

Public Administration 705

Research Methods

Silverman

HSS 137 Office Hours Monday 6:30-7:00/Tuesday/Thursday 5:30-6:00

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This class provides a theoretical and practical introduction to social science research for public and nonprofit administration. In it, we will cover the ways that social scientists pose research questions and the methodologies they use to answer these questions. We will cover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and will look at ways to collect and analyze data.

The ultimate goal of this course and the next, 706, is for the student to design, implement and report on an original research project. In this course, you will select your topic of study, conduct a literature review which helps you refine the research question, and design your methodology. This will culminate in a research prospectus. In 706 you will actually analyze your data and write up the final research project discussing your findings and how they relate to, and refine the original research question. In order to accomplish this goal we will cover both qualitative and quantitative methods of posing research questions, of designing research studies and (in 706) in analyzing the data we collect.

Secondary goals for the course are to produce intelligent consumers of research. Through this course, you will learn how to approach articles and reports that contain research. The class will help you understand how to evaluate the quality of research and how to ask what additional questions are raised by the research findings. An additional goal for the course is to permit you to intelligently contract for research. Public and nonprofit administrators often work with program evaluators. This class will help you know what questions to ask of them, and to make thoughtful decisions about the quality of their work.

Course requirements

a. Homework (30%) – There will be a series of weekly assignments. These will involve first the work to produce the proposal. Second there will be some assignments that require you to apply the materials presented in class to your research question.

b. Research proposal (30%) You will develop a research question, relate it to the literature and design your method of securing data. This proposal must involve both qualitative and quantitative data. It is acceptable to conduct a secondary analysis of an existing quantitative data set. You will present your proposals in the last two class periods.

c. Class participation (10%) You are expected to attend class and to participate in class exercises

d. Midterm and final (15 percent each): These will cover the basic concepts presented in class.

Course outline and reading

- 1/29 Introduction to the logic of research: natural science and interpretive positions. Discussion of the research prospectus
- 2/5 Forming Research Questions using qualitative and quantitative approaches
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 1,2; Berg Chapter 1
- 2/12 What is a literature review? How does it help frame the research question? What are the important issues in selecting a research design?
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 3 (pp 55-66 only); Berg Chapter 2
- 2/19 What are we headed with quantitative analysis – simple statistics
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 11 (pp 319-322), Chapter 13 (pp 388-404)
- 2/20 Issues of Measurement and Index and Scale Creation
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 4,10
- 3/5 Modes of data collection – experimental design and program evaluation
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 3 (pp 66- 97); handout
- 3/12 Modes of Data Collection: Survey Research and Sampling
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 5, 6
- 3/19 Modes of Data Collection: Interview Schedules, Questionnaires and Depth Interviewing
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 7; Berg Chapter 4,5
Midterm Distributed
- 3/26 Modes of Data Collection: Observational Strategies: Ethnography and Unobtrusive Measures
Reading: Berg Chapter 6,8
Midterm Due

- 4/2 Modes of Data Collection: Use of Existing Documents and Historical Analysis
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 9; Berg Chapter 9
- 4/16 Modes of Data Collection: Case Study Strategies and Action Research
Reading: Berg Chapter 7,10
- 4/23 Ethical Issues in Doing Research: Institutional Review Boards
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 8; Berg Chapter 3
- 4/31 Writing the Research Report
Reading: O'Sullivan, Chapter 15 ; Berg Chapter 12
- 5/7 Class Presentations
- 5/14 Class Presentations
Take Home Final Distributed