Research Methods in Public Administration

Office Hours: Please utilize my office hours first (listed above) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this class. Email should only be used as a secondary option if you are unable to see me during office hours. I check my email account once every weekday (Mon-Fri). 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. I will acknowledge email when I receive it.

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 Outcomes: 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


Additional handouts and readings on Blackboard.
Preferred Methods of Scholarly Citations

For written assignments, please use Times New Roman, 12-pitch font, 1-inch margins, and double-spacing. 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.

Please DO NOT use the citation converter on Microsoft Word or the library databases. They are both incorrect. The following user-friendly online guides to Chicago 16th Edition are provided for your use:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
http://libguides.wwu.edu/content.php?pid=123723&sid=1063051
http://libguides.nps.edu/citation/chicagoad

Major Course Requirements

Midterm Exam 25% (250 points)
Final Exam 25% (250 points)
Article Review 10% (100 points)
Research Proposal 40% (400 points total)
  Research Question/Literature Review (100 points)
  Research Method (75 points)
  Presentation (50 points)
  Final Research Proposal (175 points)

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

• Exams (250 points each; 500 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 (400 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?), 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

**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 two (2) classes without a documented excuse (e.g. 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 or completing assignments for other courses, constantly checking your smartphone, 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 day. 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 (e.g. serious personal illness, family emergency, 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 by the due date and time. Make-up exams will not be permitted except in cases of genuine medical emergency, upon production of appropriate documentation, and with my consent. 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 11 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, discussion groups, 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 (http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**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, Room #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

**Introduction and Fundamentals of Research**

Aug 29    Course Overview & Intro to Social Research (*Chapters 1 & 12*)

Sep 5     (No Class: Labor Day)

Sep 12    Research Question, Hypothesis, Strategy, Theory, and Design (*Chapter 2*)
          Ethics in Research (*Chapter 3*)

Sep 19    Conceptualization and Measurement (*Chapter 4*)

Sep 26    Sampling and Generalizability (*Chapter 5*)

Oct 3     **Due: Research Question and Literature Review**

Oct 10    Causation (*Chapters 6 & 11*)

Oct 17    **Midterm Exam**

**Methodologies and Analyses**

Oct 24    Quantitative Methods: Survey Research (*Chapter 7*)

Oct 31    Quantitative Methods: Experiments and Quasi-Experiments (*Chapter 6*)

Nov 7     Quantitative Analysis (*Chapter 8*)

Nov 14    Qualitative Methods: Observing, Interviewing, and Participating (*Chapter 9*)
          Unobtrusive Measures (*Chapter 11*)

Nov 21    **Due: Article Review**

Nov 28    Qualitative Analysis (*Chapter 10*)
          **Due: Research Design**

Dec 5     **Final Exam**

Dec 12    **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: May 5, 2016)