California State University, Sacramento
Public Policy and Administration 205
Fall 2017

PPA 205: Research in Public Policy and Administration

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Meeting times:
Thursdays 6p-8:50p

Meeting location:
AIRC 3009

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Thursdays 12:15p-3p
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COURSE GOALS

This course focuses on the design of social science research. The main goals are to enhance your understanding of how to develop high quality studies related to public policy and administration, and how to "consume" or use them as part of your work. This includes having an understanding of a number of different research approaches, including their potential pitfalls.

PPA 205 is not primarily a course on data analysis; another core course, PPA 207, focuses on that topic. PPA 205 will set you up for PPA 207, in that you will learn about the power and limitations of a variety of research methods from a conceptual level; that kind of understanding is necessary if you are to conduct rigorous statistical analyses, and if you are to consume research effectively and responsibly.

Some of the readings in the textbook might seem abstract, although the authors do a great job of providing research-based examples throughout. To help you connect your classroom-based understandings to your world outside of school, I will supplement your readings with articles from newspapers and podcasts. There is a great deal of information in our daily lives that touches upon using social science research to make policy decisions that affect our lives. I very much welcome you bringing such resources to the class' attention throughout the course. If you notice a newspaper article that discusses causation, for example, please send me the link or bring the article to class. Feel free to contact me on Mondays or Tuesdays if you find an article you wish to share with the class.

Another way that I hope you will connect the readings and class discussions to your out-of-school lives is to have you make components of a toolkit throughout the semester. The different pieces of the toolkit will help you prepare for 207 and for your thesis, and could likely help you at work as well. Even if you do not end up using, for example, the survey or interview protocol that you developed, the act of creating the tools will help ground you in the literature that we will read – especially in the main textbook (Approaches to Social Research), and it will help you think about social science topics that interest you. The components of the toolkit are listed in the course assignments section of this syllabus.

At the end of PPA 205 it is expected that students will:
- understand the importance of thinking systematically about how to answer social science questions, including understanding the advantages and limitations of different research designs and methods;
- understand the advantages and limitations of using different ways to collect data, such as experiments, surveys, field research, and secondary data sets;
- work effectively in groups;
- frame and present problems effectively to different audiences;
- write effectively for different audiences; and
- understand the difference between analysis and advocacy.

From a big picture perspective, when you finish this course, I hope you will be able to be excellent consumers and/or producers of research—including producing and using research ethically. This class will help you understand how to identify issues that you might want to study, how to ask the right questions to study the issues, and how to gather data to answer those questions. You will hopefully leave the course with a new perspective about the power and limitations of research. You should understand how and why people design research and the importance of the "front end" (design) of research, the effects each stage of the research process has on the data we collect, and how we can interpret and use the information generated by the research. You should understand the basic principles that all kinds of methods — how we go about collecting and analyzing data — have in common and how to think systematically about investigating social science issues.

COURSE CONDUCT AND POLICIES
This course differs from traditional research methods courses in that a relatively heavy emphasis is placed on classroom discussion. Simply listening to a lecture will not help you engage with, and consequently learn, the concepts. Accordingly, a typical class will include discussion topics, some of which are specified in the syllabus. Many class sessions will also use exercises; I will create some exercises, borrow some from previous PPA instructors, and use exercises from Approaches to Social Research (called simply "Approaches" throughout this syllabus). It is therefore imperative that you read the syllabus carefully to be prepared for class and to complete the readings before class.

Getting help. It is important that you understand the material we are covering in class. If for any reason, you do not understand the readings, it is essential that you gain clarity on the topic during the time in which we are covering those topics. You can speak up in class to ask for clarification or you can speak with me privately (via email, phone, in office hours, by appointment, or during class breaks). You are also welcome to seek help from your

classmates. I am best reached via email, and I will do my best to get back to emails sent between Monday and Thursday within 24 hours.

Students with disabilities. Should you need assistance with portions of class due to disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible. The University offers services to student with disabilities at SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955.

Missing class. I expect students to attend all class sessions unless they have a compelling reason not to do so. You should notify me in advance if you need to miss a class. A student who misses three classes will be penalized one entire grade (e.g. a B+ for the course will become a C+), and a student who misses more than three classes will receive a failing grade.

Late assignments. Late assignments will be accepted with a grade penalty. For every day[1] that the paper is submitted late, 5% of the total points possible will be deducted from what you would have received if submitted on time (e.g., if the assignment is worth 100 points, 5 points will be deducted for each day late).

Distractions. Please do not use cell phones or web surfing in class. If laptops are being abused in class, I may prohibit their use for all.

Academic honesty. I take plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty very seriously. I reserve the right to fail students who are academically dishonest. Note that academic dishonesty can be grounds for dismissal from the university. Details are available at the University
Policy Manual found at http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/UMA00150.htm. Plagiarism is one case of academic dishonesty, and here is an excerpt from the manual on plagiarism:

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of cheating. At CSUS plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person's contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporation of another's work into one's own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it. Acknowledgement is not necessary when the material used is common knowledge. Plagiarism at CSUS includes but is not limited to:

> *1. The act of incorporating into one's own work the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another's work without giving appropriate credit thereby representing the product as entirely one's own. Examples include not only word-for-word copying, but also the "mosaic" (i.e., interspersing a few of one's own words while, in essence, copying another's work), the paraphrase (i.e., rewriting another's work while still using the other's fundamental idea or theory); fabrication (i.e., inventing or counterfeiting sources), ghost-writing (i.e., submitting another's work as one's own) and failure to include quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged; and*

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[1] A paper submitted 1 minute to 24 hours late is considered a day late. Each additional 24 hours late is considered another day late.

2. Representing as one's own another's artistic or scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawing, sculptures, or similar works.

If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to educate yourself at the beginning of the semester and/or come talk with me.

Use of Turnitin. To assist you in avoiding plagiarism, all written assignments will be submitted via Turnitin. Below is the University required blurb on the use of Turnitin:

Consistent with Sacramento State's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score'. The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

Students should submit papers to Turnitin assignments without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number), the system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

To submit papers via Turnitin, you will need the following information:
Class ID: 15885872
Enrollment password: yayresearch

OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Research prospectus. The most important class assignment is the development of an individual research prospectus for a potential study. Such a prospectus could potentially be developed into a PPA thesis/project. Detailed guidelines for the prospectus will be distributed during the semester. The prospectus will be due on December 15, the last day of the final exam period. A short draft prospectus will be due on October 27, aimed at helping me determine if you are "on track." However, I strongly urge you to set up an appointment to discuss your prospectus before the proposal summary is due. The prospectus will be part of your toolkit, described below. *The prospectus proposal is 10% of your final grade and is due on November 3. The final prospectus is 30% of your final grade and is due on December 15.*

Toolkit. Through the course, you will build a toolkit that will assist you not only in this class, but also in future PPA coursework and in your professional careers. The toolkit will be comprised of:
- **A glossary of terms.** This will not be graded. To ensure that you are ready to succeed in PPA 207, I will hand out a glossary template with terms that you will need to know for the spring semester. This is for your reference. You will not turn it in for a grade, but I highly suggest that you check it weekly and fill out the terms as you learn them.

- **A running chart of pros, cons, uses, and challenges/limitations of each method discussed in class.** This will not be graded. This chart will be a "cheat sheet" for you next semester when you are thinking about which methods to use for your theses and how to discuss the pros and cons of the method(s) you select.

- **A list of research questions that you might be interested in exploring, along with your thoughts about hypotheses connected to those questions.** These questions could help you jump into your thesis, they could be connected to your current or future work, or they could just be issues that you're interested in exploring. *10% of your final grade, due September 15.*

- **Survey and interview protocol** (directions for administering the survey or conducting the interview and a list of questions). Constructing these tools will help you apply what you learn from the readings about how to create unbiased instruments, developed with the appropriate respondents in mind that can provide the desired data. *15% of your final grade, due October 20.*

- **Research prospectus.** Described above.

Group project. While there will be many group discussions during class, there will also be one in-class group assignment. This assignment will be aimed at having you quickly identify appropriate research approaches in real time, under significant time pressure and facing considerable assignment ambiguity. The aim is in part to duplicate the types of research you might be asked to conduct as practitioners, e.g., in state government. You will begin, finish, and present this project on November 30, 2017. *10% of your final grade.*

Causality paper. In this paper, you will aim to understand and explain a causal relationship, in addition to identifying confounding factors that may mask the causal relationship. This paper is due the day we focus on causality, September 21. *15% of your final grade*

Class participation. In addition to merely attending class, I expect students to prepare for class and actively participate. This means having had done the assigned reading before class, reviewed the exercises and discussion questions before class, and to engage your classmates in discussion, and ask questions. In assessing participation, I will take into account class attendance, completion of exercises from the course textbook to be discussed and sometimes turned in during class, quality of comments in class discussion, extent to which connections are made to course readings and concepts, and frequency of involvement. *10% of final grade.*

Grades. To calculate final grades, I will calculate a final score based on the score received for each assessment listed above and the weight of the assessment. Then I will translate the numeric score to the letter grade based on the following:

Final numeric score (based on individual scores and weights)	Final letter grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+

83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
59 or below	F

COURSE READINGS

This course requires that you have access to the World Wide Web and SacCT. For all journal articles that are accessible via the Sac State Library, I will expect you to download them on your own from Library website. I've provided links in the syllabus to articles that are freely available online. For articles that the Sac State Library does not have access to and are not available online, I've posted on SacCT. For each article, I've noted in the syllabus where you can find it. I will also use SacCT to email the class (so make sure to check the email you have linked to your SacCT account) and to post the syllabus, assignments, and any other course documents. If you need to email me, I will respond more quickly if you email me directly at jez@csus.edu than if you send me an email through the SacCT system.

Required course text. Royce A. Singleton, Jr., and Bruce C. Straits. Approaches to Social Research, 5th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Click here to buy online.

I encourage you to buy online and purchase a used, softcover version to save money. I have also asked the Sac State Bookstore to stock this title. If you wish to purchase there, please call for availability.

Note there is a more recent sixth edition now available. I will use the fifth edition, as the sixth edition came out too late for me to thoroughly review.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1: Welcome! Why Does Research Design Matter?
August 31

Readings for class
Approaches to Social Research, chapters 1 and 2 and Table of Contents

Homework
Write a 1-2 double-spaced pages on what you hope to learn in terms of being a good *consumer* of research and what you hope to learn to become a good *producer* of research. Describe any experience you have being a consumer and/or producer of research, and discuss your policy area(s) of interest. Finally, please read the Table of Contents in Approaches and, in your paper, include any questions you have for me about the issues we will discuss over the course of the semester. There

is no grade for this assignment. Your paper will help me understand where you are each starting from with regard to your understanding of the broad issues and concepts discussed in the textbook, and it will help you become grounded in some of the key introductory issues for this class. **Please email your paper to me by 10am on August 30. This paper will count as part of your participation grade.**

Exercise and discussion

Introductions

Be prepared to discuss exercises 1 - 3 from Chapter 2 in class.

Class 2: Scientific Approaches and Ethics

September 7

Readings for class

1) re-read/skim *Approaches to Social Research*, chapter 2

2) Arina K. Bones, "We Knew the Future All Along: Scientific Hypothesizing is Much More Accurate Than Other Forms of Precognition—A Satire in One Part," Perspectives on Psychological Science 7 (2012): 307-309

3) *Approaches to Social Research*, chapter 3

4) Alice Park, "How Safe are Vaccines?," *Time*, May 21, 2008

Exercise and discussion

Complete exercises 1a-1c on pages 75-76 in <u>Approaches</u> and be prepared to discuss them in class.

What does the article by "Professor Bones" suggest about how often scientists fool themselves about the accuracy of their conclusions? And what does this imply for us?

Class 3: Designing Research: What Do You Need to Think About First?

September 14 *** *no office hours this day* ***

Readings for class

1) *Approaches to Social Research*, chapter 4

2) "Does This Ad Make Me Fat?" New York Times article available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/opinion/sunday/does-this-ad-make-me-fat.html?r=0

3) "The Man With the Wobbly Walk" New York Times Magazine article on medical diagnostics available at: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/03/24/magazine/diagnosis-wobbly-walk.html#/#intro

Homework

Bring to class 2-5 research questions that you are interested in, along with hypotheses you want to test for each research question. This will become part of

your toolkit and is 10% of your class grade.

Exercise and discussion

Complete exercise 2 on pages 112-113 in Approaches and be prepared to discuss your answers in class.

Identify the unit of analysis, dependent variable, and key independent variables considered in the two NY Times pieces.

You will complete an in-class assignment about causation, and I will hand out the assignment for the causality paper (due September 21, 15% of your grade).

Class 4: Digging Deeper into Causality
September 21

Readings for class

Henry E. Brady, "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 Presidential Election," in Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (2004) *** On reserve at the library***

Exercise and discussion

Causality papers are due at the beginning of class and are 15% of your grade. The first half of the class will be reserved for each of you to talk briefly about your paper.

Think carefully about Brady's article about the Florida results in the 2000 presidential election. What may we miss by moving right to regression analysis and ignoring the logic of causal processes?

Class 5: Measurement and Sampling
September 28

Readings for class

1) Chapters 5 and 6 in Approaches

2) Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), pp. 109-118

3) an article about Nate Silver predicting the 2012 election available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/grrlscientist/2012/nov/08/nate-sliver-predict-us-election

Exercise and discussion

Complete exercise 5 on page 148 and exercise 4 on page 190 and be prepared to talk about them in class. From the Kahneman article: What does Kahneman indicate about the danger of jumping to conclusions based on "small N" samples? What does this suggest about the desirability of "large N" studies?

Class 6: Experimentation
October 5   *** guest lecturer ***

Readings for class

1) *Approaches to Social Research,* chapter 7

2) McDermott, Rose. (July 2013). "The Ten Commandments of Experiments," Political Science & Politics, Vol. 46, Issue 3, American Political Science Association, pp. 605-610

3) Listen to 30 minutes of Forum on KQED from July 12, 2013 about cholesterol available at: http://www.kqed.org/a/forum/R201307120900.

Exercise and discussion

Be prepared to talk about exercises 2, 3, and 4 from pages 228-229 in <u>Approaches</u>.

Class 7: Surveys and Interviews

October 12 *** *guest lecturer* ***

Readings for class

1) *Approaches to Social Research,* chapters 9 and 10

2) Gina Walejko, "Online Survey: Instant Publication, Instant Mistake, All of the Above," in Eszter Hargittai, Editor, Research Confidential: Solutions to Problems Most Social Scientists Pretend They Never Have (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), pp. 101- 121

3) Floyd Jackson Fowler, Jr., "How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data," Public Opinion Quarterly 56 (1992): 218-231.

Homework

Go back to your list of research questions that you might want to answer. Choose one that would allow for the use of a survey and interview protocol (a protocol is a list of interview questions and how to ask them). Decide whom you would need to survey and whom you would need to interview. Decide upon some themes for the survey and the interview protocol. For example, if you were conducting interviews and wanted to learn about whether community college students think they were prepared to take placement tests, you could have categories such as: prior educational experiences, preparation activities, knowledge of the exam, etc., and then you could have questions within each thematic area. Create questions for each area – in other words, create a survey and interview protocol that you might want to use later for your thesis or work. You will turn them in during class. These will become part of your toolkit and are worth 15% of your grade.

Exercise and discussion

Consider the types of wording issues raised in the Fowler piece. What might these imply about how a researcher should proceed to determine the extent of television viewing among present day American teenagers?

Complete exercise 3 on page 308 and 4 on 352 (both are in <u>Approaches</u>) and be prepared to talk about them in class.

Class 8: Mid-Semester Check-In, Applying and Reviewing Concepts, and Movie Night!
October 19

Readings for class

For this class, there is no reading. Listen to the following This American Life podcast: http://thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/490/trends-with-benefits. Think about the issues we have discussed so far in class related to this story (such as the role of theory in trying to understand public policy issues, the impact of public policies, collecting information to answer social policy issues) and be prepared to talk about them in class.

In-class

Film for Viewing in Second Part of Class "All the President's Men" (1976). We will watch about half of the film in class.

Class 9: Field Research and Multiple Methods
October 26 *** guest lecturer ***

Readings for class
Jez, Su Jin. "Increasing the Effectiveness of State Reporting Requirements and Student Disclosures for Private Postsecondary Institutions". http://www.bppe.ca.gov/forms_pubs/reporting_requirements.pdf

Approaches to Social Research, chapter 11

Exercise and discussion

Why do you think I chose a field work approach to examine how students chose to attend a for-profit college and what reporting requirements the state should mandate? What did I learn from this approach that I probably could not have learned from statistical analysis of available data? What were the weaknesses of this approach?

What other methods did I use? What strengths did those methods bring? What were the limitations?

Please bring your laptop to class next week.

Class 10: Research Using Available Data
November 2 *** Please bring your laptop to class ***

Readings for class

1) *Approaches to Social Research*, chapter 12

2) "There's a Fly in My Tweets" a New York Times article about using data from social media: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/23/opinion/sunday/theres-a-fly-in-my-tweets.html

3) "How Googling Unmasks Child Abuse" a New York Times article about using Google search queries: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/opinion/sunday/how-googling-unmasks-child-abuse.html?pagewanted=all

Homework

Come to class having perused the Web site for the Inter-University Consortium on Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan: www.icpsr.umich.edu. I will be expecting you to be able to conduct searches and access data from this site. Here's a link to their data use tutorial: http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/shared/ICPSR/help/newuser

Class 11: Historical Analyses
November 11

Readings for class

Natural Experiments of History, Chapter 5.

Exercise and discussion

Think carefully about how the authors draw causal inferences about 1) the effects of political institutions on banking in the New World; 2) the factors   that influenced living standards and deforestation on the island of Hispaniola; and 3) the effects of the slave trade on modern prosperity in Africa. Be prepared to discuss these topics in class.

Class 12: Policy, Evaluation, and Elementary Data Analysis
November 16

Readings for class

1) *Approaches to Social Research,* chapter 14

2) Nancy Shulock and Colleen Moore, "Rules of the Game: How State Policy Creates Barriers to Completion and Impedes Student Success in the California Community Colleges" (Sacramento: Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, 2007) available at: http://www.csus.edu/ihelp/PDFs/R_Rules_of_the_Game_02-07.pdf; and 3) Su Jin Jez and Sara Adan, "Aiming to Meet Workforce Needs: An Evaluation of the Economic and Workforce Development Program" available at: http://edinsightscenter.org/Portals/0/ReportPDFs/ewd-report-final.pdf?ver=2016-05-11-125140-810

Discussion

How convincing is the statistical evidence presented in "Rules of the Game"? Why?

Does the evidence presented in the Workforce report support the conclusions drawn? How so or how not?

Class 13: Group Work and Putting the Pieces Together
November 30

Be prepared to work in groups to analyze research topics and recommend research approaches in real time. This is 10% of your grade.

Class 14: Ethics Revisited
December 7

Revisiting research ethics in light of everything you have learned, course wrap-up

Time for student evaluations