Instructor: Gulnura Toralieva, MA
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Individual tutorials by appointment
Credit value 3

Syllabus

This course reviews the methods and procedures for writing a senior thesis in mass communication studies. It will cover these topics:

1. What is a good communication research problem?
2. How can one best devise a method and procedures to investigate it?
2. How to create a good “research literature” review and ask question.
3. How to gather and analyze data in light of a question, and come to a conclusion.
4. How to format and present a successful thesis.

This course will be results based. You will meet firm deadlines and finish your senior thesis by the end of the semester.

Reading:

Murray, R. *How to Write a Thesis*. 2007.
Skwire, D. *Writing with a Thesis*. 1976.
Gunter, B. *Media Research Methods*. 2000 (Pp. 22-54).
Ogden, E.H. *Complete Your Dissertation or Thesis in Two Semesters*. 2007.
Thomas, R.M. *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative research Methods*. 2003 (Pp. 32-55).

Important policies:

- Academic dishonesty of any type (this includes copying information from the Internet) will not be tolerated under any circumstance and will result in a failing grade. If you are guilty of dishonesty, it is a serious matter, and you will fail the course and even be dismissed from AUCA.
- Turn off your cell phones in class! Do not send or read text messages during class. Students who insist on using cell phones or wi-fi during class will be excused from class.
- Students must respect people’s diversity and to be aware of the various ways in which language can be discriminatory. Thus, everyone should avoid using biased language both in the class discussions and in written assignments.
- Important announcements, supplemental materials, etc. will be communicated via E-mail. Each student is expected to have a valid E-mail address and to check their E-mail often.
- Late assignments will not be accepted. I reserve the right to grade each student according to participation, work completed and merit.

Assignment overview:

There will be a series of class discussions and exercises designed to teach basic research procedures. After the preliminaries, much of the work in the class will revolve around producing your senior thesis proposal/project:

- A. Research introduction 10 pt
- B. Research literature review & problem 10pt
- C. Describe research methods 10 pt
- D. Content Analysis presentation 10 pt
- E. Data collection 10 pt
- F. Analysis of findings 20 pt
- G. Formatting and presentation 20 pt
- H. Extra-points for in-class assignments

Grading:

- Attendance and participation: 10%
- Assignments: 90%

Total 100%

Week 1 – Introduction to course and instructor

Week 2 –Research preliminaries

What is a good (bad) research problem?
 Selecting and narrowing your topic areas
 Quantitative and qualitative research

Due: _____ Statement of research problem

Weeks 3/4 – Research literature review

Where can you find articles about your topic?

Due: _____ A. Identify of 8 to 10 articles min. in legitimate, serious scholarly publications that deal with your thesis problem, or the concepts behind the problem. Write a summary describing these articles and how they relate to your problem.

B. Next, on a separate page, write a bibliography listing these articles.

C. Next, write a brief 1-paragraph statement of the problem itself.

Weeks 5/6—Research design/methods

Which approach is best to gather your data?

--Case study (in-class assignment)

--Survey

--Quasi-experiments

--Qualitative approach?

--Ethnography

--Interviews

--Focus groups

Due: _____ Develop a written proposal showing how you will test a hypothesis or answer a problem. How will you measure it? Where will you go? What will you do? If you use survey questionnaire, develop the questions, and pre-test them

Weeks 7/8—Research methods

Content Analysis. Human subjects' research. What is "informed consent"? What is data collection?

DUE: Content analysis presentation.

Week 9 –Data collection

Week 10 –Data collection (Cont.)

Week 11 – Data collection (Cont.)

Week 12 –Due: Submit evidence of successful collection of data

Week 13/14 – Due: Analysis of your data.

Write a summary of what your data means about the original research problem.

Week 15—Turn in your final thesis: Due date _____
Format and presentation

FORMAT GUIDELINES FOR FINAL THESIS REPORTS

Each research report should be formatted with the following elements and sections:

1. Cover/title page
2. Abstract (250-word summary).
3. General introduction (2-3 pages)
4. Research review (3-4 pages)
5. Problem statement
6. Research method/procedures (1 page)
7. Data summary (2 pages)
8. Analysis of data (4-5 pages)
9. Summary/conclusion (2 pages)
10. References (containing bibliography citations for all materials used in thesis)
10. Appendix (copies of survey questionnaires, human subjects approval, statistical data, transcripts of interviews, etc.)