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PSCI 595.51: Research Methods for Public Administration

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University of Montana
Political Science 595.51 Research Methods for Public Administration
Fall 2016
Online

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Dr. Trish Miller

Cell Phone: 217-663-8385

Email: trisha.miller@mso.umt.edu (this is the best way to contact me)

Virtual office hours: by appointment

Course Information:

This is an online course so we will not meet in person. Online courses give students more flexibility, but also require a tremendous amount of self-motivation. In order to do well in this course, a student must possess time management skills as well as understand the importance of being on time-this includes both discussions and required assignments. This course will be based on our Moodle system. All of our interactions and the homework assignments/final exam will be done through Moodle. It is imperative that students have a working knowledge of this system for maximum performance in this course.

Course Description:

Research is a critical component of public administration. This is also typically a student's least favorite area of study. However, understanding and being able to use the research methods covered in this course will be invaluable to your future careers. We will be covering both qualitative and quantitative methods. Case studies and surveys are frequently used in public administration so we will focus on those as well as some of the major statistical components such as correlation and regression. For the statistical portion of this course, we will be using Excel. For those of you who wish to gain knowledge in SPSS, your book has a chapter devoted specifically to this. While this course may seem overwhelming at first glance, I think you will find it is not as difficult as you expected, and is actually quite interesting.

Course Objectives:

Students should be able to:

1. Understand the basic components of a research project
2. Understand the ethical dilemmas involved with research
3. Understand the process for working with human subjects
4. Utilize several statistical methods including correlation and regression
5. Know when it is appropriate to use qualitative or quantitative research methods
6. Conduct a literature review
7. Complete a research design

Course Readings:

Required texts for the course

McNabb, David. *Research Methods in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 3rd edition.
Routledge.

Course grading:

The grade that you receive for this course will be based on four separate components: online discussion and participation, homework assignments, midterm analysis and presentation, and the final exam.

Online Discussion /Participation Each week students will be required to engage in an *ongoing* online discussion covering the reading materials for the week. The online discussions will comprise 20% of the course grade. In order for the online discussions to go smoothly, they will run as follows:

- 1.** Each week there will be assigned student discussants (I will take the first week). I will post the questions each week, and the discussant will answer questions/comments. If you have a question you would like to post, you are more than welcome to do so. The remainder of the class will be considered respondents. If you are a respondent, you must respond to all of the questions posted, mine and if any additional questions are posted to receive full credit.

- 2.** If you are a discussant, it is your responsibility to answer questions/comments about the question I pose and any that you pose. You should be actively engaging with the respondents throughout the course of the week.
- 3.** If you are a respondent, you must thoughtfully prepare a response to the questions. Full credit will be given to respondents who answer all posted questions for the week. Full credit responses will also be completed early enough in the week that the respondent can engage with the discussion throughout the remainder of the week. These responses should be in professional paragraph form of approximately 100-200 words and the respondent should engage actively with the discussant and the other respondents throughout the week to keep the discussion flowing. This may not be the case each week. Obviously, this is a methods course and some of the questions and responses may not require paragraph form, but I still expect more than yes and no answers. A full credit response-when possible-should also include citations from the text. Discussions are not twitter posts. I should not see “I agree” as a comment without further explanation as to why a respondent concurs.
- 4.** The discussion forum will close each week on Saturdays at 9 p.m.

Homework Assignments—there will be several homework assignments nearly one each week of the semester that make up 25% of the course grade. You will find the homework assignments on Moodle.

Research Design-The Literature Review-25% of course grade **Due: Saturday, October 29nd by 5 p.m.**

The following description of a literature review is taken directly from your text in Chapter 6 on p. 81. There is no specific number of pages due for your literature review. It is up to you to decide what you think is reasonable and when you have thoroughly covered the topic you are studying.

Conduct a Literature Review

An important part of any research project is an activity called a literature review. This is an analysis of previous research on the topic at hand. It typically involves reading and analyzing published material in books, professional and academic

journals, government documents, and other sources. The literature review allows the researcher to build on the work already completed by other investigators.

The focus of a literature review should always be on the key ideas that may function as leads for further investigation. Previous investigators may have already stated and tested hypotheses about your topic. The task of the literature review is to gather these previously published ideas, evaluate their usefulness as they specifically relate to your research, and determine whether they suggest new ways of looking at the problem that you might have missed (Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cook 1976).

Research Design/Proposal-Final Project—30% of course grade **Due: Friday, December 16th by 5 p.m.**

Your final project for this class will be to submit a research design/proposal. You will follow the guidelines as outlined in Chapter 7 of your book. Notice there are several different formats that the proposal can take. You will decide which to use based on the type of research you are conducting. This is a research design—you will not be analyzing the data for this project. This allows you to create a well-thought out design/proposal that can include the collection of data and analysis that could potentially take several months. The goal here is to create the best design/proposal possible for the research question that you have developed. If your project will include human subjects, your design must also include a completed IRB form. I suggest thoroughly reading through the IRB website (<http://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IRB/default.php>) prior to filling out the form. You will also find the form on this site. Although the literature review is due earlier in the semester, you will also include a lit review (the revised lit review) in this final project. As with the initial literature review, there is not a set number of pages for this project, you simply must follow the guidelines in chapter 7.

Help with Technology:

If you have previously taken an online course, you are probably familiar with the Moodle system. If this is your first time, and you find yourself in need of

technological assistance, you can contact the online help by phone or email at: UM Online by phone, (406) 243-4999 or email umonline-help@umontana.edu. There is **no on-call assistance during nights and weekends**. For a total Moodle system failure, students will be sent an email by the University of Montana. Your instructor cannot provide IT support so please contact the appropriate University staff if an issue arises.

Grades/Late Policy:

I will not accept assignments that are late unless you have a documented excuse. I also will not give extra credit.

Grading Scale:

The University of Montana uses the Plus/minus grading system and a Credit/No Credit system (the CR/NCR replaces the Pass/Fail system used in the past). General education courses must be taken using the traditional letter grade to count toward one's general education requirements. To accommodate the Plus/Minus system the grading scale shown below will be used.

Grade	Point Scale	Point Range	GPA
A	93-100	8 points	4.00
A-	90-92	3 points	3.67
B+	87-89	3 points	3.33
B	83-86	4 points	3.00
B-	80-82	3 points	2.67
C+	77-79	3 points	2.33
C	73-76	4 points	2.00
C-	70-72	3 points	1.67
D+	67-69	3 points	1.33
D	63-66	4 points	1.00
D-	60-62	3 points	.667
F	59 or lower	N/A	0.00

Class preparation and participation:

As an online course, participation is absolutely crucial to gaining the most knowledge from this course. In order to successfully participate, students must

have a clear understanding of the materials which will require that students have thoroughly read the materials prior to the online discussions.

Academic honesty:

It is imperative that students at this level of their educational careers understand the importance of doing their own work. This includes online discussions, homework assignments, your midterm paper and presentation and your final exam. You must do your own work. If you are using information from another author, you must give them credit for their work. If you take words from another author, you must use quotation marks. If you are merely paraphrasing a thought or idea from another author, **you still must cite their work**. Plagiarism is a major offense, do not take this lightly. If you are unsure of how to properly cite sources (and citations must be given in all assignments) there are resources available. If you have questions regarding plagiarism, please contact me. It is much better to be safe than sorry! I will not take off points for overuse of citations (this does not mean that you can cut and paste entire pages from other authors). However, if I find that you have plagiarized, this is cheating and grounds for failure.

Classroom etiquette:

Although this is an online course, this is still a classroom setting, particularly for online discussions. I expect that each of you will treat your fellow classmates and the instructor with respect. This is not social media commentary, and as such I will expect professionalism in all of your online discussion postings.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Fall 2016

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule.

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments
Week 1: August 29-September 4th	Introduction to Research Methods Research Ethics: Doing the Right Thing	Read: Chapters 1 & 2 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 1 & 2 due Sunday, September 4 th by 9 p.m.
Week 2: September 5 –11 (Labor Day is September	Building Blocks of Research	Read: Chapters 3, 4 & 5

5 th)	Public Administration Research Theory and Practice Research in Non-profits	Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 3,4, &5 is due Sunday, September 11 th by 9 p.m.
Week 3: September 12-18	Eight Steps of the Research Process Selecting a Research Topic	Read: Chapters 6 & 7 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 6 &7 is due Sunday, September 18 th by 9 p.m.
Week 4: September 19-25	Choosing a Research Design Putting Together a Research Proposal	Read: Chapters 8 & 9 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 8 & & 9 due Sunday, September 25 th by 9 p.m.
Week 5: September 26- October 2	Fundamentals of Quantitative Research Intro to Sampling	Read: Chapters 10 & 11 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 10 & 11 due Sunday, October 2 by 9 p.m
Week 6: October 3-9	Survey Research: Writing Questions and Developing Questionnaires	Read: Chapter 12 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapter 12 is due Sunday, October 9 by 9 p.m.
Week 7: October 10-16	Summarizing Data with Descriptive Statistics Using Tables, Charts, and Graphs	Read: Chapters 13 & 14 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapter 13 and 14 is due Sunday, October 16 by 9 p.m.
Week 8: October 17-23	Exploring Research Hypothesis Concepts Test Hypotheses about 2 or more groups	Read: Chapters 15 & 16 Due: Discussions

		Research Design: The Literature Review is due no later than Saturday, October 22nd by 5 p.m. Homework from Chapters 15 & 16 is due Sunday, October 23 by 9 p.m.
Week 9: October 24-30	Testing Relationships with Correlation and Regression	Read: Chapter 17 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapter 17 is due Sunday, October 30 by 9 p.m.
Week 10: October 31-November 6	Intro to Experimental Design Intro to Nonparametric Stats	Read: Chapters 18 & 19 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 18 & 19 is due Sunday, November 6 by 9 p.m.
Week 11: November 7-13	Intro to Qualitative Research Case Studies	Read: Chapters 23 & 24 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 20 & 21 is due Sunday, November 13 by 9 p.m.
Week 12: November 14-20	Grounded Theory Ethnographic	Read: Chapter 25 & 26 Due: Discussions Homework from Chapters 25 & 26 is due Sunday, November 20 by 9 p.m.
Week 13: November 21-27	Action Research Feminist and Empowerment	Read: Chapters 27 & 28 Due: No discussion or homework this week due to

		Thanksgiving. Enjoy your time!
Week 14: November 28- December 4	Analyzing Qualitative Data	Read: Chapters 29 & 30 Due: Discussions Homework on Chapters 29 & 30 due Sunday, December 4 by 9 p.m.
Week 15: December 5-11	Writing the Research Report	Read: Chapter 31 Due: Discussions No homework
Week 16: December 12-16	Research Design	No additional reading Research Design is due Friday, December 16th by 5 p.m.