

**FOUNDATION COURSE**  
**Research Philosophy, Methods, and Responsible Conduct**  
**Spring 2020**  
Mondays

Instructor: Prof. James Giordano, PhD, MPhil  
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**Course Description**

Understanding the philosophical basis and ethical responsibilities of research are critical to developing an appreciation for the tenor, methods and conduct of scholarly investigation. What is a hypothesis? What is a thesis? What is a theory, and how do we know that theories are valid? What evidence can we bring to bear to support or refute them? What are possible alternate explanations for the phenomena we observe? And fundamentally how is research engaged in ways that are technically right and morally “good”?

This course will introduce students to the basic philosophy of research as a scientific endeavor, and will ground the methods and conduct of such enterprise to an understanding of its apt effort as a human “good”. Concepts of inquiry, investigation and formal analyses will be discussed. Constructs of validity, reliability and value will be addressed. Obligate elements of responsible conduct of research will be detailed, and key ethico-legal issues and problems – and their avoidance and resolution will be provided.

**Course Format**

Didactic presentation of material/content, discussion of presented content and assigned readings will be the primary format for this course.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Familiarity with core concepts in philosophy of science as relevant to scope and importance of research
- Define inquiry, investigation, hypothesis, thesis, and theory
- Define types of research approaches, studies and designs and their relative merits and limits
- Define types and levels of evidence
- Familiarity with strengths, weaknesses and limitations of various types of evidence
- Define elements of responsible conduct of research
- Understand constraints and requirements for research with vulnerable populations

## **Course Requirements**

1. Class contribution including regular participation in classroom discussion. (25%)
2. **One Short Outline** (1000-1500 words) Develop a full annotated outline of a paper addressing a topic of your choice that addresses and elucidates an issue, question, or problem (or posing/discussion of an issue/problem's solution) arising in/from some aspect of research in current and/or future culture(s), or the influence of social variables upon that science and/or scholarship. The topic should be vetted and approved by the professor no later than the fourth week of class. The outline is due upon the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) week of class).
3. **Final Paper**; (~3500 words fully referenced) upon the topic of students' choice as initially developed in the outline. The paper should be written in an accepted scholarly style (e.g.-MLS, Vancouver or Chicago style), and should seek to synthesize and assimilate information gained throughout the course (lectures and readings) together with the students' unique individual interests and readings into a working knowledge, analysis, critique and/or review (50%).

## **GRADING**

Participation/Discussion:	25%
Midterm outline	25%
Final paper	50%

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<b><u>WEEK</u></b>	<b><u>TOPIC(S)</u></b>
1	Philosophy of research as a science
2	Hypotheses, thesis, theories, correlation and causality
3	Developing the research question and approach
4	Validity, reliability and ecological validity/realism <b>APPROVAL OF PAPER TOPIC DUE</b>
5	Types of investigation and studies
6	Mixed methods
7	Ethnographic studies and surveys <b>MIDTERM OUTLINE DUE</b>
8	Understanding a research report/paper
9	Responsible conduct of research
10	Care for human and non-human subjects
11	Vulnerable populations
12	General discussion
13	Conclusions and <b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>