

PLCY 581
Research Design for Public Policy
Spring 2019
T/TH 12:30 – 1:45 pm
Peabody - Rm 0218

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Office: 101 Abernethy Hall
Office Hours: T/TH 11:15am – 12:15 pm or by appointment

The purpose of this course is to give you an overview of the range of methodological tools useful to those working in public policy spaces, a greater ability to read and understand public policy research, and some practical experience in the research process. We will think hard about what policymakers, advocates, and the general public want to know and how we can best gain and communicate valid and reliable answers for them.

Goals and Learning Objectives

The major goals of this course are:

- To develop an understanding of research design as applied to questions of policy relevance.
- To become familiar with a variety of *qualitative* and *quantitative* methodological approaches.
- To explore methodological concepts and develop analytical skills for conducting research.
- To learn how to comprehend, critique and build on research produced by both academics and policy researchers.
- To gain concrete, marketable, practical and multi-methodological skills in research, evaluation, and evidence-based policy.

Assignments, Grading, and Expectations

This course will be a mixed-format course, which will include some lecture, some small-group activities and discussions, and some class-wide discussions. As such, its success or failure rests on your preparation and participation. Before each class session you will need to have done the assigned readings, thought about them, and prepared yourself with comments and questions for our discussion.

Final Exam: 35%

Homework: 35%

In-class Activities and Quizzes: 20%

Participation: 10%

Following UNC's undergraduate bulletin, percentile scores for the term will be translated into semester letter grades according to this schedule:

| Grade | GPA | Percentile |
|-------|-----|------------|
| A | 4.0 | 94-100% |
| A- | 3.7 | 90-93% |
| B+ | 3.3 | 87-89% |
| B | 3.0 | 84-86% |
| B- | 2.7 | 80-83% |
| C+ | 2.3 | 77-79% |
| C | 2.0 | 74-76% |
| C- | 1.7 | 70-73% |
| D+ | 1.3 | 67-70% |
| D | 1.0 | 60-66% |
| F | 0.0 | < 60% |

The **final exam** is scheduled for **Friday, May 3 at 12:00 pm**. It is a cumulative exam. It is also multiple choice and short answer in format.

Homework assignments will provide opportunities to reflect on and practice research techniques and skills. The exact number of assignments will depend on class performance and needs (for review and further practice), but there will be a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 7 assignments.

Class attendance and participation will include your contributions to class discussions, your performance on “pop” quizzes, and your grades from in-class activities (some of them completed as a group). Each student will receive one “free pass” – that is, the ability to drop the lowest score on one quiz or activity. **There will be no make-ups of quizzes or activities. Students missing a quiz will receive a score of zero**, except in cases of *documented* emergencies or illnesses, observance of a religious holiday, or properly documented University-sponsored planned activities. **Except in cases of emergency, I must be notified PRIOR to your expected absence from class.** In cases of excused absences, any missed quiz or activity will simply be dropped from BOTH the numerator and the denominator of the student’s participation grade calculation. Note that **students who never contribute to classroom discussion can receive no higher than a B- for this portion of their grade.** If speaking in class is an issue for you, please see me during office hours **early** in the semester to come up with a strategy for enabling your participation.

Policy on Absences

The number one rule is to contact me ASAP. IN WRITING.

The number two rule is documentation.

There are three possible grounds for an excused absence from class:

- Observance of religious holy day – for class *on a holy day*. **Written** notification to me during the first week of the semester.
 - You will be excused from participation; if you will miss an exam, arrangements will be made for a make-up or early exam (at my discretion). If you fail to show up at the agreed upon date, time, and place of the make-up exam, you will receive a score of zero on the exam.
- Documented emergency/illness (*excuse note* from a medical professional). Written

notification to me *before* class missed due to illness

- Contact me as soon as possible in the case of an emergency
- Properly documented *University-sponsored* planned activities (e.g., sports, music events in which you represent the University). Some University-affiliated activities will not be considered grounds for an excuse, including, but not limited to, intramural sports activities and fraternity or sorority events.
 - Written documentation to me no later than 2 weeks before
 - Sports schedules to me at beginning of term

Policy on Deadlines

No late papers unless arrangements have been made prior to the deadline with the professor. Failure to contribute to group assignments before deadlines will result in penalties to the individual portion of the group project grade.

Grade Disputes

Failure to comply with this procedure will result in forfeiture of your ability to dispute your grade.

Grade disputes will only be considered if they adhere to this policy. Grade disputes must be made in writing (TYPED!) to me. You must wait **at least 2 full days after** you receive your grade to submit a grade dispute (“cooling off period”); you may wait **no more than 2 weeks after** you receive your grade to submit a dispute. For example, your exam was returned on Monday, November 7: you may submit a grade dispute no earlier than Thursday, November 10, but no later than Tuesday, November 22. Your written dispute must contain a documented logic for why you believe your answer for each disputed item was incorrectly marked—you must cite specific passages in the texts and/or lectures *and explain why you thought they applied to the item in question*. I will then review your dispute and issue a decision within one week. This review will involve a reassessment of the entire exam or assignment, and your grade may go up or down as a result of the review.

Extra Credit

Extra credit *may* be made available during the term. *If* so, it will be made available to all students.

E-mail and Office Hours

Questions of a substantive nature should be brought to office hours and/or raised in class. Questions of a procedural nature may be e-mailed or posted to our class discussion page on Sakai. Be sure to consult your syllabus, Sakai, and your colleagues first to make sure you cannot answer your own procedural questions.

Sakai

This syllabus and other course announcements and documents will be provided to you via Sakai.

Course Resources (can be purchased at UNC Student Stores or online)

There are no course resources to purchase! All readings will be made available to you.

Honor Code

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. Academic integrity is at the heart of Carolina, and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code, and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor System. The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance provides information about the honor system, including your responsibilities as a student. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected (see <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>).

In order to ensure effective functioning of the Honor System at Carolina, students are expected to:

- a) Conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in all academic processes. If unsure about the limits of group work versus individual work on papers and projects, ask the instructor. Do not guess.
- b) Consult with faculty and other sources to clarify the meaning of plagiarism; to learn the recognized techniques of proper attribution of sources used in written work; and to identify allowable resource materials or aids to be used during completion of any graded work.
- c) Sign a pledge on all graded academic work certifying that no unauthorized assistance has been received or given in the completion of the work.
- d) Treat all members of the University community with respect and fairness.
- e) Report any instance in which reasonable grounds exist to believe that a student has given or received unauthorized aid in graded work or in other respects violated the Honor Code. Reports should be made to the office of the Student Attorney General.

The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance requires that you sign a pledge on all written work. Please type the following on ALL your work and sign your name next to it: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment."

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of published work is a violation of the honor code. Any exams submitted containing the same sentences will be considered a breach of the honor code.

When using someone else's words (from any source, including lectures), quotation marks are essential. Using the ideas of others requires reference to the source. If you are unsure about what needs to be cited, please talk with me or ask for assistance from the writing center. Plagiarism is a serious offense which can result in failure of the course and suspension from the University. To make sure that you understand what plagiarism is, please read <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/plagiarism/>. Also see the following link for an engaging animated tutorial on plagiarism: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/plagiarism>.

Copyright and Faculty Lecture Content

UNC's Copyright Policy prohibits students from making commercial use of notes taken in class; you may not sell or otherwise acquire financial or commercial gain from notes you take in this class. This includes exchanging uploaded notes for access to websites that trade in course materials (notes, tests, etc.). Students do not have rights to post or sell materials from a class without permission from the original faculty member who created the material. For example, students do not have rights to

upload content that faculty have created to online learning platforms, such as Course Hero. In addition, although students own their work, the Copyright Policy forbids them from selling classroom notes and exercises they have created. Students found to have violated this prohibition are in violation of the Honor Code.

Course Outline and Reading List

Note: **Readings should be completed before the meeting of the (first) class day under which they appear.** It is strongly suggested that you take notes on the readings. I reserve the right to modify reading assignments based on class needs and interests and developing events in politics and policy during the semester.

While there is no required textbook for this course, I highly recommend the following book for use in this and future course (yes, even though you are public policy and not political science students). It is, as the title promises, a true step-by-step guide to the entire process of social (political) research, from question formation all the way through publication.

Powner, Leanne. 2015. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. CQ Press.

Readings not available on Sakai or by links in this syllabus should be available to you through the UNC library's online holdings (just search the catalog!).

January 10—Introduction*

Powner, Leanne “[Reading and Understanding Political Science.](#)”

Bowers, Jake and Paul Testa. “Better government, Better Science: The Promise of and Challenges facing the Evidence-Informed Policy Movement” *Annual Review of Political Science*. (forthcoming)

January 15—What’s the scope of public policy research questions? Considerations of design, adoption, implementation, effectiveness, scaling, externalities, feedback...and more!

Geva-May, Iris, and Leslie A. Pal. 1999. “Good Fences Make Good Neighbours. Policy Evaluation and Policy Analysis -Exploring the Differences.” *Evaluation* 5(3): 259–77.

Pacheco-Vega, Raul. “[Writing policy content: Tips for students and educators](#)”

Recommended: Radin, Beryl A. 1997. “[Presidential Address: The Evolution of the Field: Policy Analysis From Conversation to Conversations.](#)” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 16(2): 204–18.

January 17—What *is* a research question? Off to the land of theory, methods, and data we go...

Powner, Leanne. 2015. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. Ch 1-2.

January 22, 24 — Measurement

Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology*. London: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 35-64.

E.J. Webb, D.T. Campbell, R.D. Schwartz, and L. Sechrest. 1966. *Unobtrusive Measures*. Chicago: Rand-McNally. Pp. 1-10.

*Rosenstone, Steven J., et al. 1986. Measuring change in personal economic well-being. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50:176-192.

January 29 — The Experimental Ideal and the Logic of Causal Inference

Kinder, D.R. and Palfrey, T.R. 1993. On behalf of an experimental political science. In Donald Kinder and Thomas Palfrey (eds.), *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 1-39.

Brewer, Marilyn B. 2000. Research design and issues of validity. In Harry T. Reis and Charles M. Judd (eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 3-16.

January 31—Policy Experiments

Banerjee, A, E Duflo, R Glennerster and C Kinnan (2015a), “The miracle of microfinance? Evidence from a randomised evaluation” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7(1): 22-53.

Herrnson, P., M. Hanmer and R. Niemi. 2012. “The impact of ballot type on voter errors” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 56, No. 3, July 2012, Pp. 716–730.

Danielson, Caroline. 2012. “Experiments and Social Public Policy.” In *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, eds. Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller, and Mara Sidney. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis Group, 381–92.

February 5 — The Idea of Natural and Quasi- Experiments

Campbell, D.T. and J.C. Stanley. 1966. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago: Rand-McNally. Pp. 34-42.

Campbell, D.T. and H.L. Ross. 1970. The Connecticut crackdown on speeding: Time series data in quasi-experimental analysis. In E.R. Tufté (ed.), *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Pp. 110-125.

Recommended: Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Pp. 53-63.

February 7, 12 – Design-Based Inference: Common Causal Inference Designs

Cunningham, Scott. 2018. *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Selections.

Application readings TBA

February 14— Sampling and Case Selection

Schuman, H. and Kalton, G. 1985. Survey methods. In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (3rd Edition). New York: Random House. Pp. 660-678.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis* 2:131-150.

February 19, 21 — Surveys (Statistical), Questionnaires, and Survey Experiments

Feldman, Stanley. 1991. What do survey questions really measure? *The Political Methodologist* 4:8-12.

(available online: http://polmeth.wustl.edu/tpm/tpm_v4_n1.pdf)

Brady, Henry E. 2000. Contributions of survey research to political science. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33: 47-57.

Converse, Jean M. and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Pp. 31-47 (& 9-31).

Lax, J., J. Phillips, and A. Stollwerk. 2016. “Are Survey Respondents Lying about Their Support for Same-Sex Marriage? Lessons from a List Experiment” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80(2): 510–533.

February 26—Logics of Inference in Qualitative and Multi-Method Research

Collier, David. 2011. “Understanding Process Tracing.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44: 823-30.

Feldman, Martha S., Kaj Sköldbberg, Ruth Nicole Brown, and Debra Horner. 2004. “Making Sense of Stories: A Rhetorical Approach to Narrative Analysis.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14(2): 147–70.

February 28 — Case Studies

Campbell, D.T. 1975. Degrees of freedom and the case study. *Comparative Political Studies* 8:178-193.

Achen, Christopher and Duncan Snidal. 1989. Rational deterrence theory and comparative case studies. *World Politics* 16:143-169.

McConnaughy, Corrine. 2013. *The Woman Suffrage Movement in America: A Reassessment*. Cambridge University Press. Selections.

March 7—Research Day

March 12-14—Spring Break, no classes

March 19—Mid-Course Review and Reflection

March 21, 26 — Systematic Observation—Field Work and Ethnography

Pacheco-Vega, Raul. “[On the importance of fieldwork for empirical research in public policy](#)” USC Library Guides. “[Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Writing Field Notes](#)”

Dionne, K. 2006. “Kanthu Kali Munye: A Lesson in Listening and Learning in Rural Malawi.” *Ufabamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 33(1).

Dionne, K. 2018. *Doomed Interventions: The Failure of Global Responses to AIDS in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Selections

Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown. Ch. 4 and Appendix.

Fenno’s interview notes from earlier research are available online—take some time to explore. <http://www.archives.gov/legislative/research/special-collections/oral-history/fenno/interview-notes.html>

March 28, April 2—In-depth and Elite Interviews

Martin, C. 2013. “Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect” In Layna Mosley, Ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press.

Beckmann, Matthew N. and Richard L. Hall. 2013. “Elite Interviewing in Washington, DC.” In Layna Mosley, Ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press.

Beckmann, Matthew N. 2008. The President’s Playbook: White House Strategies for Lobbying Congress. *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 70, No. 2, Pp. 407–419.

*Interview materials from Matthew Beckmann.

April 4, 9, 11, 16—Navigating Existing Data—from Archives to Datasets

**Readings and online materials will be assigned based on class interests.

April 16, 18, 23—Ethics and Bias in Social and Policy Research

Desai, D and R. Tapscott. 2015. "[Tomayto tomahto: The research supply chain and the ethics of knowledge production.](#)" *Humanity Journal*.

Young, A. 2008. "White Ethnographers on the Experiences of African American Men: Then and Now." In Tukufu Zuberi, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Eds. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*.

Brooks, Sarah. 2013. "The Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board Process." In Layna Mosley, Ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press.

Desposto, Scott. 2015. *Ethics and Experiments: Problems and Solutions for Social Scientists and Policy Professionals*. Routledge. Selections.

Willis, Derek. 2014. "Professors' Research Project Stirs Political Outrage in Montana" *New York Times*. (October 28, 2014.)

April 25—Reflections and Wrap-Up

****Did you make it this far in the syllabus? If so please email me a picture of your favorite animal BEFORE CLASS MEETS on January 15 and receive 5 bonus quiz points!**

FINAL EXAM Friday, May 3 at 12:00 pm

Additional Resources

Accessibility Resources & Service

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. See the ARS Website for contact information: accessibility.unc.edu. Relevant policy documents as they relate to registration and accommodations determinations and the student registration form are available on the [ARS website under the About ARS tab](#).

Also, please make arrangements to see me at the start of the term to discuss your needs, even if you have not yet established eligibility through ARS.

UNC Policy addressing Discrimination and Harassment

Acts of discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, stalking, and related retaliation are [prohibited](#) at UNC-Chapel Hill. If you have experienced these types of conduct, you are encouraged to report the incident and seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance / Title IX

Coordinator (Adrienne Allison, adrienne.allison@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators (Ew Quimbaya-Winship, eqw@unc.edu; Rebecca Gibson, rmgibson@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPs) (confidential) in Campus Health Services at (919) 966-3658, or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (confidential) (Cassidy Johnson, cassidyjohnson@unc.edu; Holly Lovern, holly.lovern@unc.edu) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center offers free, one-on-one help with all aspects of writing at any stage in the writing process. To make an appointment, browse the Writing Center's online resources, or submit a draft online, students should visit <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/>. To make the best use of your time there, please bring a copy of your assignment and draft with you. The Writing Center will not proofread papers or talk with you about grades. For additional resources on citing and writing, see <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>.