

PADM 0650-501,
Summer-II 2011

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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. Online Class Discussions (they will account for 25% of your final grade)

There will be a series of five required and graded on-line discussions. In these, your knowledge and understanding about the basic concepts will be examined. Emphasis will be placed on your ability to make sense of basic research methodologies that are presented to you. In addition to answering the questions, you are also required to use the discussion forum 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.

The key for successfully accomplish these discussions is to read the textbook carefully and go through the class lecture outlines attentively. These discussions also serve as tools to push you actively participate in the class activities in an online environment. Therefore, 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 posted online one week ahead of the due date. Due to the tight schedule in the short summer session, these projects must be submitted on time and no late submission will be accepted.

3. Effort and Conduct (plus or minus 10% of your final grade)

The class depends on engaged learning which is guaranteed through informed reading and active participation. I reserve the right to add or subtract 10% points from your final grade based on my judgment on your effort and conduct. Although I don’t expect that to happen, I would like to put up a warning in advance that I reserve the right to fail any student who fails to participate in more than 50% online discussions and/or fails to submit projects on time for more than three times in a row.

Grading

Final grades will be based on a possible total of 400 points.

Projects = 300 points for total of six exercises.

Each project will be graded on a perfect score of 50.

Discussions = 100 points and 20 points for each of them.

Effort and Conduct = extra 40 plus or minus points.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

372-- 400	A	360-- 371	A-		
352-- 359	B+	332-- 351	B	320-- 331	B-
312-- 319	C+	282-- 311	C	270-- 281	C-
240-- 269	D+	220-- 239	D	<220	F

Text

Elizabethann O’ Sullivan, Gary R. Rassel, and Maureen Berner Research Methods for Public Administrators, Any Edition, Longman

Other Information:

1. Changes in syllabus may be modified as deemed appropriate. All changes will be posted in the online classroom ahead of the time.
2. Students with a disability who are requesting academic accommodations should inform me as soon as possible and contact the college administration.

Outline, Exercises and Readings (detailed course outline will be posted in the online classroom)

Week One (July 5th—July 9th)

Human Rationality and Literature Review

Class Meets on _____, Classroom: _____

Reading: Chapters 2 & 3; Appendix A & D

Discussion--1

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

Due: July 10th before 11:00 pm

Week Two (July 11th—July 16th)

Research Design

Reading: Chapter 1

Discussion--2

Project 2: Design a research project about local government decision making: how do we know it is right or wrong?

Due: July 17th before 11:00 pm

Week Three (July 18th – July 23rd)

Using Available Data

Reading: Appendix H

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!

Due: July 24th before 11:00 pm

Week Four (July 25th—July 30th)

Sampling, Questionnaires & Structured Interviews

Reading: Chapters 5 & 8

Discussion-- 4

Project 4: Questionnaire Design: Survey of the Westfield residents: how often do they participate in local affairs?

Due: July 31st before 11:00 pm

Week Five (August 1st – August 6th)

Qualitative Interviewing & Observational Techniques

Reading: Chapter 9

Discussion-- 5

Project 5: Observation in your own or anybody else' office: what rules do people follow in an office setting? Write a brief research report based on your field observation.

Due: August 7th before 11: 00 pm

Week Six (August 8th – August 15th)

Quantitative Data Analysis and Using SPSS

Reading: Appendix F

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

Due: _____ in class (classroom: _____)