International Social Science Research
in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eurasia, and the Middle East:
A Multidisciplinary Seminar
on Concept, Design, and Praxis

SOC 890 (Sec 2, 1-2 cr), or WRA 890 or 891 (1-3 cr), or
ANP 825 - (3 cr only)

First Seminar Meeting: Proposal Writing Workshop, August 27, 2015
5:00-7:30 pm, International Center Room 115 – Open to everyone.

Regular Seminar: Thursdays each week 6:00 - 8:30 pm
201 International Center (beginning Sep 3)

Description of seminar: This is a seminar for U.S. and international graduate students in the social sciences and related fields who are planning to conduct thesis, predissertation, or dissertation field research abroad, especially focused on Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eurasia, and the Middle East. It also is useful for those who wish to incorporate social science methods to address international human issues that arise in research in applied/professional fields such as agriculture, resource development, communications, education, and health. Many graduates of this seminar have been successful in winning funding awards. All of the work of the seminar is designed to assist the candidate to write one or more successful funding proposals to obtain support for research abroad; therefore, the seminar begins with an initial 2.5 hour workshop on proposal writing for international research.

The seminar focuses on three stages in planning, obtaining funding for, and conducting international field research:

1) The concept stage involves specifying a research topic, searching the literature for theoretical and methodological frameworks, identifying previous empirical research in the field, and developing a concept paper. The concept paper summarizes the initial ideas and framework for conducting the study as well as the motivations and competencies of the researcher to conduct the research. It can be replaced with a completed funding proposal.

2) The design stage is the stage in which the initial ideas articulated in the concept paper are expanded into the component sections that can be tailored into individual proposals for submission to national funding sources (Fulbrights, NSF, SSRC, Wenner-Gren, Spencer, Ford, and other sources).

3) The praxis stage involves preparing for and conducting research in the field.

Throughout the seminar, participants prepare draft proposals, present them, and receive peer-review comment and assistance from seminar participants and the instructor.

Enrollment: You may enroll for one to three credits, and the seminar requirements will vary accordingly. This seminar is regularly offered under the following seminar numbers:

SOC 890 Sec 002 - Individual Readings (Wiley) – 1-2 credits - Obtain and return the completed enrollment form from the Sociology Department, 316 Berkey Hall (Roseann Bills or John Duda) or online from D. Wiley (write: wiley@msu.edu).

WRA 890-891 – Individual Readings (Bresnahan) 1-2 credits - Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures (Obtain override from Prof. Bresnahan (bresnaha@msu.edu)
ANP 825 Anthropology Research Methods (Wiley) – 3 credits – Register on the Registrar’s website.

If necessary, students also may enroll under the following independent-study or readings and research seminar listings in these six departments with instructors of record as indicated:

- AEC 890 Independent Study (Crawford)
- EC 895 Graduate Readings in Economics (Liedholm)
- GEO 890 Advanced Readings in Geography (Mehretu)
- HST 890 Independent Study (Hawthorne)
- PLS 993 Readings in Political Science (Bratton)
- ACR 890 (formerly RD 890) Independent Study (Bingen)

Seminar meets on: Meets 6:00-8:15 pm in 201 International Center except on Aug 27.)
August 27 only (5:00-7:30 pm – First Floor 115 International Center)
September 3, 10, 17, 24
October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
November 5, 12, 19 (no class Nov. 26, Holiday)
December 3 (last class of semester)
December 12 – All written assignments for the semester are due in final form.

Normally, the first weeks of the seminar allot major time to reviewing student funding proposals due in September or early October.

Instructor: Roger Bresnahan, Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures
201-A International Center, Tel.432-8244
e-mail: bresnaha@msu.edu

David Wiley, Department of Sociology
405 Berkey Hall, Tel: 355-6672/332-0333/599-1858.
e-mail: wiley@msu.edu Office hours: afternoons by appointment (email David Wiley)

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Seminar Requirements:

One Credit: All students enrolled for one credit will be expected to complete the following requirements:

(1) Participate in all seminars, complete assigned readings and class exercises, and provide constructive criticism of other class members’ draft proposals.

(2) Select one competition for support for dissertation research abroad and write an outline of the requirements for the application, and an outline of your narrative taking into account the application requirements and grantor’s criteria.

(3) Prepare successive drafts of a proposal, and then, from it, create a full draft grant or fellowship proposal for thesis, predissertation, or dissertation research specifying the disciplinary, theoretical, literature review, topical, and geographical areas of interest for a specific funding source as required by the grantor.

Two credits: In addition to (1) and (2) above, each student enrolled for two credits also will complete the following:

(3) Prepare a second draft proposal for international research
Three Credits - Anthropology 825 & WRA 891 only Students wishing to enroll for three credits will complete the requirements (1) – (3) above and:

(4) Prepare a critical review of a piece of literature (article or book) relevant to your dissertation proposal. Specific instructions for the critical review will be available in the seminar.

Grade: The grades for the seminar will be based on the following measures.

Deadlines for assignments will be announced during the seminar.

Grading will be on a sliding scale that will take into account the number of credits for which a student has enrolled, the number of proposals drafted, and the short assignments completed (e.g. critical review of a book, article, or field research report).

Attendance and active participation in all seminar sessions and active review of draft proposals of fellow students is a basic requirement for all that will affect the final course grade positively or negatively.

This review of others’ draft proposals comprises up to 20% of the grade. The minimum seminar requirements are:

For one credit - draft and revise at least one grant application and one short assignment, or two grant applications

For two credits--draft and revise two grant applications and one short assignment

For three credits - draft and revise three grant applications or two grant applications and one short assignment

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(For students conducting quantitative data collection, we recommend Blaikie’s Analyzing Quantitative Data: From Description to Explanation, 2003, ISBN: 978-0761967590 - Also available online through MSU Library for logged-in users: http://srmo.sagepub.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/view/analyzing-quantitative-data/SAGE.xml

A number of readings and accessory papers for the seminar will be provided gratis.

Introductory Module: Workshop on Proposal Writing for International Social Science Research (2014-08-27)

1 Introduction to workshop and seminar: purposes and agenda
2 Proposal strategies: understanding the proposal process in national competitions and maximizing your chances for success
3 Calendar for planning submission of proposal applications to support subsequent field research
Campus support for MSU graduate students planning to conduct international social science research: FLAS Fellowships; academic-unit support; Fulbright/IIE Fellowships; database of graduate student research interests; ISSR seminar

Non-MSU sources of funding for pre-dissertation and dissertation research: using MSU Library resources and the worldwide web (handout)

"How I developed a successful dissertation or pre-dissertation proposal" - comments from successful graduate students

“What makes a winning proposal?” - comments of faculty who have served on fellowship review panels.

Steps in planning and writing a successful proposal

PART ONE: Concepts for a Proposal (beginning on Sep 3.2015)

Module 1: Introduction to International Research and Research Design

- Designing research for an international scholarly career
- Planning your graduate program for international social science
- What is unique in research in an international setting?
- How does field work in developing nations differ from domestic field work
- Collaboration with local scholars and institutions
- Developing a research proposal: alternative strategies
- References to social science research methods
- Overview of the seminar and requirements

Module 2: Searching for International Social Science Literature and Data (with the MSU specialist librarians)

- Strategies for searching for funding opportunities
- Library resources: local and remote
- What electronic resources are available for you at MSU?
- Bibliographic software: EndNote or Zotero

Module 3: Theory for Foreign Area and International Research

- Variations in theory and concept in the disciplines
- Overview of current interdisciplinary approaches in the social sciences
- Postmodernism, cultural studies and critical theory
- Political economy, structuralist, and neo-Marxian approaches
- Ecology and co-evolution
- World systems and globalization theory
- Feminism and standpoint theories
- Crossing disciplinary boundaries: issues and the dangers of naïveté
- Social science theory in the non-Western world: Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East
- Levels: Interfacing global, national, regional, and local perspectives
- Changing paradigms in development studies

Module 4: Defining a Researchable Problem

- How are research problems identified and defined in terms of being a relevant and manageable project?
- Linking theory, concept, issues, and problems
- Grounding research in the social science literature
• Situating your problem in the scholarly debate
• Incorporating indigenous issues and scholarship
• How do you craft your proposal around a set of key works?
• Strategies for obtaining funding for international research projects
• How are proposals read by selection committees?

PART TWO: DESIGN

Module 5: International Field Research: Design Approaches

• Design issues for qualitative research
• Design issues for quantitative research
• Qualitative and quantitative approaches: How can they be combined in field research?
• Historiography and archival research
• Interdisciplinary team research
• Linking theory, practice, and policy
• Participatory research
• Impact assessment: environmental and social
• Policy studies
• Evaluation Research
• Group interviewing and focus groups

Module 6: Drafting the Funding Proposal

• Characteristics of winning proposals
• Planning proposal for varied grantors and defining the elements
• Presenting the topic, a relevant research review, methodologies, and collaboration
• Form, language, and expression
• Reviewing successful and unsuccessful proposals
• Planning the pre-submission review process by colleagues and faculty

PART THREE: PRAXIS

Module 7: International Field Research: Ethical Issues

• Human-subjects research: review and clearances
• Relations with funding agencies and host institutions
• Obligations to interviewees and professional colleagues
• Publication agreements
• Ethical agreements and collaboration

Module 8: International Field Research: Praxis

• Making contacts
• Collaboration with local scholars and institutions
• Local colleagues seeking collaborative reciprocity and future opportunities
• Obtaining research clearances
• Asking questions: interview schedules, questionnaires, focus groups, and more
• Translating and pre-testing research schedules and questionnaires
- Selecting, training, and supervising research assistants
- Special considerations in using focus groups