

**Advanced Policy Studies**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE 729/ETHICS & POLICY STUDIES 750**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
**Spring 2009**

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Office Hours: M 1-2:30pm; T 10-11:30am, or by appointment.  
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Class Meets: M 5:30-8:20 pm; Wright Hall B224

**Class Description:** This course is designed to provide guidance in designing, researching and writing an original study in a policy area. We will give attention to issues of both fact and value in the construction of an intellectually compelling research question and argument. Students will be exposed to several research traditions and each student will plan and conduct research in some policy area of her or his choice. Students are required to participate in seminar discussions and prepare several written assignments, including a seminar research paper and a prospectus for a larger research project (such as a master's thesis).

**Grades:** I will not accept late homework assignments. If you need help get it, but be on time with your assignments.

<u>Grading:</u>	Participation in discussions:	10% of final grade
	Reading Presentations	10%
	Writing Exercises:	20%
	1st draft prospectus:	10%
	Final draft prospectus:	20%
	1st draft research paper	10%
	Final draft research paper	20%

**Required Texts:**

Bluhm, William T., and Robert A. Heineman. 2007. *Ethics and Public Policy: Methods and Cases*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Creswell, John W. 2008. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gonzalez, George. 2001. *Corporate Power and the Environment: The Political Economy of U.S. Environmental Policy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

McAvoy, Gregory E. 1999. *Controlling Technocracy: Citizen Rationality and the NIMBY Syndrome*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

**Additional Readings:** (Available on WebCampus):

Bernick, Ethan M. and Nathan Myers. 2008. "Treatment of Placebo: Are State Programs Decreasing the Proportion of Uninsured?" *Policy Studies Journal* 36, 3: 367-384.

Lee, Sung Roe and Michael R. Fitzgerald. 1996. "Exploring the Basis for Parental Choice in Public Education: Assessing Performance in Tennessee." *Policy Studies Journal* 24, 4: 595-606.

Nassiff, Rosemary. 1998. "Discourse, Party and Policy: The Case of Abortion, 1965-1972." *Policy Studies Journal* 26, 2: 244-256.

Neiman, Max and Stephen J. Stambough. 1998. "Rational Choice Theory and the Evaluation of Public Policy." *Policy Studies Journal* 26, 3: 449-465.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**1. Writing Assignments:** Writing Assignments will come from Creswell (2008)

**2. Prospectus:<sup>1</sup>** The prospectus can be thought of as a statement more or less along the lines of "this is the dissertation/thesis that I am going to write". You may also think of it as similar to a grant proposal. When you write grant proposals you typically haven't actually completed the research. If you had completed it there wouldn't be any point in asking for the money. Rather, the grant proposal is a vehicle by which you convince the people with the cash that you do have a reasonable research project worth pursuing and you are likely to accomplish it. In the prospectus you will be required to develop a research design for your research question. In this design you will be required to 1) review the relevant literature of your topic, 2) elaborate on your research topic and develop various hypotheses; 3) identify potential datasets or methods of data collection to use to test your hypotheses; 4) discuss the method of analysis and statistical tools you would use to analyze the data; 5) explain how your research builds on previous research.

**a. Title:** Self-explanatory

**b. Statement of Topic and Purpose:** This is analogous to an abstract of the papers you see in journals. A relatively concise statement of your question and a very brief review of the literature you seek to address. If you are doing an empirical dissertation then list the major hypothesis or hypotheses you seek to test. You need to make a clear and concise statement of the argument you seek to develop. You also need to show why you are asking your question. Does it address a puzzle within the existing literature? Is there a gap in the existing literature? What are some of the major rival hypotheses?

**c. Literature Review:** You will need to locate, organize, read, evaluate, interpret and then synthesize the academic literature relevant to your research question. We will discuss the different types and purposes of a literature review and the different techniques for preparing a literature review in class.

**d. Methods and Data:** If you do a data-based dissertation a preliminary check of the kinds of data available and maybe some outline of the techniques to be used is needed. If you will require library or archival resources then you need some outline of where these resources are located. With case studies you should identify which cases you want to look at. You should also note an awareness of the issues involved in most-similar versus most-different designs and attendant literature. If you want to do elite interviews then you should provide some demonstration of who you will interview and where (and a sample of interview questions). You should also show that you are aware of the temporal/spatial domain of your thesis (i.e., is your dissertation cross-sectional or longitudinal or both? Examples of issues that should be discussed in the Methods Section include: 1) For case studies, you will be expected to explain why you chose particular cases and why not others which may seem equally plausible, 2) Explain why a statistical approach to a problem instead of a qualitative or case study approach (or vice versa), 3) Explain how you control for rival explanations? Do you test for them?

**e. Summary/Conclusion:** Discuss the implications and relevance of your research

**3. Seminar Research Paper:** A research paper is an extensive investigation into a research topic. It is an original piece of work that you create by investigating numerous sources of information to answer a research question. In the end the paper is a synthesis of your interpretation and evaluation of what you find during your investigation. A research paper must clearly document where your information and sources came from and how they are used. Your research question is "answered" by the use of a sound model, a sound methodology to test your model, quality data and information that you collect, and the analysis and interpretation of this information.

**Disability Policy:** The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are: (702-895-0866/Voice; 702-895-0652/TDD). For additional information please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>

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<sup>1</sup> This material was appropriated from [http://www.politicalscience.ucr.edu/other\\_resources/other\\_resources.html](http://www.politicalscience.ucr.edu/other_resources/other_resources.html)

## SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
<b>Week 1:</b>		
January 12	Research as a Creative & Strategic Process	
<b>Week 2:</b>	January 19: <b>No Class: MLK Day</b>	
<b>Week 3:</b>		
January 26	Developing Your Research Question & Method; Working with the Literature	Creswell Ch. 1 & 2 <b>Writing Exercise #1 (p.24 - #2) &amp; (p.47 - #1)</b>
<b>Week 4:</b>		
February 2	Managing the Research Process	Creswell Ch. 3 & 4 <b>Writing Exercise #2 (p.68 - #1) &amp; (p. 85 - #2)</b>
<b>Week 5:</b>		
February 9	Hypothesis Formulation and Testing	Creswell Ch. 5 & 6 <b>Writing Exercise #3 (p.103 – #1, 2, or 3) &amp; (p.117 - #1, 2 or 3)</b>
<b>Week 6:</b>	February 16: <b>No Class – President's Day</b>	
<b>Week 7:</b>		
February 23	Theoretical & Methodological Design Issues	Creswell Ch. 7 & 8; Lee & Fitzgerald (1996); Neiman & Shambough (1998) <b>Writing Exercise #4 (p. 140 - #1) &amp; (p.151 – #2, 3, &amp; 4)</b>
<b>Week 8:</b>		
March 2	Quantitative and Qualitative Methods	Creswell Ch. 9 & 10; Bernick & Myers (2008); Nicholson-Crotty (2007); Nossiff (1998)
<b>Week 9:</b>		
March 9	Examples of Good (published) Research	Gonzalez (2001)
<b>Week 10:</b>		
March 16	Examples of Good (published) Research	McAvoy (1999)
<b>Week11:</b>		
March 23	Data Collection, Management & Analysis	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Draft of Research Prospectus Due</b>
<b>Week 12:</b>		
March 30	Exploring Power and Ethics in Research	Bluhm & Heineman (2007)
April 6 - 11	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 13:</b>		
April 13	Mix Method Approaches	Creswell Ch. 11; <b>1<sup>st</sup> Draft of Research Paper Due</b>
<b>Week 14:</b>		
April 20	Communicating Research Results	
<b>Week 15</b>		
April 27	Presentations of research papers	
<b>Finals Week</b>		
May 6	Presentations of research papers (Wed. 6pm)	<b>Final Research Paper &amp; Prospectus Due</b>

## Recommended Readings:

- Androanovich, Gregory D, and Gerry Riposa. 1993. *Doing Urban Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
- Beck, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DeVellis, Robert F. 1991. *Scale Development: Theory and Application*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
- Fowler, Floyd J. 1995. *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
- Howlett, Michael and M. Ramesh. 1995. *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Kvale, Steinar and Svend Brinkman. 2009. *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kish, Leslie. 1965. *Survey Sampling*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Krueger, Richard and Mary Anne Casey. 2009. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Majchrzak, Ann. 1984. *Methods for Policy Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pan, M. Ling. 2008. *Preparing Literature Reviews: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.
- Ragin, Charles, C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sabatier, Paul, ed. 2007. *Theories of the Policy Process*. Westview Press
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers, 7<sup>th</sup> edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weimer, D.L. and A.R. Vining. 2005. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice 4th Edition*. Prentice-Hall.
- Yin, Robert K. 1994. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods, 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.