

Applied Research Design

INDEX #: 10623 / 20:834:562:02
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ADMINISTRATION
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY – NEWARK
Spring 2019
LOCATION: On-Line
This syllabus is subject to change

Instructor Information

Dr. Kelly Robinson
Phone: 973.353.3704
Email: krobins@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: by appointment & e-mail

MPA Mission Statement:

Through a culture of innovation and based upon the values of **diversity, competence, knowledge, service, and ethical practice**, we pursue an evidence-based approach to the effective, equitable, and accountable implementation of public policy. Distinguished academic scholars, complemented by adjunct faculty rich in relevant government and nonprofit experience, deliver a capacity-based curriculum. We are dedicated to student success in applying such knowledge via effective ethical public service leadership.

Overview: Building on the skills of data analysis and inference learned in Applied Statistics (20:834:561), this course attempts to improve students' understanding of, and ability to apply, modern research methods. Topics include the use of theory and models, measurement concepts and methods, qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis, identifying causes, the logic of control variables, and the design of experiments and quasi-experiments. The emphasis is on learning these ideas through practice with many different examples of real-world research and empirical evidence.

The course will be taught on-line using Canvas™.

Required Textbook:

Remler, Dahlia K. and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. 2015. *Research Methods in Practice*. 2nd Ed. SAGE Publications.

Required Journal Articles: The full text of required journal articles is accessible through the Rutgers University Library web site via www.libraries.rutgers.edu or via other links that will be provided as needed. Please consult a librarian if you need assistance locating or downloading articles.

Software: We will mostly use Excel for the statistical part of the course. Students can also use MYSTAT (SYSTAT), Stata, SPSS, or other statistical packages if they prefer. You can download Stata for free at the Rutgers software portal.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

This course should help students to make progress toward SPAA overall learning objectives by gaining specific skills:

Advance toward the SPAA overall learning objectives described below	by gaining the following skills in this course:
1. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.	a) The student clearly states a research question or problem related to public service or policy. b) The student uses the appropriate empirical methods to examine the problem. c) The student organizes, presents, and analyzes data appropriately to answer their research question. d) The student correctly identifies, interprets, and discusses the practical implications of the analysis from a public service perspective. e) The student acknowledges and incorporates multiple points of view into the analysis.

Requirements:

Students are expected to complete all assignments, quizzes and exams, keep up with assigned readings, and participate in class discussions. There will be four memo assignments, weekly reading quizzes, and a final exam. Grades will be based on the following:

- 60% Assignments (4 in total, 15% each)
- 10% Weekly quizzes
- 10% Discussions
- 20% Final exam

Each of these requirements is explained in more detail below:

Assignments (60%). Students must complete and turn in four projects. The instructions for each can found on Canvas the week they are assigned. These will be handed in via Canvas. Generally, projects should be prepared in the form of a professional memorandum. They will be graded according to their presentation quality as well as analytical substance. Students may consult with each other on assignments, but the work handed in must be the student’s own original work.

On-Line Discussions (10%). Students are expected to participate actively in on-line discussions, which are an important part of the class each week. Points will be awarded for both original posts and responses to the posts of other students and/or the professor.

Final Exam (20%). There will be a final exam for the course containing a balance of multiple choice and short answer questions. The week before the exam will be reserved for review and preparation.

Weekly Quizzes (10%). Brief quizzes will be given to assess your comprehension of the readings for each week.

Grading:

Final grades in this course will be assessed using the following breakdown:

Letter Grade	Definition	Numerical Equivalent
A	Outstanding	89.5 – 100
B+	Very Good	84.5 – 89.49
B	Good	79.5 – 84.49
C+	Intermediate	74.5-79.49
C	Satisfactory	69.5 - 74.49
F	Failing	< 69.5

COURSE POLICIES

Late Work: Assignments are generally due at 11:59 pm of the due date. Except for significant extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical, family, etc.), late assignments will be downgraded by 10% the first day and 5% each additional day thereafter. If you know in advance that you have a serious conflict in your schedule, you are encouraged to contact the professor before the assignment is due to discuss any plan to hand in the work late.

Academic Integrity: The University’s Honor Code is in effect at all times. For more information, please visit: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. I check assignments for originality using plagiarism detection software.

Grade Disputes: Grade disputes will be handled according to the SPAA MPA Student Handbook. If you think you have been graded unfairly or in error, you are encouraged to discuss it with the professor before initiating any sort of formal dispute process. I don’t “negotiate” grades, but misunderstandings and mistakes do happen occasionally.

Writing Styles: You may use either APA or Chicago style, but please be consistent within the document. In-text citations are preferred to footnotes or endnotes. Writing clarity and quality are considered in grading. Please use a standard font such as Ariel, Calibri, or Times New Roman. Pages should use 1-inch margins, double-spaced, with 12 point fonts. If you think you need help with your writing, talk to the professor.

Research Source Suggestions: Wikipedia and similar on-line resources are great, but they are not substitutes for traditional and peer-reviewed sources such as journals, periodicals, scholarly books. On-line sources may be appropriate for specific uses such as describing the stated policy of an agency, etc. There is no steadfast rule on this, but the strength of your arguments will rely on the reliability of your sources. You are expected to cite your sources and any quotes.

Disability Services: Accommodations, Auxiliary Aids, and Services enable qualified students with disabilities to receive the same information and opportunities presented to a student without disabilities. They allow students who have disabilities to learn and convey knowledge of course materials in alternate formats. These aids and services make classroom, courses, labs, and programs accessible and must not compromise the academic standards or essential requirements of the course or the program. Following list gives some examples of accommodations, auxiliary aids, and service provided in post-secondary settings:

- Scheduling classes in physically accessible locations
- Extended time on exam
- A reduced distraction testing location
- Books on Tape
- Interpreters

Students should apply at <https://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/> and provide the Instructor with a copy of the Accommodation Authorization Form. Accommodations are not provided retroactively.

E-mail and Communication: Communication about class schedules, requirements, and assignments or readings may be made via e-mail or Canvas, so it is expected that students will check their accounts regularly.

Support for Students with Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines> .

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible.

To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form> .

For more information, please contact Kate Torres at (973)353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, on the 2nd Floor or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Copyright Notice: Copying, displaying, reproducing, or distributing copyrighted works is subject to appropriate disciplinary action as well as criminal penalties provided by federal law (Title 17, United States Code). Usage of such material is only appropriate when that usage constitutes "fair use" under the Copyright Act.

Disclaimer : The instructor reserves the right to amend the schedule and/or readings at any time.

Tentative Class Schedule

Note: required articles for each week will be announced as soon as they are available.

January 22-27	Module 1. Introduction: The Nature of Applied Research No Quiz this week
January 28- February 3	Module 2. Theory & Models Assignment #1 available Quiz
February 4-10	Module 3. Qualitative Research Quiz
February 11-17	Module 4. Measurement Assignment 1 due 2/17; Assignment 2 available Quiz
February 18-24	Module 5. Sampling in the Real World Readings: R&V Chapter 5; Dillman, D.A., et al., 2014. Chapter 3 Quiz
February 25- March 3	Module 6. Primary Data: Polls; Surveys Readings: R&V Chapter 7. Nate Cohn. June 27, 2016. "Exit Polls and Why the Primary Was Not Stolen From Bernie Sanders." New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/upshot/exit-polls-and-why-the-primary-was-not-stolen-from-bernie-sanders.html Assignment 2 due 3/3; Assignment 3 available. Quiz
March 4-10	Module 7. Secondary Data Readings: R&V Chapter 6. Quiz
March 11-15	Module 8. Observational Studies R & V Chapter 12. Quiz
March 16-24	Spring Recess
March 25-31	Module 9. Regression Analysis R&V Chapters 8-10, as needed Quiz

April 1-7	Module 10. Causation & the Use of Control Variables Readings: R&V Chapter 11 & 13. Assignment 3 due 4/7. Assignment 4 handed out.
April 8-14	Module 11. Randomized Experiments Readings: R&V Chapter 14 Quiz
April 15-20	Module 12. Natural and Quasi-Experiments Readings: R&V Chapter 15 Assignment #4 due 4/20. Quiz
April 22-28	To be determined
April 29-May 5	FINAL EXAM