INTRODUCTION

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the logic, design, and conduct of applied social research for students interested in public management and policy. Research in public administration and public policy comes in two distinct but related forms. One flows from a scientific tradition that emphasizes the objective of providing a general explanation for observable phenomena. The second derives from the action-oriented environment of public administration, which focuses on prescription of best practices and prediction of effects. Even in prescriptive research, some underlying explanatory theory underlies the predictions of the effect of the practices and why practice A is likely to be better than practice B in a certain environment. Thus, traditional scientific explanatory research is a necessary prerequisite for any prescriptive research. Therefore, the primary orientation of this course is to focus on development of social science explanations for public administrative phenomena and the development of research designs which permit testing of hypotheses derived from these explanations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Introduce the purpose of research in public management and policy.

Discuss the development and evaluation of explanatory theories, and the role of theory in public management and policy research.

Develop understanding of the concept of causation in social science and strategies for establishing knowledge of causal relationships.

Develop understanding of the basic concepts of sampling design and how to apply them in developing a research project.

Introduce basic concepts of measurement and scale development and discuss how to apply them in developing a research project.

Consider the role of case studies in developing social explanations.
As part of the transition from traditional student to faculty colleague, assignments are designed to reflect real professional activities of research faculty: research design, peer review, and classroom presentations. Major assignments include:

**Article Reviews (15%)**: Each student will be required to prepare three article reviews over the course of the semester. Students can select from the articles assigned for each topic. The student is expected to prepare a 3 page review. Students may also be required to present one of their reviews and lead discussion of it during a class session.

**Classroom Presentation (5%)**: Each student will be required to provide a 30 minute presentation on one of the topics of the course. Four class sessions will be set aside for a student to present a review of an article. Four additional sessions will be set aside for students to present on one of the course topics.

**Research Proposal (60%)**: The major assignment for the class is the development of a research proposal and presentation of the proposal to the class. The final proposal is due at the end of the semester. The objective is for the proposal to be of sufficient quality to be submitted for possible funding. The proposal will include:
   a. Statement of the research question
   b. Conceptual framework/Theory
   c. Hypotheses of interest
   d. Literature review
   e. Sample selection process
   f. Description of key measures and how they will be evaluated
   g. Research design

A handout will be provided with more information about the assignment.

**Presentation of Research Proposal (10%)**: Each student will be required to provide a 15 minute presentation of their research proposal and respond to 15 minutes of questions on it. These presentation will take place during the last week of class.

**Classroom Participation (10%)**: The expectation is that students will come prepared for class ready to discuss the material. Class time is an opportunity to explore ideas, construct arguments, and develop presentation skills in a supportive environment. The class will be run with an interactive style. While I will not formally grade class participation, poor attendance or participation in the class will result in reductions in the final grade for the course.

**COURSE MATERIAL**

To reduce the cost of the course to students, I have not used the bookstore to purchase these books. Students can order these books on amazon.com or some other website.

George, Alexander L. and Bennett, Andrew. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. (Denoted as George & Bennett)


Jaccard, James and Jacoby, Jacob. Theory Construction and Model Building Skills, New York: The Guilford Press. 2010. (Denoted as Jaccard and Jacoby)


OTHER READINGS:

Blackboard: This course will be organized using Blackboard. Blackboard is available to you at: http://blackboard.syr.edu/. You log into Blackboard using your MySlice username and password. The other readings for the class and any additional material, such as powerpoint presentations and assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

WEB REFERENCES:

There are a number of web resources available for the topics covered in this course. Some web references you might look at:

Guide to Doing a Literature Review:
http://www.gwu.edu/~litrev/#search

Experiments:
http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desexper.php
http://www.okstate.edu/ag/agedcm4h/academic/aged5980a/5980/newpage2.htm

Quasi-experiments:
http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=5&n=14
http://www.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa696/696quasi.htm

Sampling:
Measurement:
http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/truescor.php

Survey research:
http://www.statpac.com/surveys/index.htm#toc
http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/survey/
http://www.srl.uic.edu/Srllink/srllink.htm

Case studies:
http://www.abacon.com/graziano/ch06/index.htm

COURSE POLICIES

Course Expectations:
1. Participation: This class is designed to involve significant student interaction. The only way to learn this material is by actively engaging it. Students should come prepared for class and ready to discuss the material.

2. Class attendance: Class attendance is essential for learning the material and for the success of the class for all students. Students will be allowed to miss 2 classes without penalty. They will be allowed to miss 2 additional classes with the reduction of 3% of the grade for each class missed. If a student needs to miss more than 4 classes, they should plan on taking the class another semester.

3. Etiquette: The class encourages open discussion and debate. Please treat your fellow students with respect in these class discussions.

Disability Accommodation: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 303 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: Complete academic honesty is expected of all students. Any incidence of academic dishonesty, as defined by the SU Academic Integrity Policy (see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/) will result in both course sanctions and formal notification of the College of Arts & Sciences. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. It is the student’s responsibility to understand the definition of academic honesty, but if you are ever in doubt, please see me before you do something that could put your academic career in jeopardy!
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

(Readings marked with “***” can be used for article reviews.)

Class dates are subject to change.

Introduction (August 29):
   Little, Chapter 1.

I. Explanation and Theory:

What is an explanation (August 31):
   Little, Chapters 2-5.

Types and uses of explanations (September 2):
   Little, Daniel, Chapters 9 & 11.

Developing a theory (September 7 & 12):
   Jaccard and Jacoby, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, & 7

Evaluating theories (September 14):

Examples of theories (September 16)

II. Establishing Causality

Validity and Research Design (September 21 and 23):
   SCC, Chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Field experiments (September 26, 28, 30):
   SCC, Chapters. 8 - 10.
Description of Research Design Topic Due Sept. 30

Lab experiments (October 3):

Webster, Murray and Jane Sell. 2007. *Laboratory Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Elsevier, Boston, MA, Ch. 9, 10, 12.

Examples of experiments (October 5)


Student presentation of article review #1

*Article Review #1 Due October 5th*

Regression, matching, and propensity scores (October 7)

SCC, Chapter 4


Instrumental variables (October 10)


Difference-in-differences (October 12)

SCC, Chapter 5 & 6


Regression discontinuity (October 19)

SCC, Chapter 7

Examples of quasi-experimental designs (October 21)


*Student presentation of article review #2
Article Review #2 Due October 21st*

III. Sampling

**Sampling: key concepts** (October 24):
Henry, Chapters 1, 2 & 3

**Sampling: techniques** (October 26):
Henry, Chapters 4-6

**Power Analysis** (October 28)
Henry, Chapters 7-8

*First Part of Research Proposal Due Oct. 28*

**Sampling examples** (October 31):


*Student presentation of article review #3
Article Review #3 Due October 31st*
IV. Measurement:

**Introduction to measurement** (November 2 & 7):

Devellis, Ch. 1-4


**Scale development** (November 9 & 14):

Devellis, Ch. 5-6


**Measurement examples** (November 16):


**Student presentation of article review #4**

*Article Review #4 Due November 16th*

V. Case Studies:

**Choosing cases and doing case studies** (November 28 & 30)

George and Bennett, chs. 4-6, 10


**Case study examples** (December 2):


**Student presentation of article review #5**

*Article Review #5 Due December 4*
VI. Presentation of Research Proposals (December 5, 7 and 8).

FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE: December 12