

PADP 7110 Research Methods in Public Administration
University of Georgia
Fall 2026

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Course time: Tuesdays, 3:55-6:45 pm
Course location: LeConte Hall 101
Office hours: Mondays, 11:00-12:00 pm
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) Identify and be able to describe the basic concepts and methods of evaluation research
- 2) Recognize and be able to explain both the importance of and inherent difficulties associated with evaluating government and nonprofit programs
- 3) Identify and explain the strengths and weaknesses associated with the different research designs and data collection strategies used to evaluate public programs and management interventions
- 4) Design, explain and present an outcome/impact evaluation proposal for a program or management intervention
- 5) 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. ***could also use** the 7th edition available as ebook from the UGA library: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ugalib/detail.action?docID=6416229>

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 & OTHER DEVICE 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.

Prohibition on Recording Lectures. In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation (or are given access to recordings of course lectures by the professor) are expected to:

- ✓ Use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- ✓ Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- ✓ Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- ✓ Not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings.
- ✓ Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

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.

AI USE POLICY

To ensure you develop and master the foundational knowledge and skills in this course, the use of generative AI (GAI) tools is strictly limited to editing/writing assistance. GAI is highly vulnerable to inaccuracy and bias so you should assume GAI output is wrong unless you know

enough about the topic to help guide and validate its answers. My hope is that this course will provide you a good foundation of knowledge on HR topics that can help you guide and assess your use of GAI in future jobs. Though perhaps that is hubris on my part as there are many news stories about how lawyers used AI to prepare for cases only for AI to give them incorrect information and citations to nonexistence case law/sources. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.

This AI policy applies only to this course. Using AI tools in courses without permission is a violation of UGA's Academic Honesty policies and is Page 11 of 12 considered unauthorized assistance. Be sure to consult the specific guidelines for each course.

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: November 11, 2026.

EXAMINATIONS & QUIZZES

Nearly every week there will be either a take-home quiz or a surprise in class quiz. We will also have two longer in class quizzes at the end of each of the two sections of the class. Students who cannot be in class on the scheduled dates for those two in class section quizzes must meet with the instructor **prior** to the date in question (failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the exam missed). Unless specifically noted on the quiz, these are individual assignments so students will need to show independent work.

EXPERIMENTAL & QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN ASSIGNMENTS

Students (in groups of 2-3) 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.

IRB TRAINING CERTIFICATION

Each student will complete IRB training through UGA's PEP system. Login to the PEP system (<http://pep.uga.edu>) using your UGA MyID and Password and complete the *Social & Behavioral Research* basic course. Students must email me their Completion Certificate to receive credit for this assignment. This is an individual assignment and your overall course grade will be an Incomplete if the assignment is not completed

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 develop either a quasiexperimental or experimental design a research study to answer this question. The assignment has four parts:

A) Research 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?

B) Need Assessment & Theory Assignment. Building on the feedback from their research presentation memo, groups will develop a clear and convincing way to introduce their research question and its importance. Get your audience to care both about the program outcome (DV) to be studied and the need for your research. In addition, groups will also develop a clear and convincing argument (using theory and culminating in at least 1 hypothesis) about why the program/intervention studied (IV) is likely to have the expected effect on the desired outcome(s). This assignment is meant to help you design and get feedback on a critical part of your final research proposal presentation.

C) Research Design Assignment. Each group will describe the research design (must be either an experiment or a quasiexperiment) that will be used to study whether their program/intervention studied (IV) has the desired effect on the program outcome (DV). In addition to describing the research design, each group must also identify and explain its major strengths and weaknesses. This assignment is meant to help you design and get feedback on a critical part of your final research proposal presentation.

D) Research Proposal Presentation. Each student group will be required to give a formal presentation of their research proposal. Presentations should be 15-18 minutes in length and should incorporate some use of visual aids (grades will reflect quality of content and presentation). 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 need
 - 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

GRADING

Attendance, Participation & weekly quizzes	15%	
*Experimental & Quasi Design memos	20%	
Midterm (in class) Section Quiz	13%	
Research Proposal		
Memo	2%	
Need Assessment & Theory Assignment	9%	} These 2 assignments make up the bulk of the Presentation
Research Design Assignment	9%	
*Research Proposal Presentation	20%	←
IRB Training	2%**	
Final (in class) Section Quiz	10%	

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

**Not completing the IRB training will result in final course grade of Incomplete

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

- 8/18 Introduction: Research Use & Process
- 8/25 Introduction to Research and the Importance of Theory
 O'Sullivan, Russell & 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.
- 9/1 Research Design: Experiments

- Text 5th Edition (2008) pp.25-27 & 56-77 or 7th Edition (2021) pp. 28-30 & 59-80
 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
 Spencer, M.B., Noll, E. & Cassidy, E. (2005). Monetary Incentives in Support of Academic Achievement. *Evaluation Review*, 29(3), 199-222.
- 9/8 Research Design: Quasi-Experiments ****Experimental Assignment Due****
 Text 5th Edition (2008) pp. 77-94 or 7th Edition (2021) pp. 80-90
 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.
- 9/15 Research Design: Cross-Sectional ****Quasi-experimental Assignment Due****
 Text 5th Edition (2008) pp.27-32 or 7th Edition (2021) pp. 30-35
 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*
- 9/22 Research Design Continued ****Research Proposal Memo Due****
- 9/29 **MIDTERM Quiz & Group Project Meetings**
- 10/6 Surveys Sampling & Administration
 Text 5th Edition (2008) Chapters 5 & 6 or 7th Edition (2021) Chapters 5 & 6
 Lange, J.E., Lauer, E.M. & Voas, R.B. (1999) selection
- 10/13 Group Project Meetings ****Need Assessment & Theory Assignment Due****
- 10/20 Measurement
 Text 5th Edition (2008) Chapter 4 or 7th Edition (2021) Chapter 4
- 10/27 Measurement: Survey & Interview Questions ****Research Design Assignment Due****
 Text 5th Edition (2008) Chapters 7 & 10 or 7th Edition (2021) Chapters 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.
- 11/3 Research Ethics ****IRB Training Assignment Due****
 Text 5th Edition (2008) Chapter 8 or 7th Edition (2021) Chapter 8
 O’Sullivan, Russell & Berner. (2008). Chapters 8 & 15 (pp. 478-482)
- 11/17 **Research Proposal Presentations**
- 11/20 **Research Proposal Presentations**
- 11/27 **NO CLASS**
- 12/8 **Final Exam**

UGA WELL-BEING RESOURCES

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Accessibility and Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.