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 general explanations 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 prerequisite for any prescriptive research. Therefore, the primary orientation of this course is to focus on development of social science explanations 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.
Grades for the course will be based on the following:

**Homework Assignments (20%):** Each student will be required to complete five homework assignments. On the day a homework assignment is due, we will discuss the assignment in class. Students should come to those class meetings prepared to present their response to the homework assignment in class and to lead class discussion of the assignment. Each student will be expected to lead discussion of a homework assignment at least once and perhaps two or three times during the course of the semester. Assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. If the assignment is completed fully and carefully and on-time, and the student is prepared to lead class discussion of the assignment when called upon they will pass and receive full-credit.

**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 presentations 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:

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

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

Class dates are subject to change. Meeting times are 10:00 – 11:30 unless noted otherwise.

Introduction (August 28):
Little, Chapter 1.

I. Explanation and Theory:
What is an explanation (August 30):
Little, Chapters 2-5.

Types and uses of explanations (September 1):
Little, Chapters 9 & 11.
Meeting will be held from 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Developing a theory (September 6, 8 & 11):
Jaccard and Jacoby, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 & 12
Meeting on September 8th will be held from 12:45 – 2:15PM

Examples of theories (September 13)

Assignment #1 Due September 13

II. Establishing Causality

Validity and Research Design (September 18 and 25):
SCC, Chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Field experiments (September 27 & 29 & October 2):
SCC, Chapters 8 - 10.
Meeting on September 29th will be held from 9:00 – 10:30PM

Description of Research Design Topic Due Sept. 27
Lab experiments (October 4):
Webster, Murray and Jane Sell. 2007. *Laboratory Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Elsevier, Boston, MA, Ch. 9, 10, 12.

Examples of experiments (October 6)


*Meeting on October 6th will be held from 9:00 – 10:30AM*

Assignment #2 Due October 6

Regression, matching, and propensity scores (October 9)
SCC, Chapter 4


Instrumental variables (October 11)

Difference-in-differences (October 16)
SCC, Chapter 5 & 6

Regression discontinuity (October 18)
SCC, Chapter 7

Examples of quasi-experimental designs (October 20)
Meeting on October 20th will be held from 12:45 – 2:15PM

Assignment #3 Due October 20

III. Sampling

Sampling: key concepts (October 23):
Henry, Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Sampling: techniques (October 25):
Henry, Chapters 4-6

Power Analysis (October 27)
Henry, Chapters 7-8
Meeting on October 27th will be held from 9:00 – 10:30AM

Sampling examples (October 30):
Assignment #4 Due October 30

First Part of Research Proposal Due November 1st

IV. Measurement:

Introduction to measurement (November 1 & 6):
Devellis, Ch. 1-4

Scale development (November 8 & 13):
Devellis, Ch. 5-6

Measurement examples (November 15):

Assignment #5 Due November 15th
V. Case Studies:

Choosing cases and doing case studies (November 27 & 29)
Readings to be determined.

VI. Presentation of Research Proposals (December 4 and 6).

**FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE: December 15**