COURSE OVERVIEW

This course serves as an introduction to research design in the social sciences—particularly as it applies to research on public policy and management topics. The course will cover topics such as the generation of research questions; theory development and testing; experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental research designs; defining and measuring concepts; quantitative and qualitative data collection; and causal inference. The course places particular emphasis on causal explanation and the statistics of causal inference because this is the dominant paradigm in the social sciences and understanding it is critical to forging a successful research career.

Learning will take place via readings outside of class, discussion of those readings in class, and the completion of a research design and final exam. It is important to note that the reading load, as well as the content of the readings, will sometimes be quite challenging. That is because I want students to know what they should aspire to master if they wish to become top researchers in the field. The idea is that students will revisit difficult readings and, hopefully, have a good grasp of them by the time they finish their PhDs. It is important to keep this in mind whenever reading assignments seem excessively difficult or inaccessible. Students will learn by struggling through readings and discussing them in class. Part of my job is to make sure that you grasp their main points and importance.

LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students should be able to do following:
1) Formulate research questions of interest to the field
2) Generate research designs appropriate for answering those questions
3) Explain why those designs are appropriate given applicable constraints
4) Describe the dominant research paradigm as it applies to public policy and management research
5) Critically assess the quality of public policy and management research with respect to this paradigm
**BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT**

*Participation (20% of Final Grade)*

Informed participation is necessary for the success of this seminar. Students are required to complete and contemplate the readings before class, and they are required to demonstrate this preparation by contributing meaningfully to seminar discussions. Every week, I will document each student’s contribution as having been good, adequate, or inadequate. To get full participation credit, students will need to have received a rating of “good” more often than not, and they cannot have received a rating of “inadequate.” Please remember that the reading load, as well as the content of the readings, will sometimes be quite challenging. When that is the case, I will look for evidence that you tried hard to understand readings. Thus, I expect you to have read carefully, but I do not expect you to have mastered the content. That said, please let me know if you have concerns about the readings (or any other assignment). I’m here to help.

*Research Proposal (40% of Final Grade)*

Doctoral students at the Glenn College must defend a research proposal before they can begin focusing on their dissertation. To simulate this process, you are required to complete a research proposal for this course. Like the dissertation proposal, students must formulate a problem, situate it in the appropriate literature, provide a conceptual framework/theory, and offer a research design for interrogating that framework/theory—including specific plans for data collection and analysis. I will grade the proposals based on the rubric doctoral committees use to evaluate dissertation proposals. Specific guidelines will be discussed during the first class. We will discuss your proposals as a class during the last couple of weeks of class.

*Final Exam (40% of Final Grade)*

Doctoral students at the Glenn College must pass candidacy exams before reaching the dissertation stage. The “research design” component requires students to critically evaluate and justify the design of a research project they have already commenced (e.g., a first-year paper) and to discuss how they might extend that research with a subsequent study. To simulate this process, I will distribute a research article and give you one week to read and critique it (e.g., in terms of the importance of the research question, the quality of the theoretical contribution, external vs. internal validity, etc.). You will also be required to offer a design for a follow-up study to extend this research. Grading will be based on the rubric used for the candidacy exam, which I will distribute the first week of class. Please note that you are prohibited from discussing any part of the take-home exam with anyone but me during the examination period.

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>77-79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>73-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>60-66.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>&lt; 59.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The following texts are required. I recommend that you purchase the first and that you use the free online version of the second, though feel free to purchase a hardcopy if you prefer. All other readings are available on Carmen.


The following texts are optional. They are often used in research design classes and could be useful resources.

  Available free through OSU library:
  1. Go to [http://library ohio state edu/screens/databases.html](http://library.ohio-state.edu/screens/databases.html)
  2. Search for “Sage Research Methods Online.”
  3. Log in first using your OSU lastname.# and password if prompted to do so.
  4. Click *Sage Research Methods online*.
  5. Title search for “The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods.”


NOTE: Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: [www.shopOhioState.com](http://www.shopOhioState.com) as well as from their BuckeyeLink Student Center. This information is disseminated by B&N to all area bookstores. You may buy from a store of your choice and/or shop for books (always use ISBN# for searches) online.
SCHEDULE

Week 1 (1/11). Research Questions and the Basics of Social Scientific Inquiry

- Knowledge Base, Foundations (read all):
  http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intres.php
- Knowledge Base, Designing Designs for Research:
  http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desdes.php
- Angrist and Pischke (Chapter 1)
- Sample Comprehensive Exam Question
- Research Proposal Guidelines
- Sample Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation Proposal Evaluation Form

Further Reading:


Week 2 (1/18). Role of Theory and Causal Explanation in Empirical Inquiry

- Lave, Charles A. and James G. March. 1975. An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of American. Chapter 1 (pages 1-42). (Might be better to assign through Chapter 2, page 84, but I don’t have PDF yet)

Further Reading:


**Week 3 (1/25). Experimental Research Designs**

- Knowledge Base, Design (read from Internal Validity through Experimental Design): [http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/design.php](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/design.php)
- Angrist and Pischke (Chapter 2)

**Further Reading:**

- Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (Chapters 1-3; 8-10)

**Week 4 (2/1). Selection on Observables: Sample Selection, Missing Data, and Heterogeneous Effects**

- Angrist and Pischke (Chapter 3)

Further Reading:


Week 5 (2/8). Selection on Unobservables: Panel Methods

- Angrist and Pischke (Chapter 5)

Further Reading:

- Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (Chapters 4-6)

Week 6 (2/15). Selection on Unobservables: IV and RD Designs

- Knowledge Base, Quasi-Experimental Design (RD Design only): http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/quasird.php
Further Reading:

- Angrist and Pischke (Chapter 4, 6)
- Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (Chapter 7)

**Week 7 (2/22). Concepts and Measurement**

- Jackman, S. “Measurement,” in J. Box-Steppensmeier, H. Brady, and D. Collier, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology
- [TBD: example from OB literature]

Further Reading:

- Ragin, C. *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, ch. 6

**Week 8 (3/1). Collection and Analysis of Survey Data**

Week 9 (3/8). Observational Data, Big Data, and Social Science Research

- Knowledge Base, Unobtrusive Measures: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/unobtrus.php
- [TBD” Workman Chapter on Machine Learning and Coding Regulations]

Week 10 (3/15). Spring Break

Week 11 (3/22). Qualitative Research in a Quantitative world

- Knowledge Base, Qualitative Measures (all sections): http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php
- H. Brady and D. Collier, eds., Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards (selections to be determined)


Further Reading:


**Week 13 (4/5). Reflection: What is the Best Way to Design Research?**


**Due: Research Proposals**

**Week 14 (4/12). Discussion of Student Research Proposals**

**Week 15 (4/19). Discussion of Student Research Proposals**

**Week 16 (4/26). Take-home Exam Due**

*****IMPORTANT NOTICES BELOW – PLEASE READ!!!******
STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273--TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

ADA Statement

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; http://www.ods.osu.edu/.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of Student Conduct may constitute “Academic Misconduct.” Sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct, Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s Code of Student Conduct is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct.