Overview of Course Goals and Objectives:

The more extensive and engaged your preparatory work this semester (i.e., defining and refining the focus of your master’s thesis, project, or three-course option), the clearer and easier the process of research and writing will be next year. That said, we will also work to avoid the needless pressure of trying single-handedly to conceive a comprehensive research study that will address everything and impress everyone. Through selective reading of direct as well as indirect sources of guidance on research organization and composition, along with formal exercises of critical and analytical skills, informal discussion of research and writing experiences, and group collaboration with peers, students will undertake the transition from a vague, messy conception to (we trust) a less vague, less messy proposal for their thesis, project, or three-course option.

By the end of the semester you will have put together a topic focus, preliminary literature review, method discussion, faculty committee, and working timetable in the form of a completed proposal. You will learn how to optimize your work time and your committee members’ time on your work; and how to deal with topic malaise, writer’s block, or other setbacks. We will clarify differences between: Master’s thesis, project, and three-course option; addressing questions and testing hypotheses; in-print and on-line finding aids and resources; annotated bibliographies and (kinds of) literature reviews; ‘tricks of the trade’ and technical skills. The aim is for you to work individually and with peers to find the right research mode (thesis, project, three-course option), questions, goals, objectives, methods, organization, strategy, and committee members to prepare yourself for the culminating Master’s experience next year, and beyond in your future career.

Class Requirements:

- Attendance and participation
- Completion of reading and writing assignments, in full and on time
- Preparation for class by bringing relevant readings, written work, notes, etc.
- Candor, fairness, and constructive judgment in discussion and in peer review
Production of timeline for proposal this semester (based on, but elaborating more specifically on, the generic timeline in this syllabus)
Production of timeline for thesis, project, three-course option next year
Deposit of a signed proposal on file in the LARP Office (required for course credit)

Thesis, Project and Three-Course Option Deadlines:
Thesis proposals are due at the Graduate Office at least four months before you defend and submit the completed and signed thesis
Projects and three-course option proposals do not go through the Graduate Office; you will be responsible for making arrangements with a committee or faculty advisor in those cases, though the formal requirements and deadlines are essentially the same as with theses

Course Readings (available at Food for Thought Bookstore, 106 North Pleasant St., Amherst):
Nicholas Walliman, Research Methods: The Basics. Routledge, 2010
[Other readings may be made available as handouts, on reserve, or from instructor as needed]

Evaluation of student performance will rely upon the following criteria:
20% for class attendance, preparation, and participation (e.g., discussion, peer review)
30% for written work, such as in-class assignments and exercises
50% for final proposal, including the process of development and drafting

Given the importance of each of these criteria for evaluating students’ course work, anyone who needs to miss a class meeting, turn in an assignment after deadline, or request other arrangements must address such matters with the instructor as far in advance as possible. Only urgent reasons or unusual circumstances will receive consideration in such cases. Please familiarize yourself, if you have not already, with university policies regarding plagiarism, disability, health issues, etc. http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct
The University of Massachusetts is committed to providing equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or other learning disability on file with UMass Disability Services [http://www.umass.edu/disability/index.html], you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations to help you better succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me at the start of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

It is expected that all students will abide by the Student Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Policy (available at the Academic Honesty Office (Ombud’s Office) or found online at [http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty.php/]). Potential sanctions for acts of dishonesty range from receiving a course grade of F, probation or suspension for a period of time, or dismissal. Students have the right of appeal through the academic honesty board.

We are all responsible for maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning and discussion. In order to assure that we all have the opportunity to benefit from our time in class, please fully review and respect these standards for creating a reciprocally responsible learning environment.

- The instructor and students will recognize and respect each other.
- Respect may include appropriate humor, enjoyment, or other indications of a comfortable and pleasant classroom community.
- We will be on time for class: no late arrivals and no packing up early.
- We will avoid disruptions during class such as loud noises, private conversations, reading newspapers, speaking on cell phones or texting, using a laptop for something other than current classroom work, and, of course, sleeping.
- We will avoid negative language that is considered racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. or in other ways may exclude or disrespect members of our campus and classroom community.

Attendance is not mandatory, but is factored into the participation grade. The instructor reserves the right to give an incomplete or F for any student with over four unexcused absences, and will make exceptions only for medical and family emergencies or other pre-approved reasons. The letter grade equivalents to the numerical scores are:

> 94 = A; 90-94 = A-; 87-90 = B+; 83-87 = B; 80-83 = B-; 77-80 = C+; 73-77 = C;
70-73 = C-; 63-70 = D; <63 = F
Although you will be evaluated for the overall quality of your work, involvement and engagement with class readings, and assignments, here is a basic breakdown of what will be expected of you in order to do well in the course:

**Attendance, preparation and participation (20%)**: There are c. 25 class meetings over the course of the semester. Attendance will be marked according to the assignments you turn in or pick up. We will circulate an attendance sheet for the meetings when no assignment is due; please be sure to look for that in class. Because this is ‘low-hanging fruit’, it can help raise your grade overall if you attend and participate regularly, come well prepared, and turn in work in full and on time.

**Weekly exercises (30%)**: The course texts have several different potential exercises or activities, varying in scale, scope and focus of work involved. A number of them as written are intended to require background research, several phases, teamwork during class time, etc. Because of the organization of this course, we will not do these activities strictly as written; we will adapt them to be completed individually as short assignments completed mostly outside class roughly once or twice a week, which you will then bring to class for collaborative discussion, peer review, and teamwork exercises.

**Self-designed research proposal (50%)**: This is your opportunity to take initiative and to pursue work in a research area based on your own interests and goals. You will select a topic/thematic focus, either from a list provided by the instructor, or your own choice with instructor approval. The aim of your project research will be to identify and address key academic and professional issues related to course readings, lectures, and discussions. You will write c. 1-2 page proposal components detailing your research strategy in terms of topic, question(s), goals and objectives, relevant literature, methodology, research advisor(s), etc. Development of the final proposal will consist of three parts: an initial prospectus and outline; a revised draft and progress report several weeks later; and the final signed proposal you submit

*Please aim for your proposal development process and product to be transformative as well as integrative relative to your long-range academic and professional goals!*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>01/19/16</th>
<th><strong>Introduction</strong>  <em>Groundrules and Guidelines; Getting Acquainted</em></th>
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<tr>
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<td>01/21/16</td>
<td><strong>Assignments:</strong> Adopt at least one thesis/project/3-course option; Adopt at least one academic/professional journal; Adopt an appropriate style/citation guide; Start on the 2-3 Sources a Week Plan</td>
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<tr>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>3 Whats</th>
<th><strong>Initiative and Ingenuity</strong></th>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th><strong>So What?</strong>  <em>Staking Out and Starting On a Research Study</em></th>
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<td>01/28/16</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th><strong>Just What?</strong>  <em>Defining and Delimiting a Research Focus</em></th>
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<tr>
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<td>02/04/16</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th><strong>Now What?</strong>  <em>Thinking and Tracking Like a Researcher</em></th>
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<td>02/09/16</td>
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02/11/16 Booth, et al., Part II, Ch. 6 (Engaging Sources)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 6 (General Data Sources)
Assignment: drafts of (3) potential research titles and abstracts due

Part Two 4 Other W’s  Coordination and Cooperation

Week 5  Which?  Research Hypotheses, Objectives, Questions

[2/16/16 University Holiday; Monday schedule followed; no class meeting]

02/18/16 Booth, et al., Part III, Ch. 7 (Making Good Arguments)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 7 (Secondary Data)
Assignment: (9) hypotheses, goals, objectives, questions due

Week 6  Who(m)?  Contacts and Committee Members

02/23/16 Booth, et al., Part III, Ch. 8 (Making Claims)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 8 (Primary Data)
Assignment: list of contacts, advisor(s), committee members due

02/25/16 Booth, et al., Part III, Ch. 9 (Reasons and Evidence)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 9 (Quantitative Data)
Assignment: detailed, specific timeline for work on proposal due

Week 7  When?  Timelines and Deadlines

03/01/16 Booth, et al., Part III, Ch. 10 (Acknowledgements and Responses)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 10 (Qualitative Data)
Assignment: documentation (audit or log) of research-to-date due
[03/03/16  Mid-semester LARP studio presentations; no class meeting]

Week 8
Where? Information in the field, in the stacks, in the ether

03/08/16  Booth, et al., Part III, Ch. 11 (Warrants)
Walliman, Part II, Ch. 11 (Organization)

03/10/16  Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 12 (Planning)
Assignment: annotated bibliography due

[03/14-18/16  University Spring Break; no class meetings]

Part Three
4 Other Q’s  Modality and Methodology of Monster-making

Week 9
Relative to? Introduction and Literature Review

03/22/16  Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 13 (Drafting)

03/24/16  Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 14 (Revising)
Assignment: draft of introduction, literature review (to date) due

Week 10
How? Method and Process Discussion

03/29/16  Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 15 (Visual Communication)

03/31/16  Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 16 (Framing: Introduction/Conclusion)
Assignment: draft of method and process discussion due

[Individual presentations of draft research outlines, Weeks 11 and 12]
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Assigned Library/Source</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>In what ways? Refining and Revising</td>
<td>Booth, et al., Part IV, Ch. 17 (Clarification, Style, Fine-Tuning)</td>
<td>04/05/16</td>
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<td>Assignment: revisions of weeks 4 and 5 assignments due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>To what extent? Comments and Recommendations</td>
<td>04/12/16 Assignment: revisions of weeks 9 and 10 assignments due</td>
<td>04/14/16 Assignment: rough draft of assembled proposal due</td>
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<td>Part Four Are We There Yet? Tying Up Loose Odds and Ends</td>
<td>04/19/16 Assignment: documentation (audit or log) of research-to-date due</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
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<td>Assignment: documentation of peer review due (last class)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
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<td>Assignment: final (proofed, formatted, signed) proposal due</td>
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