
Introduction to Research Methods

BAS 490 – DL1&2 (3 Credits)

Blackboard/Online

[Spring, 2025]

*Dates and times in this course refer to Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Syllabus is subject to change. This document was last revised on December 20, 2025.

Instructor Information

Instructor: Andrea Bourgeois-Calvin, Ph.D.
Email: abourge@gmu.edu
What you can call me: Dr. Calvin
Office Hours: By appointment. Schedule by email and meet via Teams.

Textbook Requirement

The following textbook is required for the course. You may rent or purchase an e-book or physical copy.

[Devlin, A. S. \(2020\). *The research experience: Planning conducting, and reporting research*. \(2nd Edition\). Sage Publishing.](#)

- **Paperback ISBN:** 9781544377957

Course Description and Objectives

BAS 490 is the first of a two-course sequence required to complete the Bachelor of Science degree at Mason. This course introduces students to fundamental research methods and processes. Students will explore their research interests and learn to set up research questions, review literature, and define appropriate methods for data collection. In BAS 490, students will identify one research topic and prepare an Action Research Proposal. In BAS 491: Final Project, students will conduct the research (and report results) described in the proposal developed in BAS 490.

Three Major Goals for student learning:

- Students will learn the basics of research methodology.
- Students will apply the research to drafting an Action Research Proposal.
- Students will present to and get approval from the instructor for their Action Research Proposal, which will be continued next semester in BAS 491 where students will complete the final project that includes background/rationale, methodology, results, and implications.

The course is offered fully online. Each student is responsible for reviewing lecture videos and assignments, as well as completing exercises and exams. To succeed in this course, you will need to sustain effort each week in accordance with the requirements, timelines, and deadlines described in the syllabus. More information can be found in the “Course Format and Technology” section.

Grading and Assignments

Final grades are entered according to the following scale. ***Please, do not ask for extra credit.***

A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
90 - 100%	87 - 89%	80 - 86%	77 - 79%	70 - 76%	60 - 69%	< 60%
900 – 1000pts	870 – 899pts	800 – 869pts	770-799pts	700 – 769pts	600 – 699pts	< 600pts

Final grades in the course will be determined based on student success of the following evaluations and assessments. Your grade is based on total points earned out of 1000 possible points.

- General Assignments = 150 pts (15%)
- Discussion = 200 pts (20%)
- Exams = 250 pts (25%)
- Action Research Proposal (ARP) Project = 400 pts (40%)

*****Please see Advancement from BAS 490 to 491 Policy on pg 7 for detailed information about advancing from BAS 490 to BAS 491 and the important role of the ARP in advancement.***

General Assignments (15%)

General Assignments (15%)	150
Welcome Quiz	2
Basic Structure and APA Style	20
Brief Lit Search	10
Identify the Design	15
Measures	15
Basic Stats	17
Experimental Methods	15
Identify the Method	8
Is it Ethical?	10
Recruit Flyer	13
Analytical Approach	25

Each unit will consist of small assignments to help students apply and/or practice course content. Assignments will vary in the amount of time and effort required to complete them. They include small quizzes, written assignments, or observations/reflections. Although many of the assignments are pre-determined and specifically outlined in the syllabus calendar, the instructor may add, modify, or remove assignments. If this occurs, the change will be made before the respective week that the assignment takes place (i.e., once you begin a week, the material for that week and their due dates are set).

All assignments should be completed and turned in on time. There will be grade penalties for late assignments.

Discussion (20%)

Discussion (20%)	200
Welcome Discussion	15
Brain Storming Ideas	20
Article Critique	20
Intro Concerns to Peers (Phase I)	15
Quasi-Experiments	20
Which is better for your design?	20
Qant or Qual?	20
Method Concerns to Peers (Phase II)	15
Recruiting Participants and Gathering Data	20
Procedures	20
Final Concerns to Peers (Phase III)	15

Students will complete discussions on topics as scheduled. Please read this section very carefully.

Using the prompt and course material as your guide, you are to interact with one another and have a virtual class discussion within. First, you are to respond to the prompt that is given to you by me. This should be done with thought and substance. Posts are expected to be long enough to respond adequately to the prompt—quality matters (aim for about 200 words). ***Your original post is due by Friday of its assigned week at 11:59pm. Second, you are also required to respond to at least 2 peers no later than the following Sunday at 11:59 pm.***

Although there is no official word count requirement (at least 100 words is recommended), replies that consist only of responses such as “You make an excellent point” or “Good example” do not demonstrate significant thought or effort on your part and will be graded accordingly. Use of supporting sources in your responses is encouraged, where relevant. Posts and responses should use full sentences, be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. You may want to compose first in a word-processor so that you can check for grammar and spelling, then copy and paste the post in the forum.

Plagiarism (copying text and/or ideas from another source without attribution) is not tolerated. Posts that are reasonably believed to be plagiarized will be considered an honor violation. (Review the honor code policy on p. 7 below.) If you think you need to include a citation, please do so and provide the reference. This goes for both the posts and responses.

Note. Discussions are set so that you will not see any posts until you have posted something. Although late posts are not accepted, partial credit can still be awarded for doing the peer responses – which means you would have to post something.

Discussion posts may not be turned in late or made-up. Your peers are relying on you to do your part.

Exams (25%)

Exams (25%)	250
Exam 1	62.5
Exam 2	62.5
Exam 3	62.5
Exam 4	62.5

Four exams will be assigned to assess learning and critical thinking of course material. The first three exams will lean heavily on the group of material since the previous exam (e.g., Exam 2 will focus on Week 6 – Week 9), however, they will still include questions from earlier material. Thus, they are, *technically*, cumulative. The fourth and final exam will be completely cumulative.

The exams are **open note**, however, you should be taking notes and studying outside of class to prepare for this. You may use any resources, except other individuals, to take the exam. Exams will be taken in BlackBoard during the scheduled week. You will have 75 minutes to complete them, and you must complete them in one sitting. Make sure you have a stable internet connection as it **MUST** be completed in one sitting; once you exit/submit, it cannot be resumed.

Action Research Project (ARP) Proposal (40%)

Action Research Project Proposal (40%)	400
Phase I	110
Phase II	110
Phase III	110
Phase IV	70

All the assignments in this course are intended to guide and facilitate the development of your Action Research Project (ARP) Proposal. Your ARP, completed across BAS 490 & 491, will be written in the form of a paper with Abstract, Introduction (with Statement of Purpose, Literature Review, Methods, Results, Discussion (with Conclusion), and References sections. In BAS 490, your ARP Proposal will focus only on the Introduction (including Statement of Purpose), Literature Review, and Methods sections. You will also upload a short video that presents your proposal. **This project will serve as the basis for your BAS 491 course and be continued.** You are expected to incorporate instructor feedback when moving from one phase to another.

You will have the following ARP Proposal deliverables in BAS 490 (see calendar for due dates):

Phase I: Introduction & Literature Review Sections with References: The purpose of the introduction is to provide a clear and concise overview of your research study including: the research issue or question to be investigated, a rationale for examining this research issue, and the purpose of your project. The Literature Review is a survey of relevant scholarly/peer-reviewed studies and/or technical briefs/white papers/etc.

Phase II: Method Section (with revised/corrected Phase 1 & References): The Methods section describes the research methods that you will use to address your research question. You will apply

course material and additional readings as necessary. This section should allow other researchers to replicate your research.

Phase III: Final Proposal (full Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods sections with References): Your final proposal will be a full document that incorporates all feedback you have received, any new/relevant reading/content that you have learned in the course, and any new information that you deem necessary to include.

Phase IV: Presentation and Comments: You will upload a video presentation of your project, which should include your voice with a PowerPoint presentation. You will upload your presentation to the corresponding discussion forum for your peers and the instructor to view. You are then required to comment on at least two peer presentations that you watched. Comments need to be insightful and substantive, can include feedback for their moving forward on the project, and/or asking questions about their project.

*** * TRACK CHANGES:** For the Phase II and Phase III assignments, you will be required to submit two versions of the document: 1) Clean Version- typical upload of the word document, free of comments, notes, etc. and 2) a Track Changes version. Track Changes will show me what changes you made in the revisions from the prior submission. This is important for accurate grading. Failure to submit a track changes version and a clean version will both delay feedback AND result in a 10 pts. deduction on the assignment's grade.

Late submission of the paper will result in a deduction of 15 pts. per calendar day. Presentation videos and presentation comments will not be accepted late. You must earn a total of 280 points of the 400 ARP Proposal points to pass the course (See Course and Institution Policies).

Course Format and Technology Requirements

This course is fully online, meaning there are no physically required face-to-face encounters. Except for the required textbook, all learning materials will be available through Blackboard. Please read through this section carefully as it details the technology requirements of the course. The schedule at the end of the syllabus will detail the week-to-week breakdown of the semester.

Hardware

You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to listen to recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for:

1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and
2. space to store work that you will do for the course.

If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to [Technology Buying Guide](http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6233) http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6233 to see recommendations.

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run

on it. Watch [this video](#) about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Software

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system (LMS). You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](#). (See [supported browsers and operating systems](#).) You will certainly need plugins that will allow you to stream videos through Kaltura and YouTube. You will also need PowerPoint and Acrobat reader.

It is possible that course materials may need additional software such as [Flash](#), [Java](#), and [Windows Media Player](#), [QuickTime](#) and/or [Real Media Player](#). Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free [here](#).

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications, and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Blackboard

Online materials for this class can be accessed through Blackboard. You must check the course webpage frequently for course content, assignments, and discussions. This course is 100% online. Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Check [the IT Support Center](#) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](#) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

Course and Institution Policies

Office Hours/ Email

Office hours are by appointment. Contact me at abourge@gmu.edu to set a date and time for a meeting.

I will send updates and announcements on Blackboard and by email throughout the semester. Please be sure that your GMU email account is working properly and check it regularly. Feel free to contact me by email if you have questions about the course, the readings, or assignments. You must contact me using your GMU account (see FERPA policy below).

Syllabus & Cancellation Policy

Every effort will be made to adhere to the announced course schedule and stated policies. However, the professor reserves the right to make necessary changes to accommodate unforeseen circumstances. Students will be notified of changes as they occur.

Barring a major disruption of Blackboard, the virtual classroom will not be cancelled, and all assignments are due as stated in the syllabus unless the instructor has sent an email/announcement. University holidays will not affect our schedule given that you can work within the timeline provided and adjust the pace as you see fit. Inclement weather will not be a factor in regard to course progression.

Advancement from BAS 490 to 491 Policy

**** There are two criteria for passing BAS 490 (you must achieve both to move on to BAS 491):**

- **For the course overall:** A student must have a final grade of C or higher in the course, which equals to at least 700/1000 points. If not, BAS 490 must be repeated.
- **For the ARP Project specifically:** At least 280 of the points earned in the course must come from the ARP Project assignments. *****If a student does not achieve at least 280 points on the ARP assignments, it will result in an insufficient grade for the entire course, regardless of performance on other assignments.*****

Course Withdrawal Policy

The course calendar details dates that correspond with add/drop and the institution withdrawal periods. Students should also check the campus academic calendar for the most up-to-date information.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work. **Special Note: The use of Generative AI, Including ChatGPT, is not permitted in BAS 490.**

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is [outlined in the university's procedures](#). Consequences of violations may include

academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Respect Policy

You are encouraged to share thoughts and ask questions throughout the class. Disagreement is completely acceptable when engaging in discussions with both the instructor and your classmates. However, as you make comments and ask questions, please be mindful of other's potential situations and respectful of their beliefs/values/choices. Discriminatory or hateful comments will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with this policy may result in a significant grade penalty or other actions as deemed appropriate.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor *in advance* of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

In this course, videos for lectures and instruction are provided. Any video provided for the purpose of required instruction by the course instructor has been captioned by GM. Transcripts of the audio were also created but are not uploaded. However, they are available upon request for those with a documented accommodation according to the Office of Disability Services at GM.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) governs the disclosure of [education records for eligible students](#) and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see [University Policy 1202](#): Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence. Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone *confidentially*, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in Student Support and Advocacy ([SSAC](#)), Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](#)), Student Health Services ([SHS](#)), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

Student Privacy and Additional Resources

Information about Student Privacy and Student Rights under FERPA can be found at: <http://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

A variety of student services are available:

- Distance Education Services, University Libraries (<http://library.gmu.edu/distance>)
- Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>)
- Learning Services (<https://learningservices.gmu.edu>)

University Counseling Services

Life is stressful and we all need a little support sometimes. Students are encouraged to contact Counseling & Psychological Services (3129 Student Union Building I, <http://caps.gmu.edu/>) at 993-2380 or - [Counseling and Psychological Services \(gmuedu\)](#) for assistance with any kind of psychological/life problem or crisis.

Course Calendar

Here is the schedule of topics covered and assignments for the semester. You are expected to follow the work schedule below and complete assignments on time.

Week	Dates	Text	Main Topics	Due
Week 1	1/21 - 1/26	Ch. 1	Introducing Research and Preview to APA Style	^(D) Welcome Discussion; ^(G) Welcome Quiz; ^(G) Basic Structure and APA Style
Week 2	1/27 - 2/2	Ch. 2	Generating Research Ideas	^(G) Brief Lit Search; ^(D) Brainstorming Ideas
Week 3	2/3 - 2/9	Ch. 3	Research Design and Approaches	^(G) Identify the Design; ^(D) Article Critique
Week 4	2/10 - 2/16	Ch. 5 & 6	Measures: Measurement, Survey Quality and Item Development	^(G) Measures; ^(D) Intro Concerns to Peers
Week 5	2/17 - 2/23		Conclude Unit I	^(E) Exam 1; ^(AR) Introduction Paper (Phase I)
Week 6	2/24 - 3/2	Ch. 7	Correlation and Non-Experiments	^(G) Basic Stats; ^(D) Quasi-Experiments
Week 7	3/3 - 3/9	Ch. 9 & 10	Experimental Research: Between Subjects; Within, Mixed, and Pre-Post	^(G) Experimental Methods; ^(D) Which is better for your design?
Week 8	3/10 - 3/16	Ch. 8	Qualitative Research	^(G) Identify the Method; ^(D) Quantitative or Qualitative?
Week 9	3/17 - 3/23	Ch. 4	Ethics and IRB	^(G) Is it Ethical?; ^(D) Method Concerns to Peers
Week 10	3/24 - 3/30		Conclude Unit II	^(E) Exam 2; ^(AR) Methods Paper with Introduction Revisions (Phase II)
Week 11	3/31 - 4/6	Ch. 11	Participant Recruitment	^(G) Recruit Flyer; ^(D) Recruiting Participants and Gathering Data
Week 12	4/7 - 4/13	Ch. 12	Organizing and Analyzing Data	^(G) Analytical Approach; ^(D) Procedures
Week 13	4/14 - 4/20	Ch. 13	Writing and Presenting	^(D) Final Concerns to Peers
Week 14	4/21 - 4/27		Conclude Unit III	^(E) Exam 3; ^(AR) Final Proposal (Phase III)
Week 15	4/28 - 5/4		Conclude Course	^(E) Exam 4; ^(AR) Presentation/Presentation comments (Phase IV)

Assignment Key. “^(D)” = Discussions; “^(G)” = General Assignments; “^(E)” = Exams; “^(AR)” = Action Research Assignment

Important Dates:

1/21: First Day of Classes

1/28: Last Day to Add Classes

2/4: Last Day to Drop (100% tuition refund)

2/11: Last Day to Drop (50% tuition refund)

2/12-2/25: Unrestricted Withdrawal Period (no tuition refund)

2/26-3/31: Selective Withdrawal Period (no tuition refund)

[Please consult Mason's Academic Calendars for the most up-to-date information on withdrawal dates, university holidays, and other important deadlines.](#)