

MPA 606
Research Design
UW 230, Thursdays 7:00-9:30
Department of Government
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Fall 2005

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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

Course Texts

Glenn, C. et al (2004). The Writer's Harbrace Handbook. Thomson/Wadsworth.

O'Sullivan, E. et al (2003). Research Methods for Public Administrators 4th Ed. Addison Wesley Longman.

Ritchie, J. and J. Lewis (2003). Qualitative Research Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Grading and Requirements

Item	% of Grade	Due Date
Qualitative Research Question	10%	September 22
Literature Review	20%	October 13
Qualitative Methodology	20%	November 2
Quantitative Research Portfolio	25%	December 9
UAB IRB Training Course	10%	December 1
Homework	5%	Various
Participation	10%	

1) Qualitative Research Portfolio (In 3 Modules, 50% Total)

A. The Research Question (10%)- *Approximate assignment length: 1-1.5 pages*

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

B. The Literature Review (20%)- *Approximate assignment length: 5-10 pages*

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. Qualitative Methodology (20%)- *Approximate assignment length: 5-10 pages*

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 proscribe your own method for how you will address your research question. You may choose one or more of the methods that we will study to answer your question. I will provide a more detailed outline for this module at a later date

Format and Other Specifications for all Writing Assignments

- Font Size/ Spacing: Papers should be 12 point, double-spaced.
- Margins: Top and bottom margins no larger than 1" (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)
- All papers should use Standard English and conform to good standards of grammar, spelling and neatness.
- Students should use the APA-published or CMS guidelines for in-text citation as described in The Writer's Harbrace Handbook.

2) UAB IRB Training (12.5%)

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 3-6 hours to complete.

To register go to: <http://www.citiprogram.org/>

IMPORTANT!

- YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR IRB TRAINING ON OR BEFORE December 1.

- 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

3) Homeworks (5%)

I will have you turn in assigned problems from the book and possibly other sources that I will assign once we begin the section of the course dealing with statistical analysis.

These exercises are *crucial* to gaining familiarity with subject matter that often seems foreign to students at first. If you do these assignments, it will greatly enhance your chances of doing well on the final.

4) Quantitative Portfolio (25%)

You will also do a mock quantitative research design. This assignment will involve writing up a research question, one or more testable hypotheses and a quantitative research methodology section. A detailed outline will be provided.

5) Participation and Good Effort (10%)

So what determines 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.
- **Important:** If you miss more than 3 classes, you will not earn any participation points for the course and will lose 5% of your total course grade for each additional class you miss beyond that.
- **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.
- **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.

6) Course Policies

- **BlazerID** All students in the course must have a working BlazerID. I will be distributing much of the course material via e-mail. It is YOUR responsibility to insure that e-mail sent to address specified in your BlazerID is received by you.

- **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.
- **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 cannot earn attendance credit if you skip class.
- **Emergencies:** I will make every effort to accommodate students that have legitimate emergencies. Illness, a death in the family, a car accident or some other type of crisis is a legitimate reason for missing class. Other cases will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. 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.
- **Academic Honesty:** Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules regarding academic honesty and integrity as outlined in the student handbook.

COURSE OUTLINE

August 18: Course Introduction

August 25: The ABC's of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

O'Sullivan et al Chapters 1-2 (pp.1-54)

Ritchie & Lewis Chapters 1-2 (pp.1-46)

September 1: Basic Research Designs

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 3 (pp.55-97)

Ritchie & Lewis Chapter 3 (pp.47-76)

September 8: Library Research Session

September 15: Measurement

O'Sullivan et al Chapters 4 and 10 (pp.98-132; 291-314)

* Dannenberg, A. et al (2003). "The Impact of Community Design and Land Use Choices on Public Health: A Scientific Research Agenda." American Journal of Public Health. 93 (9): 1500-1508.

(Academic Search Elite)

September 22: Sampling

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH QUESTION DUE

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 5 (pp.133-170)

Ritchie & Lewis Chapter 4 (p.77-108)

September 29: In Depth Interviews and Focus Groups

Ritchie & Lewis Chapters 6-7 (pp.138-198)

October 6: Analysis of Qualitative Data

Ritchie & Lewis Chapters 8-9 (pp.199-262)

October 13: Surveys and Questionnaires

LITERATURE REVIEW DUE

O'Sullivan et al Chapters 6-7 (pp.171-242)

October 13 cont...

*GAO (1986). *Developing and Using Questionnaires*. Washington, D.C. GAO Program Evaluation and Methodology Division, Transfer Paper 7.
(Online at GAO Website)

* GAO (1991). *Using Structured Interviewing Techniques*. Washington, D.C. GAO Program Evaluation and Methodology Division, GAO-PEMD 10.1.5.
(Online at GAO Website)

October 20: Univariate Analysis

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 11 (pp.315-357)

October 27: Univariate Analysis

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY DUE

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 11 (pp.315-357)

November 3: The T Test

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 12 (pp.359-384)

* Dolan, J. (2004). "Gender Equity: Illusion or Reality for Women in the Federal Executive Service?" Public Administration Review. 64 (3): 299-308.
(Library Catalog)

November 10: The T Test/Chi Square Test

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 12 (pp.359-384)

November 17: Contingency Tables and other Measures of Association

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 13 (pp.388-423)

November 24 Happy Thanksgiving- Holiday

December 1: In Class Run Through of Quantitative Designs

IRB TRAINING MUST BE DONE AND DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED BY TODAY

O'Sullivan et al Chapter 14 (pp.427-462)

December 9: Quantitative Methodology Due no later than 7:00 p.m.