PLS 506—Research Methods and Program Evaluation

Fall 2004

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Office Hours: 4-6 pm, Thursday or by appointment
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Course Description: This course focuses on research methods, basic quantitative analysis, and program evaluation. There is an emphasis on theory development and hypothesis testing for the public manager. The ethical issues of research and program evaluation are also explored.

Goals:

∗ To understand the basic elements of research design, theory development, and hypothesis testing
∗ To develop skills in basic data collection and data analysis including the use of SPSS
∗ To improve skills in the present quantitative information to decision makers and public managers
∗ To design and complete a program evaluation
∗ To become sensitive to the ethical issues in research practice and program evaluation

Books:


Claire Hewson, et. al., Internet Research Methods, Sage, 2002.


Assignments:

There will be weekly reading and written assignments and an objective final exam.
**Class Grade:**

Weekly Written Assignments 60%. The program evaluation and presentation counts for 3 assignments.

Final Exam 30%

Class Participation 10% (based on contributions made in class and presentation of written assignments).

**Class Schedule and Assignments:**

**August 19**

Logic of Scientific Inquiry  
Why Research is important  
Using Research to make decisions

**August 26**

Variables  
Reliability and Validity  
Hypothesis testing  
Development of Theory

Read: Payne and Payne sections on Bias, Grounded Theory, Hypothesis, Indicators and Operationalizations, Objectivity, Positivism and Realism, Reliability, Validity.

Assignment: Bring to class an empirical article that uses data to test hypotheses/theories. In class we will critique these articles for their hypotheses, data sufficiency, major methods used, and overall strengths and weaknesses. Students will turn in assignments at the end of the class session. See Journals at the end of syllabus for suggestions.
September 2

Using the internet for research
Using library resources for research
Secondary data analysis (census, agency files, program statistics)

Read: Payne and Payne, Internet and other searches, Official Statistics, Secondary Analysis………. Hewson, et. al., chapters 1, 2,3,4.

Assignment: In class you will develop three hypotheses. Each hypothesis should have an independent and dependent variable. Compare the fifty states, all the counties in N.C., or all the major cities over one million in the U.S. You will need at least fifty cases to test your hypotheses. Bring data to class on September 9 to code in SPSS.

September 9

Building a data set on SPSS
Using SPSS to analyze data
Descriptive Statistics

Read: Kerr, et. al., chapters 1,2,3………..Payne and Payne, Contingency Tables.

Assignment: Bring data to class to test the three hypotheses developed on September 2. You will begin to code your data in SPSS

September 16

Normal distribution
Correlation
Regression
Analysis of Variance

Read: Kerr, et .al., chapters 6,7,8,9,11, 12

Assignment: Complete an elementary data analysis of your three hypotheses. For each relationship develop a table using descriptive statistics like percentages, means, modes, etc. Interpret your results.
September 23

Quantitative Designs
Experimental and Quasi Experimental Designs


Assignment: Prepare three more tables using the results of correlation analysis and significance testing on your three hypotheses. Interpret the results of the tables. Limit 3 pages.

September 30

Qualitative Designs
Case Studies
Ethnography
Focus Groups
Elite Interviews

Read: Payne and Payne, Case Study, Coding Qualitative Data, Community Profiles, Community Studies, Ethnography, Ethnomethodology, Fieldwork, Group Discussions and Focus Groups, Interviewing, Key Informants, Observation, Participant Observations, Qualitative Methods, Visual Methods.

Assignment: Test one hypothesis using one of the experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Lay out the design and indicate how you will measure the independent and dependent variables. Select an intervention that you are really interested in---crime watch? Speed bumps? Privatization? Citizen involvement in the planning process? Etc.
October 14

Ex Post Designs
Causal analysis
Advanced SPSS

Read: Payne and Payne, Association and Causation, Levels of Measurement……..Kerr chapters 11,12,13.

Assignment: Observe one organization three times over at least a week in time. Each observation time should be one hour. In a log, describe everything you see. This should be descriptive information. Then in addition to the log, indicate on one page your hypothesis about productivity in the organization.

October 21

Survey Research
Sampling
Content Analysis
Documentary Methods
Unobtrusive Methods and Triangulation


Assignment: Interview two public managers. Probe these managers about productivity and what their definition of productivity is, how they measure it, and what they think causes productivity to go up and down. Write up the notes from these interviews. Three page limit. Develop two hypotheses about productivity and include in the paper.
October 28

Introduction to program evaluation
Ethics and Politics of Evaluation
Basic principles of evaluation

Read: Payne and Payne, Evaluation Studies, Hawthorne Effect…… Sylvia and Sylvia, chapters 1,2,3.

Assignment: Develop 5 open-ended questions and 5 closed ended questions. If your open-ended question is income, then there should be another close-ended question on income. So ask a question in two different ways. These questions should be connected to some hypothesis. Interview 5 people with your ten questions. Display results in Table form and include descriptive

November 4

Program theory
Evaluation designs
The Counterfactual in program evaluation
Measuring efficiency, outcomes, productivity

Read: Sylvia and Sylvia, chapters 4,5,6

Assignment: Bring to class an organization or program you want to evaluate. In two pages give a profile of the program/organization. For example, mission, history, desired results, annual budget, number of personnel, activities, other important details.

November 11

Measuring organizational outcomes
Measuring service outcomes

Read: Sylvia and Sylvia, chapters 7,8,9

Assignment: In two pages, indicate at least five measures of program/organizational efficiency, outcomes, and productivity for your chosen program/organization.
November 18

Presenting program evaluation data to decision makers
Class presentations of program evaluation data


Assignment: Work on program evaluation/organizational evaluation.

December 2

Casual modeling
Advanced SPSS
Development of Critical Theories and the Role of Science

Read: Payne and Payne, Action Research, Ethical Practice, Grounded Theory……
Kerr, et. al, chapter 13.

Assignment: Present using power point, the results of your evaluation. This will count for three assignments. An outline for the presentation will be given out in class.

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Public Administration Journals:

Public Administration Review
American Review of Public Administration
State and Local Government Review
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management
Public Budgeting and Finance
Public Management and Productivity Review
Urban Affairs Review
Journal of Urban Affairs
Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory
Municipal Finance Journal
Governing
Administrative Science Quarterly
Journal of Political Economy
Economic Development Quarterly
Publius