Course Number: PPPA 8101

Course Title: Research Methods

Description: Doctoral seminar on theory and practice in research methodology. Data sources and gathering, research models and designs. Critical evaluation of research studies. Emphasis on application of research methods to policy questions.

Prerequisites: None

Professor: Dr. Kathryn Newcomer
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Office hours: Tuesday, 2 pm - 6pm and by appointment

Required Textbooks:


Yin, Robert Case Study Research: Design and Methods, which ever edition you can get...
Student Learning Objectives: Course content and requirements are designed to develop students’ knowledge and skills in:

1. Understanding one’s own ontological and epistemological preferences;
2. Developing and testing theories and models;
3. Framing and developing good researchable questions;
4. Designing research to provide appropriate comparisons to address research questions;
5. Weighing the relative advantages of different data collection techniques to address research questions;
6. Writing focused questions for interviews and surveys;
7. Recognizing ethical issues that arise in conducting and reporting research; and
8. Reporting on one’s own research and on studies conducted by others in a clear manner.

Course Requirements:

1. **Class participation.** The class is a doctoral seminar, relying on active participation by all students. I expect students to attend every class, complete all readings, and participate fully in class discussion. Students should come with at least one discussion question for the class to discuss on each reading. **AND each student will be asked to find and present the basics about a study that exemplifies one of the research designs covered in class, and discuss how it illustrates the design. S/he should provide a brief summary to the class on the night s/he presents.** (15% of grade).

2. **Written Assignments.**

Please note: Students can not submit written work electronically for this class unless discussed with the instructor before the due date.

a. **Article Critique (Due July 7):** Students are asked to select an empirical research article of their choosing and
submit a written critique of approximately four pages in the following format:

1) a brief description of the focus and findings;
2) identification of the key research questions addressed;
3) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used; and
4) a systematic list of threats to the measurement validity and measurement reliability, internal validity and external validity, and statistical conclusion validity. Note that the threats should be clearly presented, for example do not simply state “Hawthorne Effect,” but clarify how/why that threat occurred. And the threats should be labeled regarding the extent to which the authors acknowledged and addressed each. And please, please pay attention to threats to statistical conclusion validity. (20% of grade).

b. Research Synthesis and Design (Due July 28): Students are asked to perform a systematic analysis of a set of (at least six) empirical research articles and/or reports on a topic of their choosing and develop a brief research design that would address a set of about 3 research questions that are relevant to the literature that has been reviewed. The written report should include a synthesis of the studies that is summarized in a matrix with a series of columns containing pertinent information about the studies reviewed (see a list of potential columns below).

The design should include: as statement of the policy issue or problem to be addressed, the research questions to be addressed, data sources, data collection methods, the type of design (in Campbell and Stanley terminology), and potential limitations to implementing the study that might be encountered (35% of grade).

Potential columns for your synthesis include:

i) author and year
ii) primary research questions
iii) research design
iv) data collection techniques
v) type of sampling and sample size
vi) data analytical techniques
vii) key findings
viii) limitations (categorize under headings of measurement validity and measurement reliability, internal and external validity, and statistical conclusion validity

3. Final Exam. An on-line final exam will be given during the last week of the class. The exam will provide a series of essay questions focused on the main topics covered in the course (30% of grade).

Class Schedule and Assignments

Session 1 (May 26)

Science, Theories, Models and Concepts: Formulating Research Questions

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 1-3)
Chapters from Nader book on BB
Clarke and Primo on BB

Session 2 (June 2)

Qualitative Researching

Readings:

Mason, (Chapters 1,2,3)
Riccucci Chapters 1,2,4,5, 7 and 8 (Blackboard)
Bennett and Elman, “Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Research.” on BB
A good example of an article by Brainard is on BB, too

Session 3 (June 9)

Case Studies and Operationalizing Concepts

Readings:

Yin (Entire book)
Mason (Chapters 4-7)
Newcomer Threats to Validity and another piece on external validity on BB

Session 4 (June 16) Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research

Readings:
Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 6-8)

Session 5 (June 23) Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research Continued

Readings:
Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 9-14)

Session 6 (June 30)

Synthesizing Research and Meta-Analysis

Readings:
Lipsey and Wilson chapters on BB
Cooper and Hedges, chapters 1, 2, 32 and 33 (Blackboard)

And

Please visit and assess one of the following websites, or one of your choosing, and be ready to discuss your evaluation of it:
2. HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis
   www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/
3. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs OJJDP
   www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/
5. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Effective Health Care
   http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/what-is-comparative-effectiveness-research1/

Session 7 (July 7) *****ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE*****
Choosing Appropriate Data Collection Methods and Designing Data Collection Instruments, and Ethical Concerns

Readings:

Newcomer and Triplett (Blackboard)
Selections from Kimmel (Blackboard)
Christians Chapter (Blackboard)

Session 8 (July 14)

Analyzing Data and Reporting Research, and Addressing Causality

Readings:

Mason (Chapters 8,9)
Goodrick and Rogers chapter (Blackboard)
Creswell chapter 8 (Blackboard)
Shadish article (Blackboard)

Session 9 (July 21)

The Politics of Research and “Evidence-Based Policy”

Readings:

Cook, Shadish and Wong article (Blackboard)
Leamer article (Blackboard)
Cook paper (Blackboard)
Angrist and Pischke
"Randomnistas" readings (Blackboard)

Session 10 (July 28) ***** Research Synthesis and Design Due*****

Students each present their paper through a 15 minute powerpoint presentation (or similar vehicle).

NOTE: The online Final Exam to be taken when convenient for students during the week of July 20 or July 27 to be scheduled with the instructor.
Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit our website for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.

2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.

3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.

4. Academic Honesty: Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.

5. Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

6. The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, modify content and requirements during the semester.

7. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to
the Office of Disability Support Services, Marvin Center 436, 202-994-8250.
Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office.