

PADM 6130

Research Methods for Public Administrators, Fall 2018

Tennessee State University, College of Public Service and Urban Affairs

Dr. Ken Chilton

This is a sample for prospective students. Current students should NOT purchase books based on this - consult your instructor!

Office Hours: MON-WED Noon - 2PM, or by appointment

Course Information

Unlike undergraduate courses, graduate school focuses on building critical thinking skills needed to analyze complex public policy issues. Graduate students need to know how to assess the validity of research in their field and how to produce scholarly work. Researchers have a variety of “tools” that can be used to measure program outcomes, public opinion, and the efficacy of program interventions. In this class, you will learn the variety of tools available to researchers and how to use them to better understand public administration.

This class is a hybrid course. We will meet in both a traditional lecture format and online. During weeks where we meet online, you are expected to dedicate the equivalent of 3 hours class “time” on discussion groups and supplemental reading. Students are expected to actively engage the material and make insightful comments and posts that add value to class discussions. Students are also expected to read the posts of others and, when appropriate, civilly engage their peers in debate.

Learning Outcomes

Research methods is a critical class to graduate students. It provides a solid background in understanding how social science research is conducted. In addition, students learn the strengths and weaknesses of various qualitative and quantitative approaches to measurement. At the end of this course, students should be able to develop a research strategy that includes a research questions, literature review, research design, data analysis and policy implications.

Students will develop and hone the following core competencies:

Strategic Learning Outcome 3: Each MPA graduate will be competent to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions appropriate to public or nonprofit administration settings

Program competency 3.2: Employ and interpret data analytics and statistics appropriately
Assignment: Research paper and individual sections (methods, analysis, interpretation)

Program competency 3.3: Apply systematic research processes to novel problems and produce research in written format

Assignment: Independent Research Assignments

Strategic Learning Outcome 4: Each MPA graduate will be competent to articulate and apply a public service perspective

Program competency 4.2: Appreciate the foundations and context of the field of public administration, as well as its connections to other disciplines

Assignment: Students need to explore interdisciplinary factors associated with their research topic in independent research assignments

Strategic Learning Outcome 5: Each MPA graduate will be competent to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

Program competency 5.2: Identify and explain issues of cultural diversity given the changing demographics of society

Assignment: Population Pyramid Data Assignment

Policies

Students are expected to participate in all discussions, turn in assignments on time and communicate with the instructor in advance of absences or problems with assignments. In addition, students are expected to conduct original research; academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism *will not be tolerated*. All assignments will be reviewed through *Turn-it-in* software. Students are expected to read and understand policies on academic dishonesty (see week 1 readings).

All assignments are due by midnight on the due date via Dropbox. Late assignments will be docked **10 points** per day.

Students are expected to regularly check Elearn for important class announcements, supplemental readings/articles, and discussion. Students can also use the discussion board to ask questions about assignments, concepts and course material.

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Required Text

Practice of Social Research, 13th Edition. Earl Babbie. Wadsworth Cengage Publishing.
Supplemental readings will be posted weekly via Elearn.

Assignments

This class combines weekly assignments with ongoing project assignments. It is critical that students stay up-to-date on readings, quizzes, discussions and research assignments. This course consists of the following assignments:

Participation: Students are expected to attend in-class sessions, actively engage in discussions and interact civilly with colleagues and peers. I will actively engage in classroom discussions to cover important issues and challenge your perceptions.

I expect students to prepare, at a minimum, a paragraph response to weekly questions on the syllabus (also posted on the discussion threads). Excellent participation grades will be based upon the quality of your input over the volume of your input. For example, students who use materials from the readings or external resources to clarify points or move the discussion forward will receive better participation grades than students who post "I agree" or "good post" type comments. I also expect students to read the comments of other students. Keep in mind, in

a traditional class you would spend 3 hours per week in the classroom. Dedicate a similar amount of time weekly to discussion boards!

Population Pyramid Assignment: This assignment requires students to create a population pyramid for different racial/ethnic groups in a city/county. Students are expected to download the appropriate data, create the pyramids, and discuss the social implications of the data.

Data Mapping Assignment: Students will use SocialExplorer to create maps to visually depict trends in inequality. Students must anchor their variables in established research.

Education Data Analysis: Students must choose a Tennessee School District and analyze available public data to determine education performance gaps by selected groups.

GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

Students groups of 3-4 students are responsible for creating a full research report on a topic of their choosing. The paper will be 18+ pages and include the following sections:

Research Question: What will you research and why? In this section, highlight the main research questions your group will address. Provide additional context related to the significance of this research. Why should we care? What is the need? What are your expected outcomes?

Literature Review: Each group should produce a comprehensive literature review that includes at least 25 appropriate citations (peer-reviewed journals; respected think tank reports). The purpose of the literature review is to provide an overview of what we know about the topic. What have other researchers found? How have they studied the problem? Based on this review, the group will identify a gap in the literature (which your study addresses) or explain how your research strengthens the existing literature.

Research Methodology: This is the blueprint for how you will analyze the research question. In this section, you will identify your data sources, the tools you will use to answer your research question and acknowledge any weaknesses or shortcomings of your approach. You can use citations to support your chosen methods (“Smith & Jones used a mixed methods approach to measure community support for increased taxes to support public schools...”). You need to be specific about the where you will get the data needed to answer the research question. For example, will you conduct a survey? Analyze secondary data? Use Census data? Use proprietary data from a government organization?

In this section, you will also address potential ethical issues and how your research design mitigates those.

Data Analysis: In this section, you will implement the research design, present data in tables, charts, maps, grids, etc. and elaborate on the contents. The analysis should be grounded in the data you collect and focus solely on that information. You can elaborate on potential implications on public policy in the conclusion of the report. This section is usually 3 to 4 pages in length. All data tables, figures, charts, maps, etc. are expected to be properly formatted, sourced and explained.

Conclusion & Research Implications: In this section, you revisit your research questions and purpose of your research. What did you find? Did your research confirm your hypothesis? Do

your results conflict with conventional wisdom? In this section, you can also make suggestions for future research. This section usually requires 2 or 3 pages.

Final Paper. The final paper combines all of these subsections into a final report. Students are expected to polish their individual sections (based upon my feedback) to develop a basic social science research product. Students are expected to include a cover page and a works cited page, as well. The final paper should be 18+ pages.

Assessments & Due Dates

Grades are determined by the quality of your performance on individual assignments. You are expected to turn in ALL assignments. Late submissions will only be accepted with prior approval by the instructor. Students are expected to inform the instructor of problems in advance of submission dates/times. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in severe penalties.

| Assignment | Total Points | Due Date |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|
| Participation/Discussion | 75 | Weekly |
| Population Pyramid | 50 | Sept. 5 |
| Data Mapping | 50 | Oct. 3 |
| Education Data Analysis | 50 | Nov. 7 |
| Research Question | 25 | Sept. 9 |
| Literature Review | 50 | Sept. 30 |
| Research Design | 25 | Oct. 15 |
| Data Analysis | 50 | Nov. 9 |
| Conclusion | 25 | April 23 |
| Paper Presentation | 15 | Dec. 5 |
| Final Paper | 75 | Dec. 5 |
| TOTAL | 490 | |

*All assignments are due in the Dropbox no later than midnight on the due date.

Grade Scale

- A (90-100%) 441 - 490 points
- B (80-89.99%) 392 - 440 points
- C (70-79.99%) 343 - 391 points
- D (60-69.99%) 294 – 342 points
- F Less than 294 points

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit original work. When in doubt, CITE it properly. The following link provides detailed examples of how to properly cite the work of others and it also provides valuable information on the subtleties of academic honesty versus dishonesty.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

Students are also expected to “mature” as social science writers by synthesizing the work of others. Many students simply stitch together a variety of “quotes” to avoid plagiarism; however, this practice is not acceptable in graduate level course work.

In addition, students are expected to use “peer reviewed” research in literature reviews. Newspapers, blogs, editorials and magazines are not acceptable sources for scholarly research.

Disabilities

It is the policy of Tennessee State University (“TSU” or “University”) to provide equal access to education and employment to all, regardless of disability. TSU fully complies with all laws, orders, regulations and policies promulgated for promoting and ensuring equal opportunity for persons who may have a disability, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Under TSU Procedure No. 6.6.1, it is the expressed policy of the University that discrimination or harassment based upon a disability is prohibited. If an applicant for employment, employee, student, or applicant for admission believes s/he has been discriminated against or harassed because they have a disability, they should contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) at 615-963-7435 or visit our office in the McWherter Administration Building, Suite 260.

TSU’s Disability Policies can be accessed [here](#).

Harassment

The Office of Equity and Inclusion ensures that the University complies with federal and state equal opportunity and affirmative action laws and regulations. OEI is also responsible for ensuring faculty, staff and students comply with TSU Policies regarding harassment and discrimination.

TSU’s Harassment Policies can be accessed [here](#).

Weekly Content

Module 1, Aug 20-26: Course Introduction & Overview

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Review Syllabus

- Plagiarism: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>
- Measurement: http://lesswrong.com/lw/i8n/how_to_measure_anything/
- Writing a Social Science Report:
<http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=615849>

Discussion Question: On a scale of 1 to 10 (ten meaning “expert”), how would you rate your knowledge of research methods? What previous research classes have you taken? What are your expectations for this class?

Module 2, Aug 27-Sept. 2: Human Inquiry and Science

Online

- Babbie, Chapters 1 & 2
- Familiarize yourself with <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>
- Familiarize yourself with Social Explorer

Module 3, Sept 3-9: Ethics & Politics

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- Babbie, Chapter 3
- http://www.ahc.umn.edu/img/assets/26104/Research_Ethics.pdf
- <http://www.npr.org/2013/08/28/209559002/taking-a-closer-look-at-milgrams-shocking-obedience-study>

Module 4: Sept 10-16: Research Design

Babbie, Chapter 4

Module 5, Sept 17-23: Measurement

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Babbie, Chapter 5

Module 6, Sept 24-30: Organizing Data & Sampling

Babbie, Chapters 6 & 7

Module 7, Oct 1-7: Experimental Designs

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Babbie, Chapter 8

Module 8, Oct. 8-14: Surveys

Babbie, Chapter 9

Module 9, Oct 15-21: Qualitative Methods

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Babbie, Chapter 10

Module 10, Oct 22-28: Observation

Babbie, Chapter 11

Module 11, Oct 29-Nov 4: Evaluation

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Babbie, Chapter 12

Module 12, Nov 5-11: Qualitative Analysis

Babbie, Chapter 13

Module 13, Nov 12-18: Quantitative Analysis

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Babbie, Chapter 14

Module 14, Nov 19: Statistical Analysis

Babbie, Chapters 15 & 16

Module 15, Nov 26: The Art of Social Research & Cultural Competency

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Babbie, Chapter 17

FINAL PAPER & Presentations: December 5