POLS 503b: Research Methods for Public Administrators

Spring 2013

MW 12:35 p.m.-1:50 p.m.

Faner 3135

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**Contacting the Professor.** The preferred way of contacting the professor is through e-mail or during office hours. I check my e-mail almost daily (except when on travel) and will respond. If you send an e-mail, I may ask for a phone number to contact you for follow-up, if necessary.

Research Methods for Public Managers (POLS 503b) is required of all students seeking the M.P.A. degree and provides a foundation on which are based on other courses like public budgeting and program evaluation required of master students. It is a course to help students understand ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data. This course is of potentially great value to public administrators because it deals with the application of social science research methods and statistics to problems of interest to public administrators. Those who take this course often approach it with attitudes of fear and loathing—fear, in that they worry that the course will be heavily quantitative and overwhelm their modest backgrounds in mathematics, and loathing, in that they suspect that the course material will be boring beyond belief. Well, it could happen! But I will do four things with the course in an attempt to avoid such problems.
• First, the statistical portion of the course will presume no knowledge of mathematics beyond what is commonly learned in high school. I ask that you give the statistical portions of the course your best efforts. As a practical matter, I suspect that you will find that this statistical material relies more substantially on your general powers of reasoning than on your mastery of high school mathematics.
• Second, I will attempt to provide a range of interesting examples (in addition to those in the textbooks) in order to demonstrate that the methods studies can be put to use by public administrators. Much of the value of the course will be lost if you see no way in which the methods studies can actually be used by you in your jobs.
• Third, one of the course texts-Essential Statistics by Berman and its associated Workbook-provides an easy to use series of exercises that will be used during the semester.
• Fourth, I will show students how to communicate and present data in a manner than can be easily understood by their audience. Students will learn how to conduct basic calculations in Excel. With this information, they will learn to develop charts and graphs that can be imported to a word document or power point presentation for illustrative purposes.

This is a problem oriented course and therefore requires that you keep up with the problems assigned. The problems will be presented by YOU, not by the professor.

The texts for Research Methods for Public Administrators are:

3) Supplemental readings will either be posted on SIU On-line or placed in the office for you to copy and return within one hour. Please be considerate of other classmates who must also copy and get the materials read before class.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Syllabus Disclaimer and Changes. The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus. Such changes will be announced in class.

2. Attendance Policy. Attend and participate in all class sessions. You are professionals in training for a life-long career in public administration. The assumption is being made that you will attend all class sessions and arrive before 12:35 p.m. Class attendance will be an important factor in your class participation grade. Two points will be deducted for each absence. Two late entrances will also be counted as one absence. No points are deducted for documented medical absences and other allowable absences according to university policies, but, as with all absences, the lack of class attendance will affect student learning and, hence, performance. In order to receive an approval for medical or University related absences, students must submit documentation to the professor upon their return to class. Documentation will not be accepted thereafter.
3. **Participation.** Your participation will be noted every class period and will be assessed based on the completion of workbook exercises on your own time and your preparedness to discuss and present assignments in class. If you are not in class, you cannot participate. Therefore, two points will be deducted from your participation grade for every day that you are not physically present in class to participate.

4. **Late Hand-in.** Acceptance of late hand-ins or e-mails is at the discretion of the professor. Points will be deducted for late hand-ins or submissions to Dropbox.

5. **Computer and Software Access.** The hands-on, computer-based laboratory assignments are an important part of homework and this course. Unless you have easy access to a student computer lab with SPSS software, and are willing to use it outside of classroom hours, it is strongly recommended that you invest in SPSS (student version) and a computer.

6. **Student Conduct.** Students should conduct themselves in ways that are consistent with promoting an efficient learning environment for themselves and everyone else. Students should be conscientious, helpful, properly motivated to learn, honest, and respectful of others and their opinions at all times. Such conduct is consistent with generally regarded norms of professionalism, including those found in graduate, professional degree programs. If a student “commits the offense of disorderly conduct when he/she does any act (e.g. being disobedient) in such unreasonable manners as to alarm or disturb another and to provide a breach of peace” (See the SIUC Student Conduct Code), the professor reserves the right to deduct points for inappropriate conduct and refer the student to the University for further investigation of the matter. The professor also reserves the right to excuse the student from class for the remainder of the semester and give the student a letter grade of “F” for the course.

   Students should also familiarize themselves with the university Code of Student Conduct. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. Other acts of misconduct are stated in the Code of Student Conduct. Please note that plagiarism is a serious academic offense that may result in a student being expelled from an academic program or institution.

7. **Weekly Assigned Readings.** This is a problem solving and practical application based course. The professor will not lecture on the assigned readings, but will engage an open discussion of the subject matter. It is your responsibility, as aspiring professionals, to read materials assigned each week. You should also bring all assigned readings to class each week. Most will be referenced or will be used during in class exercises.

8. **Supplemental Readings.** Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester. These readings will either be available in the main office to be copied by students or posted on SIU Online.
9. *Workbook Exercises*. Workbook exercises will be given each class period. I encourage you to take your assignments very seriously as they will have an immense impact on your final grade. Students should be prepared to discuss these exercises in class and should submit an electronic version of the exercises to Dropbox (located at SIU on-line) prior to the start of class. Every effort should be put forth in doing the work on your own time and not while in class.

Hardcopies of all workbook exercises will be due April 22nd. You should also submit an electronic version of your completed workbook exercises to Dropbox (located at SIU On-line). Five points will be deducted (per each day) for any workbook exercise submitted after class on April 22nd.

**Course Topics and Assigned Readings**

**January 14**

Introduction to the Course

Explanation of Syllabus, Overview of Course

**January 16**

Berman, Ch. 1- Why Statistics for Public Managers and Analysts

Exercise Due: My career and use of quantitative data

**January 21 (No Class) Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday Holiday**

**January 23**

Babbie, Ch. 1-Human Inquiry and Science

Babbie, Ch. 2-Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research

Babbie, Ch. 3-The Ethics and Politics of Social Research

**January 28-30**

Introduction to Research Designs for Description and Explanation

Berman, Ch. 2-Research Design

Babbie, Ch. 4-Research Design
Workbook Chapter 2 Exercises
Do the following Critical Thinking Exercises: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Do the following Application Exercises: 2, 3, 5

February 4-6- Visit by Librarian-Phil Howze on the 6th

Measuring Variables
Berman, Ch. 3- Conceptualization and Measurement
Babbie, Ch. 5- Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Workbook Chapter 3 Exercises
Do the following: Workbook: Ch. 3, Critical Thinking: 1-5
Application Exercise-questions 1-4

Homework 1: Analysis of Article (Due February 18th)

February 11-13

Sampling and Data Collection
Babbie, Ch. 7-The Logic of Sampling
Berman, Ch. 5-Data Collection

February 18-20

Modes of Observation
Babbie, Ch. 8- Experiments
Babbie, Ch. 9-Survey Research
Babbie, Ch. 10-Qualitative Field Research
Babbie, Ch. 11-Unobtrusive Research

Workbook Exercises from Babbie: 9.3, 9.4 (be prepared to discuss your experience of collecting data)

Homework 2: Questionnaire Construction (Due March 6)
February 25-27

Data Analysis

Babbie, Ch. 13-Qualitative Data Analysis
Babbie, Ch. 14-Quantitative Data Analysis

Workbook Exercises from Babbie: 14.1, 14.2, 14.3

March 4-6

Introduction to SPSS for Windows

Readings: Berman Workbook Exercise Chapter 20, p.100-151 (SPSS User’s Guide)

* Getting familiar with SPSS
* Data input using SPSS
* Frequency distributions, recoding data, bar charts, calculating means

*Students will critique and input previous class survey instrument

Students will receive a copy of the Research Design

March 11-15 Spring Vacation

March 18, 20, 25, 27

Descriptive Statistics

Berman, Ch. 6-Central Tendency
Berman, Ch. 7-Measures of Dispersion
Berman, Ch. 8- Contingency Tables

Workbook Chapter 6 (Data Base Exercise)
Data-Based Exercises 1, 2, 3, 4, 5a, 6, 7

Workbook Chapter 7 (Data Base Exercise)
Data-Based Exercises 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Workbook Chapter 8 (Data Base Exercise)
Critical Thinking: 3, 4
Data-Based Exercises: 1, 3, 4, 5

April 1 (Midterm Exam)

April 3

Inferential Statistics
Berman, Ch. 10-Hypothesis Testing with Chi-Square;
Berman Workbook, Ch. 20, p.151-152
Berman, Ch. 10-Measures of Association

April 8-10 (students will pilot their individual group survey in class on the 10th)

Workbook Exercises Chapter 10
Critical Thinking: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Data-Based Exercises: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

April 15-17 (students will create codebook and SPSS database in class)

Continue Inferential Statistics
Excel-Basic Skills (Reading Materials will be provided in class or posted on SIU-Online)

Describing Data
Functions and Tools
Frequency Distribution
Making Charts
Integrating Excel Objects into Word

April 22--24
(In Class working sessions: Data analysis in SPSS)

*Note:* Hardcopies of all workbook exercises will be due April 22nd. *Five points will be deducted (per each day) for any workbook exercise submitted after class on April 22nd.*

April 29

**Research Papers Due (Group 1 & 2)**

**Power Point Research Paper Presentations Due (Group 1 & 2)**

Presenters should prepare a 10-15 minute presentation

**The Final Exam Will Be Scheduled In Accordance With the University’s Policy**

**Course Requirements:**

Students are required to attend all classes and complete all assignments. The distribution of points is stated below:

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework 2 (Survey Questions)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation (Power Point)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbook Exercises</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

181-200=A  
161-180=B  
141-160=C  
121-140=D
Emergency Procedures:

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the Bert’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Helpful Websites

Selected Government Data and Reports Sites:


World Bank: http://www.worldbank.org/data (data)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: http://www.oecd.org/home/ (see “Statistics”)


Federal government portal: http://www.firstgov.gov (portal, see also “data & statistics”)

Federal data: http://www.fedstats.gov (includes data, reports)

U.S. Census: http://www.census.gov (also, “American Fact Finder”)


U.S. Library of Congress: http://thomas.loc.gov (reports)


Louisiana Parish Profiles: http://leap.ulm.edu (reports, data)
Greater New Orleans Community Data Center: [http://www.gnocdc.org](http://www.gnocdc.org) (data for 10 parishes)

Baton Rouge: [http://brgov.com/demographics.htm](http://brgov.com/demographics.htm) (data)

**Selected Other Sites (Public Polls, Data, Public Administration, and Policy Analysis):**

American Society for Public Administration: [http://www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org) (see also: [http://www.aspanet.org/solutions/links.html](http://www.aspanet.org/solutions/links.html), and “databases.” Note the link to “associations” is very useful for networking and career development!)

National Academy of Public Administration: [http://napawash.org](http://napawash.org)

Council of State Governments, [http://www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org) (reports, Book of the States list of tables)

International City/County Management Association: [http://www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org) (and then “Information Resources”)


Roper Center for Public Opinion Research: [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/) (see also “links”)


Urban Institute: [http://www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org) (reports)

Brookings Institute: [http://www.brookings.org](http://www.brookings.org) (reports)

Rand Corporation: [http://www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org) (reports)

American Enterprise Institute: [http://www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org) (reports)

Heritage Foundation: [http://www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org) (reports)

Kennedy School of Government: [http://ksg.accman.harvard.edu/publications/index.htm](http://ksg.accman.harvard.edu/publications/index.htm)


Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action

**Note:** Hardcopies of the following workbook exercises will be due April 22nd. Five points will be deducted (per each day) for any workbook exercise submitted after class on April 22nd.
Workbook Chapter 2 Exercises
Do the following Critical Thinking Exercises: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Do the following Application Exercises: 2, 3, 5

Workbook Chapter 3 Exercises
Do the following: Workbook: Ch. 3, Critical Thinking: 1-5
Application Exercise-questions 1-4

Workbook Chapter 6 (Data Base Exercise)
Data-Based Exercises 1, 2, 3, 4, 5a, 6

Workbook Chapter 7 (Data Base Exercise)
Data-Based Exercises 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Workbook Chapter 8 (Data Base Exercise)
Critical Thinking: 3, 4
Data-Based Exercises: 1, 3, 4, 5

Workbook Exercises Chapter 10
Critical Thinking: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Data-Based Exercises: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Babbie-Chapter 9 (The professor will give handouts in class on these exercises)
9.3, 9.4

Babbie- Chapter 14 (The professor will give handouts in class on these exercises)
14.1, 14.2, 14.3

*When completing an assignment using SPSS or Excel, you should first type the question (use the crux of the question for longer questions rather than retyping the entire question) and then paste the output directly into MS Word.