Course Objectives

This is a course on both how to think as a social scientist and how to conceive and execute critical work in the social sciences. It is designed to challenge each student with the fundamentals, nature, purpose, and methods of social science research. The course deals with matters concerning both qualitative and quantitative methodology that are relevant to Public Administration, Public Policy Analysis, and Program Evaluation. Actual topics to be covered include the philosophy of science, the role of theory, research design and evaluation, data collection and analysis, use of emerging technologies, and writing research reports. Basic issues in dissertation writing and undertaking publishable work will also be addressed throughout the course of the semester. Since students come from differing backgrounds, little or no assumptions will be made regarding prior exposure to research methods in the social sciences.

The materials for the course are organized topically. This topical format allows for periodic learning assessments/feedback. It also encourages continuity. Each participant is expected to have a computer research account.

Required Texts


Norusis, Marija J. (2002). SPSS 11.0 Guide to Data Analysis. New Jersey, Upper
Saddle, River: Prentice Hall.

**Reference Materials**


**Course Requirements**
Readings: Students benefit more from lectures if required readings are completed prior to the session(s) where the materials are presented. Each student is expected to read accordingly.

Attendance: Class attendance is strongly recommended since requirements are based on lectures and class discussions.

Assignments, Grading, and Exams: There will be an in-class final examination. There will be one major assignment--the preparation of a research design. Each student will formulate a problem and design an appropriate research technique for answering the question(s) posed. There will be two minor assignments during the course of the semester. The final grade will be computed as follows: class attendance and participation, 20%; class assignments, 20%; research design, 30%; final exam, 30%.

Honesty: Plagiarism is the act of taking ideas and/or written statements from another and passing them off as one's own. Examples of this are failing to cite a source for statements used in a paper and failing to signify a quotation through the use of quotation marks. Anyone engaging in this intellectually dishonest practice will receive a grade of "F" for the assignment in which it occurs. If you are uncertain of the meaning of this policy, please contact the instructor.

Course Outline

August 25/September 1 Introduction

Assigned Reading: None

September 8/15 UNIT ONE: The Philosophy and Organization of Science

Instructional Objectives:
- social science research as message sending
- theory building and paradigms
- paradigms in the social sciences
- the quantitative/qualitative debate (real or imaginary?)
- public administration research as social science research
- ethical considerations in social science research

Assigned Reading:
- Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
Sept. 22/29; Oct. 6 UNIT TWO: Research Design and Evaluation

Instructional Objectives:

-conceiving research in the social sciences
-the structure of causality
-the predictive nature of science
-hypotheses, concepts, variables
-asking and developing a research question
-causal modeling
-reliability and validity
-literature review
-sampling

Assigned Readings:

-Babbie, Part 2
-White, D. Jay and Adams, Guy B. (All)

Oct. 13/20/27 UNIT THREE: Data Collection Techniques/Issues

Instructional Objectives:

-primary data collection (experimentation, surveys, field work)
-secondary data collection and use
-questionnaire construction and coding
-measurement and scaling
-document analysis
Assigned Readings:

- Babbie, Part 3
- Shadish, William R., Cook, Thomas, D.; and Campbell, Donald T.

Nov. 3/10  UNIT FOUR: Data Preparation/Computer Applications
Use of Emerging Technologies

Instructional Objectives:

- general review of data in research.
- getting data ready for the computer.
- asking the computer for answers.
- looking for relationships.
- Cyberspace and the future of research.
- Nachmias, chapt 14

Assigned Readings:

- Babbie, Part 4
- Norusis (All)

Nov. 17/24  UNIT FIVE: Research Report & Technical Writing

Instructional Objectives:

- use of charts, tables, etc.
- issues in dissertation writing
- writing for academic journals
- non-technical writing/presentation

Assigned Readings:

- Babbie, Chapter 17

December 1  Examination
Research Designs Due
The Research Design

To receive a grade in this course, a student must complete a research design. The design should be approximately 13 pages long, typewritten, double-spaced, referenced and must reflect the preparer's original thinking. The design must contain sufficient details as to make it a blueprint, i.e., it should be prepared in such a manner that an independent person could easily implement it in the absence of the preparer. All topics must be approved by the instructor.

Whenever social scientists are called upon to evaluate any piece of scholarly work--theses, dissertation, journal articles, research reports, etc.,--they are guided by four major questions:

1. What questions are being asked and are they worth asking?
2. To what body of knowledge do these questions belong?
3. What methodology is employed to answer those questions and is it the correct methodology?
4. What results are obtained and what contribution has been made?

These questions also comprise the major sections of a well executed research design. Although some works may not fit this model or some parts thereof totally, mastering the model can only be likened to mastering the alphabets: students build very quickly beyond this point. With this in mind, I require that all designs for this course embody all of these questions. In practical terms, the questions breakdown as follows:

Part One: What questions are being asked and are they worth asking? (This is called the problem identification stage)

* What is the problem?
* Why should we be interested in this problem?
* What concepts, hypotheses, and theories are you concerned with?
* How are these concepts, hypotheses, and theories related conceptually or practically?

Part Two: To what body of knowledge do these questions belong? (This is the literature review stage)

* What have other scholars (in some cases popular writers) said about this particular subject?
* Are these works directly or indirectly related?
* What gaps do you see in this literature?
* Will your research address this gap or some part of it?
Note: This review helps you to refine the research questions, variables of interest, hypotheses, concepts, theories, etc.

Part Three: What methodology is employed to answer these questions and is it the correct methodology? (This is the methodology stage)

* Measurement Issues
  - Units of Analysis
  - Population versus sample
  - Operationalization of concepts and variables
  - Dependent and independent variables

* Data Collection Strategies
  - Experiment
  - Survey
  - Fieldwork
  - Aggregate
  - Documents

* Data Analysis
  - Level of data and statistical operations feasible
  - Univariate, bivariate, multivariate
  - Descriptive or inferential

Part Four: What results are obtained and what contribution has been made? (This is the research report stage)

* Manner of presentation--charts, tables, histograms, etc.