

**DS495: Research Methods in Strategic Studies**  
G2 (0740-0855), WH6206/6301/6302

As of: 28 JUNE 2021

## Course Overview

This is a research methods course designed to support the interdisciplinary nature of advanced, self-guided research in the field of strategic studies. Students will learn different research methodologies and develop effective writing skills in a seminar format. Assignments are geared toward preparing students to design and execute their own rigorous research projects. Students enrolled in DS496 (thesis) and DS497 (capstone) will use this class to develop a research prospectus that they will then build on for their thesis and capstone projects in the spring semester. Students enrolled in DS498 will begin to think about how they can approach the study of leadership in modern war in the following semester and hone their methodology skills. All cadets will produce a research prospectus by the end of the semester.



## Contact Information

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## Additional Instruction (AI)

I encourage all students to make use of AI and to contact us frequently by email with any questions or concerns. This is a valuable way to clarify confusing concepts, ask questions about readings, or receive feedback on your performance. It is often easiest to reply to longer or complex questions in person or by video chat.

## Course Objectives and Requirements

### Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, each cadet will:

1. Be able to find, evaluate, and critique literature related to Defense and Strategic Studies.
2. Be able to apply qualitative and quantitative methods for independent research projects.
3. Deepen their knowledge of a substantive topic of interest.
4. Further develop effective research, writing, and communication skills.

### Grading Standards and Requirements:

You must complete all graded requirements to receive credit for this course. If you anticipate that you will not be able to meet requirements well or on time, or that you will be unable to attend class, you must tell your instructor as early as possible.

Consistent with Department of Military Instruction guidelines, your grade in this course will reflect your ability to demonstrate your achievement of the above course objectives through various course events. I use the standard DMI grading scale, with the following qualitative equivalents. If you have questions about your performance, please let me know.

Grade	Percentage	Qualitative Interpretation
A+	97.0–100	<b>Mastery:</b>
A	93.0–96.9	No major problems in either style or substance
A-	90.0–92.9	Applies concepts in innovative ways
B+	87.0–89.9	<b>Proficient:</b>
B	83.0–86.9	Solid understanding of concepts; few errors
B-	80.0–82.9	Generally clear and effective communication
C+	77.0–79.9	<b>Acceptable:</b>
C	73.0–76.9	Basic understanding of concepts; some significant errors Some problems with communication or organization
C-	70.0–72.9	<b>Below Standard:</b>
D	67.0–69.9	Questionable understanding of concepts Lack of clarity in communicating ideas
F	< 67.0	<b>Unacceptable/Failing:</b> No clear understanding of basic concepts Little or no effort to meet assignment parameters

Graded Events:

Please note the deadlines for assignments on the course schedule, below, and read the “Assignment Instructions” for detailed event expectations. You should also review the expectations for DS496/7 when planning the associated assignments.

Research Approval Forms/Client Memo	50 points
CITI Training	50 points
Concept Paper	150 points
Methodology Exercise	150 points
Methodology Board	150 points
Final Thesis/Capstone Prospectus	300 points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>150 points</u>
TOTAL	1,000 points

A Note on Participation:

Research methods are best learned through practice. Therefore, your active participation is critical to success in this course. We expect students to come to class having already read and critically engaged with the assigned readings, and ready to express reasoned thoughts and questions. Student are evaluated on the quality (not necessarily quantity) of their participation. Quality participation includes—but is not limited to—answering tough questions, responding thoughtfully to classmates’ comments, asking relevant questions, and making a good faith effort during in-class activities. I do not expect you to come to class having mastered the concepts from the lesson’s readings; I do expect you to be able to show you tried to.

To prepare for class, be sure to take notes while you read. I have provided lesson objectives for each class topic. The readings provide guidance for answering these questions so you should read with these in mind and come to class ready to reference ideas from the readings. I have tried to select readings that are a mix of “how-to” guides and interesting (note: not necessarily good) examples of specific research design concepts. Think about how the examples in the readings illustrate the core methodological concepts, or about what you would have done differently if you were the researcher. Remember: you are only getting an introduction to methodologies here: I encourage you to ask questions or challenge the authors we read. If you have any questions or concerns about how to do participate or read effectively, please come and talk to me—the sooner, the better.

Late Submissions:

The standard DMI penalty of a 15% grade reduction per 24-hour period after the deadline applies for all assignments if you have not made advance arrangements for an extension. Additionally, DMI requires that I submit a Cadet Observation Report for every late assignment.

### Required Texts:

We will frequently use the following texts, which we strongly encourage you to purchase.

1. Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021).
2. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

### **Additional Policies**

#### Academic Integrity and Citation Style:

All sources used in your written work must be documented using the most recent version of the Chicago Manual of Style's "notes and bibliography" guide, which can be found in the Turabian text or online, here: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14\\_toc.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14_toc.html). This citation style requires the use of footnotes throughout the paper, as well as a "Works Cited" list or "Bibliography" at the end. You should also consult the relevant sections of all relevant USMA policies, including DAW, for further guidance on documentation. Failure to cite and format properly according to the Chicago notes-bibliography style may result in a reduced grade, *regardless of whether such failure constitutes an honor violation*. If you have questions about how to properly cite, please feel free to contact the Course Director.

Remember that any idea that is not yours and not common knowledge (not just direct quotes) must be cited. This is good scholarly practice and an important component of learning research methodology. Scholarship is about having a conversation. Citations allow readers to know what ideas you are engaging with and where they should look if they want more information.

Common knowledge, for the purpose of this course, includes in-class discussion and lectures, or conversations/information provided by the instructors—unless the instructor is citing a source used in class. In other words, analysis and discussion during class or with the instructors do not need to be cited. However, summaries of ideas from readings do need to be cited, and much of what we discuss in class can probably be traced back to a reading. When in doubt, ask the instructor.

#### Multiple Submission of Academic Work:

You may not submit your own work—whether in part or in whole—that has been submitted for credit in this course or any other course. Any submission of prior work—even your own—may be considered plagiarism. However, I welcome efforts to build on ideas you have developed in other classes, and I strongly encourage you to meet with your thesis/capstone advisors and the DS495 instructors to discuss how to successfully submit new work that builds on prior work. You may, of course, reuse elements from your research proposal and concept paper for your final prospectus.

**Regrade Policy:**

You have the right to request a regrade on any assignment worth at least 20% of your overall grade. To request a regrade, you must 1) Review instructor feedback and your notes to develop specific questions or points of disagreement; 2) After waiting at least 24-hours and no more than 1-week after receiving your grade, meet with your instructor to discuss the basis of your disagreement; 3) If you still believe a regrade is warranted, submit a brief memo explaining the basis of your disagreement within 48-hours of the meeting. The instructor will then ask two disinterested, qualified faculty members to regrade the assignment. The final grade will be an average of all three grades. In other words, your grade may go up or down. Note that penalties for late submission are not subject to revision through this process.

**Keys to Success**

1. Seize the initiative. This course is highly self-directed/group-directed. Your success and enjoyment will correlate with how quickly you get out in front of your project.
2. Think critically. A real research project requires you to build on others' work and contribute something new. This is difficult, but crucial. See above and don't be shy about asking for help.
3. Pick something you will enjoy. You are going to spend a lot of time with this project, and research design can seem dry. You will learn more if you are engaged with a topic that really piques your interest.

## Course Syllabus and Schedule

### Block I—Choosing a Topic

#### **LSN 1 (17 AUG): Introduction to Research Methods**

Lesson Objectives: Familiarize yourself with the purpose and structure of the academic research process, as well as the course requirements.

Required Readings (24 pages)

- a. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, pages 5-9.
- b. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 7-13.
- c. Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Rudolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2013), pages 3-14.

#### **LSN 2 (19 AUG): Deciding on a Research Question**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the difference between good and bad research questions.

Required Readings (29 pages)

- a. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, pages 10-18.
- b. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), pages 19-23 and 205-219.

#### **LSN 3 (23 AUG): Thinking about Data**

Lesson Objectives: Know the different types of variables in social science research and how they are represented in large datasets.

Required Readings (16 pages)

- a. William M. Bannon, Jr., *The 7 Steps of Data Analysis* (New York, NY: StatsWhisperer Press, 2013), 37-38, and 40-42.
- b. Reiter et al., "A Revised Look at Interstate Wars, 1816-2007," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60:5 (2016), 956-963 and 966-973.

#### **LSN 4 (27 AUG): Concepts**

Lesson Objectives: Identify best concept formation practices and their importance in research

Required Readings (26 pages)

- a. Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 3-11, 30-39, and 62-65.
- b. Jason Lyall, *Divided Armies* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 8-14.

#### **LSN 5 (31 AUG): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 6 (2 SEPT) Literature Reviews**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the purpose of a literature review. Learn how to identify relevant, reliable sources and develop the skills to write a literature review.

Required Readings (36 pages)

- a. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), pages 32–37, 187–197, and 277–281.
- b. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, pages 25–42.
- c. Soeters et al., *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Military Studies*, pages 318–322.

**LSN 7 (7 SEPT): Analytical Approaches**

Lesson Objectives: Learn how to generate testable hypotheses from a broader research question. Identify the differences between different types of arguments. Explain how to craft a theoretical argument.

Required Readings (18 pages)

- a. Craig Parsons, *How to Map Arguments in Political Science* (Oxford University Press, 2007), “Introduction,” 3-20.

**LSN 8 (9 SEPT): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 9 (14 SEPT): Hypothesis Formation and Developing Arguments**

Lesson Objectives: Practice developing arguments and test out possible hypotheses. Understand what makes a good hypothesis.

Required Readings (24 pages)

- a. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), pages 57–64.
- b. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, pages 19–23.
- c. William M. Bannon, Jr., *The 7 Steps of Data Analysis* (New York, NY: StatsWhisperer Press, 2013), 46–56.

**LSN 10 (17 SEPT): Writing Your Draft**

**\*\*\*Advisor/Topic Forms Due!\*\*\***

Lesson Objectives: Identify the basic structure of a research prospectus and report.

Required Readings (37 pages)

- a. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, pages 66–85.
- b. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), pages 252–268.

**Block II—Research Design****LSN 11 (21 SEPT): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 12 (23 SEPT): Research Ethics (*Guest Speaker: Karen Peck, Human Protection Administrator*)**

Lesson Objectives: Familiarize yourself with the ethical challenges of different types of research in strategic studies. Understand the purpose of human subjects protection and mechanisms for supervising and conducting ethical research. Learn how bias and ethical problems can creep into research of even well-meaning scholars.

Required Readings (~20 pages)

- a. Maria Konnikova, "The Real Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment," *The New Yorker*, June 12, 2015.
- b. Jelena Subotic, "Ethics of archival research on political violence," *Journal of Peace Research* (2020).

**LSN 13 (27 SEPT): Methodologies, Causal Inference, and Errors**

**\*\*\*CITI Training Due\*\*\***

Lesson Objectives: Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies/approaches to research. Understand the key challenge of making causal inference and recognize the common errors or threats to inference, including selection effects, reverse causality, and omitted variable bias.

Required Readings (~18 pages)

- a. Jessica D. Blankshain and Andrew L. Stigler, "Applying Method to Madness: A User's Guide to Causal Inference in Policy Analysis," *Texas National Security Review* 3:3 (2020).

**LSN 14 (30 SEPT): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 15 (5 OCT): Surveys and Experiments**

Lesson Objectives: Identify the threats to causal inference to be wary of when using surveys and experiments. Understand how to design effective surveys and experiments for use in strategic studies research.

Required Readings (23 pages)

- a. Griffith in Soeters et al., Ch. 16, "Survey research in military settings," 179–192.
- b. Rose McDermott, "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002), 31 – 41.



**LSN 16 (8 OCT): Case Studies and Selection**

Lesson Objectives: Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies of case selection and comparison. Understand the difference between a single case study and case comparisons, and familiarize yourself with approaches to these approaches.

Required Readings (24 pages)

- a. John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Ch. 3, "Overview of Case Selection," 39-52.
- b. Carrie Lee, *The Politics of Military Operations*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2015, selections

**LSN 17 (12 OCT): Historical Analysis and Archival Research**

Lesson Objectives: Learn how to effectively use archives, memoirs, oral histories, and other historical documents to do strategic studies research.

Required Readings (33 pages)

- a. Kleinreesink in Soeters et al., Ch. 14, "Research "The Most Dangerous of All Sources,"" 153-163.
- b. Brooks in Soeters et al., Ch. 15, "Scrutinizing the Internet in Search of 'Homegrown' Terrorism," 165-175.
- c. Melissa Wilde, "Just Your Average Full Service Secret Archive," *Trajectories* 19:2 (2008), 4-6.

**LSN 18 (14 OCT): Process Tracing**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the difference between process tracing and other types of qualitative analysis. Familiarize yourself with the basic techniques of process tracing, including the four types of tests described by Bennett.

Required Readings (20 pages)

- a. Vennesson and Wiesner in Soeters et al., Ch. 9, "Process tracing in case studies," 92-101.
- b. Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, eds. Henry. E. Brady and D. Collier, 207-219 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

**LSN 19 (18 OCT): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 20 ( 22 OCT): Interviews**

**\*\*\*Concept Paper Due\*\*\***

Lesson Objectives: Identify the value of structured and unstructured interviews in collecting and interpreting data, and their utility to strategic studies research. Understand how to minimize bias and other threats to inference when using interviews as a research method.

Required Readings (32 pages)

- a. Moore in Soeters et al., Ch. 11, "In-depth Interviewing," 116–127.
- b. Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen, "How to Report Interview Data," in *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley, 84–105 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

**LSN 21 (26 OCT): Ethnography**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of ethnographic research. Consider how to ethically wear dual hats as soldiers and scholars.

Required Readings (28 pages)

- a. Moelker in Soeters et al., Ch. 10, "Being one of the guys or the fly on the wall?" 107–114.
- b. Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12:4 (1987), pages 687–699, 707–713 **OR** Hugh Campbell, "The Glass Phallus: Pub(lic) Masculinity and Drinking in Rural New Zealand," 259–278.

**LSN 22 (28 OCT): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project

**LSN 23 (3 NOV): Statistical Research**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the difference between substantive and statistical significance. Familiarize yourself with how to read a regression table and critique statistical evidence.

Required Readings (35 pages)

- a. Philip H. Pollock III, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press, 2016), 183–194 and 201–203.
- b. Steven V. Miller, "What Do We Know About British Attitudes Toward Immigration," March 23, 2020. Available at <http://svmiller.com/blog/2020/03/what-explains-british-attitudes-toward-immigration-a-pedagogical-example/>. **(read pp. 10–15, skim rest)**
- c. James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97:3 (2003), 75–90. **(skim)**

**Block III—Putting it All Together****LSN 24 (5 NOV): Peer Review**

Lesson Objectives: Understand the role of peer review in the research process. Demonstrate the ability to provide constructive feedback to peers.

Required Readings (~30)

- a. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* 124–133.
- b. Miller et al, "How to Be a Peer Reviewer," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 46:1 (2013), 120–123.
- c. Two of your classmates' concept papers! (to be provided by the instructors)

**LSN 25 (9 NOV): Presenting/Displaying Data****\*\*\*Methodology Exercise Due\*\*\***

Lesson Objectives: Learn best and worst practices for clearly presenting your research through tables, charts, figures, and presentations.

Required Readings (~18 pages)

- a. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*," 86–101.
- b. Echo Rivera, "Effective Slides for Your Job Talk and Beyond," *The Professor is In*, Nov. 10, 2017. Available at <http://theprofessorisin.com/2017/11/10/effective-slides-for-job-talk-and-beyond/>.

**LSN 26 (16 NOV): METHODOLOGY BOARDS**

Lesson Objectives: Present your prospectus draft and understand how to integrate feedback from faculty and peers into your final product. Provide useful feedback to your classmates.

No Required Readings**LSN 27 (18 NOV): METHODOLOGY BOARDS**

Lesson Objectives: Present your prospectus draft and understand how to integrate feedback from faculty and peers into your final product. Provide useful feedback to your classmates.

No Required Readings**LSN 28 (23 NOV): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project.

**LSN 29 (2 DEC): RESEARCH DROP**

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project.

No Required Readings**LSN 30 (7 DEC): RESEARCH DROP****\*\*\*Final Proposals Due\*\*\***

No classes or readings, but meet with your advisor and work on your project.

## Assignment Instructions (DS498 cadets can stop reading after page 18.)

### Thesis and Capstone Program Overview

By the time the fall semester begins, you should have already decided how you will earn your integrated experience/capstone credit for the DSS major: through a thesis (DS496), group capstone project (DS497), or capstone course (DS498). If you are unsure, you must meet with the DS495 Course Director as soon as possible. You can change into the thesis or capstone project options until you submit your first assignment; after that, the only permitted changes are to go into DS498. Making your decision early—and no later than your Methodology Board—will help ensure you do not do unnecessary work or inconvenience your advisor and groupmates. You must inform the Course Director and your DAC immediately if you decide to pursue an option different from the one you are registered for at the start of the semester.

**If you are enrolled in DS496 or DS497 in the spring, you will primarily work with—and be evaluated by—your specific project advisor(s). If you are enrolled in DS498, your section instructor will be your primary point of contact and grader.**

Given the individual nature of your thesis and capstone projects, the assignment instructions are intentionally broad. Your advisor (or, for DS498 cadets, instructor), will be best equipped to provide additional detail about expectations. Regardless, the DS495 Course Director will remain available and happy to assist you with your work throughout the year.

To prepare for all assignments, you should begin to consider possible topics, advisors, and groupmates (for DS497 and DS498 cadets) as soon as possible. Remember, instructors might receive requests to be an advisor from multiple cadets, so it is best to confirm that an advisor can work with you early. These must be finalized at the time you submit the first assignment.

Please pay careful attention to the instructions below, which will change depending on which course you are enrolled in. Cadets taking DS498 can choose to work either individually or with the same one or two partners for the duration of the semester. For both DS497 and DS498 cadets, **the advisor and instructors retain the right to assess cadets individually, rather than as a group.** Thesis and Capstone Project cadets **MUST** discuss their projects frequently with their advisors if they expect to succeed in their courses.

### Assignment Formatting and Submission

Please email all assignments to both your advisor (instructor, for DS498 cadets) and cc the DS495 Course Director NLT 1600 on the assigned date. Submit all assignments in 12-point Times New Roman font, with double-spacing, 1-inch margins, page numbers, and a West Point-formatted cover page. Cadets working with clients who prefer to receive work in memo format should defer to their advisors for different formatting instructions. Requests for extensions should be addressed to the advisor/instructor.

**Assignment 1:****Research Approval Forms/Client Memo (Due 17 SEPT, 50 points)**

This assignment is designed to get you started on your projects and to introduce you to the challenge of defining a rigorous research question in strategic studies.

All cadets must write 1–2 paragraphs that describe possible research topics in the field of strategic studies. This write-up must include two possible research questions that relate to this topic and that are consistent with the guidelines for research question formation covered in class and in our readings. Cadets must also briefly explain why these questions are interesting—in other words, why do we need to do more research to answer them and relevant to strategic studies. You will not be able to answer these questions completely now, but you should show that you have put some thought into appropriate questions for your project. This assignment should be no more than one-page long.

***In addition...***

THESIS CADETS must complete the Thesis Committee Formation Form in blackboard and send it to the Course Director and their advisor/Chair.

CAPSTONE PROJECT CADETS must send an Army-formatted memo to their client describing their plans for the project.

DS498 CADETS must select questions related to the topic of leadership and future war.

## Assignment 2: CITI Training (Due 27 SEPT, 50 points)

The purpose of this assignment is twofold: First, it is to familiarize you with the ethical obligations of any researcher working with human subjects. Second, it is to prepare you to do such research if it becomes necessary for your project by ensuring you have the proper certification.

To get full credit for this assignment, you must submit a copy of your certificate to confirm that you successfully completed your CITI training, along with a copy of your assessment scores. Anyone who completes this assignment on time will receive at least a passing grade, though better assessment scores will correlate with more points. **You must submit this assignment directly to the Course Director—by email—rather than to your advisor/instructor.**

### Instructions for Human Subjects Research Training for Investigators

You can complete your training from any computer that can connect you to the internet. Simply remember the location of the CITI home page ([www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org)), your user name, and your password to log in to the CITI website.

Individuals who are new to the CITI website should select the **U.S. Army CCDC Armaments Center (AC) / (formerly U.S. Army ARDEC)** affiliation. Once you select U.S. Army CCDC Armaments Center (AC) you will be prompted to complete personal information. Select “Human Subjects Research” as your learner group. Your next screen should then present the choice of either “Basic course” or “Refresher course.” **Choose “Basic Course,” unless you have previously completed CITI Training.** You will then be presented with a choice of 5 groups based on your role and the type of human subjects activities you will conduct. **Choose “Social & Behavioral Research Investigators.”** Next you may be offered the Health Information Privacy and Security (HIPS) option. You may select “Not at this time” if health information will not be collected in your study. You will then be able to start your course. There will not be a fee or payment at the end of the course. The fees are funded by U.S. Army CCDC Armaments Center (AC). **IMPORTANT:** Once you have registered, go to the top right-hand corner of the screen and click the arrow next to your name. Click “profiles.” Under Army Human Research Protections Office (AHRPO), click “Edit Profile.” Under Army Affiliation type in “USMA.” The course can be completed at your own pace all at once or in parts. You will need a total of 2-3 hours to complete the required modules. Each module requires a passing score of 80%. Your final overall score is determined from the scores of the required modules you complete. If you want to improve a score on a quiz, you may repeat any quiz in which you didn't score 100% correct. Scores obtained after a completion report has been issued will not be reflected on the completion report. When you have completed the CITI course, you will be prompted to complete the Confirmation of Course Completion form. You can then print out the certificate page. Keep a copy of your certificate for your records.

### Assignment 3: Concept Paper (Due 22 OCT, 150 points)

By this point in the semester, you should have narrowed your project down to a single research question based on feedback from your first assignment and (if not in DS498) further conversations with your advisor. The concept paper is an opportunity to flesh out the research you have done since then to help your project take shape. Consider this a start, not an exhaustive account of or end to your preliminary research. Your concept paper must be 10–13 pages long include the following components:

1. Introduction. Identify the topic and research question. Explain why the research question is interesting and deserves attention. This section also should describe the focus and scope of the proposed project (2–3 pages).
2. Literature Review. Reviews the major schools of thought that bear on the problem your research addresses. Explain to the reader how the project fits into the broader theoretical and empirical debates relevant to the topic: how have other scholars answered your research question, or why might their answers to other questions shed light on yours? (6–7 pages)
3. Contribution and/or Methodology. If you are not satisfied with existing answers to your question, what are some possible arguments you want to make? If you like an existing argument but it has not been tested well, why is that? What kinds of methods and analytical tools are most appropriate to answer your question? What kind of evidence do you need to support your argument and to undermine other ones? How might you be able to get that evidence? This section should provide suggestions for what you might want to add to your chosen debate and how, but it does not need to be very detailed at this point. Be sure to consider whether you need to get IRB exemption/approval. (2–3 pages).
4. Reference Lists. Divide this into two sections: First, you must of course include a properly cited work cited page for all sources you referenced in your concept paper. Second include an additional “preliminary bibliography” that lists (with proper formatting), a selection (non-exhaustive list) of additional work you plan to consult. These sections also do NOT count toward your page limit.

#### ***If you are NOT taking DS496/DS497 in the spring...***

Do not approach this assignment any differently. Choose one of the questions you submitted for your first assignment (or a version of it that your instructor approved) and write a concept paper describing the existing answers to this question, some problems with them, and what you might want to add to the debate.

### Assignment 4: Methodology Exercise (Due 9 NOV, 150 points)

This exercise is the same for all cadets; it is designed to test your engagement with key methodologies from this course and to give you practice using one of them. You must choose to complete ONE of the following exercise options and submit your write-up/response to the Thesis Program Director by the start of class. **You must submit this assignment directly to the Course Director—by email—rather than to your advisor/instructor.** Your submission should be no more than 3-pages long, double-spaced. These are the options:

1. Process Tracing: Do the reading titled “Process Tracing” in the “Methodology Exercise” folder on Blackboard. What process does the author try to trace, and why does this process need to be traced? Does this reading meet the criteria for “process tracing?” Why or why not? What kinds of evidence and tests does the author use (be specific, and reference our readings)? What other evidence or tests would better support the author’s argument?
2. Archival Research: Identify a research question (*not* the one you are using for your project) in strategic studies. Do some research online and find an archive that should have information to help you answer the question. Why is this archive appropriate for you, and what kind of information should it have that will help you answer your question? What might be the limitations of the archive? What are the steps you would need to take to do research at that library (be as specific as possible: consider the hours, check-in and registration process, etc.)? How much, if any, of the holdings are available online?
3. Interviews: Identify a USMA faculty member who has some experience and expertise in a topic that interests you. Think of a research question that relates to their experience and interview them about it. The interview should be between no less than 15 and no more than 30 minutes long. Provide a write-up that briefly describes why you interviewed this person (including their experience in the topic you chose), what questions you planned to ask them, what questions you actually asked them, and what information you learned (or still need to learn) after the interview. Be sure to include your notes from the interview and the name of the interviewee, and don’t forget to address the terms of confidentiality and confirm their consent before you begin.
4. Surveys and Experiments: Do the reading titled “Surveys and Experiments” in the “Methodology Exercise” folder on Blackboard. What information is the survey designed to produce? Are the authors correct in their interpretation of the survey results? Why or Why not? If there is an experimental element, what is the treatment and is it randomly assigned? Are there threats to causal inference that the authors did not consider?



**Assignment 5:****Methodology Board (MUST SCHEDULE FOR WEEK OF 16 NOV, 150 points)**

This assignment is designed to prepare the student to finalize their prospectus and maximize their level of preparation going into the spring semester. All cadets are responsible for arranging a time during this week that works for all necessary parties. They must share the time and location of their Board with the DS495 Course Director **prior to 11 NOV 2021**. Cadets must attend AT LEAST two other methodology boards if they can.

For this assignment, the researcher(s) must formally present the draft thesis/capstone prospectus (including slides) to a panel of faculty members, observed by other cadets in the class. Each methodology board should last 30 minutes, including **NO MORE THAN 10 MINUTES** of presentation by the cadet(s). In the remaining 20 minutes, board members will ask questions that the cadets must answer. All members of the of the board will confer to determine the grade.

Remember, your methodology board is designed to prepare you to finalize your prospectus. That means you must have a very good grasp of what your project is about and what you need to do by the time you present at your methodology board. Things to consider that will affect your evaluation:

- Content and Analysis: Is the research question clear? Is it clear why the research is relevant? Is the literature review clear in terms of where this work fits in to the existing literature? Is the research methodology clear and will it answer the question?
- Responses to feedback: Faculty board members will generally focus their questions to address the following: Is the research question flawed? If so how, and how might it be revised? Is it clear why the research is relevant? What gaps exist within the literature review? Is key literature missing? Is the research methodology clear and will it answer the question? What are the shortcomings of the methodology? Is the selection of case studies justified?
- Oral Presentation (voice, body language, filler words, etc.)
- PowerPoint slides (properly formatted, effective bullets, not too many/few, etc.)

***In addition...***

THESIS AND CAPSTONE CADETS must submit an updated draft of their prospectus at least 48 hours prior to their Methodology Board. They must also have chosen two additional “readers” to sit on their Board. For thesis cadets, these two additional readers will stay with you as members of your “thesis committee” for the rest of the year.

DS498 CADETS should treat this like an Oral Exam: They do not need to find additional readers to sit on their committee, but they will meet with their instructor to present a well-developed plan for how they would use specific tools they learned so far this semester to answer their research question.

**Assignment 6:  
Final Prospectus (Due 7 Dec, 300 points)**

The prospectus must be at **minimum** a 15–20 page paper that formally presents a viable research plan. This will be an expanded and polished version of the concept paper, and should include the same general sections; while you may be able to reuse parts of the concept paper, the organization and even some content of the prospectus will be significantly different because the expectation is that you have received and incorporated extensive feedback from members of your committee and at your methodology board. In addition to demonstrating an overall higher quality of work, more thorough research, and integration of feedback, the prospectus should differ from the concept paper in the following ways:

1. The literature review, in particular, should be nearly complete. In other words, you have exhaustively and correctly identified the major schools of thought that address your research question.
2. The methodology section should be fully fleshed out and describe a viable plan for collecting and analyzing evidence, to include what datasets or case studies you will use. This section might require several subsections to break down different parts of your research plan, as well as a more thorough discussion of limitations.
3. The bibliography (not included in page count) should be updated and more detailed. There is no need to divide this into two sections; just include work cited.
4. Include, as an appendix (not included in page count) an outline and timeline for your work in the spring

Your advisor or instructor will assign a holist grade for your prospectus in consultation with the DS495 Course Director based on how well it meets these criteria. While you should share the prospectus with all members of your committee (if you are doing a thesis), or at least keep them updated, only the main advisor/Chair needs to provide a grade.

***In addition...***

DS498 CADETS should also complete a prospectus that describes what they WOULD do as part of a longer research project. This prospectus may be slightly shorter than 15–20 pages.

ANY CADETS WORKING IN A GROUP must complete a peer assessment: Allocate a portion of 100 points to each group member (including yourself) that reflects their share of the group's work. Keep in mind that not all work is as readily observable, and that research and coordination/communication with clients can be just as valuable and time-consuming as writing or editing. You may not use fractions of a point and the total for all group members must add up to exactly 100. In a few sentences for each member, or in one short paragraph at the end, justify your point allocation.

**Assignment 7—SPRING SEMESTER:  
Progress Report (Due TBD, 50 points)**

This assignment is intended to serve as a forcing mechanism for the students to share some of their research with their advisor. Sometime between TBD and TBD, each cadet/group must do two things.

- 1) First, they must submit a complete draft of some empirical portion of their project. Most likely, this will be a complete case study, though the advisor should clarify alternatives if this does not apply to the project.
- 2) At the time that they submit the draft, they should schedule a time to meet, as a complete group, with their advisor and the Course Director, to present their findings on that case in the context of the project as a whole. The presentation should be 5-10 minutes long and does not require slides. The presentation should not rehash the whole project, but should clearly explain the research question, key variables, logic of case selection, findings, and remaining questions.

The advisor assigns a holistic grade based on the quality of the draft empirical chapter and the students' clarity of presentation and level of preparation during the meeting. Grades will be assigned individually or as a group, at the advisor's discretion.

**Assignment 8—SPRING SEMESTER:  
Complete Final Draft (Due TBD, 100 points)**

By this point in the semester, you must have a complete draft of your capstone paper. This will allow your advisor to provide appropriate feedback that you can integrate before your Projects Day presentation. You should be in frequent contact with your advisor about the expectations for this final draft. A final draft is not a rough draft, so you must comply with all formatting requirements, including the Chicago Manual of Style. The rubric that your final capstone will be evaluated on should be a guide for expectations for this assignment; it can be found at the end of this pack. The advisor will assign grade for this draft based on that rubric, either individually or as a group. The grade for the final draft is distinct from the final submission grade.

**Assignment 9—SPRING SEMESTER:  
Mock Defense (Week of TBD, 50 points)**

As soon as the complete final draft is submitted on TBD, cadets should schedule a time to practice their projects day presentation with both their advisor and the Capstone Program Director. This is intended to maximize student preparation for Projects Day. Overall quality and level of preparation at the mock defense, either individually or as a group, will determine grades. Confer with your advisor before the mock defense to learn their expectations.

**Assignment 10—SPRING SEMESTER:  
Final Defense (Projects Day, 200 points)**

Students will present their projects to their advisor, other Committee members (if relevant and available) the Client (if relevant/available), and other audience members on Projects Day. The advisor/Committee will determine a grade based on the students' ability to clearly, confidently, and succinctly present their project, both orally and through visual aids. The advisor will provide guidance to the student about required corrections or changes. In the event of a scheduling conflict, the Course Director must approve the movement of the presentation to another day. The grade will also reflect the student's ability to answer questions from the audience, as well as how well they followed guidance to prepare for their presentation. The grade for the Final Defense is distinct from both the final draft and final submission grades. It may be awarded either individually or collectively, at the advisor's discretion.

**Assignment 11—SPRING SEMESTER:  
Final Project Submission (Due TBD, 600 points)**

The final submission should incorporate feedback from the defense. Every project is different, and the exact form of the final paper will be determined between advisors/readers/clients. Most are between 40–60 pages. They should include the following sections, though defer to your advisor for additional advice:

1. An introduction that introduces your research question, situates it within an existing literature or field, provides relevance/importance, summarizes your contribution and argument, and previews the rest of your paper.
2. A literature review that addresses the current state of the field that is relevant to answer your questions, how this other literature sheds light on your question, and problems or limitations with their approaches and answers.
3. A theory section that describes your argument and contributions in detail and addresses potential critiques. This section may be part of your literature review.
4. A methodology section that describes how you will answer your question, address limitations, and justifies your research plan.
5. An empirical section that presents and analyzes evidence to support your argument
6. A conclusion that summarizes your findings and contributions, and clearly describes policy recommendations or solutions.

You can find the grading rubric your advisor will use on the following page. Please keep in mind that the substance is the most important component of the rubric, though the other components can still have a significant impact on your grade.

***In addition...***

DS497 CADETS must complete the same peer assessment that they did at the end of the fall semester.