



**The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration
Spring 2024**

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
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Telephone: 301-706-9296 (cell)
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kathryn.newcomer@gmail.com)
Office hours: Virtually anytime 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. No need to buy – assigned chapters are on Blackboard.

Salganik, Matthew J. *Bit by Bit*. Princeton University Press, 2018.
This entire book is free on-line at
<https://www.bitbybitbook.com/en/1st-ed/preface/>

Shadish, Cook and Campbell. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002. (which ever edition you can purchase inexpensively.)

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 assumptions and 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 strategies to address them; 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 and Inclusion:

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.

Acknowledging Historical Realities about GW:

GW and Slavery:

“Although additional work remains to be done, initial research into Columbian College [GW’s predecessor] clearly shows that the practice of slavery influenced the school from the president down to enslaved servants. The college was located in a slave-owning city, financed and led by slave owners and men who profited from the slave economy, educated pro-slavery students, and depended on the labor of enslaved people” (library.gwu.edu/slavery-columbian-college).

GW & Native American Lands

“George Washington University's Foggy Bottom Campus in downtown Washington, D.C. ... resides on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Piscataway and Anacostan peoples. ... The District borders the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, a historic center of trade and cultural exchange between several tribal nations. For generations, the Piscataway and Anacostian Peoples have resided in this region and served as stewards of the local land and waterways” (cipp.cps.gwu.edu/land-acknowledgement).

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 bring to class at least one discussion question they want the class to discuss about the readings. 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 but no written paper needed (15% of grade).

2. Written Assignments.

- a. Article Critique (Due March 26): 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 six pages in the following format:
- 1) An introduction to the paper;
 - 2) A brief description of the focus and findings;
 - 3) identification of the key research questions addressed;
 - 4) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used; and
 - 5) **a table with a systematic list of threats to the : multicultural validity, 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 May 7): 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)

See good examples on Blackboard!

3. Final Exam. The final exam will be divided up into 5 separate brief (2-3 page double spaced) essays distributed across the semester. The exam questions will be focused on the main topics covered in the course and the pool of questions will be provided in the powerpoint slides (30% of grade). The essays will be due: March 5, April 9 and April 30. Prompts for each will be distributed at least two weeks ahead.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Session 1 (Jan. 16)

What is Science? and The Role of Theories and Models

Readings:

Chapters from Nader book on BB
Clarke and Primo on BB
Skim Gilbert et al. on BB
Skim Biden Memorandum on Indigenous Knowledge on BB

Session 2 (Jan. 23)

Addressing Racism in Research

Readings:

Chapters from Toldson on BB
Chapters on Decolonizing Methodologies by Tuhiwai-Smith on BB
White Paper on Structural Racism (by Urban Institute) on BB
White Paper on Structural Racism in Public Health (by Urban Institute) on BB

Session 3 (Jan. 30)

Introduction to Research Design.

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 1-3)

Newcomer and Hart Chapter 2 on Blackboard
Cartwright on Evidence on BB

Session 4 (Feb. 6)

Qualitative Researching

Readings:

Mason, (Chapters 1,2,3)
Riccucci Chapters 1,2,4,5, 7 and 8 (Blackboard)
Skim Bennett and Elman, “Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Research.” on BB
Skim CASP Checklist on BB

Session 5 (Feb. 13)

Case Studies, Process Tracing, and QCA

Readings:

Yin (Entire book)
Mason (Chapters 4-7)
Raimondo Chapter on Process Tracing on BB
Chapter on QCA on BB
Skim Mumford paper on Q sort on BB

Session 6 (Feb. 20) Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research Continued

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 6-8)

Session 7 (Feb. 27) Student presentations on designs.

Designing Research Continued

Readings:

Shadish, Cook and Campbell (Chapters 9-13)

Session 8 (Mar. 5) **NOTE NEXT WEEK IS SPRING BREAK.**

Designing Research with Big Data **First Final Exam Essays Due**

Readings:

Salganik, Chapters 1-4

Session 9 (Mar. 19)

Designing Data Collection Instruments, and Ethical Concerns

Readings:

Salganik, Chapters 5 and 6

Session 10 (Mar. 26) *******ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE*******

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)

Skim Leviton reading on BB

Session 11 (April 2)

Addressing Causality

Readings:

Pearl and Mackenzie, chapters 1-4 and 9

Session 12 (April 9) **Second Final Exam Essays Due**

Informing Public Policy-making with Research

Readings:

Leamer article on BB

Cook article on BB

Shadish article on BB

Session 13 (April 16)

Rethinking Standards of Evidence and Class Overview

Readings:

Newcomer et. al. 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. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs
OJJDP Model Programs Guide
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/mpg.html>
3. The Campbell Collaboration <http://campbellcollaboration.org/>
4. The Department of Labor <https://clear.dol.gov/>
5. ACF <https://www.pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/>

Session 14 (April 23)

Students each present their paper through an 8 minute powerpoint presentation.

April 30 Last Final Exam Essay Due

May 7 *** Research Synthesis and Design Due*******

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 but only to give students more time, not less.

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/

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/

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

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!
