

PPPM

Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management



UNIVERSITY
OF OREGON



University of Oregon
School of Planning, Public Policy and Management
PPPM 657: Research Methods in Public Policy and Management
Winter 2019

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30 to 5pm or by
appointment

Course Description

This course is a survey of research methods used in public policy and management and builds upon Quantitative Methods. The course provides an overview of frequently applied quantitative methods, their role in the research process, and discussion of several research studies in which they have been implemented. At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Critically read and apply research findings
 - Extract relevant and valid inferences
 - Identify tenuous and invalid conclusions
- Design and commission research for specific objectives
 - Describe a variety of methods and data types
 - Determine the appropriate methodology for a given research question
 - Shape research to meet practical objectives
- Plan and perform applied research at a basic starting level
 - Locate and evaluate previous research
 - Design research in an ethical manner that protects human subjects
 - Conduct basic research using quantitative and qualitative methods
 - Avoid major pitfalls in data collection and research execution
 - Describe limitations of any proposed or completed study

Course Prerequisite

This course builds upon PPPM 656 Quantitative Methods in Planning and Public Policy.

Students are required to have passed PPPM 656 prior to enrolling in PPPM 657 Research Methods in Public Policy and Management. This course is part of the MPA core curriculum and is limited to students who have been admitted to the MPA program. Other students may enroll with permission of the instructor.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will:

1. Prepare a professionally written, *concise* research report on a given topic of interest (including proper citations, grammar, appropriate consideration of the audience, etc.), including construction of a clear, logical thesis supported with proper evidence.
2. Constructively critique other peers' works.
3. Conduct a professional oral presentation of their research report (e.g., clear explanation of content, eye contact, speed of speech, etc.).
4. Feel comfortable doing group work.
5. Understand and compare different statistical methods and their limitations.

Course Website

The course website is located on the University of Oregon's Canvas system. The class syllabus, announcements and other materials will be posted on the Canvas site. Please check the course website frequently for updates. In addition, make sure that the University registrar has your correct email address. I will use this email address and Canvas to communicate with you.

Required Reading

- Remler, Dahlia K., and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. 2015 (2nd edition). *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. Sage Publications (previous editions okay)

Assignments and Course Grades (more details are in the "Assignments" folder on Canvas)

The course grade will be based on the following components:

1. **Research proposal (37%)** The purpose of the research proposal is to help you think critically about an argument and credibly support it using the tools and resources learned in class. This is also an opportunity to improve your writing, so I strongly suggest reviewing the rubric and explanation of grading system at the end of the syllabus to understand my expectations of students.
 - a. **Draft research proposal:** These assignments will be marked on the syllabus as "***DRP." Drafts of the research proposal will be submitted throughout the quarter on the specified due dates and I will offer feedback and comments primarily on the content of the work. Although these are drafts, I expect students to turn in high-quality work with few grammatical, spelling errors. *Drafts of sections that are submitted after the due date may not receive feedback or at least significantly less feedback and comments.* For further information on how to write and think about research, I suggest reviewing Chapter 17 from your textbook. **Submit assignments by 5pm on the due date onto Canvas**, otherwise the assignment will be considered late.
 - b. **Peer review: 10%**
 - c. **Final research proposal: 22%**
 - d. **Oral presentation of research proposal: 5%**
2. **Paper discussion: 8%**
3. **Midterm: 20%**
4. **Final Exam: 35%** Midterm and Final Exams will be in-class. Anything said in lecture (and not in the handouts) could be on the exam.

Classroom Environment

In order to create a classroom in which students are comfortable expressing their opinions and perspectives, I ask that students please approach the readings and others' contributions with both an open mind and a willingness to question one's own assumptions and biases.

Professional Practice

This course is a core course in the PPPM undergraduate pre-professional degree program. As such, students are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times.

- Students should treat each other and the instructor with the professional courtesy and respect expected in a workplace.
- All communications relating to this course and all work turned in for this course should reflect professional standards in tone, presentation, formatting, and spelling.
- The classroom is a place of focused learning. This requires that students arrive on time, stay until the end of the class period, do not disrupt the class by leaving the room temporarily, and refrain from non-learning activities. Students who fail to adhere to these guidelines will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class session.
- I expect all course assignments to be completed using a word processor.
- Some assignments will require use of a spreadsheet program for data analysis and graphing. Some familiarity with a spreadsheet program (e.g. Excel) and statistical software, specifically Stata.
- You will also be required to use PowerPoint for a presentation at the end of the term on your final project.

Course Workload

A general rule of thumb for the expected workload for a graduate level class is approximately 3-4 hours/week per credit hour. Thus, a four credit course will require approximately 12-16 hours of effort per week. Our class meets for three hours each week, so students should expect to spend an additional 9 to 13 hours per week studying for this course.

Writing Lab

This is a writing intensive course. If you struggle with writing, I strongly encourage you to use the services of the Writing Lab: The Writing Lab begins week two of the term and closes at 5:00 pm the Wednesday of finals week. Free tutors are available. Upper-division and graduate student tutors are available on a drop-in basis or by appoint. (You must come to the writing lab to schedule your appointment.) 9:00am – 5:00pm, Monday – Friday, 72 PLC (Prince Lucien Campbell).

Documented Disabilities

Students who have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should make arrangements to see the instructor as soon as possible. They should also request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying the disability.

Calculators

We will use calculators periodically throughout the term, so please make sure you always bring one to class. A basic calculator (not a fancy graphing calculator) is all that is needed for this course, **but it will not be allowed for use during exams.**

Email

I will try to respond to all email within 48 hours of receiving them. It is, however, becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the quantity of email that I receive, so I ask that you make sure that you have reviewed Canvas and the syllabus prior to sending a note about course logistics.

Late Assignment Policy

If you are unable to make it to class on the day an assignment is due, you may mail, email, or fax your assignment to me prior to the class time and date that assignment is due. Late assignments receive only partial credit. If an answer key is posted to the website, however, no late homework assignments are accepted (no credit).

Missed Class Policy

If you miss a class, please arrange to get class notes from a classmate. Instructor lecture notes are not available.

Incomplete Policy

Students are expected to behave in a professional manner and to turn in all materials at the designated time. In accordance with university regulations, an incomplete will only be given when “the quality of work is satisfactory but a minor yet essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor.”

Academic Misconduct

You are expected at all times to do your own work. Copying content from other students and submitting it as your own work is grounds for failing the class. The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor.

Plagiarism

Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. All assignments submitted onto Canvas will be run through VeriCite, a plagiarism detection tool. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at:

www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

Make up Exams: Final Exam

Students must take the final exam to receive a grade in the course. The date and time for the final exam will not be changed to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Final exams will not be given early under any circumstances. A make up final exam will be scheduled for students who miss the regularly scheduled final exam due to serious illness or family emergency.

Inclusion Statement

The School of Architecture and Allied Arts is a community that values inclusion. We are a committed to equal opportunities for all faculty, staff and students to develop individually, professionally, and academically regardless of ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic standing, cultural beliefs and traditions. We are dedicated to an environment that is inclusive and fosters awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity. If

you feel excluded or threatened, please contact your instructor and/or department head. The University Bias Response Team is also a resource that can assist you. Find more information at their website at <http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html> or by phoning 541-346-2037.

Diversity Statement

In this course, class discussions, projects/activities and assignments will challenge students to think critically about and be sensitive to the impact of cultural, religious, gender, race, socioeconomic, physical and cognitive ability, and sexual differences. Students will be encouraged to develop or expand their respect and understanding of such differences.

Classroom Behavior

Maintaining a safe classroom environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their ideas, beliefs, and values will not only be my responsibility, but the responsibility of each class member as well. Behavior that disregards or diminishes another student will not be permitted for any reason. This means that no racist, ableist, transphobic, xenophobic, chauvinistic or otherwise derogatory comments will be allowed, but it also means that students must pay attention and listen respectfully to each other's comments.

Sexual Violence, Harassment and Survivor Support

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted to completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are **not alone**. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

Tentative Course Schedule

Below is a tentative outline of the course sessions with assigned readings. Dates for some topics will inevitably change. Please rely on the class Canvas account for knowing what reading should be done for what class. It will be up to date. All the readings will be available for download on Canvas.

Week #1

Monday (Jan. 7): Introduction and foundations of research

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 1

Assignments and reminder

- *Optional:* Bring your textbook to class on Wednesday for an in-class exercise

Wednesday (Jan. 9): Review of quantitative methods

Optional readings

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 10
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapters 8 (start on p. 248) & 9 (p. 281-303)
- Optional reading: Berman & Wang (p. 17-42)

Assignments and reminders

- Read **DRP Assignment 1: Research question/objective
- Sign up for paper discussion groups by this Friday, January 11! (Link to sign up is [here](#))
- Read assigned article and report for example paper discussion next Wednesday

Week #2

Monday (Jan. 14): Theory, research questions, and literature review

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 2 (p. 25-38,49-53)
 - Skip section on “Logic models”
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 17 (pg. 529-545)
- *Paper discussion reading:* [Can government play Moneyball? In the Atlantic](#). Read an associated report from the article [here](#)—only read the Executive summary and Part 1 (pages 1-13) (Pdf also available on Canvas). (*Caveat:* This news article is not about one specific scientific report, but I thought it was more interesting with respect to using evidence based research to evaluate government policies and programs.)

In-class: Example paper discussion

Wednesday (Jan. 16): Measurement

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 4 (skip p. 121-123 and p. 131-133)
- [Gang stats aren't remotely reliable, but voters keep hearing them anyway](#) at Fivethirtyeight.com

Assignments and reminders

- **DRP Assignment 1 due Friday on Canvas (January 18) by 5:00 pm
- Read **DRP Assignment 2: Literature Review (due January 30)

Week #3

Monday (Jan. 21): Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday- *No class*

Wednesday (Jan. 23): Sampling

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 5 (skip p. 166-173)
- *Paper discussion 1: Social welfare policy*

Week #4

Monday (Jan. 28): Secondary and administrative data- *Guest lecture: Jonathan Cain*

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 6
- *Paper discussion 2: Healthcare/public health policy*

Wednesday (Jan. 30): Causation and regression

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 11
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 13

Assignments and reminders

- Midterm review will be posted by Thursday on Canvas.
- **DRP Assignment 2: Literature Review due

Week #5

Monday (Feb. 4): Midterm Review/Reproducibility in research

- [How reliable are psychology studies?](#) In The Atlantic
- *Optional:* “Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science” by the Open Science Collaboration (pdf in Canvas)
- *Optional:* Listen to the podcast “[Brian Nosek on the Reproducibility Project](#)” (about an hour long). There are also written highlights from the podcast students can read.

Assignments and reminders

- Read **DRP Assignment 3: Data (due Wednesday of Week 6, February 13)

Wednesday (Feb. 6): Midterm

Week #6

Monday (Feb. 11): Observational studies

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 12

Assignments and Reminders

- Read **DRP Assignment 4: Methods (due Week 7 Wednesday, February 20)

Wednesday (Feb. 13): Natural and Quasi experiments

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 13 (p. 467-484)
- Dominici, F., Greenstone, M., and Sunstein C.R. (2014) “Particulate matter matters,” *Science*.
- *Paper discussion 3: Environmental policy*

Assignments and reminders

- **DRP Assignment 3: Data due today at 5pm on Canvas

Week #7

Monday (Feb. 18): Qualitative methods-- *Guest lecture from [Michael Howard](#) (Assistant Program Director of IPRE (formerly CSC))*

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 3

Assignments and Reminders

- Peer assessment partners posted on Canvas. Email your most updated research proposal to your assigned partner by *this Friday!*

Wednesday (Feb. 20): Randomized experiments

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 14
- *Paper discussion 4: International development*

Optional: Aviva Aron-Dine, Einav, L., and Finkelstein, A. (2013) “The RAND Health Insurance Experiment, Three Decades Later,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27, 1. (*only read p. 197-212*)

Assignments and Reminders

- **DRP Assignment 4 (Methods) due today at 5pm on Canvas
- Bring your laptop to class next week—we will work in groups in-class using Qualtrics.
- Sign-up for oral presentations that start Wed., March 7 [here](#). First come-first serve basis

Week #8

Monday (Feb. 25): Surveys and observation, Part 1

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 7

In-class: Create a survey using Qualtrics (bring your computers).

Assignments and Reminders

- Bring your laptop to class next week, and we will continue to work on survey

Wednesday (Feb. 27): Surveys and observation, Part 2

- *Paper discussion 5: Education policy*

Assignments and Reminders

- Peer review due next Friday, March 8 on Canvas. In addition, email your peer review to your partner (don't need to email it to me). Look at the Research Proposal Assignment if you have questions.

Week #9

Monday (March 4): Research ethics- *Guest Lecture from UO's Research Compliance Services*

Optional: Human subjects certification

- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 16 (p. 517-525)
- [Read UO's policies on research involving human subjects](#)
- Follow the online instruction to register [here](#), then complete the training. I also posted a document by the UO which lists instructions on completing the training.
- More information about Research Compliance Services is available here: <http://orcr.uoregon.edu/>

Wednesday (March 6): Student presentations, Part 1

Assignments and Reminders

- Peer review Friday on Canvas at 5pm.

Week #10

Monday (March 11): Student presentations, Part 2

Wednesday (March 13): Final Review

Final research proposal due on Canvas!

❖ **FINAL EXAM (in-class):** Thursday, March 21 at 2:45 pm

Grading Rubric Example (will vary by specific assignment)

<i>Criteria</i>	Unacceptable professional quality	Minimally acceptable professional quality	Adequate professional quality	Very good professional quality	Highest professional quality
EVALUATION					

Addressing each portion of assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will vary 					
Providing adequate justification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of literature to present issues and arguments • Development of a coherent argument or reasoned position • Exhibition of higher-level thinking, synthesis and argumentation 					
Writing (see below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly structured and organized • Professional tone • Grammar, referencing & presentation 					

WRITING: Detailed Feedback	Weaknesses or Deficiencies
Logical structure: <i>Can your reader follow presentation of information?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory section to orient the reader to the purpose of the document • Clear sequence of sections: logical order for writing task • Clear structure to sections • Uses subheadings effectively—reader can easily find key information • Uses paragraphs to support structure • Clear topic sentences • Links between paragraphs • Links within sections 	
Professional approach: <i>May not apply for each assignment.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective paper avoids bias and prejudice • Assertions supported by evidence (references, clear information, citations) and not just opinion • Uses a range of high quality sources • Appropriate use of active and passive voice • Awareness of audience: avoids slang, jargon and informal language • Coherence 	
Grammar: <i>Errors can raise questions about sloppiness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noun verb agreement • Correct use of tense • Complete sentences • Appropriate punctuation 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No run on sentences • No spelling errors or typos • Other grammar issues 	
<p>Referencing: <i>Provide support for assertions in accepted referencing style.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In text references (author date, page) or footnotes • Reference list (or footnotes) using proper citation format 	
<p>Professional Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't overuse bullets • Professional format (page #s, clear print + graphics) • Free of handwritten edits • Use graphics to support text, but not replace it • Proofreading 	

Explanation of Grading System

- C+ and Lower (below 80)
 - **Unacceptable work for professionals or undergraduate/graduate courses**
 - Factual errors or calculation errors
 - Poorly written (misspellings, typos, poor grammar, poor sentence structure)
 - Graphics poor (inaccurate tables, poor titles, no data sources)
- B- (81-83)
 - **Below acceptable standards for professionals**
 - Minor errors of fact or calculation
 - Poorly constructed text, unclear graphics
 - Rushed or lack of attention to overall product
- B (84-86)
 - **Meets minimal professional standards**
 - Factually and technically correct
 - Clear message to readers
 - May lack precision in language and presentation of data
- B+ (87-90)
 - **Solid professional work**
 - Factually and technically correct
 - Excellent tables and graphics
 - Falls short in some areas
- A- (91-93)
 - **High quality professional work**
 - Technically, methodologically, and factually 100% accurate
 - Fall short of highest quality work in organization, flow of text or presentation
 - Clearly conveys conclusions to audience
- A (94-99)
 - **Highest quality work**
 - Technically, methodologically, and factually 100% accurate
 - Efficient language and graphics presented with emphasis
 - Easy to navigate and follow
 - Clear about main points and evidence provided to support these points
 - All graphics are clear and titled, sources, labeled

