

**PSC 302**  
**Political Science Research Methodology**  
**Fall 2009**

**Faculty:** Tiffiany Howard, E-mail: [tiffiany.howard@unlv.edu](mailto:tiffiany.howard@unlv.edu)

**Time:** Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00pm-2:15pm

**Location:** CBC-C129

**Office Hours:** WRI A210, Tuesday 2:30-4:30pm and Thursday 7-8pm

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to study design, data collection, and measurement. This course will teach students how to identify research problems, formulate research questions and hypotheses. This course will also expose students to various design strategies and provide a working knowledge of indicator construction, validity threats, and sampling techniques. The course moves on to take up in detail a variety of approaches as exemplified by such topics as the experimental method and survey methodology. Emphasis is placed on recognizing the relationship between theoretical and substantive questions; the methodology employed and the analytical strategies that are utilized. Finally, the course will focus on developing the conceptual tools necessary to design and assess empirical research studies, and developing the technical and basic computer skills necessary to conduct statistical research.

## **BASIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) Please read the assigned readings before you come to class.
- 2) Please turn everything in on time- This means that I will not grant extensions if you ask for them within 24 hours of the deadline. The university policy on the grade of incomplete will be followed in this course.
- 3) ALWAYS Ask questions when you don't understand something; chances are you're not alone.
- 4) Please try not to miss class- I am willing to accommodate reasonable absences if notified in writing 24 hours prior to class or if your are ill a doctor's note is submitted by the next class meeting.
- 5) Please check <https://webcampus.nevada.edu/webct/entryPage.dowebct> frequently. I will post announcements regarding class on that site.

## ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS/INSTRUCTIONS

1) Please turn OFF all cell phones upon entering the classroom!!! In cases of an emergency, please inform me that you are expecting a call prior to class.

2) Honor code violations will not be tolerated. If you have any questions regarding the honor code please go to <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>.

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3) If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to present to me an official Academic Accommodation Plan, which you can obtain from the DRC. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

4) If for some reason class is cancelled please go to <https://webcampus.nevada.edu/webct/entryPage.dowebct> I will either conduct class using the Discussion Board or post relevant assignments so that we remain on schedule.

## GRADING

*Class Attendance* (15%)--Each unexcused (a doctor's note or an absence excused by the professor prior to the date represents a valid excused absence) absence will result in a loss of 2 percentage points. Each late arrival will result in a loss of one percentage point if the professor is not notified prior to the start of class.

*Class Participation* (15%)--Discussion and critique of readings; Active and constructive participation. This does not mean simply talking. Your comments should demonstrate that you have carefully read the readings for the week.

*Class Assignments* (5%)--Five short assignments are due throughout the course each worth 4% of your grade=20%

*Mid-Term Exam* (20%)

*Final Exam* (30%)

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- 1) Creswell, John W. (2003). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Sage Publications.
- 2) Salkind, Neil J. (2005). Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Sage Publications
- 3) Druckman, Daniel. (2005). Doing Research. Sage Publications.

## **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

- 1) Weisburg, Herbert F., Krosnick, Jon A. & Bruce D. Bowen. (1996). An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis. Sage Publications
- 2) Levin, Irwin P. (1999). Relating Statistics and Experimental Design. Sage Publications.
- 3) Maxwell, Joseph A. (2005). Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Sage Publications.
- 4) Punch, Keith F. (2003) Survey Research: The Basics. Sage Publications

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1- Introduction and Class Overview**

#### **Assessment of Research Knowledge**

### **Week 2-Introduction to Research and Building the Necessary Framework to Develop a Successful Research Design**

Readings- \*Creswell, Preface and pp. 1-69

\* Druckman, pp. 1-52

\*<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/DissPropWorkshop/examples/>

(Read Proposals by Postero and Wolford)

### **Week 3- Identifying the Research Problem and Developing the Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp.87-118

**[In Class] Assignment #1 Due-You must submit a research problem, question, and your hypotheses-maximum length-3 pages**

#### **Week 4- Data Sources and Collection**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp. 36-37, 156, 164, 185-188

\*Druckman Chapters 5,7 and 9

**[In Class/Out of Class] Assignment #2 Due-You are responsible for collecting data from one data source-This could mean constructing a dataset, conducting an interview, obtaining archival documents (examples include memoirs, personal documents, birth marriage and death certificates, etc.), administering a survey, or observation (examples include writing up what you observe or presenting a photograph.) There is no page requirement but successful completion of the assignment must demonstrate that you understand how to properly gather data from the selected source.**

#### **Week 6- Survey Design**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp. 155-162

\*Druckman, pp. 123-162

**[In Class] Assignment #3 Due- You are responsible for designing a survey-3-5 pages**

**This entails:**

- 1) Presenting the problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)**
- 2. A description of the scale (variable, construct). The scale represents the variable you are interested in. Each scale requires 3-10 questions. You must have a minimum of three scales and a maximum of six scales.**
- 3. Your questions and sample answers (answers that you would expect respondents to provide.)**

#### **Week 7- Experimental Design**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp.162-175

\*Druckman, pp. 53-119; 303-309

**[In Class] BEGIN Assignment #4 -You are responsible for designing an experiment (quasi)-  
3-5 pages**

**This entails:**

- 1) Presenting the problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)**
- 2) Presenting the type of experiment**
- 3) Defining the control group and the treatment group or groups**
- 4) Providing a discussion justifying why participants are assigned to either the control or treatment group. Example: Are subjects randomly assigned?**
- 5) Describing the treatment or intervention. How would you manipulate the variables to test your hypotheses. Example: Does the introduction of this diet pill (the treatment) produce better weight loss results in the treatment group than the control group which were given a sugar pill? Be very clear about how would you control for the effect that external factors have on the results. Example: age of participant, race of participant, original weight at the beginning of the study, family history of weight loss, health factors, economic background, etc.**

**Week 8-**

**\*Tuesday-**

- \*FINISH and TURN IN Assignment #4**
- \*Review for Midterm Exam**

**\*Thursday-MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 9- Descriptive Statistics**

Readings- \*Salkind, pp. 19-76

Note: Please use SPSS or STATA to do the assignments at the end of the chapter before coming to class. We will review the answers in class.

**Week 10- October 25-Correlations, Hypothesis Testing, and Inferential Statistics**

Readings- \*Salkind pp. 77-192

Note: Please use SPSS or STATA to do the assignments at the end of the chapter before coming to class. We will review the answers in class.

### **Week 11-ANOVA, Simple and Multiple Regression-PART I**

Readings- \*Salkind, pp. 193-241

\*Druckman, pp. 167-200

**Note: We will work through the assignments together in class**

### **Week 12-ANOVA, Simple and Multiple Regression-PART II**

Readings- \*Salkind, pp. 242-260; 299-300

\*Review Druckman, pp. 167-200

**Note: We will work through the assignments together in class**

**Week 13-November 14-Qualitative Data Analysis (No Class on Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup> due to Veteran's Day)**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp. 188-195

\*Druckman, pp. 229-292

**[In Class/Out of Class] Assignment #5 -You are responsible for conducting a five minute interview with one subject and transcribing your interview. You must analyze the data from this interview. We will discuss as a class the questionnaire techniques used and problems encountered.**

**Your paper should include the following:**

- 1) The problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)**
- 2) A description of the variable or construct that you are interested in and the questions that will help you capture this variable or construct.**
- 3) Your transcription- The questions and the respondent's answers.**
- 4) A discussion interpreting your interview. In this discussion you should indicate whether or not your hypotheses were confirmed. There is no page requirement**

**\*Note-In Class I want you to develop Point 1 and your questionnaire**

**Week 14- NO CLASS-THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 15- Reliability and Validity/Interpreting and Defending Your Results/Conducting Ethical Research and Review for Final Exam, Course Evaluations-Finish transcribing and analyzing the data from Assignment 5 and turn it in.**

Readings- \*Creswell, pp. 195-197

\* Salkind, pp. 273-295

\*Browse the following website and familiarize yourself with IRB procedures and policies and conducting ethical research- <http://research.unlv.edu/OPRS/>

\*Barrier Devices (DVD)

**FINAL EXAM DATE-TUESDAY DECEMBER 9<sup>th</sup> AT 1:00PM**