

## FO 8111 – Graduate Seminar Distance Syllabus

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**Objectives:** The general objective of this course is to prepare incoming graduate students for work in the Department of Forestry. Specific objectives are to:

- 1) Familiarize students with graduate program requirements,
- 2) Provide graduate students with information on available resources that may be of value in conducting and completing their graduate program,
- 3) Provide students with instruction on various aspects of developing, conducting, and presenting a graduate research (or professional) project,
- 4) Facilitate the preparation of a study plan or graduate research proposal.

**Attendance Policy:** Students are expected to participate in online discussions. The quality and quantity of the input into the discussion will be evaluated as participation.

**Evaluation/Expectations:** Students will be evaluated based on online participation (10%), performance on assignments (40%), and a draft study plan (or other equivalent assignment) (50%). Students are expected to actively participate in the online discussions.

The primary focus of this class will be on preparation of a study plan. Students are strongly encouraged to start on their plan early and actively engage the instructor, their major professor, and their committee throughout the semester. Occasionally, students may have already written a study plan. These students will be required to work with the professor to come up with an equivalent written assignment. This may include a summary of the analysis of first year data, a draft manuscript, or a simply a progress report on their research. In addition to the study plan, there will be assignments designed primarily to encourage students to make progress on the development of their study plan throughout the semester, as well as introducing students to a variety of other topics related to graduate research. Weekly assignments will require reading assigned materials and production of written reports or summaries. Reading materials will be made available in MyCourses.

**Academic Misconduct:** Violations of the academic honesty code will be dealt with in the strictest terms. Students are advised to become familiar with the university's academic honest code. Policies and procedures for handling academic misconduct as outlined on the MSU web site (<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/audit/1207.html>) will be followed in this course. Students are responsible for ensuring that both the letter and intent of this code are met in all circumstances. Ignorance of this code will not provide a refuge from the consequences of misconduct.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

**I. Study Plan\*:** Students are required to prepare a draft study plan or project proposal. The proposal should contain an introduction/problem statement that justifies the study, a review of the current and pertinent literature, a clear statement of your objectives or the hypotheses you will test, a description of the methods you intend to use, a literature cited section containing a minimum of 10 relevant references, your plans for publication and presentation of the results, and a timetable for completion of the study with completion dates for major milestones.

\* Students working on an alternative assignment will work with the professor early in the semester to determine what the specific requirements of the assignment will be.

### **II. Assignment 1: Problem statement**

Each student will submit a short written description of the problem or issue that their research will address. For those that have not finalized a topic, describe one or two potential options. NOTE: I'm not asking what you are going to do. I'm asking for the problem that is being addressed.

### **III. Assignment 2: Study plan outline and detailed problem statement**

Each student will prepare a detailed outline of his or her study plan and submit via MyCourses. This outline should contain all of the required elements for the study plan in as much detail as possible. The outline should include a short (1-2 paragraph minimum) problem statement that describes and justifies questions or issues to be addressed in the study.

### **IV. Assignment 3: Development of the methods section**

Each student will present a written description of the methods they anticipate using in their study.

### **V. Assignment 3: Literature review**

Each student will prepare a 4-6 page (double-spaced, 1" margins) review of the current literature pertaining to his or her research topic. **Two copies** of the review will be **due to Dr. Roberts prior to the due date**. Each student's literature review will be "peer-reviewed" by another member of the class. The grade on this assignment will be based on the literature review prepared by the student, and the written review of another students' literature reviews.

### **VI. Research and professional ethics**

Students will read a series of articles on ethics and provide a written report discussing a specific ethical issue to be assigned by the instructor.

### **VII. Time management**

Students will read a series of articles on time management and complete a written assignment.

### **VIII. Research presentations**

Students will provide written summaries of assigned readings on the topic of research presentations.

### **IX. Publication of research results**

Students will provide written summaries of assigned readings on the topic of research publication.

## **X. Assignment 4: PowerPoint presentation**

Each student will prepare a PowerPoint presentation explaining the primary elements of their study plan. Required elements of the presentation will include an introduction, background, objectives, methods, and anticipated results. Presentations should include the use of graphics (tables, figures, images) to facilitate their effectiveness. Presentations should be developed in PowerPoint and will be transmitted using Camtasia technology. The overall grade for the assignment will be based on peer evaluations of your presentation (35%), your evaluation of your peer's presentation (15%), and the instructor's evaluation of your presentation (50%).

Each student will fill out an anonymous evaluation of each of the presentations prepared by fellow students. These evaluations will be submitted via MyCourses to Dr. Roberts. Dr. Roberts will summarize the evaluations, and the class will discuss each of the presentations in an online discussion.

### **Topics:**

- Course introduction, graduate resources available, requirements and milestones (1 contact hour)
- Research planning (1 contact hour)
- Importance of the literature review; library resources (1 contact hour)
- Focusing on a research topic (1 contact hour)
- Development of the methods section (1 contact hour)
- Technical and professional writing (2 contact hours)
- Research and professional ethics (1 contact hour)
- Time management (1 contact hour)
- Research presentations (1 contact hour)
- Publication of research results (1 contact hour)
- Student presentations (3 contact hours)
- Study plans (1 contact hour)

Total Contact Hours: 15