Introduction to Research Methods for Public Administrators

Overview

This course is an introduction to methods of empirical social research, and how they are used to assemble, describe, and draw inferences from bodies of data. It is designed to enhance your “hands-on” research experience. We will read literature, but the emphasis of the class will be on actually doing research. Students will “learn by doing” in the Deweyan sense of learning through experiences. This will give you an opportunity to meet the kinds of situations and issues about which we will read and discuss. In this way, you will have some experience upon which to “hang” our theoretical and methodological discussions.

We shall discuss elementary methods of statistical analysis for information drawn from surveys or archives. I do not want you to be “terrorized” or immobilized by the fear of numbers before you start to do research. I guarantee that you will enjoy playing numbers in this class when you need to and the “fear factor” about numbers will be minimized or even eliminated.

The course seeks to develop your practical skills as both a consumer and a producer of social research, and it is designed with this in mind. I hope that upon completion of the course you will be a more informed and critical reader of academic work, news accounts and advertising materials that present statistical evidence. You should also be able to execute and present elementary statistical analyses on your own.

Requirements

1. In Class Discussions (they will account for 25% of your final grade)
   There will be a series of in-class discussions. In these, we collectively improve our knowledge and understanding about the basic concepts. Emphasis will be placed on your ability to make sense of social research methodologies that are presented to you, not on your ability to do calculations under time pressure. The key for successfully accomplish these discussions is to understand class contents clearly. These discussions also serve as tools to check your class attendance. Each time you participate in the discussions, you’ll get 20 points regardless of your performance. NO make-up will be granted.

2. Six Research Projects (They will account for 75% of your final grade)
These projects are designed to enhance your “hands-on” experience by actually doing research. You are expected to begin your research experience during the second week of the course. Our theoretical and methodological discussions will be based on these hands-on experiences. Specific requirements for each of these projects will be handed out to you one week ahead of the due date. In addition to answering the questions for each project, you are also strongly encouraged to reflect on your research process while writing your report; that is, your thoughts on the positive experiences (neat solutions to problems) as well as on the difficulties, problems, and mistakes (which we all make) made in the research process. These projects must be submitted on time and late submission will be penalized by 8 points/week.

Grading

Final grades will be based on a possible total of 400 points.
1. Projects = 300 points for total of six exercises. Each project will be graded on a perfect score of 50.
2. Discussions = 100 points and 20 points for each of them.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>372-- 400</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>352-- 359</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>312-- 319</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>240-- 269</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>360-- 371</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>332-- 351</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>282-- 311</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>220-- 239</td>
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<td>320-- 331</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>270-- 281</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>&lt;220</td>
<td>F</td>
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Text


Other Information:
1. Changes in syllabus may be modified as deemed appropriate. All changes will be announced in class.
2. Students with a disability who are requesting academic accommodations should inform me as soon as possible and contact the college administration.
3. Any student who is unable, because of religious beliefs, to attend class on a particular day shall be excused under the condition that s/he informs me ahead of the class.

Outline, Exercises and Readings

Week One
Logics of Research Design and Literature Review
**Reading:** Chapters 2 & 3
Discussion 1

**Project 1:** Find Two Major Theoretical Discussions on the Topic: Why do people obey? Summarize these theories in a two-page literature review.

**Class meeting as arranged**

**Week Two**
Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

**Reading:** Chapter 4 & 10
Discussion 2

**Project 2:** Let’s Measure “POWER”!

**Week Three**
Using Available Data

**Reading:** Chapter 9
Discussion 3

**Project 3:** Using the Census Bureau Data: let’s pretend to assume a role as government officials to distribute a large sum of federal funding!

**Week Four**
Observational Techniques & Qualitative Interviewing

**Reading:** Chapter 6
Discussion 4

**Project 4:** Observation in an Elevator: What rules do people follow in a confined space? Write a brief research report based on your field observation.

**Week Five**
Sampling Techniques and Questionnaire Design and Structured Interviews

**Reading:** Chapters 5 & 7
Discussion 5

**Project 5:** Questionnaire Design: Survey of the WSC Students about their class attendance.

**Week Six**
Quantitative Data Analysis: Using SPSS

**Reading:** Chapter 11, 13, & 15

**Project 6:** Let’s Try to Understand Why Most Students Obey College Rules!

**Class meeting as arranged.**