RESEARCH METHODS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

EMAIL POLICY: The best way to contact me is by email. On weekdays (M-F) I will make every effort to respond to all email inquiries promptly. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours (M-F) or 48 hours (weekends), feel free to send a follow-up email. When emailing, please use your Islander email account, include your name, and what course you are in. I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is meant to familiarize you with the analytical methods, research techniques, and models of inquiry in the social and administrative sciences. Topics will include problem definition, needs assessment, data gathering, processing and interpretation, survey research, secondary analysis, and demographics. Please see course catalog for prerequisites. This course will rely on your mastery of undergraduate and graduate level research methods and statistics in a very obvious way.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Over the course of the semester students will:

1) Demonstrate the ability to interpret, evaluate and present qualitative and quantitative data.
2) Develop the skills necessary to participate in and contribute to the public policy process by presenting results reliably and accurately and with structured coherent arguments.
3) Develop the skills necessary to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions based on empirical data.
4) Develop the skills necessary to conduct quality policy and program analyses.
5) Demonstrate the ability to apply professional standards of writing and research to issues in public administration.

REQUIRED READING:


Additional handouts and readings assigned by the instructor.

RECOMMENDED READING:

*If you do not wish to purchase a copy of the APA manual, a user friendly online guide to APA style is available here: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/).


*Newer editions now available.

**ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION POLICY:** Attendance will be taken regularly. Regular attendance is necessary if you want to do well in the course. Exams will cover material presented during the lectures that may not be covered in the text. Additionally, many of the assignments are based on activities that we will be doing in class. If you are not in class, you will not be able to complete the related assignments. In general, you are expected to attend class regularly and come to class prepared to discuss required readings and assignments. If you are unprepared for class, you will be counted absent for that period.

**Absences:** Do not ask the instructor for copies of PowerPoint presentations/lecture notes/handouts/videos for classes you have missed. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to get these materials from a classmate. PowerPoint presentations will not be posted on Blackboard.

**STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAY POLICY:** Section 51.91 (b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observation of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University Policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor.

A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made within the first fifteen days of the semester or the first seven days of a summer session in which the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable time frame in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

**GRADING:** Your course grade will be based on your grades on the required exams and assignments. Your grades will be posted on Blackboard. **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will only be accepted for 72 hours past the due date/time. All late papers and assignments will have 10 points deducted per day, including holidays and weekends. In addition, you are responsible for following all instructions for submitting assignments. **I DO NOT ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS VIA EMAIL.** If an assignment is due on Blackboard, you are required to submit the correct assignment, as a single document, the first time. You are allowed only one submission.
EXAMS: There will be two exams given over the course of the semester. Each exam is worth 200 points (20% of your final grade). See the course calendar for exam dates. The exams may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions over material from the textbook (which may not be discussed in class), lectures, and other material provided by the instructor in class or on Blackboard. Missed Exams: You will only be able to make up a missed exam if you provide the instructor with a reasonable excuse for missing the exam ahead of time!! “Reasonable excuses” are determined at the discretion of the instructor and may require documentation. The instructor reserves the right to alter the content and format of exams taken outside of the designated class period for the exam.

ARTICLE REVIEW: You will be provided with two articles over the course of the semester and asked to write essays describing and critiquing the methods employed by the researchers. The articles and additional instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: Because of the limited time available in a semester, you will not be conducting a study for your primary project in this class. Instead, you will write a proposal for a study that you could conduct. Writing a research proposal can feel overwhelming, so the project will be broken up into smaller writing assignments using the notebook method. These smaller assignments will ultimately be compiled and edited for your final research proposal. All sections of the research proposal should follow proper APA 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) **Introduction:** Approximately 2 pages*. This sets the foundation for everything else in your research proposal. It should include the purpose of the study, why the study is important, the hypothesis, why the research is worthy of funding, and who would benefit from/be interested in the findings.

2) **Literature Review:** Approximately 10 pages*. This section should provide a thorough and well organized review of previous studies that relate to your research question. Your writing should not reflect your opinion on the topic. However, you are encouraged to critique the methodology of other articles or highlight gaps in the literature, particularly if this supports the relevance of the study you are proposing. Your literature review should include at least 10 academic sources. If there is a lack of research in your topic area, see the instructor. We will spend at least one class period on how to evaluate articles and conduct a good literature review.

3) **Methods:** Approximately 3-5 pages*. This section describes and justifies your research design. It should include a statement/re-statement of your research question and hypothesis. 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, an anticipated time-line for the study, and an anticipated budget.

4) **Discussion/Conclusion:** Approximately 2-3 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?

These page limits are only guidelines. The length of your proposal will vary based on the topic that you choose, and your grade will reflect the *quality* of your work.

*If you would like feedback prior to submitting an assignment, you may submit questions or samples of your work in person or by email. In order to guarantee feedback on written assignments, you must submit them to me at least one week prior to the due date. I will make every effort to provide feedback at all times but may not be able to provide you with timely feedback if you submit a paper less than one week prior to the due date.*

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<th>My Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td>Article Review 1</td>
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**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY:**

Up to 24 percent of this course will take place online. This course makes use of the Blackboard system. To be successful in the course you will need access to reliable internet service. *Most of the assignments in this course will be submitted using Blackboard.* Specific instructions for submitting assignments will be included on the individual assignments.
You will have additional reading and/or small assignments due each week, so it is imperative that you check Blackboard and your Islander email account daily during the week for important course updates and reading assignments.

If you need help with Blackboard:

- View the tutorials at [https://iol.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html](https://iol.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html)
- Call the IT help desk at (361) 825-2692
- Email computer.helpline@tamucc.edu

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
The faculty of the College of Liberal Arts expects students to conduct their academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments as a member of the college.

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.

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RECORDING POLICY:
In this class, students **may not** make audio or video recordings of any course activity unless the student has an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Services permitting the recording of class meetings. In such cases, the accommodation letter must be presented to the instructor in advance of any recording being done and all students in the course will be notified whenever recording will be taking place. Students who are permitted to record classes are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements
or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Distribution without permission is a violation of educational privacy law.

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INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE:
The Department of Social Sciences is committed to University Values as stated in the Momentum 20/20 Strategic Plan. It values Inclusion, “to foster an environment of mutual respect that values and engages diverse people, ideas, views, and practices.” With the University, the Program believes “we must foster a campus climate with an ethos of respect, inclusion, empowerment, shared responsibility and social justice for all.”

TITLE IX:
As a recipient of Federal financial assistance for education activities, TAMUCC is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to ensure that all of its education programs and activities are free from discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual discrimination includes sexual misconduct (sexual violence, stalking, intimate partner violence, gender based animosity and gender based stereotyping). If you have questions about Title IX or wish to file a Title IX complaint, please visit the TAMUCC Title IX website: http://edcs.tamucc.edu/titleIX/ or call Sam Ramirez, Campus Title IX Director PH: 361-825-2765 email: Samuel.ramirez@tamucc.edu or Rosie Ruiz, Campus Title IX Deputy Coordinator PH: 361-825-5826 email: rosie.ruiz@tamucc.edu.

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.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS:
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.

**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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** 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 8th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**GRADE APPEALS:**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has 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. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**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.
**CALENDAR**

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<th>READING</th>
<th>EXAMS/APPONMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08/27</td>
<td>Introduction to Course &amp; Syllabus&lt;br&gt;  Selecting a Research Topic&lt;br&gt;  Formulating a Research Question&lt;br&gt;  How to Conduct a Literature Review&lt;br&gt;  Writing Strategies&lt;br&gt;  Avoiding Plagiarism</td>
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<td>Student Info Sheet&lt;br&gt;  Diagnostic Exam</td>
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<td>Introduction to Social Research Methods &amp; Terminology</td>
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<td>Ethics in Research</td>
<td>CH. 3</td>
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<td>Conceptualization, Operationalization, &amp; Measurement</td>
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<td>Sampling</td>
<td>CH. 5</td>
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<td>10/29</td>
<td>Causation &amp; Research Design</td>
<td>CH. 6,8</td>
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<td>11/26</td>
<td>Survey Research</td>
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<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
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<td><strong>FINAL EXAM</strong></td>
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*The course calendar is subject to change based on student interests, availability of guest speakers, and time constraints. All changes to the calendar will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.*