

# Substantial Research Paper Guidelines

## Comparative and Regional Studies

### 2009-2010

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The Substantial Research Paper (SRP) is the capstone, integrative project for master's degree students of the School of International Service. The purpose of the SRP is to further develop your expertise in an issue of concern to the field of Comparative and Regional Studies (CRS) and to demonstrate your ability to conduct theoretically informed, analytical research. The knowledge and skills that you use in the research and writing of your SRP are evidence of your substantial knowledge of the field in which you are earning your degree.

#### I. SRP REQUIREMENTS

**SUPERVISOR:** *You must work with a CRS faculty member on your SRP. Please check the CRS web site (<http://www.american.edu/sis/crs/research.cfm>) for a list of faculty and their research interests. Emily will know who is on leave during a given semester, and thus unavailable to supervise. In special circumstances, it is possible to work with SIS faculty outside of CRS. Such arrangements must be approved by the CRS program director prior to registering the project.*

**CONTENT:** The SRP asks and answers an analytical research question based on a topic within the field of Comparative and Regional Studies. You must connect the research of your SRP to the themes and concerns of international relations and comparative studies scholarship, much of which you will have read when you fulfilled your comparative theory and comparative economics requirements.

The SRP must contain *both* a review of existing scholarly literature *and* original research critiquing or contributing to that literature. The research must be empirically grounded and theoretically informed. SIS regulations require a fifty-page paper plus a bibliography. The bibliography must consist mainly of peer-reviewed scholarship from academic books, journals, and/or conference papers AND primary sources of data used in your research. It may include web-based resources, but you must pay careful attention to the quality and reliability of online material.

**QUALITY OF THE WRITING:** Recipients of master's degrees in international affairs are expected to be skillful writers. Consequently, students writing SRPs are held to a high standard for the quality of their prose. The SRP must be logically organized, grammatically correct, and stylistically pleasing.

References to published literature (i.e., notes and bibliography) must follow an appropriate academic

format from *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian (7<sup>th</sup> ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). You should strongly consider using EndNote or some other software to manage your citations and bibliography.

**GRADING:** SRP grades will be based on the quality of the research and the quality of the writing. Students must receive a grade of B or better for the SRP to satisfy graduation requirements.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering for the SRP credits, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please talk to your SRP supervisor if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for your SRP. More information on academic integrity can be found at <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm>.

## II. STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The Substantial Research Paper involves a series of steps:

1. **INITIAL PLANNING:** It is essential that you obtain faculty approval for your project in the semester *prior* to when you plan to write your SRP. Therefore, it is your responsibility to identify a potential supervisor and to meet with him/her to discuss your topic in the semester that *precedes* the one in which you register for the SRP. (See schedule below.)

To prepare for a meeting with a potential faculty supervisor, you should have a topic in mind, as well as several potential research questions and a short bibliography of pertinent literature. Be sure to contact the faculty member via email in advance of meeting with him or her so that your request for supervision is anticipated.

It is also your responsibility to be informed about research with human subjects. If your project involves interviews, surveys, or observations of people, then BEFORE you begin this portion of your research you MUST receive approval from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). See <http://www.american.edu/irb/index.htm> for current protocols.

2. **PROPOSAL:** Prepare a proposal that is an extended outline (~5 pages), which lays out: your research question; a discussion of its importance; a discussion of the literature you intend to review; a description of your method for data collection and analysis; a preliminary bibliography; and a schedule of expected completion dates for each stage of the research project. This proposal must be fully completed and approved by your faculty supervisor before you can register for SRP credits. (See schedule below.) Faculty members are not obliged to supervise students who start the planning process too late to complete their proposal before the SRP registration deadline.
3. **ROUGH DRAFT:** During the semester when you are conducting your research and writing your SRP, you should submit a rough draft of the paper to your SRP supervisor for feedback.

Separate deadlines can be set for the rough draft of the literature review and the rough draft of the analysis of evidence, as approved in the proposal.

4. **FINAL PAPER:** Submit the final paper by the deadline agreed upon with your supervisor.

### III. SCHEDULE (It's best to plan ahead!)

#### For SRPs being done in the Spring Semester

1. Initial planning: October/November, with approval of your proposal by November 15.
2. Registration deadline: four weeks after the first day of classes – for exact date, please see academic calendar\* and consult with Emily.
3. Rough draft: early to mid-March.
4. Final version to be graded: one week before the last day of classes.
5. Oral exam to occur between the last day of classes and the last day of exam period.

#### For SRPs being done in the Fall Semester

1. Initial planning: February/March, with approval of your proposal by March 15.
2. Registration deadline: four weeks after the first day of classes – for exact date, please see academic calendar\* and consult with Emily.
3. Rough draft: early to mid-November.
4. Final version to be graded: one week before the last day of classes.
5. Oral exam to occur between the last day of classes the last day of exam period.

\* Academic calendar: <http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/schedule/calendar09-10.cfm>

#### IV. USEFUL RESOURCES

- American University Library. *EndNote Tutorial*.  
<http://www.library.american.edu/Help/tutorials/endnote/index.html>.
- Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- Dochartaigh, Niall. *Internet Research Skills*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- Edwards, Paul N. *How to Read a Book*. <http://www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtoread.pdf>.
- Fowler, Floyd. *Survey Research Methods*. Third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001.
- Galvan, Jose L. *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Second Edition. Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing, 2004.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. *Handbook of Feminist Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- Hobbs, Dick, and Richard Wright, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Fieldwork*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Manheim, Jarol, Richard Rich, and Lars Willnat. *Empirical Political Analysis*. Fifth edition. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2002.
- Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Fourth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- Oliver, Paul. *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*. New York: Open University Press, 2004.
- Ridley, Diana. *The Literature Review*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008.
- Rubin, Herbert, and Irene Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005.
- Shively, W. Phillips. *The Craft of Political Research*. Seventh edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice-Hall, 2009.
- Somekh, Bridget, and Cathy Lewin, eds. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005.
- Stake, Robert. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995.
- StatSoft, Inc. *Electronic Statistics Textbook*. Tulsa, OK: StatSoft, 2007  
<http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/stathome.html>
- Stewart, David, Prem Shamdasani, and Dennis Rook. *Focus Groups*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth edition. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1999.
- Trochim, William M.K. *Web Center for Social Research Methods*.  
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/>.
- Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Seventh edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- University of California, Berkeley. *The Research Question*.  
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/DissPropWorkshop/nuts&bolts/question.html>
- University of California, Los Angeles. *Stat Computing Portal*. <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/>.
- Yin, Robert K. *Applications of Case Study Research*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003.