

RESEARCH DESIGN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM DEPT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course introduces the fundamentals of research design in the social sciences. The course takes students through the entire research design process, from developing research questions to selecting and executing various data collection and analysis methods. Students will also develop the skills to critically digest, interpret, and evaluate research produced for both academic and practitioner audiences. The course's overarching goal is to prepare students to critically process, generate, and communicate public affairs research. Upon completing the course, students should be able to:

- ✎ Process academic and practitioner research in an informed manner, including critical assessment of research design strengths and limitations.
- ✎ Interpret and communicate research findings, including an evaluation of research quality and credibility, for practitioner audiences.
- ✎ Design and execute a research study on par with the MPA/MPP degree-required major research or capstone project.

COURSE DETAILS

PADMN 6289, Summer 2019
 May 13-August 2
 Class meetings: 6-9 pm
 Gardner Commons, Rm 4660

INSTRUCTOR INFO

Prof. David P. Carter
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 Office: GC 3329
 Office Hours: By appointment

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REQUIRED COURSE TEXTBOOK

The required course book is listed below, followed by *optional* supplementary texts that you may find helpful. We'll draw heavily on other materials, such as journal articles and online resources; with the exception of the books below, all materials are provided or linked to through the course Canvas site.

Johnson, Gail. (2014). *Research methods for public administrators: 3rd edition*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKS

Giventer, Lawrence L. (2008). *Statistical analysis for public administration*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Babbie, Earl, Fred S. Halley, William E. Wagner and Jeanne S. Zaino. (2012). *Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (8th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

COURSE FORMAT

This is a hybrid online and in-person course structured around your development of the central course project, the Research Proposal. The first eight course weeks are comprised of in-person class meetings focused on developing a familiarity with research design concepts and skills. You will concurrently work on your Proposal in sections. The final four weeks are set aside for you to develop, receive feedback on, and revise and finalize your proposal.

CANVAS

The course Canvas site is a virtual classroom and super syllabus all-in-one. There are several aids for addressing any technical difficulties experienced in Canvas, listed below and linked to in the course Canvas site's homepage. Please consult these aids before contacting instructors about technical difficulties.

- ☞ University of Utah Canvas Orientation resources:
<http://campusguides.lib.utah.edu/canvas>
- ☞ Online Canvas Guides:
<https://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides/>
- ☞ University of Utah IT Help Desk: 801-581-4000

COURSE GROUPS

You will be assigned to a group with 6-9 colleagues for the purposes of completing in-class assignments, namely Research Evaluation Briefs and Data Analysis Exercise. Groups will be randomly assigned and available under the Canvas "People" section.

GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

RESPECTFUL & APPROPRIATE CLASS CONDUCT

This course may touch on topics and issues on which individuals often hold strong opinions, based on their personal values, beliefs, and interests. It will challenge students to not only respect perspectives that differ from their own but may also call on students to challenge their own opinions and beliefs, and "step into" another's perspective to consider the strengths and limitations of their own argument. In order to facilitate this process and ensure a socially, emotionally, and psychologically safe environment, respectful behavior is the expectation, norm, and requirement in this class. Arguments and ideas may (and are expected to) be challenged, but personal attacks and disrespectful behavior and/or attitudes towards people or groups of people will not be tolerated.

PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

As can be seen in the course grade outline later in this syllabus, participation and engagement makes up a significant portion of the course grade. Effective participation includes reviewing and processing all assigned content and actively engaging in an integration of that material through class activities and discussions. Of course, participation and engagement are only possible if you are in class. Thus, while I do not regularly take attendance, repeated absences will threaten your participation and engagement grade. I am eager to work with you to help navigate the impact of challenging circumstances and/ or unanticipated emergencies and *may* be able to help accommodate planned absences. Talk to me ASAP if either circumstance arises; the earlier we begin addressing such situations, the more options we have to mitigate the impact of class absences.

COMMUNICATIONS

All communications from the professor will be sent using the Canvas message feature; be sure to set your Canvas settings such that you are notified when messages are sent (see the Canvas Help page for assistance). All communications between students and the professor are to be respectful in content and professional in tone. In the case of emails and Canvas messages, this means:

- ☞ Stating the purpose of the email and including background information to enable the instructor to understand and respond to the email.
- ☞ Using complete sentences.
- ☞ Refraining from using profanity.

ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW

Assignment overviews are provided here. Detailed assignment instructions are available on Canvas. Unless assignment instructions indicate otherwise, all assignments are to be submitted in 12-point font with one-inch margins. References and citations must follow American Psychological Association (APA) style (other APA guidelines, such as for paper formatting, are *not* required). Written assignments are to be submitted via Canvas in PDF format. *Most assignments are due the Monday the precedes a class meeting, however, this is not true of all of them - be sure that you note the due date specific to each assignment.* Late assignment submission policies:

- ☞ Submissions after the assigned due date and time are subject to a five percent deduction.
- ☞ An additional five percent may be deducted for each additional 24 hours the assignment is late.

SYLLABUS QUIZ & CANVAS PROFILE

You will complete a Syllabus Quiz/Course Contract and fill out your Canvas profile in the first week of class.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Over the course of the semester you will develop a proposal for a Masters-level research study. A research proposal establishes that there is a need for the proposed study and that the plan for research is feasible. The proposal is your opportunity to apply the research design concepts covered in this class and represents the bulk of the course assignment work. It is also a great opportunity to explore and/or plan your Major Research Project (for MPA students) or Capstone Project (for MPP students). You will work on sections of the proposal successively over the course weeks, submitting each section for a grade and/or feedback, and then put them together to turn in a complete proposal at the end of the course.

PROPOSAL PEER REVIEWS

Towards the end of, you will provide a couple of colleagues with feedback on their research proposals. Your overall objective is to help your colleagues by providing critical and constructive comments or guidance. In the process, you will practice evaluating and critiquing the elements of research design. To encourage quality peer reviews and recognize the time and effort that effective feedback requires, your peer reviews will be graded for course credit.

IN-CLASS RESEARCH EVALUATION BRIEFS

At two points throughout the course, you will work with a randomly-assigned group of colleagues to critique a published research article. Although you will have time to work on the critique in class, you will need to arrive to class already familiar with the article in question. Your group will turn in a brief summarizing your critique.

DATA ANALYSIS APPLICATION

We will spend one class meeting analyzing quantitative data in SPSS in randomly-assigned course groups. Your group will be charged with executing several descriptive and associational analyses to answer a pre-identified research question. You'll turn in a report of your analysis results, complete with an interpretation of those results that answers the research question.

COURSE GRADING

The course grading scheme follows. When a course grade falls between integers, I apply a standard rounding procedure: any point total that ends in .0 to .49 will be rounded down to the nearest whole number, while any point total that ends in .50 to .99 will be rounded up.

Table 1. Course grading descriptions

Course Points	Letter Grade	Description
93-100	A	Outstanding work in terms of content, quality, and creativity of written and oral expression.
90-92	A-	Very good work—thorough in content and generally well written, though with minor flaws and/or omissions.
87-89	B+	Good work—covers the essentials with adequate depth in substance as well as quality of written/oral expression.
83-86	B	Acceptable work—covers most of the essentials with adequate quality of written/oral expression, though lacks depth in some explanations of subject matter.
80-82	B-	Marginal work—borders on unacceptable—weak written/oral expression, coverage of subject matter lacks attention to some essential points and/or is overly vague about them.
73-79	C+/C	Below standard—lacks adequate coverage of essential points, written/oral expression is very weak.
>72	C- and below	Inadequate work/performance overall. Fails to answer questions, writing is very confusing, vague, and/or does not cover many essential points.

Table 2. Course grading by assignment

Assignments	Course Points
Course Expectations & Syllabus Quiz	1
Canvas Profile	1
Group Research Evaluation Briefs (2 @ 8 pnts each)	16
Group Data Analysis Report	15
Research Proposal Peer Reviews (2 @ 5 pnts each)	10
Participation & Engagement	16
Research Proposal	
Research Ideas	3
RQ & Lit Review Sources	3
Research Design, Case Selection/Sample Strategy	3
Variables of Interest with Conceptual Definitions	3
Data Collection	3
Data Analysis	3
Draft	3
Research Proposal, Complete	20
Total	100

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar provides a starting point and roadmap for the semester. Additional materials may be posted as the semester progresses. Topics, materials, and dates may be altered. Any changes to the course calendar will be announced on Canvas and reflected in an updated syllabus posted on Canvas, as well as in the Canvas modules.

🔗 = Material available on Canvas

WEEK 1, MAY 13-14 | COURSE INTRO & BASIC CONCEPTS

Class Meeting: Tuesday, May 14

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 1, 2, & 18
2. 🔗 Cox, "A Basic Guide for Empirical Environmental Social Science," *Ecology & Society*, 20(1), 63.
3. 🔗 Canvas Site
4. 🔗 Course Syllabus
5. 🔗 Course Expectations & Guides [on the Course Resources page]

In-Class Activity

We'll spend quite a bit of time laying the groundwork for the main course assignment, the Research Proposal. Come to class with some ideas of what you might want to focus on in your proposal, as we'll workshop ideas in small group discussions. Get a better idea of what the proposal entails at the Student's Guide to the Research Proposal on the course Canvas site.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Friday, May 17)

- Syllabus Quiz & Course Contract
- Canvas Profile

WEEK 2, MAY 15-21 | RESEARCH QUESTIONS & LITERATURE REVIEWS

Class Meeting: Tuesday, May 21

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Ch. 3
2. 🔗 Cresswell (2009), "Review of the Literature," in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (pp. 23-48).
3. 🔗 Suny Empire Online Writing Lab, "Can the Topic be Researched?"
4. 🔗 Suny Empire Online Writing Lab, "Developing a Research Question"

In-Class Activity

We'll workshop research proposal research questions in small group discussions. Spend some time before class drawing up draft research questions to be sure that you can make the most of the time.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, May 21)

- Research Proposal: Research Ideas

WEEK 3, MAY 22-28 | RESEARCH DESIGNS & SAMPLING

Class Meeting: Tuesday, May 28

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 5, 6, & 10
2. 🔗 Flipp, "What is case study?" (YouTube video; <5 mins.)
3. 🔗 Gerring, "What is a case study? The problem of definition," in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*.
4. 🔗 Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005), "The role of sampling in qualitative research," *Academic Exchange*, 280-284.

In-Class Activity

We'll workshop research proposal research designs and associated sample strategies in small group discussions. Spend some time before class considering likely research designs for your research proposal to be sure that you can make the most of the time.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, May 28)

- ❑ **Research Proposal: Research Question & Lit Review Sources**

WEEK 4, MAY 29-JUNE 4 | MEASUREMENT & AVAILABLE DATA

Class Meeting: Tuesday, June 4

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 4 & 7
2. Sowa, Selden, & Sandfort (2004), "No longer unmeasurable? A multidimensional model on nonprofit organizational effectiveness," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 33(4), 711-728.

In-Class Activity

We'll workshop research proposal conceptual definitions and their operationalizations in small group discussions. Spend some time before class considering how to define the concepts central to your research proposal to be sure that you can make the most of the time.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, June 4)

- ❑ **Research Proposal: Research Design, Case Selection/Sample Strategy**

WEEK 5, JUNE 5-11 | QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Class Meeting: Tuesday, June 11

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 8 & 11
2. Jacob & Furgerson (2012), "Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research," *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1-10.
3. Leech, N. & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). "An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 22(4), 557-584.
4. Research Evaluation Brief article, as chosen by your group (available on Canvas)

In-Class Activity

In assigned groups, you'll critique one of two articles (available on Canvas) identifying the strengths and weaknesses of its research design. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the article to make the most of the allotted class time.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, June 11)

- ❑ **Research Proposal: Variables of Interest with Conceptual Definitions**

WEEK 6, JUNE 12-18 | QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Class Meeting: Tuesday, June 18

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 9, 12-14
2. Research Evaluation Brief article, as chosen by your group (available on Canvas)

In-Class Activity

In assigned groups, you'll critique one of two articles (available on Canvas) identifying the strengths and weaknesses of its research design. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the article to make the most of the allotted class time.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, June 18)

- ❑ **Group Research Evaluation Brief 1**

WEEK 7, JUNE 19-25 | QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS APPLICATION

Class Meeting IN COMPUTER LAB (location T.B.D.): Tuesday, June 25

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Ch. 17
2. 📄 Resources for analyzing statistics in SPSS (Canvas site page)

In-Class Activity

We'll devote the entire class to working in small groups on the Data Analysis Application assignment. Familiarize yourself with the assignment, with particular attention to the tasks assigned to your group, prior to our class meeting. Make sure you're prepared to make the most of the class period by examining the Statistics with SPSS resources page.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, June 25)

- ❑ **Group Research Evaluation Brief 2**
- ❑ **Research Proposal: Data Collection**

WEEK 8, JUNE 26-JULY 2 | INFERENCE STATISTICS & REGRESSION

Class Meeting: Tuesday, July 2

Assigned Readings/Content

1. Johnson, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, Chs. 15 & 16
2. Kulik, L. (2007). "Explaining responses to volunteering: An ecological model." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 36(2), 239-255.

In-Class Activity

In this final class meeting we'll apply what we've learned about regression and inferential statistics by critiquing (both in small groups and as a class) the article "Explaining responses to volunteering: An ecological model." Come to class well acquainted with the article and ready to dive into a detailed evaluation of its methods.

Assignments (due 5:59 pm on Tuesday, July 2)

- ❑ **Group Data Analysis Reports**

WEEK 9, JULY 3-9 | RESEARCH PROPOSAL MEETINGS

Individual Online or In-Person Meetings (as scheduled)

Research Proposal Meetings

Set some time aside to prepare before your meeting with Prof Carter. Re-familiarize yourself with the research proposal requirements and expectations. Review the work you've done thus far, to identify the questions or concerns that you'd like to discuss. Make notes of what you want to cover and let Prof Carter know beforehand or at the time of your meeting.

Assignments (due 11:59 pm on Tuesday, July 9)

- ❑ **Research Proposal: Data Analysis**

WEEK 10, JULY 10-16 | WORKING WEEK

Working Week

This is a working week during which you should complete a full draft of your research proposal. Even though this is a first draft of the proposal, it should be complete, thorough, and polished. This is the draft that you'll receive feedback from colleagues on next week.

Assignments (due 11:59 pm on Tuesday, July 16)

- Research Proposal, Draft**

WEEK 11, JULY 17-23 | RESEARCH PROPOSAL PEER REVIEWS

Research Proposal Peer Reviews

Be sure to set aside several hours throughout the week for each of the two research proposal reviews you'll be completing. It takes a while simply to read a proposal closely and it takes even longer to craft insightful, helpful, and kindly-worded feedback. Strive to identify the central strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. For every limitation you list, suggest at least one way in which your colleague might improve on or address the problem.

Assignments (due 11:59 pm on Tuesday, July 23)

- Research Proposal Peer Reviews**

WEEK 12, JULY 24-AUGUST 2 | COMPLETE RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Final Working Week

At this point in class you've spent weeks studying the concepts, decisions, and skills essential to research design. You've worked on your research proposal in stages, written a draft, and received feedback. The remainder of class is set aside for you to incorporate and address the feedback you've received, ultimately submitting a solidly-designed and well-written research proposal.

Assignments (due 11:59 pm on Friday, August 2)

- Research Proposal, Complete**

CONDUCT POLICIES, ACCOMMODATIONS, & RESOURCES

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to the Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, and I will do so, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, as public service is a calling that requires students - future and current administrators - to understand the importance of ethical behavior in all facets of their work, including their academic coursework. The University of Utah and the Program in Public Administration expect students to adhere to generally accepted standards of academic conduct. Academic misconduct is defined in the University's student code as follows: Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information. Cases of academic misconduct will be dealt with immediately and may result in failure of the class. It is expected that you will cite for every assignment—give credit where credit is due!

Please read the entire MPA Academic Honesty Statement at: www.mpa.utah.edu

ADDRESSING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

GENERAL WELLNESS RESOURCES

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.

ADA RESOURCES

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor, as well as to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

LGBTQ RESOURCES

I am committed to inclusivity and respect for all students in the classroom, including and not limited to LGBT individuals. Additionally, the University of Utah has a LGBT Resource Center located in the Oplin Union Building, Room 409. Their website contains more information about the support they offer, a list of events, and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/>.

VETERANS RESOURCES

The University of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in the Olpin Union Building, Room 161. Their website contains information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events, and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & WRITING RESOURCES

There several resources on campus that will support English language learners with language and writing development. These resources include the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>), the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>), and the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>).