

GENERAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

Course Description

[Stephen Colbert](#) coined the term “truthiness” to describe the tendency of people to “go with their gut” rather than facts and evidence in evaluating the world around them. He made this observation in 2005 (!) but we know that “truthiness” isn’t time bound; we’ve seen an awful lot of this in the last several years – and in the last couple months. As easy it is to identify the loudest of the culprits, we are ALL affected by biases that obstruct critical thinking. These biases influence how we hear and understand new information, whether we question assumptions, and how we disentangle opinion from fact. Challenging these biases is essential to making rational, evidence-based arguments and decisions, and we can all benefit from being informed and reflective.

We will spend the next 11 weeks developing and using the critical thinking and writing skills necessary to examine and propose solutions to real-world problems. You will work on various stages of the research process – identifying the research question or problem, putting it into intellectual and policy context, collecting evidence to support the answer or resolution, and developing a coherent argument – on a topic related to the work of your internship organization. We will work together throughout the writing process, but you will have a lot of independent work to do too.

Learning Objectives

Goal #1: Students will develop skills to make evidence-based arguments.

Objective #1: Students will write an evidence-based argumentative research paper.

Goal #2: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in their course.

Objective #2: Students will write an argumentative research paper related to the work of their internship organization.

Goal #3: Students will experience a cultural, historical, policy or other event in the District of Columbia that relates to their course.

Objective #3: Students will attend (virtually, of course!) and analyze at least one congressional or other government briefing, a think tank seminar or lecture, or NGO/advocacy/nonprofit event to include as a citation for their research paper.

Goal #4: Students will be able to communicate persuasively in writing and orally.

Objective #4: Students will write and discuss their research and class materials and assignments.

Goal #5: Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments, and use empirical evidence to research and apply theory to practice.

Objective #5: Students will complete several critical thinking and writing assignments.

Course Materials and Accessibility

Course materials may include a combination of scholarly articles, news articles, court cases, videos, podcasts, and more. Many readings are electronic and available online; others will be available in PDF format on Canvas. Documents will be stored in Files, and our weekly materials will be easily accessible in weekly Modules.

**** I reserve the right to make changes to the course materials as the term progresses.****

Course Responsibilities and Assignments

- **Attendance:** Attendance is important for your successful progress in class, but also for class community & camaraderie. This is especially true in a remote environment. Please be sure that your internship supervisor understands that you will be in class every Wednesday and attend to these rules:
 - **Everyone gets ONE (1) freebie absence without explanation.**
 - Other absences *require an explanation*, whether it be illness (of self or family member or other person in your care), rolling blackouts, tech issues, and more. I will honor your need for privacy, but I do expect a reason. Just let me know, in advance if possible, but as soon after as you can.
 - This includes internship-related absences. Sometimes a special event comes up that occurs during out class period. Let me know and I will consider excusing you.
 - I am very likely to excuse absences, but you **MUST** give me an explanation.
 - If you don't provide an explanation, I'll consider it an *unexcused* absence & will lower your final participation grade to the next grade (e.g. A- will become a B+) for each absence.
- **Reading Assignments:** All the reading assigned in this syllabus and any added throughout the term is required. This means that you should read all of the material **BEFORE** the class meeting and be ready to use it for your graded assignments (if relevant) **EVEN IF** we do not discuss it in class. See the Weekly Schedule below for dates and assignments. You should have assigned readings available for reference in class.
- **Research Paper Assignments:** Prompts for each assignment will be forthcoming.
 - **Research Question or Problem:** At the core of every research project is a question or problem.
 - **Annotated Bibliography:** Research builds on the work before it and seeks to fill a gap or develop a new perspective or solution.
 - **Argument Fundamentals:** The most compelling arguments are evidence-based.
 - **Final Research Paper:** Final papers are the culmination of important questions/problems, synthesis of existing and relevant scholarship and other knowledge, and the collection of evidence, crafted into a coherent and persuasive whole.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. **You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C.** You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Participation	20%
Research Question & Significance (1-2 pages)	10%
Annotated Bibliography (3-4 pages)	15%
Argument Fundamentals (4-5 pages)	15%
Final Research Paper (15-20* pages)	40%

*Several campuses require 20 page research papers for major or other course credit. Students should check with their campus advisors before turning in a final paper that is less than 20 pages in length.

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.

Course Communication Tools

I will use Canvas and email for communicating with you this term. Unless you tell me otherwise, I will be communicating with you using the email address that you included as your primary address when you enrolled for classes. You are responsible for checking these sources regularly for messages and feedback. You are responsible for letting me know if you change your email address.

Turnitin may be used for submitting and returning some writing assignments. We will discuss in class how to create an account if you don't already have one, and how to use the software.

Also: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Policy on Attendance

See Course Responsibilities and Assignments (above).

Policy on Late Assignments

Keeping up with the work in a class like this is very important. The assignments are scaffolded, which means they build on each other and rely on the completion of the one before.

Assignment deadlines are firm to keep us on track, but also to provide predictability in your schedules. Still, life happens and you may find that you miss a deadline. Been there, done that.

I encourage you to submit late assignments rather than not submit at all. While you are likely to be docked points for lateness *if you haven't provided an excuse*, I don't judge! You are much better off with some points than no points, and you're definitely better off with feedback than no feedback. So, get in your work even if you take a bit of a hit on points.

I do dock points for late assignments that are not accompanied by an excuse because deadlines are important and we want to be fair to those who meet them.

For every 24 hour period after the date and time that the assignment is due, the grade received for the assignment will be decreased by one (1) part of a grade. The 24 hour periods include weekends. For example, if you turn in an A quality assignment on Wednesday before 11:59p, after it was due on Monday at 11:59p, then the assignment will be 2 days late and you will earn a B+ on that assignment. If you turn in a B quality assignment at that same time, you will earn a C+.

You may submit assignments early, but I don't grade assignments early.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872- 8937). ***Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.***

[Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on accommodations for students with disabilities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Weekly Schedule

I reserve the right to adapt the reading assignments and discussion topics as the seminar progresses.

Life happens – and fast!

[Codes: PDT=Participation Discussion Thread; PA=Participation Assignment; RA: Research Assignment]

Date	Prep for Class (Homework)	In Class – Synchronous	In Class – Asynchronous
<u>Module 1:</u> Biases and Assumptions: Why Does Evidence-Based Problem-Solving Matter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video: Overview of Syllabus (Canvas, Module 1) Review syllabus (Canvas, Announcement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>PDT Prompt:</u> Introduction and Ice Breaker Syllabus: Questions? <u>PA Prompt:</u> Changing Minds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Starbird (2020), Matthews (2018), and Klein (2018) (Canvas) Review Cognitive Bias Infographic <u>PA Prompt:</u> Cognitive Biases
<u>Module 2:</u> Exploring Ideas, Asking Questions, Developing Theses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video: Research Questions Nyhan, Brendan, et al. 2014. "Effective Messages in Vaccine Promotion: A Randomized Trial." <i>Pediatrics</i>, Vol. 133, N. 4: 1-9. (Canvas) Giles, Jim. 2011. "Social science lines up its biggest challenges." <i>Nature</i>, Vol. 470: 18-19. (Canvas) Otto, Shawn. 2016. <i>The War on Science: Who's Waging It, Why It Matters, What We Can Do About It</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions. Chapters 1-2. (Canvas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias and Motivated Reasoning Characteristics of Compelling Questions <u>PDT Prompt:</u> Developing Compelling Questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>PDT Prompt:</u> Getting to Know Internship Organizations
<u>Module 3:</u> #ShutUpAndWrite: Research Question/ Problem & Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. <i>The Craft of Research</i>. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL. Chapters 3-4: pp. 35-67. (Canvas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>PA Prompt:</u> Writing Questions, Explaining Significance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch: Developing a Research Question (6:25) <u>RA Prompt:</u> Research Question and Significance Assignment (due April 14, by 11a PST via Canvas)

Module 4: Building Knowledge: Reviewing Literature and Building a Bibliography DUE: RA: Research Question/Problem and Significance (by 11a PST via Canvas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Building Knowledge • Video: Online Searches • A Guide to Annotated Bibliographies, The Writing Center, George Mason University, accessed January 2, 2021. • Literature Reviews, The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed January 2, 2021. • Plagiarism, The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed January 2, 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading, notetaking and plagiarism • PDT Prompt: Library of Congress Tour and Scavenger Hunt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Creating an Annotated Bibliography (3:32) • Explore: Purdue University OWL (Online Writing Lab) • PA Prompt: In-text Citations, Bibliographies, and Works Cited
Module 5: #ShutUpAndWrite: Annotated Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for your papers: Bring to class at least three (3) articles or other sources related to your research question to analyze. TWO (2) must be peer-reviewed articles. Best if you've already read them once. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Prompt: Using Databases, Creating Annotations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA Prompt: Annotated Bibliography (due April 28, by 11a PST via Canvas)
Module 6: Evidence Matters DUE: RA: Annotated Bibliography (by 11a PST via Canvas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanneh, Kelefa. 2016. "Untangling the Immigration Debate: What do we owe people in other countries who would like to come to this one?" <i>The New Yorker</i>, October 31, 2016. accessed January 2, 2021. • Clemens, Michael. 2017. "There's no evidence that immigrants hurt any American workers." <i>Vox</i>, August 3, 2017. accessed January 2, 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDT Prompt: What Makes for Compelling Evidence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Prompt: Connecting Evidence to Theses
Module 7: #ShutUpAndWrite: Argument Fundamentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. <i>The Craft of Research</i>. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL. Chapters 7-10, pp. 108-149 (Canvas), <u>focus on text around figures on pp. 113 and 131.</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Prompt: Mapping Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA Prompt: Argument Fundamentals (due May 19, by 11a PST via Canvas & Turnitin)
Module 8:	MENTAL HEALTH BREAK: No Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDT Prompt: Evidence of Self-care
Module 9: Evidence Matters (cont'd) DUE: RA: Argument Fundamentals (by 11a PST via Canvas & Turnitin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enten, Harry. 2017. "Fake Polls are a Real Problem." <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, August 22, 2017. accessed January 2, 2021. • Rampell, Catherine. 2017. "A chilling study shows how hostile college students are toward free speech." <i>The Washington Post</i>, Septemeber 18, 2017. accessed January 2, 2021. • Villasenor, John. 2017. "Views among college students regarding the First Amendment: Results from a new survey." Brookings Institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD: Virtual Tour /Guest Speaker, Pew Research Center • PA Prompt: Surveys & Concept of Generalizability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Prompt: Correlation, Causality, and "Proof" • RA Prompt: Final Research Paper (due June 4, by 5p PST via Canvas & Turnitin)

	September 18, 2017 , accessed January 2, 2021.		
<u>Module 10:</u> #ShutUpAndWrite: Final Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2020 Election Cases (Selected, TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>PA Prompt:</u> Organizing Thoughts, Using Section Headings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write, Write, Write!!
<u>Module 11:</u> Writing Beginnings & Endings: Finishing Touches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent & group work on final papers• Office hours	DUE: RA: Final Research Paper Argument (FRIDAY, June 4, by 5p PST via Canvas & Turnitin)