

**The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration**  
**Summer 2019**

Course Number: PPPA 8101

Course Title: Research Methods

Description: Doctoral seminar on theory and practice in research methodology. Data sources and gathering, research models and designs. Critical evaluation of research studies. Emphasis on application of research methods to policy questions.

Prerequisites: None

Professor: Dr. Kathryn Newcomer  
Suite 601N  
Telephone: 202-994-3959 (O)  
301-251-1226 (H)  
E-mail: [newcomer@gwu.edu](mailto:newcomer@gwu.edu)  
Office hours: Tuesday, 2 pm - 6pm  
and by appointment

Required Textbooks:

Mason, Jennifer *Qualitative Researching*, 3rd edition, Sage, 2018  
(which ever edition you can purchase inexpensively.)

Pearl, Judea and Dana Mackenzie. 2018. *The Book of Why*. Basic Books.

Salganik, Matthew J. *Bit by Bit*. Princeton University Press, 2018.

Shadish, Cook and Campbell. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Yin, Robert *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (which ever edition you can purchase inexpensively.)

Student

Learning

Objectives:

Course content and requirements are designed to develop students' knowledge and skills in:

1. Articulating one's own ontological and epistemological preferences;
2. Developing and testing theories and models;
3. Framing and developing good researchable questions;
4. Designing research to provide appropriate comparisons to address research questions;
5. Designing research using "big data;"
6. Weighing the relative advantages of different data collection techniques to address research questions;
7. Writing focused questions for interviews and surveys;
8. Recognizing ethical issues that arise in conducting and reporting research; and
9. Reporting on one's own research and on studies conducted by others in a clear manner.

**Classroom Expectations:**

Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process and works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

**Respect for Diversity:**

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I strive to create an inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic

status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. Your suggestions on how to help me succeed with this are encouraged and appreciated.

Course  
Requirements:

1. Class participation. The class is a doctoral seminar, relying on active participation by all students. I expect students to attend every class, complete all readings, and participate fully in class discussion. Students should come with at least one discussion question for the class to discuss on each reading. **Each week students are expected to write and bring to class one discussion question they would use in teaching an undergraduate class about the topic of that week to share with the instructor and the class. AND each student will be asked to find and present the basics about a study that exemplifies one of the research designs covered in class, and discuss how it illustrates the design. S/he should provide a brief summary to the class on the night s/he presents with powerpoints (15% of grade).**
2. Written Assignments.

**Please note: Students can not submit written work electronically for this class unless discussed with the instructor before the due date.**

- a. Article Critique (Due July 2): Students are asked to select an empirical research article of their choosing that has **quantitative analyses and addresses at least one impact (causal) question** and submit a written critique of approximately four - six pages in the following format:
  - 1) a brief description of the focus and findings;
  - 2) identification of the key research questions addressed;
  - 3) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used; and
  - 4) **a table with systematic list of threats to the : measurement validity and measurement reliability, internal validity and external validity, and statistical conclusion validity of the findings.** Note that the threats should

be clearly presented, for example do not simply state “Hawthorne Effect,” but clarify how/why that threat occurred. And the threats should be labeled regarding **the extent to which the authors acknowledged and addressed each**. And please, please pay attention to threats to statistical conclusion validity. (20% of grade). See good examples on Blackboard!

- b. Research Synthesis and Design (Due July 30): Students are asked to perform a systematic analysis of a set of (at least six) empirical research articles and/or reports on a topic of their choosing and develop a brief research design that would address a set of about 3 research questions that are relevant to the literature that has been reviewed. The written report should include **a synthesis of the studies** that is summarized in a matrix with a series of columns containing pertinent information about the studies reviewed (see a list of potential columns below).

The **design** should include: as statement of the policy issue or problem to be addressed, the research questions to be addressed, data sources, data collection methods, the type of design (in Campbell and Stanley terminology), and potential limitations to implementing the study that might be encountered (35% of grade).

Potential columns for your synthesis include:

- i) author and year
- ii) primary research questions
- iii) research design
- iv) data collection techniques
- v) type of sampling and sample size
- vi) data analytical techniques
- vii) key findings
- viii) limitations (categorize under headings of measurement validity and measurement reliability, internal and external validity, and statistical conclusion validity)

3. Final Exam. An **on-line** final exam will be given during the last week of the class. The exam will provide a series of essay questions focused on the main topics covered in the course (30% of grade).

### **Class Schedule and Assignments**

#### Session 1 (May 21)

Science, Theories, Models and Concepts: Formulating Research Questions

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 1-3)  
Chapters from Nader book on BB  
Clarke and Primo on BB

#### Session 2 (May 28)

Qualitative Researching

Readings:

Mason, (Chapters 1,2,3)  
Riccucci Chapters 1,2,4,5, 7 and 8 (Blackboard)  
Bennett and Elman, "Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Research." on BB  
CASP Checklist on BB  
A good example of an article by Brainard is on BB, too

#### Session 3 (June 5) NOTE: This is a Wednesday!

Case Studies, Process Tracing, and QCA

Readings:

Yin (Entire book)  
Mason (Chapters 4-7)  
Newcomer Threats to Validity and another piece on external validity on BB  
Chapter on Process Tracing on BB  
Chapter on QCA on BB

Session 4 (June 10) NOTE: This is a Monday! Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 6-8)

Session 5 (June 18) Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research Continued

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 9-14)

Session 6 (June 25)

Designing Research with Big Data

Readings:

Salganik, Chapters 1-4

Session 7 (July 2) \*\*\*\*\*ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE\*\*\*\*\*

Designing Data Collection Instruments, and Ethical Concerns

Readings:

Readings:

Salganik, Chapters 5 and 6

White Paper on Structural Racism on BB

Session 8 (July 9)

Synthesizing and Evaluating Rigor in Research, and Meta-Analysis

Readings:

Lipsey and Wilson chapters on BB

Cooper and Hedges, chapters 1, 2, 32 and 33 (Blackboard)  
Cartwright on Evidence on BB  
Leviton reading on BB

And

Please visit and assess one of the following websites, or one of your choosing, and be ready to discuss your evaluation of it:

1. IES What Works Clearinghouse (education) <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
2. HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis  
[www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/)
3. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs OJJDP Model Programs Guide <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/mpg.html>
4. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Effective Health Care  
<http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/what-is-comparative-effectiveness-research1/>
6. The Campbell Collaboration <http://campbellcollaboration.org/>

### Session 9 (July 16)

Addressing Causality

Readings:

Pearl and Mackenzie

### Session 10 (July 23)

The Politics of Research and “Evidence-Based Policy”

Readings:

Cook, Shadish and Wong article (Blackboard)  
Leamer article (Blackboard)  
Cook paper (Blackboard)  
Angrist and Pischke

### PLUS

Students each present their paper through an 8 minute powerpoint presentation (or similar vehicle).

### July 30

**\*\*\*\*\* Research Synthesis and Design Due\*\*\*\*\***

NOTE: The online Final Exam to be taken when convenient for each student between July 24 and August 4 to be scheduled with the instructor.

**Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses**

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit our website for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.
2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
4. Academic Honesty: Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.
5. Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.
6. The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, modify content and requirements during the semester.

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**University Policies**

## **University Policy on Religious Holidays**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

## **Support for Students Outside the Classroom**

### **Disability Support Services (DSS)**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

### **Mental Health Services 202-994-5300**

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. [counselingcenter.gwu.edu/](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/)

## **Academic Integrity Code**

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity)

## **Out of Class Learning**

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of- class, learning expected per week: In a 15 week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of- class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a

**minimum** total of 2.5 hours a week. So this summer you should spend much more than that outside of class reading!

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