

**American University**  
**Washington Semester Program**  
**International Business and Trade Research Project**  
**IBUS 422.001T (4 credit hours)**

Prof. Jeffrey Sosland  
Office: Dunblane 213

### **Introduction**

The research project is a unique opportunity for you to conduct intensive analysis on an international business and trade (IB&T) topic of interest to you. This work should complement the knowledge you will acquire in the seminar and internship components of the Washington Semester program. Ultimately, you will produce a 35 to 50 page original paper on a topic of your choice. The final product should show evidence of your research activity throughout the semester, including detailed knowledge on the topic and original analysis of your primary source information.

Some students might find the concept of producing a 35 to 50 page paper overwhelming. The research project *is* a substantial task, which might not be for everyone. However, students who complete the research project will find that it is a truly rewarding experience. You have the opportunity to conduct research in Washington, with someone guiding you through each step of a complex process. You are unlikely to encounter a similar opportunity in the future.

The key to a successful research project is a commitment to work diligently during the term on each stage of the project. You need to choose a manageable topic and research design and employ a disciplined approach as you write each section of the paper. Moreover, you should not be easily discouraged when you encounter minor setbacks along the way. You simply cannot afford to fall behind at any point in the process. Procrastination is not an option when you have such a massive project ahead of you.

### **Topic Selection**

Topic selection is the first critical step in the research process. Be sure to choose a topic that meets the following requirements:

1. Your topic must be original. You must produce more than a simple examination of secondary sources. Your project will include primary source collection, such as interviews with relevant IB&T actors or first hand observation of actions.
2. Your topic should be current. You must focus on a contemporary IB&T issue, not a distant historical event. A current topic allows for a close and realistic study of business and political actions even as they occur. You need to take advantage of your ability to witness current developments on major IB&T issues.
3. Your topic should be Washington-based. You should take advantage of the unique resources (business and political actors, institutions, groups, special documents, etc.) available in Washington DC. The research project should not be something you could have accomplished at your home university.
4. Your topic must be manageable. The research project must be completed during the semester. Incompletes are not given. Many research questions you develop will need to be narrowed to a reasonable extent.
5. Your topic must be interesting to you. You will spend an enormous amount of time working on this topic and your experience will be much more rewarding if you actually enjoy the topic.

6. Your topic should be significant. The topic should pass the “so what?” test. In other words, will the result of your research matter to any IB&T actors in Washington or beyond?
7. Your topic should be non-biased. You must present competing views of the arguments. If you feel too strongly about a topic to consider the arguments on the opposing side, you should *not* choose that topic.
8. You should select a topic which is marketable. You should take advantage of the opportunity to become an “expert” on a specific topic and at the same time, you ought to contact others who already work on the topic. Sometimes, a student will link the research project topic with the internship work, an option which is likely to benefit the student on both counts.

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE AND MILESTONES**

The following is a general outline of our class schedule and milestone due dates for the semester. Although not required, you are encouraged to come to my office at any time during the semester to brief me on your progress or to receive feedback. See seminar weekly schedule for class locations and times.

<b>Week 1:</b>	<i>Class:</i> Initial class meeting - review syllabus Discuss Project Topic and Research Question	(Week of Aug. 27)
<b>Week 2:</b>	<i>Required:</i> Individual meetings to discuss topics	(Week of Aug. 31)
<b>Week 3:</b>	<i>Class:</i> Discuss Secondary, Scholarly and Primary Sources	(Week of Sept. 7)
<b>Week 4:</b>	<i>Due:</i> Secondary Source Review	Monday, Sept. 14 by 9:30am
<b>Week 5:</b>	<i>Required:</i> Individual meetings to discuss returned paper	(Week of Sept. 21)
<b>Week 6:</b>	<i>Due:</i> Literature Review	Monday, Sept. 28 by 9:30am
<b>Week 7:</b>	<i>Required:</i> Individual status meetings	(Week of Oct. 5)
<b>Week 8:</b>	<i>Due:</i> Paper Proposal	Monday, Oct. 12 by 9:30am
<b>Week 12:</b>	<i>Class:</i> Oral presentation and discussion <i>Due:</i> First draft	(Week of Nov. 9) Monday, Nov. 9 by 9:30am
<b>Week 14:</b>	<i>Required:</i> Individual status meetings to review markups	(Week of Nov. 30)
<b>Week 17:</b>	<i>Due:</i> Final Paper	Monday, Dec. 7 by 9:30am

## GRADING POLICY

*Class participation, oral presentation, and individual consultations* 10%

Students must attend and participate in all group meetings and presentations, along with any non-optional individual meetings. Students should actively participate in the discussion, including providing valuable feedback to their peers. Students must also come to individual meetings prepared for the discussion (have a topic idea ready, etc.). It is the student's responsibility to seek out the instructor for help and consultation once the project is underway. Just before submitting the first draft, students must do a brief (2-3 minute) oral presentation (words only – no A/V) to the class on their topic (what is the research question, what is the thesis, what are your findings, and most importantly, what issues need to be resolved for the final paper?). Students in the class should provide feedback and input to their colleagues to help them further develop their research.

Secondary Source Review, Research Question, and Bibliography 5 %

This paper establishes the topic, gives explanatory information that sets the stage for why the topic is of interest, and explicitly states the research question to be addressed. This should be 3 - 4 pages. This paper must have at least 35 secondary source referenced in the bibliography. See for example LexisNexis Academic, CQ Researcher, CRS (Congressional Research Service) databases, *The Economist*, *EIU*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *New York Times*, *Business Week* and so on.

Scholarly Literature Review, Thesis, and Bibliography 5 %

The scholarly literature review is very important in setting the context for the study - what is the current state of knowledge on the topic and how does the proposed study fill any gaps or fit in the current state of knowledge. This paper clearly states the project's thesis. This paper must have at least 25 references in the bibliography, including books, academic journal articles, policy papers, etc. Newspaper articles, miscellaneous web pages, magazine articles may not be included. This material should be about 3-4 pages. See such databases as Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), EconLit, JSTOR, CIAO (Columbia International Affairs Online) and ECO Essay & General Literature Index, and Left Index. Keep records of your sources as you read them in order to simplify the creation of your first draft and final paper. You might also find it helpful to interview an informed person in the area for some additional direction toward relevant literature.

*Paper Proposal (including interviews)* 5 %

Prior to beginning your first draft, you will complete a paper proposal that includes a 200 word abstract (includes clearly stated research questions, thesis, and expected findings), a one page outline of the first draft, the scheduled dates and times for at least four in person interviews, brief biography, and a list of questions you plan to ask the interviewees, and a one page research method section that includes how you expect to address the research question (by interviewing certain individuals, using World Bank data, etc.); what documents you expect to use; why they are important (what can they offer to the study). This could also incorporate the use of a survey instrument, including who will be surveyed, etc. The final paper must include at least four interviews you conducted and 5-10 other primary sources. This paper should be 4-5 pages. For primary sources, see databases such as GovSearch, IMF, EIU Country Reports, and LexisNexis Statistical databases.

### *First Draft*

25 %

A first (preliminary) draft of your paper is essential (and mandatory). The more complete the first draft is, the more effective feedback I can provide and hence the better the final paper. Pay attention to everything, including the Asmall@ stuff; chapter headings, citation styles, organization, grammar and spelling, page numbers, etc. *Also turn in a three-ring notebook that contains all of the previous assignments with my notations.*

### *Final paper*

50 %

The final version of your paper should be 35 to 50 pages. There should be at least 35 pages of text with additional pages for appendices and tables as necessary, not to exceed 50 pages. *Also turn in a three-ring notebook that contains all of the previous assignments with my notations.*

### *Extra Credit*

5%

You may receive up to 5% extra credit per requirement, depending on how well the extra credit is executed.

- A. Visit the Tenley Writing Studio – You may visit the writing studio for all requirements: papers 1-3, first draft and final paper. To receive extra credit you must submit a proof-of-meetings receipt and any marked up drafts. For scheduling a Tenley Writing Studio appointment, see [american.edu/ocl/tenleywritingstudio](http://american.edu/ocl/tenleywritingstudio). Also available on Main Campus is the Writing Center <http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/cas/lit/writingcenter.cfm> and Writing Lab [american.edu/ocl/writinglab](http://american.edu/ocl/writinglab)
- B. Comments on Peer's First Draft – Using a copy of the first draft that was submitted, mark up the paper and write out comments. By one week after the oral presentations class, give a copy to the author and turn in a copy with your final paper notebook to Professor Sosland.
- C. Submit paper for publication – When you turn in your final paper also turn in a manuscript which follows the submission guidelines of an academic or policy journal. Be sure to attach a copy of the submission guidelines and an envelope for mailing your work. I will cover your postage.

### Turning in Assignments

You may turn in your assignments to my Dunblane (room 113) mailbox or slide it under my office door (Dunblane 213). If you are unable to access Dunblane, you may turn your assignment into the wood mailbox directly outside the administration office and across from the ATM in the Constitution building lobby (let me know by email that your paper is in the wood mailbox). The penalty for turning in an assignment late is the subtraction from the grade of three points per 24 hours. The penalty begins immediately after the due time.

### *Format*

**All assignments, including the final paper, are to be on 8.5 by 11 inch paper, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, and numbered pages. No exceptions. In addition to turning in a hard copy, each requirement must also be submitted as an attachment to an email.**

### *Effective Writing*

Here are some suggestions for effective writing. Begin your work with a short summary introduction. Be sure to summarize your bottom line or thesis in a few sentences. A good summary in the introduction helps me or any other reader to grasp your argument from the outset. It also helps you diagnose problems with your answer. A good introduction can even make a full summary at the end redundant. Use your conclusion to explore the implications of your argument. Use empirical evidence — facts, numbers, and history — to support your argument. Purely deductive reasoning is sometimes appropriate but an argument backed by evidence is always more persuasive. Also, clearly frame your general points with appropriate evidence. Don't ask facts to speak for themselves. "Argue against yourself." After laying out your arguments, acknowledge questions or objections that a skeptical reader might raise, and briefly address them. This shows that you were thoughtful, thorough, and attentive to possible objections or alternate interpretations. Be sure to document all sources and statements of fact.

Good writing is essential to clear thinking and effective communications. So bear the following in mind: Write from an outline. Outlines are major aides to coherence and readability. Write short, declarative sentences. Avoid the passive voice. Start each paragraph with a topic sentence that distills the points of the paragraph. Finally, take care to turn in a neat, clean paper. Budget your time so you are not rushed prior to handing in your work.

## General Guidelines for First and Final Drafts

**\*\* This is basically an example of how academic research is developed and reported. You do not have to follow this exact guideline, but the materials identified below should be in your paper (e.g., statement of the topic, the literature/background materials, research method, results, etc.). The page totals should serve as a guide to the relevant proportions devoted to these categories, not as a strict guideline to be followed explicitly. Clearly, one of the most important parts of the paper is the results and analysis section where you exhibit your ability to analyze the topic). Feel free to improvise – different topics may lend themselves to different formats. All papers MUST have an Abstract and a Table of Contents.**

I have a collection of past research projects in my office you can check out as examples of other student's work and format (I'll be happy to point out the ones that I believe were the better papers).

### Typical Research Project Outline

#### *Abstract*

Provide a brief (no more than one page) summary of the entire paper, including the topic, research question, thesis, why it was important to study it, how you conducted the study generally, and most importantly, the findings.

#### *Chapter One: Introduction & Research Question/Hypothesis*

Introduce the topic of study, why is it important, what are the relevant issues, briefly note the current thinking on the topic (including competing positions). Clearly develop your research question/thesis and present it. Some general comments about the study (how you will proceed to address the issue) should follow. This should include how you expect to contribute to the literature on your topic (approximately 3 - 6 pages).

#### *Chapter Two: Literature Review (Background)*

Here you will thoroughly establish what is known about the topic, as set down in the literature. In this section you will exhibit how to place the research in the context of the current knowledge (which can include diverse opinions and positions), and your ability to find, comprehend and synthesize the relevant literature. Clarify where the gaps in the literature are and what is your contribution (approximately 4 - 10 pages).

### *Chapter Three: Research Methodology*

Describe the means by which you intend to research your topic, including primary and secondary sources. Is your approach qualitative or quantitative - or a combination? Does it get statistics or comparative case studies? Where did you obtain your data (primary and secondary) and why? Identify your cases or interview subjects, etc. (approximately 1 - 5 pages).

### *Chapter Four: Results and Analysis*

Here you display your results in whatever format you deem necessary to address your thesis hypothesis. Then analyze these results - based on what you've learned and what you expected to find (e.g., did the results confirm your expectations or were they counter to what you expected). Discuss why you did (or did not) find what you expected. This is an extremely important section, showing your ability to analyze the fruits of your research (approximately 14 - 18 pages).

### *Chapter Five: Conclusions*

Bring the study to a conclusion; restate what you've found and why you believe this is the case. What conclusions flow from your research on this topic? What are the business and policy implications of your work? Are there any other research questions that come to mind given what you've uncovered? If so, suggest them. Are there any limitations to your study (not enough data, etc.) that may have affected your results? If so, state them (In fact, all studies have limitations and it is important to acknowledge them to the reader) (approximately 4 - 6 pages).

### *Reference Section*

This is a list of the works cited for the study (including journals, books, newspaper articles, web sites, interviews, etc.).

### *Appendices (if applicable)*

## REFERENCING AND COMMON PITFALLS

(for all academic writing)

### References

Required – all papers must be well cited. Citations can be incorporated in the body of the text or with footnotes - but you must include a complete reference list in either case. I am less concerned with referencing style than with the fact that you adequately acknowledge prior work and contributions.

Some examples of how to cite in the paper:

Jones and Davis (2000) identified a preliminary model for incorporating national culture into the decision making process for where to locate global R&D.

Today, nearly 3 billion people live on less than \$2 a day (World Bank, 2000).

The share of textiles and apparel in South Korea's exports, for example, grew from 8 percent in 1960 to 40 percent in 1980 but then shrank to 19 percent by 1993.<sup>1</sup>

Then prepare a reference list at the end of the paper incorporating what was cited in the paper:

References:

Jones, Gary & Herbert Davis. 2000. National Culture an Innovation: Implications for Locating Global R&D. *Management International Review*. Pp. 11 - 49.

World Bank. 2000. *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries 2000*. Washington: World Bank.

... or if footnotes ...

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 1993. *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **Common Problems**

Not well organized (illogical or no flow)

No headings

No citations in the text

No page numbers

Improper use of acronyms (spell out first time they are used; e.g. ...the United Nations (UN) ...)

Inconsistency (% , percent; Britain, Great Britain, England, UK, United Kingdom; etc.)

Improper spacing (double spacing between paragraphs)

Passive voice (e.g., Instead of 'The French are establishing their identity as leaders of Europe' say 'The French are establishing their identity as European leaders')

Footnotes not on same page as their reference

Single sentence paragraphs and paragraphs that go on for pages

Not explicitly/clearly stating the issues you are addressing in the paper up front

Excessive use of quotations from relevant sources

Not enough attention to general grammar, spelling, etc.

Not meeting paper requirements (too long/short; single spaced instead of double spaced; etc.)

Web address citation lacks title of page in quotes

Introduction's end lacks brief outline of rest of paper

**Lack of adequate referencing ...**

Lack of adequate referencing ....

**Lack of adequate referencing!!!**