Anthropology 662: Research Design

Instructor: 
Office: 
Phone: 
Email: 
Office Hours: 

Course Description
This course provides guided instruction on how to design grounded projects in anthropological inquiry. Students will study the relationships between the research question, core anthropological literatures and theories, and research methods and site selection. Students will also consider fundamentals of data analysis.

Prerequisites
Consent of the student’s advisor and at least one year of graduate work in Anthropology.

Student Learning Objectives
After completing this course, the student will be able to:
• Prepare in-depth literature reviews using journals, search engines and databases
• Formulate research problems and questions (hypotheses) for empirical inquiry and relate these to existing scholarly research
• Design a set of methods and corresponding data analysis to be used to gather and analyze data to answer research questions (hypotheses)
• Write proposals for dissertation funding research

Course objectives and goals
The goal of this course is to provide graduate students with an in-depth understanding of the objectives and strategies of contemporary research problem formulation, including the writing and construction of research proposals. The course will concentrate on those aspects of problem definition and research design that will help you achieve this understanding, with particular emphasis given to the interplay among data, method, and theory. A corollary objective of the course will be the student’s semester project – the formulation and write-up of a formal research proposal in NSF DDRIG format

Course materials
There are no required texts for this course. The student will draw on previous coursework and conduct new literature-based research to prepare the literature reviews and broader bibliography necessary for the proposal. Recommended texts include handbooks for research methods, The Chicago Manual of Style, and The Elements of Style (Strunk and White).
Course Policies and Requirements

Disability Resources and Accommodations:
Should you need any accommodations for a disability please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC). DRC Address: 725 Rose Street, Multidisciplinary Science Building (the building between the T. H. Morgan Building (Biological Sciences) and the College of Nursing), Suite 407. Phone: 257-2754. Director: David Beach dtbeac1@uky.edu Please see the DRC website for policies regarding official faculty notification of accommodations, etc.
http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/

Academic Honesty (Plagiarism and Cheating):
Per university policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students must practice academic honesty. Academic honesty means you produce original work and appropriately and accurately credit and cite the sources you use. Violating this system of integrity is a serious offense, and is unacceptable in this class, department, and university.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to university policies concerning academic integrity, plagiarism, cheating, and the use of library materials, as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited. Complete information can be found at the following website: http://www.uky.edu/Ombud.

See University Senate Rules (USR) 6.3.0.1-6.3.0.3 for additional details. The USR are available at: http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/rules_regulations/index.htm

Meetings:
In addition to the organizational meeting (Week 1) the student will meet with the professor and/or workshop group approximately once every week or every other week over the course of the semester. These meetings are mandatory. The student is also encouraged to schedule additional meetings during regular office hours as necessary.

Verification of Absence:
Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Appropriate notification of absences due to university-related trips is required prior to the absence.

Description of Course Activities and Assignments
During the semester, the student will formulate and prepare a formal research grant proposal related to a specific research problem for his/her thesis or dissertation research. Each of the Course Activities and Assignments are components of this proposal or exercises required to begin to compose the proposal.
Course Assignments
Assignment 1: 10 points
Assignment 2: 10 points
Assignment 3: 10 points
Assignment 4: 10 points
Assignment 5: 20 points
Assignment 6: 10 points
Assignment 7: 20 points
Assignment 8: 20 points
Assignment 9: 20 points
Assignment 10: 20 points
Assignment 11: 20 points

Summary Description of Course Assignments:
WS means that this assignment is workshopped among the other 662 students (if collaborating with other faculty and ANT 662 students during the semester).
Assignment 1: description of research interests
Assignment 2: identify research problems, and bibliography
Assignment 3: formulate three research questions and bibliography (WS)
Assignment 4: 20 more references for your bibliography
Assignment 5: Draft of intro and statement of problem (WS)
Assignment 6: Outline of local background and specific research questions
Assignment 7: Draft of local background and specific research questions (WS)
Assignment 8: Outline of Methods (sampling, methods, analysis)
Assignment 9: Draft of Methods (WS)
Assignment 10: Draft of full proposal (WS)
Assignment 11: Final version of full proposal

Course Grading
170 to 153 points (90-100%) = A
152 to 134 points (80 – 89%) = B
133 to 116 points (70 to 79%) = C
115 points or below = E

Assignments: With the exception of the final proposal draft, and as otherwise noted, all assignments are due 48 hours before each meeting. Please submit assignments via email, except, as noted, for the final assignment, which is due in both electronic and hard copy. A penalty of 5% will be applied each day the assignments are late unless the student has obtained the consent of the instructor for an extended deadline at least two weekdays (M-F) in advance.
**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

*(Please note: the "workshop" references below are appropriate when ANT 662 is "team taught" by a group of faculty. If a student and advisor are working on their own please revise accordingly.)*

**Week 1: What do you want to research for your dissertation?**

Write a page defining what you are interested in doing for your dissertation. This should tie together the general topic of your research, the specific question(s) you want to answer, and what kinds of data you think you will need to answer these questions. You will work on each of these components in great detail throughout the semester, so what you write for this first assignment is just a very preliminary attempt to get your general ideas on paper. Throughout the course of the semester, your ideas may change, but we have to have a preliminary statement at the beginning of the semester to serve as a rough map of what you want to do and where you want to go.

**Week 2: The research problem/topic and literature review**

Formulation of a research problem/topic often begins from an observation made either of events in the real world or from your reading of the literature (usually both). The Research Problem/topic is “bigger” than the Research Question. For example, a research topic might be something like “the origins of inequality”, whereas the research question would be something like: “How did changes in subsistence agriculture facilitate social inequality on the coast of Chiapas during the Early formative?”

Or, “what impact do work opportunities in maquiladoras have on women’s equality in Mexico?” Based on your own interests, identify three Research Problems that might be relevant to your dissertation. Although a tight, focused proposal for dissertation funding may only permit you to address one research problem, your dissertation could easily engage with two research problems, and perhaps three.

Beginning this week and continuing throughout the semester, you need to do literature review. Naturally, your literature review begins when you have a research problem/topic. So, start your literature review this week. Literature review covers many different subjects (general literature from beyond anthropology and/or archaeology that addresses your research topic, literature on your research topic within the discipline but outside your region, literature in your region that addresses your research topic, methods, etc.) and forms the basis not just of your proposal but also of the bibliographies for your qualifying exams.

**Assignment 2** due at end of the week: state three research problems/topics and compile ten bibliographic references that are pertinent to your research problems/topics. Some of these should be ones that you have not read before and are reading for the first time this week. The idea is for you to do serious reading throughout the semester.

**Week 3: The research question and continue with literature review**

Select one Research Problem from the previous week and formulate at least three theoretically-informed research questions. Each of these questions could be the starting point from which you develop your dissertation research proposal. In formulating the Research Question, ask yourself, “What will we learn from the project that we don’t already know, and why do we want to know it?” Continue with your readings this week and throughout the semester: Identify the bodies of literature relevant to your particular research question (this might come from the identification of important
concepts within the Research Question), including the theoretical framework. From a critical review of the most important work within these bodies of literature, identify specific questions that you will ask in your own research. In other words, the work that has gone before sets the stage for identifying the various elements that will come together to form the essential argument of your project. What have you learned from each relevant body of literature? How has the literature informed your own thinking and, therefore, your own project? What contribution will you make to what is already known? Make sure to think about literature that will be important not just to your research question but also to your methods.

Assignment 3 for this week is to write out these three questions (WORKSHOP these three questions) and to also add another ten bibliographic references that are pertinent to your research problems/topics.

Weeks 4-6: PART A of the Proposal: Intro and statement of problem that gets into relevant theory and background literature
During these weeks your main assignment is to continue to do reading on your topic and write the first part of the proposal. Make sure you pay attention to the NSF "advice" (although it's also useful to familiarize yourself with Wenner-Gren, Fulbright, and SSRC requirements).

In this draft of the first part of your proposal, you should identify the research problem and the research questions, and where the research will take place. You might also end the section by providing a list of specific aims of the research. You should also state (not describe – you can do that later, see below) the approach you will take in the research (e.g., archaeology: mostly lab analysis, versus initial regional survey, versus excavation of a sample of structures, etc., or multiple approaches combined; cultural anthropology: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, focus groups, household surveys, etc.); and, of course, identify the theory/ies that will guide the work. You will also want to present the most cutting edge perspectives available in the literature that is pertinent to your research question. If possible, show how your work is connected to the literature, i.e., the work of others. If done properly, this should indicate how you created the argument that forms the basis of your research.

Once completed, you should have a fully developed argument for and justification of the research. As Silverman states, it “should provide an explicit statement of what you aim to accomplish and your general plan for doing so. It should also make clear why you want to do it and what we will know as a result that we don’t know now.”

Assignment 4: due at end of week 5: Another 20 references for your bibliography. The idea here is that these should be references that you actually read during weeks 4 and 5.

Assignment 5: due at end of week 6: Draft of PART A (about 3 pages). (WORKSHOP DRAFT)

Weeks 7-9: PART B of the proposal: Local background and specific research questions you will address
In this section, you will talk about how the research problem applies to the area where you plan to work. This is where you justify why the region/site(s) and time periods you will be focusing on are particularly appropriate for addressing the research problem you have chosen. This is also the place you describe all the preliminary research that you have done thus far and/or the pertinent qualifications
you have for moving forward. This is an important section because reviewers want to know that you will be able to hit the ground running: they want to see that you have been to the region before, that you know what you are doing, and that you have demonstrated the feasibility of what you propose to do. In short, you show that you are building on something, not starting entirely from scratch. Even if you happen to be the first person to do archaeological/anthropological work in your site or region, there are still ways to show that you are not “starting from scratch.”

Your specific research questions will be tailored to the kind of region/site(s) you are working on and what previous research has been conducted there. This is why we are having you bundle the local background and the research question into the same chunk of work. Your specific research questions are Part 1 of research design. Part 2 is the methods and will be dealt with in the next step of your proposal writing see below.

Focusing just on part 1 for now, a successful statement of your specific research questions will also involve elaboration of the multiple possible answers (multiple working hypotheses) to your questions and expectations entailed by each possible answer. For example, if one of your questions is about how the expansion of the Monte Alban State affected the valley you propose to work in, you might have three potential answers: 1) tight economic and political control 2) new tribute demands with relatively little political meddling, 3) loose alliance. For each of these answers you should state what you would expect to see if the answer is correct, as well as what information would falsify this particular answer.

Assignment 6: due at the end of week 8. Outline of Part B

Assignment 7: due at the end of week 9. Draft of Part B. (WORKSHOP)

Weeks 10-12: PART C of the proposal: Methods and Analysis
In this section of the proposal, you need to talk about what methods you will use to get the kinds of data necessary to test the different answers/hypotheses to the research questions you proposed in the previous section. You will also describe how you will analyze the collected data to answer your questions. Describe and justify your sampling strategy. Make sure you know the difference between a random sample, a stratified random sample, etc. and the limitations of the strategy/ies you will use. Next identify the data that need to be collected, and the processes you will use to do so, linking the data back to the questions and/or aims specified in Section 1. Make sure that you unpack and operationalize all concepts – statements such as, “I will built the chronology,” “I will collect data on economic activities,” “I will collect settlement patterns data,” etc. are NOT specific enough.

Cultural anthropology students might find it helpful to outline or list sites where you would like to conduct research (organizations, neighborhoods, etc.) Ask yourself: “Where do I need to go in order to answer my research question, and why?” You could also prepare a list of the types of people you would like to interview and why. This should correlate with the list of potential sites. For example, if you want to conduct participant observation in a military training facility, list the different categories of people who live and work there (trainees, trainers of different rank, spouses and family members, etc.).
When you eventually write this section, you must be extremely detailed – statements like, “I will search for themes,” and “I will evaluate the connection between this and that” will not do! Every time you make a statement about an analytic strategy, ask yourself “How”? Your reviewers will be asking that same question. Again, it would be appropriate here to link your analytic strategies back to the aims and/or more focused research questions which you enumerated in previous sections. If you do this, you will see if you missed anything and you will make it much easier for your reviewers to evaluate your overall research design strategy. Also, make sure you mention your data management plan. Where will results be stored and will you publicly archive them according to NSF guidelines? Finally, if you will be conducting research with human subjects be sure to detail how you will protect their interests (anonymizing data, storing in locked cabinets, training local assistants in CITI etc.)

Finally, outline a detailed research schedule for all research activities. Reviewers will be evaluating the proposal, in part, on whether or not you can complete all activities in the timeframe you specify.

Assignment 8: due at the end of week 8. Outline of Part B


A NOTE ON READING AND REVISING THE LITERATURE REVIEW:
You may need to continue with background reading. Authors of NSF proposals that are well versed in the literature easily cite 100 references, and your reviewers will want to make sure you have cited relevant literature, so you gotta keep reading! Your literature review should include not only the most recent publications, but also classic/foundational works. Consider how relevant scholarship sets the stage for identifying the various elements that will come together to form the essential argument of your project. Questions to ask yourself include: What have I learned from each relevant body of literature? How has the literature informed my own thinking and therefore, my own project? What contribution will I make to what is already known?

Week 13 and 14: A full draft of the proposal
You have received feedback from your advisor (and your peer workshop group if applicable) on the three main parts of the proposal: A) intro, research problem and theoretical background for this problem, B) Local background and research questions/hypotheses as tailored to your field site and time period and C) methods. You have also received feedback from your peers’ advisors on at least one of these sections (if applicable). Revise your three sections on the basis of this feedback and put it together as a single proposal. ALSO, add one additional page to the end: a statement of the significance of the project in terms of its intellectual merit and the “Broader Impacts” – see the following website: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf.

Assignment 10: due at the end of week 14. Full proposal draft (10 pages). (WORKSHOP)

Weeks 15-16: Revise your first full draft and submit final draft
During these two weeks, you will work on revisions based on the feedback you get from your advisor as well as your workshop peers.

Assignment 11 due at the end of week 16. Full proposal final version (10 pages).