Research Methods in Public Administration

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize you with the analytical methods, research techniques, and models of inquiry in the social and administrative sciences. Students are expected to master the skills necessary to design and conduct their own research projects. Topics will include understanding the scientific method; developing and testing hypotheses and falsifiability; research design considerations and their limitations; sampling; data collection and management; measurement issues; and an introduction to qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Student Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to interpret, evaluate and present qualitative and quantitative data
- Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions to evaluate the appropriateness of policy and management options related to the public sector and communicate results accurately, reliably and with structured coherent arguments
- Participate in and contribute to the policy process by developing the skills necessary to conduct quality policy and program analyses
- Articulate and apply a public service perspective by demonstrating the ability to apply professional standards of writing and research to issues in public administration
- Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry through application of a project presentation

Required Readings


*If you do not wish to purchase a copy of the Chicago manual, a user-friendly online guide to Chicago style is available at the following:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
http://libguides.wwu.edu/content.php?pid=123723&sid=1063051
Additional handouts and readings on Blackboard.

**Recommended or Supplemental Reading**


**Major Course Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam I</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam II</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(100 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>(500 points total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Question</td>
<td></td>
<td>(25 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>(100 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hypotheses</td>
<td></td>
<td>(25 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Design</td>
<td></td>
<td>(100 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>(50 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Final Research Proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading**

- A (895-1000 points)
- B (795-894 points)
- C (695-794 points)
- D (595-694 points)
- F (000-594 points)

- **Exams (200 points each; 400 points total):** All exams will be in class and closed book. Each exam may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay format, covering the key themes and materials of each major section of the course.

- **Article Review (100 points):** You will be provided with an article and asked to write an essay describing and critiquing the methods employed by the researchers. The article and additional instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

- **Research Proposal and Presentation (500 points total):** Due to the unfeasibility of actually conducting a study in one semester, instead, you will write a proposal for a study that you *could* conduct in the future. Writing a research proposal can feel overwhelming, so the project will be broken up into smaller writing assignments. These smaller assignments will ultimately be compiled and edited for your final research proposal and presentation. All sections of the research proposal should follow proper Chicago Author-Date 16th Edition format. Your final research proposal will lay out a plan for conducting research in an area of interest to you and must be within the field of public administration. Your final research proposal should include the following sections:
1) Title Page (include title, name, date and course)

2) Abstract (100-word max summary of your research proposal)

3) Table of Contents

4) Introduction: Approximately 3-5 pages. This sets the foundation for everything else in your research proposal. It should describe the research question and include the purpose of the study, why the study is important, the hypotheses, and who would benefit from/be interested in the findings.

5) Literature Review: Approximately 10-12 pages. This section should provide a thorough and well-organized review of previous studies that relate to your research question and justify your hypotheses. Your literature review should include at least 12-15 scholarly sources.

6) Methods: Approximately 3-5 pages plus your research protocol. This section describes and justifies your research design. It should include a statement/re-statement of your research question and hypotheses. Your hypothesis will likely be influenced by what you have found during the literature review. If not, why? Is there something other researchers have overlooked? The greatest emphasis should be on the data and sample (where do they come from?), your intended sampling method, instrumentation (how will you be collecting your data? what items will you be using?), independent and dependent variables and how they will be operationalized. You should also include the projected data analysis procedures, and an anticipated time-line for the study.

7) Discussion/Conclusion: Approximately 3-5 pages. This section analyzes your proposal almost as if you had conducted the research. You should re-emphasize why your research is important. What are the implications of your potential findings? Include the strengths and weaknesses of your study. How does the study you are proposing build on what others have done? How does it fall short? What are the challenges to conducting the proposed study? What are the threats to validity and reliability in your design?

8) Bibliography/Reference

9) Notes (if applicable)

10) Appendix (tables and graphs if applicable)

Course Policies

Preferred Methods of Scholarly Citations

For written assignments, please use Times New Roman, 12-pitch font, 1-inch margins, and double-spacing. Double-sided printing is encouraged. Citations and note style should be consistent throughout, using Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition (Author-Date referencing). Papers should be of professional quality, thoroughly proofread, and clear of spelling and grammatical errors. References or sources of information for papers must consist of scholarly
(peer-reviewed) articles or journals, government reports or legal citations, or the readings for the class. The use of Wikipedia or other Internet encyclopedia for any paper is not acceptable for graduate level work and will not be accepted.

**Attendance/Tardiness**

Attendance is vital to the success of this course as material presented in lectures and discussed in class may not always appear in the assigned texts. Attendance will be taken during the class. Students who miss more than three classes without a documented excuse (medical or family emergency) will lose two percentage points from their final grade per additional class that they miss. Attendance means attending the entire class! It means paying attention, taking notes, etc. It DOES NOT MEAN reading the newspaper, constantly checking your smartphone, completing assignments for other courses, or engaging in any activity not directly related to the day’s topic. Students who do not attend the whole class or who engage in such inappropriate behavior as described above will not receive attendance credit for that class. Students should make every effort to arrive 5 minutes before the start of class.

**Late Work and Make-up Exams**

Excused late assignments will be allowed only for significant and verifiable personal emergencies (serious personal illness, etc.). Unexcused late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade for each day it is late. Please contact the instructor if you will not be able to complete an assignment on time. If you are not able to attend class, you must still turn in the assignment via email by the due date. No un-penalized extensions will be granted due to pressures of academic life. Make-up exams will not be permitted except in cases of genuine medical emergency, upon production of appropriate documentation, and with the consent of the instructor. There will be no extra credit in this course.

**Cell Phone/Electronic Device Usage**

Over the past two decades there has been a dramatic expansion in electronic mail, cell phones and PDAs. While these devices are helpful they have also created some communications issues with which we are all familiar. Please utilize email first if you have any questions or concerns regarding this class. I check my email account every weekday (Mon-Fri) to answer emails, provide feedback to students and answer questions. If you do send emails in the evening or weekend, please be aware that they may not be read and no response provided until the next weekday at the earliest. Finally, do not assume that I have received an email because you sent one. There are numerous system problems in software and with Internet Service Providers that can cause an email to not reach their intended destination. I will acknowledge email when I receive it.

Important information for this course will be distributed via Blackboard. Class readings, discussion forums, and additional course resources are available on the Blackboard site for this course. It is your responsibility to monitor your Blackboard account regularly to obtain these materials.
**Academic Misconduct**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic misconduct of any kind is unacceptable. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. Consequences for academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in an automatic F (0 points) for that assignment/test. If academic misconduct is suspected on any assessment, the instructor reserves the right to impose restrictions on future assessments for an individual or the entire class as needed. Please note that the university requires faculty members to formally report all instances of academic misconduct via an *Academic Misconduct Incident Form*.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, collusion, and fabrication. *Cheating* is intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise. Cheating also includes: 1) the dependence of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments or 2) the possessing, using, buying, stealing, transporting, selling or soliciting in whole or in part items including, but not limited to, the contents of an un-administered test, test key, homework solutions or possession at any time of current or previous test materials without the instructor’s permission. *Plagiarism* is intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one’s own without proper acknowledgement of the source, with the exception of information that is generally accepted as common knowledge. Plagiarism also includes: 1) the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment or 2) the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. *Multiple submissions* is the submission of substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from instructors of the class for which the student submits the work. *Collusion* is intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another individual in progressing forward on academic assignments. *Fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation* is the intentional altering or inventing of any information or citation that is used in assessing academic work.

If you have questions about the university’s policy on academic misconduct, please see the *Student Code of Conduct* and *Procedure for Academic Misconduct Cases*.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 6 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.
**Classroom/Professional Behavior**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Statement of Civility**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Grade Appeals Process**

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**Disability Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.
Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Academic Advising

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call (361) 825-3466.
Syllabus

1. Introduction

Aug 27 Course Overview (Nishishiba Ch. 2 and 15)

2. Fundamentals of Research

Sep 3 Research Question, Theory Building and Hypotheses (Nishishiba Ch. 3)
Sep 10 Conceptualization/Operationalizing and Measurement (Nishishiba Ch. 7)
Sep 17 Inference and Causality (Nishishiba Ch. 8)
Due: Research Question
Sep 24 Sampling and Generalizability (Nishishiba Ch. 5)

Oct 1 Exam 1

3. Methodologies and Analyses

Oct 8 Quantitative Methods: Survey Research (Nishishiba Ch. 6)
Oct 15 Quantitative Methods: Survey Research Cont.
Due: Literature Review and Hypotheses
Oct 22 Quantitative Methods: Experiments, Quasi-Experiments, and Field Experiments (Nishishiba Ch. 4)
Oct 29 Quantitative Analysis (Nishishiba Ch. 9-13)
Due: Article Review
Nov 5 Qualitative Methods: Case Studies, Observation, Interviewing, Focus Groups, and Comparative Research (Nishishiba Ch. 6)
Nov 12 Qualitative Analysis (Nishishiba Ch. 14)
Due: Research Design
Nov 19 Exam 2
Nov 26 No class (Thanksgiving)

4. Research Proposal

Dec 3 Due: Final Research Proposal and Presentation
NOTE: Every attempt will be made to follow the guidelines outlined in this syllabus as closely as possible. However, I reserve the right to change the course from the guidelines outlined in this syllabus (e.g., the schedule of topics, etc.) if circumstances require it.

(Current as of: June 27, 2015)