

USC Marshall School of Business

BUAD 493 – Marshall Honors Research Seminar

Syllabus – Spring 2021 – M 10:00 – 11:50 AM – 2 Units

Professor: Vishal Gupta

Email: *Do not email. Slack Only.*

Office Hours: By Appointment Only.

Zoom link for Office Hours: See Blackboard or Slack

Course Description

Evidence-based decision-making is becoming ever-more crucial in our world. But where does such evidence come from? In most cases, it stems from research -- conducted by us or by others. Said another way, the modern world requires us both to *produce* research and to *consume* research produced by others. We produce and consume research both when considering global, “wicked” problems such as “How can we root out systemic racism?” and also in the minutia of day-to-day life, such as “Which webcam should I buy for online teaching?”. Moreover, with the increasing prevalence of misinformation and “fake news,” our success in this process hinges not only on our ability to synthesize data, but to critically distinguish good data from bad and bad data from outright lies.

This research seminar focuses on developing the core skills to be an effective researcher, and to communicate that research effectively. Along the way we will discuss the ways that research exists inside and outside academia, and how it supports various industries in achieving their goals. We will learn firsthand from some guest speakers, and incrementally refine our own research questions and projects. Group work, discussion, and constructive critique of one another will be the norm.

The primary deliverable and goal for the seminar is to develop (over the course of the semester) a viable research proposal for an undergraduate thesis.

Learning Objectives

By the end the course, students should be able to

- Critically assess the quality of a research question in terms of its impact and feasibility
- Iteratively refine their own research questions by synthesizing existing knowledge on the topic
- Perform basic data analysis in R (statistical software)
- Communicate the importance of their research question and plan in a written proposal

Required Materials

There are no required textbooks for this class, however, I will distribute articles and reading occasionally to be reviewed.

Students are required to install and use the class’s Slack Channel. Slack is available for free from USC ITS here: <https://itservices.usc.edu/slack/> See the same link for some tutorials if you’re new.

Students will also have to download R and R-Studio (two programs), both of which constitute a commonly used, freely available statistical software for data analysis. See this page for instructions on downloading R Studio Desktop: <https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/>

Course Notes:

Since this course is a seminar, a premium will be placed on discussion both in-class and on Slack. While there are certain “graded” elements to participation, I do hope we can cultivate a free-flowing discussion with the group that is supportive, constructive, and intellectually stimulating.

Grading Detail

Deliverable	% of Grade
In-Class Participation	10%
Slack Participation	10%
Homework	15%
*Annotated Bibliography (2 parts)	10%
Initial Literature Review	10%
*Initial Proposal and Presentation	15%
*Final Proposal	30%
Total	100%

I will be distributing evaluation rubrics for “*” deliverables above to help you prepare them.

Group Work Policy

Students are strongly encouraged to work together with students *from the course* on *all* assignments, however, you must

1. Write-up your own work. It is great to discuss an assignment together (e.g., over Zoom or Slack), but then you should separately author your own document. (Zoom or Slack should be closed for the second part.)
2. Indicate on your work any students you worked with and what their contribution was. For example, I might write on top of my assignment, “I discussed Question 2 with John Snow, who knew nothing” or “I spoke with Arya Stark about Question 3 who helped me to get R installed properly.”
3. External help is forbidden. Students may not seek help from anyone outside the class, including but not limited to former students of this course, friends and family, tutors, and online forums. Students may consult course materials and web resources. Students may not post anything related to the assignments outside of BlackBoard. Failure to abide by the above guidelines may constitute a case of suspected plagiarism or cheating, which will be reported and investigated. Please see the “Academic Integrity and Conduct” section below for further details. For more information about unauthorized collaboration, visit <https://libraries.usc.edu/tutorial/academic-dishonesty> or http://lib-php.usc.edu/tutorials/academic-dishonesty/story_html5.html.

Assignment Submission Policy:

Assignments must be turned in on the due date/time electronically via **Blackboard**. Late work will be penalized. Late or not, however, you must complete all required assignments to pass this course.

Grading Policies:

Slack Participation: As listed above, slack participation will constitute 10% of your grade. At the minimum, for this participation credit you should (at some point in the semester)

- Post at least on article or blog post that explores a question that interests you. (It might not be related to your thesis.). You should add some discussion to your post about follow-up questions you think are interesting, and how you might feasibly go about exploring them. You should also describe 1 dataset you'd ideally love to have to explore the question and discuss who might actually have that data.
- Respond to at least 2 articles posted by other students. You can add other aspects of the articles you find interesting, or help them refine the questions they are asking. Further discussion of data sources is encouraged.

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar below is only tentative. I will do my best to shape the course to the interests and needs of the students in it, which may necessitate adjusting some dates. If for any reason the due-date of a deliverable poses a problem for you, please contact me as early as possible.

Please check the below table! Many deliverables were shifted later one week to account for president's day.

Session	Date	Deliverable	Topic
1	25-Jan-21		What is research? Why do we care?
2	1-Feb-21	HW 1 : Initial Topic	Refining a question
3	8-Feb-21		Secondary Research
4	15-Feb-21	President's day	
5	22-Feb-21	HW 2: Installing R/R-Studio	Data Analysis and Visualizations with R
6	1-Mar-21	HW 3: Annotated Bib: Part 1	
7	8-Mar-21	HW 4: Data Analysis Assignment	
8	15-Mar-21		Literature Reviews
9	22-Mar-21	Annotated Bib: Part 2 (new Due date)	1-1 Check-ins
10	29-Mar-21	Initial Lit Review	Shivani Kumar Engagement Manager Advanced Industries Practice, Data and Analytics Function (DnA) McKinsey Consulting
11	5-Apr-21		Sabrina Howard, PhD Research Manager Institute for the Future
12	12-Apr-21	Initial Proposal + Slides	Student Presentations and Feedback
13	19-Apr-21		
14	26-Apr-21		Guest Speaker: Phil Janowicz PhD Strategic Research Advisor GoGuardian
	7-May-21	Final Proposal	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Class Conduct/Netiquette

Professionalism will be expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show respect for one another by exhibiting patience, courtesy, and professionalism in our exchanges. Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a requirement. Courtesy and kindness are the norm for those who participate in my class.

Synchronous Sessions

In order to earn full participation points, students must actively participate in all synchronous sessions via computer or laptop, with a webcam and headset/speakers. You are expected to be in a location with a reliable internet connection and without distractions. You need to be able to fully engage at all times. Students are expected to be visually present and to ask thought-provoking questions, offer relevant comments, and answer questions from faculty in a clear and concise manner.

As outlined in the student handbook, there are specific expectations of a student attending class online. When attending, present and act appropriate as if you were in a physical classroom.

Please do:

- Attend class from a quiet area, free of distractions.
- Dress respectfully. Video conference business meetings are and will be the norm, so practice your professional telepresence.
- If you use a virtual background, please keep it respectfully professional
- Display both your first and last name during video conferencing and Synchronous class meetings.
- Respectfully minimize distractions by muting and or turning video off when moving around
- Engage in appropriate tone and language with instructors or classmates
- Disagree respectfully
- Respectfully pay attention to classmates

Please do not:

- Engage in a simultaneous activity (e.g., using a telephone, reading a book, knitting)
- Interact with persons who are not part of the class
- Leave frequently or not be on camera for extended periods of time
- Have other persons or pets in view of the camera
- Behave in an overtly inattentive manner (looking distracted, not participating)

Asynchronous Activities – Discussion Boards and emails

Our discussion boards are ways for you to share your ideas and learning with your colleagues in this class. We do this as colleagues in learning, and the Discussion Board is meant to be a safe and respectful environment for us to conduct these discussions.

Some Netiquette Rules:

- Engage in appropriate tone and language with instructors or classmates
- Disagree respectfully
- Do not use all CAPITAL LETTERS in emails or discussion board postings. This is considered "shouting" and is seen as impolite or aggressive.
- Do not use more than one punctuation mark, this is also considered aggressive!!!!
- Begin communications with a professional salutation (Examples: Dr. Name; Ms. Name; Hello Professor Name; Good afternoon Mr. Name). Starting without a salutation or a simple "Hey" is not appropriate.
- When sending an email, please include a detailed subject line. Additionally, make sure you reference the course number (Ex. BUAD101 in the message and sign the mail with your name.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Text messaging language is not acceptable. You are practicing for your role as a business leader.
- Re-Read, think, and edit your message before you click "Send/Submit/Post.". as a check, consider whether you would be comfortable with your email or post or text being widely distributed on the Internet.

USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355– 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

https://usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care_report/

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. If you have a disability which may impact your performance, attendance, or grades in this course and require accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Services and Programs (www.usc.edu/disability). DSP provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to your TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS (Grace Ford Salvatori Hall) 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Email: ability@usc.edu.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

<https://uscса.usc.edu/>

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.