POLS 5020 (0): Public Administration Research & Analysis I (CRN 40693)
3 credit hours
Fall 2014
R 5:30-8:00pm
Fletcher Hall 416

<u>**Instructor**</u>
Dr. Liz Norell
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**You should expect a reply to emails within 48 hours.

Office location: PSCI computer lab, Fletcher Hall 415A
Office hours: TR 2-3pm; R 4:30-5:30pm; other times by appointment only
**If you plan to visit office hours, I would appreciate a heads up the day before so I can ensure I'm in my office.

This course is designed to provide a strong foundation in conducting and evaluating research in political science. Students should expect a challenging but rewarding semester of developing the skills needed to excel in subsequent courses.

Course description: The application of social science research to administrative problems, including practical methods of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Theory and approaches to evaluating public programs.

Prerequisite: One course in statistics.

Course outcomes: The goal of this course is to enable students to achieve the following learning objectives:
- Students will be able to identify opportunities to use research skills as a tool for effective public administration.
- Students will be able to locate, understand, organize, and evaluate published public administration research.
- Students will be able to design a wide variety of applied research projects, program evaluations, and policy analyses.
- Students will be able to apply basic quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.
- Students will become prepared to conduct, consume, supervise, and commission applied research, program evaluation, and policy analysis as public administration professionals.

This course plan is very ambitious! This is a graduate, 3 credit hour course with a commensurate workload; students should expect to work at least two hours outside of class for every one hour in class. This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, but deviations may be necessary.

Class preparation and participation
Students are expected to come to class having read and completed all assignments. Participation is a key component of this course and will enable your learning. Learning science has shown that engaged participation in class enhances learning. Thus, I encourage you to ask questions, participate in class, and remain engaged.

Attendance
Attendance is vital to succeeding in this course, as much of our learning will occur during class time. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Absent students are responsible for making arrangements to obtain missed lecture notes, handouts, announcements, etc., from other students. Asking your professor, "Did we do anything important in class?" is not a winning strategy. I will have an attendance sign-in sheet each evening to document your attendance.

Academic integrity
Careful adherence to standards of academic integrity is expected of all students. Students are responsible for ensuring that they understand and follow these standards. Students are expected to adhere to the UTC honor system. To protect the academic integrity of this university and this course, the instructor takes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously and seeks the most severe sanctions available in response to instances of academic dishonesty.

Textbook
We will be using two books in our class:

> Berner, Maureen. 2013. *Statistics for Public Administration*, second edition. ICMA press. ISBN: 978-0-87326-771-7.
> *NOTE: This book will be used more heavily in the second course in this sequence, taught in the spring. However, it's a great resource for you to have this semester.*

> Sylvia, Ronald D. and Kathleen M. Sylvia. 2012. *Program Planning and Evaluation for the Public Manager*, fourth edition. Waveland Press Inc. ISBN: 978-1-57766-778-0

The Berner book is a very accessible introduction to research methods and review of statistical analysis methods commonly applied in public administration. This text will serve as the basis of the statistics review and competency test described later in this syllabus. The Sylvia and Sylvia book will be useful as you complete your semester-long project in program evaluation.

These books should both be at the bookstore, but you may also find far less expensive used copies from Amazon.

The following books are recommended for this course:

> O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G., R., and Berner, M. (2003). *Research methods for public administrators* (4th edition). New York: Longman. ISBN: 0-321-08558-2.

Perrin, R. (2006). *Pocket guide to APA style*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 978-0618691197.

United Way. (1996). *Measuring program outcomes: A practical approach*. Alexandria, Virginia: United Way.

All students are strongly encouraged to own at least one basic social science research textbook, preferably specific to public administration. Students are expected to supplement in-class discussion by reading relevant portions of their textbooks before or after they are discussed in class.

Students developing a program evaluation (and others interested in program evaluation) are encouraged to purchase the United Way handbook directly from http://www.unitedwaystore.com for $5 (search by title or for product #0989). This is an immensely practical and accessible program evaluation manual and is so widely used that its jargon has become "the" jargon for most social sector program evaluation. This book is available on course reserve in the library until the logic model exercise (described later) due date.

Additional reading assignments will be announced and made available via Blackboard.

Late work
Turning in work late is discouraged and carries with it substantial penalties. Namely, work submitted late will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day. For example, if you turn in an assignment the morning after it is due, you will lose 10% of your assessed grade. If you turn in an assignment one week late, you will lose 70% of your assessed grade. It is therefore to your benefit to turn in work on time.

Course Assignments
There will be a number of different assignments throughout the semester:
- **Readings.** There will be a reading assignment before each class. Students are expected to complete these assignments. Occasional start-of-class quizzes will test your completion of these readings.
- **Homework exercises.** Most weeks, you will be given a homework exercise/problem set to complete in which you will apply the concepts we have learned that week. These will be posted in Blackboard. Your responses to the weekly homework sets should be typed and submitted via Blackboard. You will have one week to work on them. You are allowed to collaborate on the questions, but you should write and turn in your own set of answers to each exercise.
  - **SPSS exercise.** We will spend a few class sessions working in SPSS towards the end of the semester, to get some hands-on experience working with data analysis. You will be responsible for completing a problem set/homework in SPSS to demonstrate you have acquired the skills needed to perform basic statistical analysis in SPSS.

- **Literature review.** Competence in research within a master's degree program requires knowledge of how to research and write a literature review. For that reason, you will write a literature review. More details are provided on the next page.
- **Program evaluation project.** Throughout the course of the semester, you will be working on a program evaluation project with a local nonprofit organization. More details on this project will be available early in the semester. Your job, by semester's end, is to work with your nonprofit (or other organization) to produce a report they can use in their activities. There will also be both a presentation and a graded peer review component to this project.

Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

- Homework assignments/exercises (lowest one dropped): 20%
- Literature review: 30%
- Program evaluation: 40%
- Peer review of the research design: 10%

A (90 – 100%) = Excellent; all expectations met or exceeded; explicitly demonstrates thorough understanding; no substantive shortcomings or only minor shortcomings; presentations are well organized, help other students learn course content, and add value above existing course content; writing is well organized and adheres to rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax with no or very few exceptions

B (80 – 89%) = Good; most or all expectations are met; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough, understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings; presentations are well organized and help other students learn course content; writing is generally well organized and mostly adheres to rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax

C (70 – 79%) = Satisfactory; directions are followed, most expectations are met but with at least one significant shortcoming; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding; presentations demonstrate understanding of the content but do little to help other students learn the content; writing is organized well enough and with enough technical accuracy to be understandable

D (60 – 69%) = Passing, but less than satisfactory; directions only partially followed; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding; presentations demonstrate poor preparation and do not contribute to other students' learning; and/or writing is difficult to understand

F (0 – 59%) = Failing; not completed or directions not followed; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding; presentations waste class time; and/or incoherent writing

Literature review. For this assignment, students will write a structured literature review of previous research addressing an applied public administration research question. The literature review will include at least 10 peer-reviewed articles (or books published by university presses or other reputable publishers). These articles must address the research question or some aspect of it. Additional articles and other sources may be used to establish the importance of the question and to provide background information to help the reader understand the context of the research question. The quality of the sources included in the review should reflect use of graduate-level library skills. Students should not aim to review the minimum required number of articles, but to identify the most important articles necessary to thoroughly summarize existing knowledge about the research question. If this number is unmanageably high, the research question may need to be narrowed; if this number is too low, the research question may need to be expanded.

The literature review will serve to structure existing knowledge about the research question. For example, the student may structure existing knowledge in terms of different theoretic approaches to addressing the research question, different conclusions reached by previous research, different methodological approaches used in previous research, or different sub-questions addressed in the previous research. A literature review that is simply organized article-by-article has failed to structure the literature.

The student will also provide his or her analysis of the body of knowledge represented by the previous research. The student may consider questions such as: Is the existing body of knowledge comprehensive? Does it adequately address the research question? And if so, what is the answer? Or, what is the set of plausible answers that emerges? What are the weaknesses of the body of knowledge? What gaps exist in the existing knowledge? What aspects of the research question remain unexplored? What additional methodological approaches should be applied? What theoretic approaches are neglected? Is the body of knowledge useful? Can it be applied with confidence?

The following outline is suggested, and all literature reviews should include these components:
1. Introduction of the research question, background information needed to understand the research question, explanation of the importance of the research question.
2. Description of how you have structured the existing knowledge about the research question. This section might be anywhere from one or two sentences to one or two paragraphs. For example, you might describe how "Previous research can be organized into three main theoretic approaches: microeconomic, bureaucratic, and psychological . . . ."
3. The actual structured literature review, where you summarize the existing body of knowledge following the structure you've just explained in #2 above. Note here that the focus is on the knowledge—the ideas contained in the previous research, not on individual authors or articles. This is the "meat" of the paper and should be the longest section.
4. Evaluation of the existing body of knowledge and conclusion (see ideas for evaluation above).
5. All literature reviews should conclude with the list of references.

There is no set page limit for this assignment, but it is hard to imagine that the a good job could be done in less than 10 double-spaced pages, and over 20 pages would probably be excessive. Liberal use of meaningful section headings is encouraged. Papers should adhere to APA formatting. Students are encouraged, but not required, to relate this literature review to the research proposal in this course and the MPA capstone paper requirement.

If requested, the instructor will meet with students to provide feedback for one (and only one) draft before the final literature review is due. Drafts must be received by email at least 48 hours before the appointment. Beyond reading and commenting on written drafts, the instructor is always available to meet students to discuss their progress.

Blackboard
Students are responsible for submitting assignments and accessing readings and other course materials on Blackboard. Many supplemental study aids are also available on the course Blackboard page. Blackboard may be accessed at http://utconline.utc.edu. Students who are unfamiliar with Blackboard, especially the assignment and quiz functions, should enroll in the UTC Online Student Training course (http://utconline.utc.edu/StudentResources/StudentTraining.php).

Blackboard is available at this URL: http://www.utc.edu/learn
Use the same login you use for MyUTC.

A note about assignments
All papers and other written assignments in this class should be submitted to UTC Learn (Blackboard) text-matching software (SafeAssign) for review and to analyze for originality and intellectual integrity. By submitting your paper online, you agree to have your paper included in the institutional repository of digital papers. If the results of the review indicate academic dishonesty, disciplinary action may be taken against the student as outlined in the UTC Student Handbook.

Accommodation
If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, call the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 425-4006 or come by the office, 102 Frist Hall.

Counseling Center
If you find that personal problems, career indecision, study and time management difficulties, etc. are adversely impacting your successful progress at UTC, please contact the Counseling and Career Planning Center at 425-4438.

Honor Code Pledge (for reference)
I pledge that I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any test or assignment. I understand that plagiarism constitutes a serious instance of unauthorized aid. I further pledge that I exert every effort to insure that the Honor Code is upheld by others and the I

will actively support the establishment and continuance of a campus-wide climate of honor and integrity.

Tentative Course Schedule – this schedule is likely to change as the semester progresses; check Blackboard for latest info. We will likely have guest speakers and work periods for the term project that are not currently scheduled.
Key takeaway: This is a rough sketch, not a promise.

Week Dates	Topic	Readings assigned	Assignment due on Thursday**
1 Aug. 21	Introduction to course, syllabus	-	-
2 Aug. 28	Research foundations	see Blackboard	Plagiarism tutorial/quiz (homework 1)
3 Sept. 4	Research design	see Blackboard	Problem set 2
4 Sept. 11	Conducting a literature review	see Blackboard	Problem set 3
5 Sept. 18	Program evaluation	Sylvia & Sylvia chs. 1-3	Problem set 4
6 Sept. 25	Program evaluation (cont'd)	Sylvia & Sylvia chs. 4-6	Problem set 5
7 Oct. 2	Program evaluation (cont'd)	Sylvia & Sylvia chs. 7-9	Problem set 6
8 Oct. 9	Data analysis	Berner chs. 1-4	⊕
9 Oct. 16	Data analysis (cont'd)	Berner chs. 5-7	Problem set 7
10 Oct. 23	Data analysis (cont'd)	Berner chs. 8-9	Problem set 8
11 Oct. 30	SPSS workshop	see Blackboard	Problem set 9
12 Nov. 6	SPSS workshop (cont'd)	see Blackboard	Problem set 10
13 Nov. 13	Catch-up day	-	Problem set 11, ⊕
14 Nov. 20	Presentations	-	**-**

** Assignments due by start of class on Thursdays. Turn them in on Blackboard.
Final exam: Thursday, December 4, 6-8:00pm

⊕**Key deadlines:**
- **Literature review:** Thursday, October 9 (start of class)
- **Final draft of program evaluation project:** Thursday, November 13 (start of class)
- **Peer reviews begin:** Friday, November 14
- **Peer reviews due:** Friday, November 21, midnight

- **Program evaluation project + team assessments due:** Monday, December 1, midnight