Intro to College Inquiry

SPEX 196-001T/005T

American University

School of Professional & Extended Studies

Fall 2015

**Instructor**: Dr. Laila Sorurbakhsh **Office Hours**: W 10:30am-12:30pm

**E-mail**: [sorurbak@american.edu](mailto:sorurbak@american.edu)(or by appointment – please e-mail me)

**Office Location**: Brandywine 301 **Class Meets**:

(BUT we will meet in the SIS lobby) 001T: 10:20am-11:35am in Ward 303

005T: 1:10pm-2:25pm in HRST 205

***Course Description***

Introduction to College Inquiry is an unique course of study for Washington Mentorship Program students. This class uses real-world questions, issues, and controversies to develop inquiry, research, and communication skills. Inquiry is learning by questioning, exploration, and discovery--as opposed to memorization and drill. Lecture is minimal because “inquiry” is an active, rather than a passive, experience. Students will acquire a broad understanding of key approaches to both learning and research. The course will utilize an experiential learning-based approach to enable students to apply what they are learning, while exploring the vast diversity of resources available to them at American University and in the District of Columbia.

This course provides an opportunity for students to develop an awareness of the ways knowledge is generated by introducing students to the tools and study of the different means, materials, methods, nature, and ethics of academic inquiry. The course presents interdisciplinary investigations through experiential learning, faculty-guided discussions, speakers, and collaborative learning. The course includes skills and techniques in critical thinking, analysis, investigation, problem solving, learning, and research appropriate to the acquisition of knowledge in varying fields of study. The purpose of this course is to guide student discovery in the generation and development of knowledge through various fields of inquiry. In essence, you will learn by doing.

**Course Objectives and Outcomes:**

This course will:

* Improve student understanding of key approaches to academic research;
* Explore educational and professional opportunities at American University;
* Provide students with an opportunity to enhance numerous skills including critical thinking,  writing, and research;
* Encourage students to think deeply about phenomena that impacts their everyday lives; and,
* Encourage students to become lifelong learners.  Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
  + Identify key approaches to both inquiry and academic research;
  + Compare and contrast diverse sources and information content, recognizing types of sources, bias, and characteristics of high quality data;
  + Demonstrate active learning and engagement through such activities as critical questioning, synthesis and evaluation of course readings and resource materials, individual research, active discussion, and analytical writing; and,
  + Understand and be able to apply varied approaches to inquiry and research including written summary, written analysis, hypothesis development, and research design.

**Texts and Course Materials:**  *The Research Journey: Introduction to Inquiry*, by Sharon Rallis and Gretchen Rossman, The Guilford Press (2012). Available at the bookstore and for online purchase.  Many resources for this class will be available on-line and are listed in the course schedule below. Journal articles are posted on the class website. Additional readings will be added during the course and distributed digitally.

**Course Grading and Evaluation:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exam I | 25% |
| Exam II | 25% |
| Research Question/Oultine | 10% |
| Paper | 20% |
| Attendance/Participation | 10% |
| Weekly Journal Assignment | 10% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | 93-100 | C+ | 77-79 |
| A- | 90-92 | C | 73-76 |
| B+ | 87-89 | C- | 70-72 |
| B | 83-86 | D | 60-69 |
| B- | 80-82 | F | <60 |

Grades are rounded up at 0.5 (for example, 89.5% = 90%) and down at 0.4 (89.4% = 89%).

**Research Question/Outline/Paper:** Students will develop a research question or a special inquiry at the beginning of the semester to investigate in their internships. As we go through the semester, the student will think about how different aspects of inquiry apply to their experience. At the end of the semester, the students will write a 4-6 page assessment of their inquiry, presenting their findings, their conclusions, and potential questions for future research, personal or formal.

**Exams**: Exams will be conducted in class and will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and a selection of 2 out of 4 short essays to be handed out one week prior. The test will be administered online. More details to follow.

**NOTE: Late assignments will receive a one-letter grade penalty for each day (including weekends and holidays) that they are late.**  **Grading Policies:**  I do offer incompletes and make-up examinations, but only under extraordinary circumstances, such as serious illness or family emergency. Such extraordinary circumstances require you to provide me with appropriate documentation.

**Attendance and Preparation:**  In addition to attending all classes and arriving prepared, students will be asked to engage in a variety of inquiry activities. Students are permitted one unexcused absences during the semester after which your participation grade will be impacted accordingly. Two late arrivals to class will equal one class absence.

**Class Participation:**  Class participation includes asking questions and being active in class discussions. You are expected to participate regularly throughout the term. This course offers unique opportunities to engage with your peers, instructor, and speakers. The quality of your participation is more important than the quantity. For students who tend to be shy and do not participate in other courses, you should try to prepare a few questions before each seminar. If you are concerned about class participation, I encourage you to share your concerns with me.

**Professionalism:** Students must conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. This requirement pertains to interactions with all persons associated with the course: guest speakers, peers, and the professor. Students may disagree with many comments made by guest speakers as well as other students in the class. Disagreement is fine and even good in many cases; however, you must learn to “disagree agreeably.” You should voice your difference of opinion in a respectful manner. Respectful dialogue and inquiry is a skill that will serve you well in your career. If you are disrespectful to a speaker or peer, or to me, I will not hesitate to remove you from the class. Personal attacks are never okay. Civility is a must.

While new technologies are useful in many circumstances, they create problems when they are abused. If you cell phones, laptops, and other similar devices to class, they should be turned off and stored away. Laptops may be used in class for note taking.

***Course Schedule***

**Introduction**

**August 31 -- Introduction to the Course, Expectations, and Each Other**

We will review the syllabus and discuss expectations of this course.

Journal Assignment 1: What expectations do you have for this course? For the program?

**Sept 3 -- Introduction to Inquiry**

Required reading: Preface, pp 5-16 and pp 23-27 in *Research Journey.*

Introduction to your Research Projects

\*\*\*No class, Sept 7: Labor Day\*\*\*

**September 10 -- Starting your Research Prospectus Project**

We will discuss the Research Prospectus Assignment in detail in class. I will provide a handout explaining the format, substance, and expectations of the assignment.

Required reading: pgs. 28-34 in your book.

Journal Assignment 2: What questions do you have about your organization/institution?

**September 14 -- Intro to the Scientific Method**

How to make observations, formulate hypotheses, develop testable predictions, gather data to test, evaluate results, develop general theories

Required reading: pgs 41-52

Sample research project available on blackboard

**September 17 -- Concept Mapping**

Required Reading: pgs 88-95

Read information online on Concept Mapping: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/conmap.php

Additional reading may be assigned.

> You should come to class with a basic working research question for your Research Prospectus. We will complete an in-class assignment. Details to follow.

**Sept 21— Developing a Research Question**

Required Reading: Read pp 95-106 and 115-118 in *Research Journey*.

Read "If Bill Clinton Were a Woman: The Effectiveness of Male and Female Politicians' Account Strategies Following Alleged Transgressions," in *Political Psychology* by Elizabeth S. Smith, Ashleigh Smith Powers and Gustavo A. Suarez. Posted in pdf form on class website.

As you read, think about the strengths and weaknesses of the research questions, data, and the research design.

**Sept 24— Socialization and Personal Bias**

Read Lecture slides posted on blackboard and assess ways in which your personal socialization may affect your internship performance/experience.

Required reading: available on blackboard

Journal Assignment 3: What potential personal biases may affect or alter your internship experience? Are there differences in culture, socialization, or approach that may affect inter-work or group relations?

**Sept 28 – Inquiry In Education/Pedagogy**

\*\*\*Research Question and Outline due\*\*\*

Required Reading:

Read John Dewy, *Democracy and Education* (Only Chapters 1 and 7): http://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm

Read Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (All of Chapter 2): http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/education/freire/freire-2.html

**Oct 1 -- Inquiry In Literature**

Required Reading:

Read Susan Gladspell, "A Jury of Her Peers" (Entire short story): http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/story/fulltext.html

Journal Assignment 4: Now that you have your research question, what sources of information do you think you can use to help arrive at a conclusion?

**Oct 5 – Inquiry From Literature catch-up**

Read Susan Gladspell, "A Jury of Her Peers" (Entire short story): http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/story/fulltext.html

**Oct 8 --** **Critical Reading and Critical Analysis**

Required Reading: pgs 141-148

Review the information online on Avoiding Bias: <http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/774.htm>

Intro on how to read scholarly articles: PRINT "Suburban Diversity in Postwar America," *Journal of Urban History* by Matthew D. Lassiter and

Read "Oil, Islam, and Women," *American Political Science Review* by Michael L. Ross. Posted in pdf form on class website.

**October 12 – Understanding Academic Arguments and an Author's Main Point**

**\*\*\*CONCEPT MAPS DUE\*\*\***

**Bring to class a scholarly article that is relevant to your paper**

Required Reading: Read the entire "Glossary of Critical Thinking Terms":http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/glossary-of-critical-thinking-terms/496

Read information online on Summary Writing: http://users.drew.edu/~sjamieso/summary.html

Journal Assignment 5: What hypotheses do you have regarding your research question?

**October 15 -- Evaluating Sources + Writing a Literature Review**

Required Reading:  Read Jeffrey Knopf, "Doing a Literature Review," in *PS: Political Science and Politics*: http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1038752.files/Doing\_a\_Literature\_Review.pdf

Optional Reading:

Read online information on Literature Review and Focusing Research: <http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/29986_Chapter3.pdf>

Journal Assignment 6: Read the journal articles listed above very closely. Use the information from the *Research Journey* and online readings to help you glean the important information from the journal articles. Summarize your article.

**October 19 – Midterm Review**

Essay questions will be administered

**October 22 -- Inquiry in a Professional Setting**

Tentative Speaker: Chris Jackson, Department of Justice

**October 26 -- MID-TERM EXAM**

**October 29 -- Intro to Data Collection**

Required readings/class notes on blackboard

Journal Assignment 7: What types of information can you gather from your internship? Personal interview?

**Nov 2 – Doing Research and Data Analysis in a Professional Setting**

Tentative Speaker: Faisal Baluch, Professor of Political Science, Holy Cross University. Lecture on Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and it’s relevance to Inquiry.

**Nov 5 – Key Concepts in Academic Research: Causation versus Correlation, Triangulation, and Validity**

Required Reading: reread pp 49-52 in *Research Journey.*

Read "See Some Hilarious Charts Showing Correlation is not Causation," in *Los Angeles Times* by Michael Hiltzik: http://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-mh-see-correlation-is-not-causation-20140512- column.html

We will complete an in-class assignment. Details to follow.

**Nov 9- Quantitative or Qualitative?**

Required: Watch the online video on the difference between quantitative and qualitative data: http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/a3121120.nsf/home/statistical+language+- +quantitative+and+qualitative+data

We will complete and in-class assignment. Additional reading may be assigned.

**Nov 12 -- Research and Data Collection as Applied Research**

Required readings/class notes on blackboard

Journal Assignment 8:

Obtain one example of how research and data collection is utilized at your internship location (a report, memo, flyer, website article) that you can share publicly. Write a two-page summary (typed, double spaced), including the purpose of the applied research, the audience, the research methods used (if any), the data used (if any), and the primary findings (if any). Is there anything else you can explain about the document? Attach your summary to the document.

**November 16 -- Research Prospectus Workshop I**

> By this class each student is expected to have their topic chosen, sources preliminarily searched and gleaned, and a working argument/hypothesis developed.

**November 19 -- Ethics in Research** Required Reading:

Required reading: pgs 59-79

Read "A Family Consents to a Medical Gift 62 Years Later," in the *New York Times* by Carl Zimmer: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/08/science/after-decades-of-research-henrietta-lacks-family-is-asked- for-consent.html?pagewanted=all&\_r=0

Read "Stanley Milgram and the Uncertainty of Evil," in the *Boston Globe* by Christopher Shea: http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/09/28/stanley-milgram-and-uncertainty- evil/qUjame9xApiKc6evtgQRqN/story.html

Read "Ethics Left Behind as Drug Trials Soar in Developing Countries," in *The Guardian*: http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2011/jul/04/ethics-left-behing-drug-trials-developing

Review the online information on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at American University: <http://www.american.edu/irb/>

Journal 9: Topic on Ethics in research

**November 30 -- Course Wrap-Up**Required Reading:

Read pp156-168 in *Research Journey*.

Journal 10: Topic on the inquiry journey

**December 3 – FINAL EXAM**

**\*\**Your final Research Paper is due in electronic version via email on December 7 before midnight.***

***University-Wide Policies***

**Academic Integrity Code**

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University’s Academic Integrity Code which can be found at http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code01.htm. It is expected that all assignments will be completed according to the standards set forth in this code. By registering, students have acknowledged awareness of the Academic code and are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if there are any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general, or as they relate to particular requirements for this or any other course or work at AU.

**Disabilities statement**

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. A wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

**Academic Support Center** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities.

**Counseling Center** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus resources.

**Disability Support Services** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

**AU – Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease) or other emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. All faculty members will design alternative means of completing classes. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. We will communicate class- specific information to students via AU e-mail and/or Blackboard. Students are responsible for checking AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, you should refer to the AU Web site (www. prepared. american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information. AND contact your faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/ college-specific information.

**General Statement**: Instructor reserves the right to change or modify the syllabus as needed through the course of the semester.