Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
10:762:395

RESEARCH METHODS

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:00, and by appointment (location TBD)

Lecture: Wednesdays, 1:10-4:10
Classroom: Hardenbergh Hall, Room A3

Lab Sessions: Section 1: Mondays 9:50-11:10
Section 2: Mondays 11:30-12:50
CAC Computer lab

Course Description and Teaching Style

This course is designed to introduce students to research methods for public health, urban planning, and public policy. Basically, the course is an introduction to the fundamentals of social science research. The main goal is for you to learn to design and interpret research so you can solve problems and make informed decisions. During this semester, you will learn how to ask questions, how to probe for answers, and how to evaluate the answers we get as a result of research. The emphasis of the class is on gaining the ability to think logically and critically about social science research. We will cover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but more time will be spent on the former. I do not assume any previous work in methodology and there are no prerequisites for this class. The goal of this class is NOT to make you into expert statisticians or quantitative researchers, but into educated consumers – and often critics – of the research of others. Equally important, this class should give you a firm foundation upon which to stand as you complete your capstone class for your major.

The class meetings are comprised of a weekly 2 hour 50 min class lecture period and a weekly 1 hour 20 min. lab session. The format for the class lecture period will include a mix of lectures and student participation. I will attempt to use discussion in place of traditional lectures whenever possible and encourage questions **and I expect class participation**. I ask that you be physically and mentally present at every class session. The lab session will provide you with a smaller group meeting to ask additional questions and gain some hands-on practice with the concepts we learn in lecture. Thus, the lab will be structured around cases, discussions, homework preparation and a tutorial on the statistical software package, SPSS, you will use in the lab and likely will use in future coursework.

Course Objectives
The goal of this course is to provide students with1) An understanding of the logic of scientific inquiry and how to measure concepts 2) An ability to develop a research hypothesis and a complementary research design 3) An awareness of different types of data collection and analyses – both qualitative and quantitative 4) An introduction to analyzing quantitative data to test your own ideas about relationships between concepts

Required Readings
Schutt, Russell. 2006. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research.* 6th Edition. **Available at the main Rutgers bookstore in downtown New Brunswick.**

You will be required to read the newspaper everyday (on-line is okay) to be prepared to discuss topical policy issues at the start of class each week. We will do this for the first 30 minutes of class with the objective of understanding how to approach various policy topics from a research perspective.

Any additional readings will be distributed in class or posted to the class website on Sakai.

Grading
The totality of your grade is 100 percent.

Lab Assignments: 30%
- Assignment 1: 10%
- Assignment 2: 10%
- Assignment 3: 10%

Class participation: 20%
- Lecture: 10%
- Lab: 10%

Midterm examination: 20%

Final paper: 30%

Allocation of these percentages are subject to change at my discretion

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:
A = 90 -100; Excellent or Superior
B+ = 86 -89; Very Good
B = 80 -85; Good
C+ = 76 -79; Solid Overall, but some flaws
C = 70 -75; Average
D = 60 -69; Significant problems in the work in terms of understanding, effort or writing
F = 59 or below; Failing **including any instances of plagiarism**

Ground Rules

Collegial and respectful conduct is expected in class. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. To facilitate this process, class will start and end on time. Although I understand emergencies occur, timely arrivals and departures should be the norm.

Please turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices during class.

Attendance at all class sessions is expected. Any missed classes without an excused absence will count against your class participation grade. If there is an emergency or if you are ill, please send me an email to insure you are not marked down for non-participation in class.

All assignments must be completed on time. They should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and submitted in hard copy and electronically. Late work will be penalized. Assignments turned in the following week will be marked down an entire grade. Assignments cannot be submitted any later than one week after the due date; missed assignments will receive a failing grade.

Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Such actions will result in a failing grade in the class. For further information about academic misconduct and a full explanation of the University's policies, please see the University's *Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students* located on the web at http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html.

My office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus. If any questions or concerns arise, please come see me. If you cannot make my office hours, please make an appointment, via email. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

Lecture, Lab, and Reading Schedule

Please note, this is subject to change as the semester progresses

Date	**Topic**	**Readings**
9/2	Introductions and course overview	
9/8	*SPSS: Basics of data management* ***(Note: Tuesday class)***	
9/9	Problem definition; overview of the research process; terms	Chapters 1 and 2
9/14	*In-class exercise: Operationalization*	
9/16	Research ethics	Chapter 3
9/21	*SPSS: Basics of univariate analysis*	
9/23	Conceptualization and measurement	Chapter 4, Appendix D
9/28	*In-class exercise: Validity*	
9/30	Research designs, causation, and experiments	Chapter 6 and 7
10/5	*SPSS: Basics of bivariate analysis*	
10/7	Sampling	Chapter 5
10/12	*In-class exercise: Samples and Populations*	

10/14	Primary Qualitative Data Collection	Chapter 9
10/19	*Midterm review*	
10/21	**MIDTERM EXAM**	
10/26	*Lecture: Methods of qualitative analysis*	
10/28	Primary Quantitative Data Collection: Survey research, in-class research survey	Chapter 8
11/2	*Case Study: Polling and the N.J. gubernatorial election*	
11/4	Secondary and historical research	Chapters 12 and 13
11/9	*Lecture: Finding research information*	
11/11	Introduction to SPSS	Handout, Appendix F
11/16	*In-class work on data analysis*	
11/18	Quantitative analysis	Chapter 14
11/23	*Individual meetings on final paper: please schedule time in advance! (lab also available for in-class work on data analysis, if needed)*	
11/25	**THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS**	
11/30	*In-class work on data analysis*	
12/2	Quantitative analysis	Chapter 15
12/7	*In-class work on data analysis*	
12/9	Quantitative analysis; Wrap-up of semester	Chapter 11

Exam and Assignment Schedule

Assignment	**Date distributed**	**Date due**	**Covers:**
Assignment 1	September 21st	October 5th	Measurement: Finding/ decomposing a statistic
Midterm Exam	October 21st		Chapters 1, 3-7, 9
Assignment 2	October 26th	November 9th	Data collection
Assignment 3	November 16th	November 23rd	Data analysis
Final Paper	November 23rd	December 13th	Data analysis