



CSUS 802
Introduction to Interdisciplinary Inquiry

Fall 2021
3:00 – 5:50 PM Mondays
304 A-C Natural Resource Building
Final exam Monday, December 13 from 5:45-7:45 PM

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1. MSU Course Catalog Description

Interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research design. Community engagement as related to research and inquiry. Practical skills for developing inquiry projects.

2. Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the elements of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research design and to provide them with practical guidance on how to begin a research proposal. To make this process relevant to all our graduate students, including those who will engage in research for practical purposes, we frame the research process as one of *inquiry* broadly. This approach reflects a practice of systematic, interdisciplinary inquiry that involves multiple aspects of boundary crossing, including integrating various disciplinary perspectives as well as learning how to conduct work that crosses between academic and practice communities. This broader framing encompasses multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approaches, as well as less academic forms of inquiry such as evaluation and action research.

Part I. The course begins with an introduction on the basics of the inquiry process, explains how the process is different when it is an interdisciplinary process, and highlights concerns that arise when working in an engaged setting. Selected examples of published works will demonstrate the diverse genres of inquiry that are represented in CSUS (e.g., hypothesis testing, emergent designs, alternative paradigm inquiry) and will illustrate the diversity of criteria that shape their ultimate design. These examples will serve as guideposts and common touchstones for the class so that shared understandings about the nature of interdisciplinary work can be developed. These concepts are put into practice with hands-on, small-step assignments as students begin to think about their own project of inquiry, a project prospectus.

Part II. In the second half of the course we guide students through the practical steps of developing a research prospectus, including developing a problem statement, researching sources and interpreting the literature, constructing a problem-focused literature review, developing and revising research questions, and the process of peer review and support. This set of assignments is meant to break the process down into small defined steps and to guide the student in how to create the beginnings of a research proposal/

prospectus. Assignments will allow for an iterative process of development and will illustrate how boundary crossing occurs as part of this process.

At the end of the semester students will present their proposed research questions and the motivation for this research provided by their project prospectus. The prospectus will focus on identifying a knowledge gap from their review of the literature as well as appropriate inquiry questions. Students will receive feedback from departmental colleagues at this public symposium. This process is meant to prepare them to either 1) enter the proposal writing course (CSUS 805) 2) and/or more advanced methods coursework in the spring.

In sum, the course aims to create a learning space that is relevant to all students, regardless of the degree program they have chosen. MS-B students will likely focus on professional applications of research or inquiry, while MS-A and PhDs will focus on conventional academic research. Regardless of the career they pursue after graduation, all students will benefit from understanding how principles of inquiry are applied and how they can be made useful for practice.

3. Course Learning Outcomes

- An introduction to interdisciplinary principles in *research design* and how these concepts can be applied to conventional academic as well as practical, non-academic questions of importance using inquiry and engagement;
- The *development of practical skills* that prepare students to *develop a proposal for interdisciplinary inquiry*, to be addressed in the 1 credit-proposal writing seminar, CSUS 805, offered in spring.

Specific Learning Outcomes: (at the end of the course, students should be able to)

- Define and differentiate the terms and goals of: research, inquiry, multi-, inter-, transdisciplinary research and inquiry.
- Explain why it is important to develop skills to become an informed consumer of research for future careers in Community Sustainability.
- Apply critical thinking and reading skills as consumers of research.
- Compare and contrast different genres of research/inquiry and explain fundamental differences in goals, underlying assumptions, and eventual study design (e.g. traditional hypothesis-testing designs; emergent designs; alternative design paradigms; mixed designs that combine emergent and hypothesis-testing elements);
- Differentiate validity criteria for diverse forms of inquiry and explain relationship to ultimate design of study and underlying paradigm
- Define epistemology, methodology, and method and explain the practical implications of different choices of each.
- Utilize information technologies to locate appropriate sources of information.
- Develop a problem statement
- Formulate research questions & research goals that are aligned with a problem statement
- Demonstrate an iterative process of revising the problem statement, research questions.
- Develop a short, problem-focused project prospectus
- Demonstrate knowledge of procedures related to IRB protocol development and human subject testing, and appreciate why those procedures are important.
- Be familiar with and follow appropriate rules of authorship (as indicated by the university or a given publication outlet).
- Know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

4. Course Format

The course is structured as a in-person seminar, but the pandemic has taught us to be flexible, therefore if for any reason you cannot attend in person, please let me know in advance and I will set a zoom for you. If by any reason, I cannot attend one day, I will let you know and we will move the section to zoom.

The organization of this course, and maybe all the courses in this Department, is predicated on the assumption that learning takes place best in a dynamic, interactive and critical atmosphere. Accordingly, the course relies heavily on student initiative and active participation. We will use many of the assignments and class activities to think about the decisions and steps involved in the research/ inquiry process.

This syllabus is a work in progress, therefore students are invited to suggest and reshape its content. I am a facilitator for our discussions in class. I encourage you to consider yourself a partner in this process and if there is a better way to do things, please feel free to suggest it. I am more than happy to make adjustments that can improve our learning experience.

Collegiality is important. Each of us should feel free to raise questions, share research experiences and disagreements, bring interesting or sticky issues to class, or make suggestions about how we do things. The course is about interdisciplinarity and it is expected that there will be diversity in disciplinary backgrounds and epistemological beliefs. As such, it is important that we cultivate a culture of open-mindedness in the class.

5. Required readings

The required readings will be posted on the course D2L site. We will read many articles written by some of our colleagues in the Department. In addition, we will read chapters from different books.

We will read different chapters from Repko and Szostak. 2021. *Interdisciplinary Research*, Fourth Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

We will also read pieces of Booth, W.C, Colomb, G.G, Williams, J.M. 2016. *The craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago press. An electronic version of the book is available in the library.

Finally, we will read different parts of Graff, G and Brikenstein C. *They Say. I Say*. 4th Edition. 2018. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

6. Assignments and Evaluation

The course requires you to work on two different sets of assignments. Some that are related to Part I of the course as described in the course description, and others are related to Part II. The ones in part II I will call assignments towards the Project Prospectus. 40% of your grade will be based on the weekly assignments for part I of the semester, 20% will be based on different assignments related to your Project Prospectus, 5% will be based on a peer review you will do of one of your classmates' Project Prospectus, 35% will be devoted to your final project (10% for the presentation, and 25% for the final Project Prospectus).

Assessment / Grading

Weekly assignments related to Part I of the course	40%
Assignments towards Project Prospectus	20%
Peer Review Project Prospectus	5%
Presentation Project Prospectus	10%
Final Project Prospectus	25%
Total	100%

Weekly assignments related to Part I of the course

These assignments will be based on required readings. Assignments are due on the Friday before class, but if this due date does not work for you, I can change it to Saturday. That will allow me to have time to read your assignments ahead of class and to use them for the discussion, or class activities. Assignments are individually graded.

Assignments towards Project Prospectus

Aside from the main assignments related to Part I of the course, we will also have the Assignments towards Project Prospectus. The purpose of these assignments is to start the process of working on your Project Prospectus. For that you will work on small, sequential steps towards your final Project. Note that many of these assignments will involve your advisor, since you will start thinking about a literature review on a topic of interest for your own research or Plan B project. Assignments are individually graded.

First draft Project Prospectus & Peer Review

The purpose of this draft is to practice an iterative process of writing and editing and to practice giving and receiving critique on our work. This first draft will not be graded. However, you will get comments from me and from one of your classmates on that draft aiming to improve your final project Prospectus. That draft will be due on November 19, and the peer review is due on November 29.

This draft should be submitted in Word, so that I can write comments with the “comments” feature in Word. The draft should be written in a formal style and the quality of writing will be part of the grade. The Project Prospectus must be between 2500-3500 words (double spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins) not including references. The draft should include in-text citations of the literature and these should be entered into your chosen citation management software. For this draft you must cite at least 12 references directly.

The draft Project Prospectus will take the following form:

1. Introduction

Includes problem statement and context, main question to be addressed by future research, and why this is important.

2. Problem-focused literature review

The *Assignments towards Project Prospectus* are designed to help you in writing this first draft step by step. This is why we are starting to think about it early in the semester.

Final Project Prospectus and presentation.

The project prospectus will be the final product of the class and it is due on December 15. It is expected that the final prospectus will be between 3200-4500 words and must cite at least 15 references directly.

You will each do an oral presentation on your prospectus either on Monday December 6 or Monday December 13.

Great news about the Project Prospectus.

Part of the final project will be to conduct literature searches to explore what is known and unknown about your problem of interest. Our department is lucky to be assigned a very helpful partner in the MSU library system. Suzi Teghmeyer is a research librarian at MSU and she will work with us during the semester to help you with your searches. We will first meet Suzi as a group on October 11.

Writing assistance

Use the resources that the University has to help you improve your writing. If English is not your native language or if you are not a good writer visit the MSU Writing Center (www.writing.msu.edu). The assistance you receive will help you with the assignments for this course, but also help you learn how to write more effectively. That is a skill you will use a lot in the coming years.

7. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments Project Prospectus	Assignments class
1	September 1	Week 1: Introduction		
2	September 13	Week 2: What is research? What is inquiry?		Due September 10. Memo 1
3	September 20	Week 3: Multi/ inter/Transdisciplinary Research		Due September 17. Memo 2
4	September 27	Week 4: Different Genres of Research/ Inquiry. Part I	Appointment with advisor by September 24.	Due September 24
5	October 4	Week 5: Epistemology	Write a paragraph describing your topic for this project. Due on October 1 st .	Due October 1 st .
Draft 1 of paper 1 due CSUS 800 on October 10.				
6	October 11	Week 6: Visit the library Different Genres of Research/ Inquiry. Part 2		Due October 8.
7	October 18	Week 7: Validity	Revise the paragraph describing your topic. October 15th	Due October 15.
8	October 25	Week 8: Launching the Project Prospectus Guest speakers. Students from the Department will talk about their experiences with their research process.	Let's start working on the prospectus. Schedule a meeting with me	Due October 22.
9	November 1	Week 9: Practicing Iteration and Assessing the Literature		Due October 29.
10	November 8	Week 10: Integration		

11	November 15	Week 11: Workshop week	Draft Prospectus Nov 19
12	November 22	Week 12: RCR Discussion	RCR training due Nov 24.
13	November 29	TBD	Peer review due Nov 29
14	December 6	Presentations/ Workshops	
15	December 13	Presentations/ Workshops	Finals are due December 15

Responsible Conduct of Research

MSU requires that all graduate students undergo training in the responsible conduct of research (RCR). During the first year they must undergo five hours of training and then three hours each year thereafter. Each department designs its own approach for RCR training. In the Department of Community Sustainability the current system involves two hours of on-line training and three hours as part of CSUS 802. Our approach for this will be to devote one session of the class to RCR (on November 29).

8. Course Policies

Class attendance.

Students are expected to attend class and to be on time. Absences will be noted. If you are sick, please stay home and get well. However, please notify the instructor beforehand for anticipated absences or as soon as possible for unexpected absences. If you miss class it is your responsibility to check D2L for upcoming assignments.

Class conduct.

It is important that we are all “present” while we are in class. I will therefore ask that we refrain from using devices during class that may take you away from the work we are doing together. Of course you can use a computer or device to take notes, but please no texting, social media, or web surfing while we are together in class.

Complete Assignments

Assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through *D2L* unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested from the instructor before the due date.

Late Assignments

Since learning how to meet deadlines is an essential skill for all academics and professionals, all deadlines are taken as seriously here, as they are in the real world of work. Late submissions of assignments will be discounted 20% of the total possible points. This is only fair to those in the class who made every effort to meet deadlines; otherwise they would be disadvantaged relative to those who took more time.

Unexpected events

Unexpected events take place and factors out of our control can obstruct our plans. I will be sensitive to such things, and any students with personal circumstances that hamper their ability to carry out certain tasks on time are encouraged to contact me in advance.

Communication Policy

Email is the best method for sharing information with me. I will do my best to respond within 24-48 hours of your email. **Please include “CSUS 802” in all email subject lines so it gets prompt attention.**

Diversity Equity and Inclusiveness

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are important, interdependent components of everyday life in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) and are critical to our pursuit of academic excellence. Our aim is to foster a culture where every member of CANR feels valued, supported and inspired to achieve individual and common goals with an uncommon will. This includes providing opportunity and access for all people across differences of race, age, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, migratory status, disability / abilities, political affiliation, veteran status and socioeconomic background. (See the full CANR statement: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/canr-statement-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need accommodations in this class related to a disability or religious holidays, please make an appointment with me to discuss as soon as possible.

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to an instructor during the second week of class and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.

MSU Grief Absence Policy

Michigan State University is committed to ensuring that the bereavement process of a student who loses a family member during a semester does not put the student at an academic disadvantage in their classes. If you require a grief absence, you should complete the "Grief Absence Request" web form (found at <https://www.reg.msu.edu/sitemap.aspx?Group=7>) no later than one week after knowledge of the circumstance. I will work with you to make appropriate accommodations so that you are not penalized due to a verified grief absence.

Disruptive Behavior

Article 2.III.B.4 of the Academic Freedom Report (AFR) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the AFR states that "The student has a right to scholarly relationships with faculty based on mutual trust and civility." General Student Regulation 5.02 states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in the classroom may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Faculty Judiciary process.

MSU Guidelines for Handling Emergencies

In the event of an emergency arising within the class, the Professor will notify you of what actions may be required to ensure your safety. It is the responsibility of each student to understand the evacuation, "shelter-in-place," and "secure-in-place" guidelines posted in each facility and to act in a safe manner. You are allowed to maintain cellular devices in a silent mode during this course, in order to receive emergency SMS text, phone or email messages distributed by the university. When anyone receives such a notification or observes an emergency situation, they should immediately bring it to the attention of the Professor in a way that causes the least disruption. If an evacuation is ordered, please ensure that you do it in a safe manner and facilitate those around you that may not otherwise be able to safely leave. When these orders are given, you do have the right as a member of this community to follow that order. Also, if a shelter-in-place or secure-in-place is ordered, please seek areas of refuge that are safe depending on the emergency encountered and provide assistance if it is advisable to do so.

MSU recommends including the following language in all course syllabi:

Academic Integrity:

Article 2.III.B.2 of the Academic Freedom Report states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations.

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestyFAQ.html>). **There will be no warnings – the maximum sanction allowed under University policy will occur on the first offense.** Turnitin.com will be used for all written assignments.

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at any institution of higher education; therefore, we cannot tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize or falsify. Should we determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, we reserve the right either to assign a grade sanction or to refer the case to appropriate campus authority. Ignorance (not knowing the rules) is NOT an excuse for an academic integrity violation. Therefore, if you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to speak with us before you turn in a test or assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course.

Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade on the affected assignment. A second violation will result in a failing grade for the course. Note that all submitted work will be processed through Turnitin.com via the D2L site.

Instances of plagiarism constitute academic dishonesty and will result in a grade of zero for the assignment in which plagiarism occurs. See <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html> for a definition and discussion of plagiarism.

9. General College and University Policies

All other general college and university policies applicable to this course are available at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/academics/courses/policies>. Please review these policies.

Topics covered in these general policies include:

- Students with disabilities, Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) and accommodations
- Student rights under the family educational rights and privacy act (FERPA)
 - Student release authorization form

- Religious holiday policies
- Grief absence policies
- Students in distress policies
- MSU student athlete policies
- Course add-drop policies
- Honors options
- Course Management system policies
- Final exam policy and attendance
- Grade dispute policies
- Academic honesty and integrity, plagiarism, and disciplinary procedures
- Disruptive behavior
- Harassment and discrimination policies
- RVSM University reporting protocols
- Limits to confidentiality
- Social media policy
- Web accessibility policies
- MSU Code of Teaching Responsibility
- SIRS
- Commercialization of lecture notes
- University Learning Go