

PADP 7110 Research Methods in Public Administration
University of Georgia
Spring 2020

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Course time: Thursday, 6:30-9:30,
Course location: Baldwin 102
Office hours: Thursday, 12:00-1:00
or by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

An introduction to the application of social science research methods to problems in public management and policy. Topics include research design, measurement, data collection techniques, and research ethics. Several of the key objectives to be achieved include:

- 1) Developing an appreciation of the importance of research methods in government
- 2) Identifying which research designs and data collection strategies are the most appropriate for planning and evaluating public policy, program, and management interventions,
- 3) Gaining increased sophistication as a research "consumer" who understands the strengths and limitations of research studies

Although this course may help strengthen several all 5 key competencies highlighted by the MPA Program, it contributes the most to:

Competency 2. To strengthen your ability to Participate in the Public Policy Process by developing your ability to collect, interpret and persuasively communicate information regarding policy alternatives especially with regards to policy importance and policy evaluations.

Competency 3: To strengthen your ability to Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems and Make Decisions by developing your ability to collect, analyze and interpret data to provide effective reasoning for decision-making

Note: This syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may become necessary as the semester progresses.

REQUIRED TEXTS

O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G. R. & Berner, M. (2008). Research methods for public administrators (5th ed.). New York: Longman Publishers.

Additional assigned readings available on the e Learning Commons Course Site. Students will be expected to complete the readings **before** attending the class session for which they are assigned.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Given the technical nature of this course, attendance at every class meeting is especially important. Each class builds on material learned in previous class sessions and will often cover some important material not covered in the assigned readings. As a result, even if a student manages to master the required text and all supplemental readings, it is likely that s/he will be insufficiently prepared for the examinations. Students are expected to be in class (on time) as both

attendance and participation will be considered in overall evaluations of performance. As an added incentive, the instructor reserves the right to give quizzes in the beginning of class (no late or make-up quizzes will be allowed). If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility 1) hand in assignments due prior to the beginning (late work will be penalized) and 2) to obtain complete information from on that class and any assignments due the following week from another student.

COMPUTER, TABLET & CELL PHONE USE

Laptop computers and tablets (i.e. iPads) may be used during class sessions for note taking ONLY. ANY instance of unapproved use of laptop computers or tablets in the classroom will result in your laptop/tablet privileges being revoked for the remainder of the semester. Cell phones and other electronic devices must remain off and stored out of sight at all times during class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY (<https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty>)

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor and work with the Disability Resource Center (<http://drc.uga.edu/students/register-for-services>) to develop an accommodation plan. The student is responsible for providing a copy of that plan to the instructor.

Make-up exams and Incomplete or "I" grades are permitted in only extremely rare circumstances. The instructor has the right to (1) require documentation and proof of the need for the make-up exam or "I" grade (2) require the completion of different versions of assignments missed and/or (3) impose a grade penalty for a missed exam or Incomplete grade in the course. Please let the instructor know as soon as you see a problem developing. Any students wishing to withdraw from the course must follow the University's course withdrawal procedures.

Last day to withdraw from full semester classes: March 20, 2020.

EXAMINATIONS & QUIZZES

Two in-class examinations will be administered covering topics raised by the class lectures and assigned readings. Students who cannot be in class on the scheduled dates in which examinations are to be completed must meet with the instructor **prior** to the date in question. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the exam.

Nearly every week there will be either a take-home quiz or a surprise in class quiz. The format of these assignments will be very similar to the questions asked on the final exam. Unless specifically noted on the quiz, these are individual assignments so students will need to show independent work.

EXPERIMENTAL & QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN MEMOS

Students (in groups of 2 or 3) will be asked to prepare a research design to answer a question posed to them. These assignments will be very similar to the questions asked on the midterm exam but will be done as memos. More information about each assignment will be provided in class the week before it is due. These assignments would provide good examples to use in your MPA Capstones and Portfolio to showcase the two competences highlight above.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal assignment is an opportunity for students to integrate all essential components of research methods in an area of interest to them. The students will work in small groups (3 students) to identify a research question of interest to public administration and use either a quasiexperimental or experimental design a research study to answer this question. The assignment has two parts: 1) a 1-2 page initial research proposal memo, 2) a 15-20 minute oral research proposal presentation.

Proposal Memo. Students will be required to submit a memo written to convince the reader that the research is both important and feasible. In the proposal memo, the following questions must be addressed in 1-2 pages (single space, 12 pt. times roman font, 1 inch margins):

1. What is your research question?
2. Why do you want to undertake it? Who will care and why?
3. What do you think may be happening and how would this study help you know?
(identify the variables, relationships of interest and hypotheses)
4. What audience(s) do you hope to influence?
5. What type of research design might you use to test your hypothesis and why?

Research Proposal Presentation. Each student group will be required to give a formal presentation of their research proposal. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length and should incorporate some use of visual aids (grades will reflect quality of content and presentation). The effectiveness of research proposal and findings are not solely dependent on the importance of the topic or the quality of their design and implementation. Often good research is ignored because the researcher(s) does not clearly and concisely communicate their work. Students are required to use PowerPoint for their presentation and a copy of their slides (in handout format) must be submitted at the time of their presentation. Prior to the final presentation, students must hand in a draft PowerPoint presentation for instructor review and feedback. The proposal presentation should discuss the following elements:

1. Statement of the problem
 - Research objective / question
 - Significance of the problem
2. Outline of the theoretical framework or model
 - Justify and conceptualize the variables that you select
 - Identify independent and dependent variable (s)
 - Introduce testable hypotheses
3. Research design
 - Study design and how it helps rule out alternative explanations
 - Identify study subjects (sample)/ units of analysis
 - Describe sampling procedure

- Data collection methods (measures/instruments; operationalization)
4. Management Plan
 - The time table
 - Budget
 5. Anticipated strengths, weaknesses and benefits.
 6. Ethical considerations

This assignment may be a good examples to use in your MPA Capstones and Portfolio to showcase the two competences highlight above.

GRADING

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance & Participation | 4% |
| Take Home (or in class) Quizzes | 8% |
| Experimental & Quasi Design Memos | 16% |
| Midterm Exam | 28% |
| Research Proposal Memo | 2% |
| Research Proposal Presentation | 24% |
| Final Examination | 18% |

Any assignment not handed in at the beginning (in person) or before (if not in attendance) class on the day it is due will be penalized at least 1 letter grade. Grading penalties increase by 1 letter grade for additional each day an assignment is late.

Course grades will be determined according to the following criteria:

| | | | | | |
|----|------------|----|------------|---|-----------|
| A | 89.5-100 | C+ | 75.0-79.49 | F | 0.0-58.99 |
| B+ | 85.0-89.49 | C | 69.0-74.99 | | |
| B | 79.5-84.99 | D | 59.0-68.99 | | |

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- 1/9 Introduction: Research Use & Process
- 1/16 Introduction to Research and the Importance of Theory
 O’Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 1
 Whetten, D. A. (1989). What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 490-495.
 Goldacre, B. (2009). *Bad Science*. London: Fourth Estate. Chapter 13.
- 1/23 Measurement & Data
 O’Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 4
 Bertrand, M. & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination, *American Economic Review*, 94(4), 991-1013
- 1/30 Research Design: Experiments
 O’Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 3 (pp.56-77)
 Spencer, M.B., Noll, E. & Cassidy, E. (2005). Monetary Incentives in Support of Academic Achievement. *Evaluation Review*, 29(3), 199-222.

- 2/6 Research Design: Quasi-Experiments ****Experimental Memo Due****
 O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 3 (pp.77-94)
 Van Ryzin, G. G. (2014). The Curious Case of the Post-9-11 Boost in Government Job Satisfaction." *The American Review of Public Administration*, 44(1), 59-74.
 McCartt, A.T., Braver, E.R. & Geary, L. L. (2003). Drivers' use of handheld cell phones before and after New York state's cell phone law. *Preventive Medicine*, 36(5), 629-635.
- 2/13 Research Design: Cross-Sectional ****Quasi-experimental Memo Due****
 O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 2 (pp.25-38)
 Houston, D. J. (2006). Walking the walk" of public service motivation: Public employees and charitable gifts of time, blood, and money. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory*, 16(1), 67-86.
 Stack, S. & Gundlach, J. (1992). The effect of country music on suicide. *Social Forces*, 71(1), 211-218.
- 2/20 Research Design Continued ****Research Proposal Memo Due****
- 2/27 **MIDTERM**
- 3/5 Surveys Sampling & Administration
 O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapters 5 & 6
 Lange, J.E., Lauer, E.M. & Voas, R.B. (1999). A Survey of the San Diego-Tijuana Cross-Border Binging: Methods and Analysis. *Evaluation Review*, 23(4), 378-398.
- 3/12 NO CLASS
- 3/19 Survey Measurement
 O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapter 7 & 10
 McDowall, D., Loftin, C., & Presser, S. (2000). Measuring civilian defensive firearm use: a methodological experiment. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 16(1), 1-19.
 Fowler, F.J., Sr. (1995). Appendix A: Commonly Used Measurement Dimensions & Appendix B: Measures of Common Covariates. In *Improving Survey Questions*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications. (Applied Social Research Methods Series, vol. 38)
- 3/26 Survey Design Exercise
- 4/2 Research Ethics
 O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner. (2008). Chapters 8 & 15 (pp. 478-482)
- 4/9 Research Ethics continued
 Piff, P. K., Stancato, D. M., Côté, S., Mendoza-Denton, R., & Keltner, D. (2012). Higher social class predicts increased unethical behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(11), 4086-4091.
- 4/16 **Research Proposal Presentations**
- 4/23 **Research Proposal Presentations**
- 5/1 **FINAL EXAM (6:30 pm, location tba)**