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Substantial Research Paper Syllabus
for International Economic Relations Students

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The Substantial Research Paper (SRP) is the integrative project for master's degree students. The purpose of the SRP is to further develop your expertise in an issue of concern to the field of international economic relations 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.

Faculty supervisors for the SRP must be faculty members who are affiliated full-time to the IER program at SIS. These are Daniel Bernhofen, Claire Brunel, Randall Henning, Miles Kahler, Jennifer Poole, Arturo Porzecanski, Stephen Silvia, and Krista Tuomi. **Before choosing an advisor, please verify that the professor will be teaching that semester.** It is also possible to work with SIS faculty outside of IER in special circumstances. Such outside arrangements must be approved by Professor Porzecanski.

I. SRP REQUIREMENTS

CONTENT: The SRP asks and answers an analytical research question based on a topic within the field of international economic relations. You should be able to connect the research you are undertaking to the themes and concerns of scholarship in the areas covered by the IER field, such as international trade, finance, investment, development assistance.

The SRP must contain both a review of existing scholarly literature and original research critiquing or contributing to that literature. The research must be empirical (you must have evidence to support the claims you make), though it need not be statistical. Whatever your methodology is, it must be explicit and explained. Your work must be distinguishable from superficial description or policy prescription by the explicit use of a standard social science model (testing a falsifiable hypothesis) or an alternative approach grounded in a non-positivist epistemology.

SIS regulations require a fifty-page paper plus a bibliography. The bibliography may include web-based resources, but you must pay careful attention to the quality and reliability of on-line material. Your review of the literature must include scholarly books and/or articles appearing either in print

or as e-books or e-journals available through the American University library website. However, we urge you to actually go to the library to examine print materials because not everything is available online.

The SRP must not be a polemic in which you simply argue a point of view you have already adopted without careful attention to the evidence. A good rule of thumb is that if you already know the answer, what you are doing is not research. Research begins with a question or a puzzle.

QUALITY OF THE WRITING: Recipients of master's degrees in international affairs are expected to be skilled 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.

The SRP must follow an appropriate academic format. Most students should use *The Chicago Manual of Style* (either form a or form b), though some will be directed otherwise by their faculty supervisor.

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, 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 see your faculty supervisor if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. More information on academic integrity can be found at *http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm*

KEEP COPIES OF YOUR SRP, YOUR RESEARCH NOTES, AND YOUR ROUGH DRAFTS. An unfortunate truth of the Information Age is that the ease of copying digitized materials makes plagiarism and other violations easier. The result has been increased scrutiny of student's work to verify that academic integrity has been upheld. Keep copies of your research materials and drafts so that you will be able to document the work you have done in case a question is raised about sources for or the originality of your research.

HIMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH: If any portion of your research involves human subjects as defined by AU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects, your research must receive prior approval by the IRB. To determine whether your research requires IRB approval or to begin the IRB review process, please speak with your faculty supervisor and consult http://www.american.edu/irb/.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

Jose L. Galvan, *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd Edition (Glendale, CA: Pryczak Publishing, 2004).

Chris Hart, *Doing a Literature Search* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

David Freedman, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves, *Statistics* (New York: Norton, 1991).

Robert K. Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research* (Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1993).

II. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Copies of final SRP must be e-mailed to the IER Program Coordinator, Cameron Noël, at *ier@american.edu* We keep a record of completed SRPs and we use anonymous versions for our own assessment processes.

III. STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The substantial research project involves a series of steps:

1. **INITIAL PRESENTATION OF TOPIC**: At the beginning of the semester, meet with your faculty supervisor to discuss your topic.

   If your project involves human subjects, please read the information and requirements at *http://www.american.edu/irb/index.cfm*

2. **PROPOSAL:** You must prepare a proposal that is an extended outline (5-10) pages that lays out: your research question; a discussion of its importance; a discussion of the literature you intend to review; an explanation of your methodology; the evidence you are considering to answer your question; a preliminary bibliography; and a schedule of expected completion dates for the stages of the research project.

3. **OUTLINE**: Consult with your faculty supervisor about the degree of detail he or she wishes in the outline.

4. **ROUGH DRAFT**: Students will submit a rough draft to their faculty supervisor for feedback by the agreed deadline.

5. **FINAL PAPER**: Students must submit the final paper by the deadline specified by the faculty supervisor in order to be eligible to graduate that semester.

III. TIMELINE: We recommended that you plan your SRP topic the semester before your registration

To complete your SRP in the Fall Semester, please adhere to the following dates:

1. Initial Presentation: No later than the second week of September (the week of Labor Day).
2. Proposal and outline: No later than the third week of October.
3. Rough draft: by early- to mid-November (two weeks before Thanksgiving).
4. Final Version: before last day of class.

To complete your SRP in the Spring Semester, please adhere to the following dates:

1. Initial Presentation: No later than the last week of January.
2. Proposal and outline: No later than the third week of February.
3. Rough draft: by mid- to late-March (No later than two weeks after Spring Break).
4. Final Version: before last day of class.