

MPA 606: Research Design
Tuesdays 7:00-9:30 Heritage Hall 104
Master of Public Administration Program
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Fall 2008

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Our MPA Program Mission

In line with the mission of the University, the MPA program is committed to excellence in graduate education through teaching, research and service. The program focuses on building the next generation of responsible decision makers by enhancing their intellectual capacities through knowledge and skills provided within the NASPAA-based MPA curriculum.

Course Objectives

- 1) For students to understand the basic research process
- 2) To expose students to a wide variety of methodological tools
- 3) To enhance students' ability to critically evaluate research
- 4) To empower students to make better decisions based upon research

Required Course Texts

George, D. and Mallery, P. (2008). SPSS for Windows Step by Step. Pearson Education, Inc.

Lester, J. and J. Lester Jr. (2005). The Essential Guide to Research Writing Across the Disciplines- 3/E. AB Longman.

O'Sullivan, E. , et al. (2008). Research Methods for Public Administrators 5th Ed. Addison Wesley Longman.

Other readings marked with asterisk (*) available through library or (**) through electronic course reserve

ASPA Membership Requirement

As new entrants into the field of public administration, your initiation into professional networks is essential. Accordingly all students in the course are required to join the *American Society for Public Administration* (ASPA). (The electronic student membership is the least-cost option and is fine.) This membership provides a number of benefits, including a free electronic subscription

to Public Administration Review, the premier journal in our field, as well as access to valuable job information and updates on other items of interest to the field. This requirement is NOT optional. Any student that does not provide evidence of ASPA membership by the end of the course will receive an incomplete.

Course Grading and Requirements

Item	% of Grade	Due Date
Draft Research Questions	5%	Sep 2
Research Question and Literature Review (Module I)	25%	Sep 30
Final Portfolio (Module II)	25%	Nov 11
Data Analysis Report	30%	Sec 9
UAB IRB Training Course	5%	By Dec 2
Homework	5%	Various
Participation	5%	
Total	100%	

1) Quantitative Research Portfolio (In Three Parts, 55% Total)

A. Draft Research Questions (5%)

This module is the key to the rest. Here you will define and frame three possible research questions. A more detailed outline will be provided

B. Research Question/Literature Review (25%)

Once you've defined your research question and hypotheses, now you can turn to what others have written on your question. (That's why we call it RE-search). Your literature review must be focused. The scholarly literature is an endless sea. The thing that will best help you to define the boundaries of your literature review is your own research question. More detailed instructions for this module will be provided.

C. Methodology/Final Portfolio (25%)

Now that you've got your research questions, some hypotheses and a handle on what the literature says about your question, it is time to prescribe your own study design for how you will address your research question.

Along with the methodology, you will also hand in the first two sections of your paper with the revisions that I suggested. All of this will be combined into a "final portfolio." I will be checking to see if you paid attention to my comments.

Format and other specifications for all writing assignments

- As graduate students in a professional program, anything less than impeccable grammar and spelling is unacceptable. All papers should use Standard English and conform to good standards of grammar, spelling and neatness.
- Margins: Top and bottom margins no larger than 1.25" (and no smaller than .75") and left and right margins no larger than 1.25" (and no smaller than .75")
- Each page should be numbered (except cover sheet).
- Your paper should have a cover sheet with your name, the course the date and the assignment title.
- Font Size/ Spacing/Page Numbers: Papers should be 12 point, double-spaced with page numbers.
- Students should use the APA-published for in-text citation.

2) Data Analysis Report (30%)

You will conduct an analysis of data that we will gather together as a class from a survey. An outline will be provided for the project.

3) UAB IRB Training (5%)

An essential part of the process of becoming a researcher is understanding the ethics of research. Protection of human subjects is at the very core of research ethics. UAB offers an online training course in human subjects protection through Miami's CITI training. It will take 2-3 hours to complete. To register go to: <http://www.citiprogram.org/>

- IMPORTANT! YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR IRB TRAINING ON OR BEFORE December 2.
- To receive credit for completing the IRB course, you will have to provide documentation that you have completed the CITI course.
- Any student that doesn't complete the IRB training will not receive a passing grade for this Research Design Course

4) Homework (5%)

There will be a three homework assignments throughout the semester. The assignments will be distributed a week before they are due.

5) Participation and Good Effort (5%)

You Need to Make a Reasonable Effort to Participate: So what constitutes a reasonable effort?

- You should attend class.
- You should be prepared to discuss the readings.
- You should engage in at least some discussions.
- You should be actively listening and not working on other things during class.

Attendance is crucial for success in this course. Students are responsible for knowing the material presented in classes that they miss, including homework assignments. You need to rely on your colleagues for this information, not the professor. You will not earn attendance credit if you miss class even in the case of so-called “excusable” absences. Everyone will receive one “grace” class. If you miss more than one class, regardless of the reason, you will not earn attendance credit for that class. You can only earn attendance credit by being in class.

Course Policies

- 1) **Academic Honesty:** Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules regarding academic honesty and integrity as outlined in the student handbook.
- 2) **Electronic Etiquette** is expected. Please put cell phones and pagers or other devices to “vibrate” or silent setting. Please remove Bluetooth, i-Pod or other aural electronic appendages. Set pagers to stun.
- 3) **In-Class Laptop Use.** Students are welcome to use laptop computers for note-taking purposes. Students may not use laptops for non-course related activities during class. (i.e. web surfing, games, working on non-course items, etc.) Students that use their laptops for non-course related activities will not be permitted to continue bringing their computers to class.
- 4) **E-Mail**
 - I will endeavor to respond to your e-mails within 1 business day of receipt. Do not expect me to respond to your e-mails over the weekend.
 - If you e-mail me with a question about a problem, you should provide a “best guess” answer. I won’t give away freebies. If you don’t include a best guess, I will not provide an answer.
 - You should check your e-mail at least once per day to see if there are any course-related communications.
 - You are responsible for ensuring that your Blazer e-mail is received. This means if you are forwarding it to an inactive account, you need to update the forwarding info so that you are receiving it.
- 5) **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of one letter grade per day. If you have a legitimate reason for turning in an assignment late, you should check with me WELL BEFORE to ensure that I will accept it without penalty.
- 6) **Makeup Examinations:** I will only allow makeup examinations in the most extraordinary of circumstances. If you know that you will be absent for an examination, you need to come see me WELL BEFORE and we will work out an arrangement.
- 7) **Students with Disabilities/Special Needs:** Students with special needs or disabilities will be accommodated to the maximum extent possible. Please see me if you wish to discuss any particulars.
- 8) **I reserve the right to hold “gut feeling quizzes.”** If I get the gut feeling that students have not prepared by doing the required reading, I may have an ad hoc quiz to confirm my suspicions. The quiz will count for a percentage of your participation and or homework grade.

9) **I may assign students to discuss certain readings.** At the beginning of the course, I will be mostly lecturing since this material will be unfamiliar, but toward the end, I will expect a greater degree of student participation and will assign students to lead discussions over certain readings.

COURSE OUTLINE

August 19: Course Introduction

August 26: The ABC's of Research

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 1 and 3 (Focus on pp.1-20 and 56-76; Skim 77-94)

September 2: Measurement
DRAFT RESEARCH QUESTIONS DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 4 (pp.101-128)

September 9: Library Research Session @ Sterne Library

September 16: Sampling
SAMPLING HOMEWORK DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 5 (pp.133-163)

September 23: Surveys and Questionnaires
GROUP SURVEY HOMEWORK DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapters 6-7 (pp.172-243)

*GAO (1986). *Developing and Using Questionnaires*. Washington, D.C. GAO Program Evaluation and Methodology Division, Transfer Paper 7.
(Online at my webpage- No need to print this out, this is just reference material)

* GAO (1991). *Using Structured Interviewing Techniques*. Washington, D.C. GAO Program Evaluation and Methodology Division, GAO-PEMD 10.1.5.
(Online at my webpage- No need to print this out, this is just reference material)

September 30: Surveys and Questionnaires/Univariate Analysis
MODULE I DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapters 6-7 and 11 (pp.172-243; pp.323-357)

October 7: Secondary Data/Univariate Analysis

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapters 9 and 11 (Skim pp.270-295; Read carefully pp. 323-357)

* Bowman, J. and C. Cox (2008). "Ethics in Government: No Matter How Long and Dark the Night." Public Administration Review. 68 (4): 627-639.

October 14: Univariate Analysis/ Contingency Tables and other Measures of Association

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 12 Focus on pp.368-378)

* Auer, M. (2008). "Presidential Environmental Appointees in Comparative Perspective" Public Administration Review. 68 (1): 68-80.

October 21: Contingency Tables and other Measures of Association

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 13 (pp.396-419)

* Berman, E., et al. (2002). "Workplace Relations: Friendship Patterns and Consequences (According to Managers)" Public Administration Review. 62 (2): 217-230.

* Cogburn, J. (2005). "The Benefits of Human Resource Centralization: Insights from a Survey of Human Resource Directors in a Decentralized State" Public Administration Review. 65 (4): 424-435.

October 28: The t Test

CONTINGENCY TABLE HOMEWORK DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 12 (Focus on pp.378-384)

* Greasley, S. and G. Stoker (2008). "Mayors and Urban Governance: Developing a Facilitative Leadership Style" Public Administration Review. 68 (4): 722-730.

November 4: Indices and Scales

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 10 (pp.299-317)

* Coe, C. and J. Brunet (2006). "Organizational Report Cards: Significant Impact or Much Ado About Nothing?" Public Administration Review. 66 (1): 90-100.

November 11: Qualitative Research and Qualitative Interviewing

MODULE II DUE

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 2 (Focus on pp.38-45)

* Adams, B. (2004). "Public Meetings and the Democratic Process" Public Administration Review. 64 (1): 43-54.

** Curtis, S., et al. (2000). "Approaches to Sampling and Case Selection in Qualitative Research: Examples in the Geography of Health" Social Science and Medicine. 50: 1001-1014

** Goldstein, K. (2002). "Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews" PS: Political Science and Politics. 35 (4): 669-672.

November 18: Focus Groups

O'Sullivan, et al. Chapter 2 (Focus on pp.38-45)

** Grudens-Schuck (2004). Focus Group Fundamentals. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Extension. May.

* Garrett, R., et al. (2006). "Assessing the Impact of Bureaucracy Bashing by Electoral Campaigns" Public Administration Review. 66 (2): 228-240.

* Heikkila, T. and K. Isett (2007) "Citizen Involvement and Performance Management in Special-Purpose Governments" Public Administration Review. 67 (2): 238-248.

November 25: The Case Study Method

*Adams, G., et al. (2006) "Abu Ghraib, Administrative Evil, and Moral Inversion: The Value of 'Putting Cruelty First'" Public Administration Review. 66 (5): 680-693.

* de Graef, G. and L. Huberts (2008). "Portraying the Nature of Corruption Using an Explorative Case Study Design" Public Administration Review. 68 (4): 640-653.

** McNabb, D. (2002). Research Methods in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management. London: ME Sharpe (pp. 285-300)

December 2: Course Summary

LAST DAY TO DOCUMENT COMPLETION OF IRB TRAINING

LAST DAY TO DOCUMENT ASPA MEMBERSHIP

December 9: DATA ANALYSIS REPORT due BY 7:00 P.M.