

Spring 2022
Syllabus
Research Methods for Social Sciences Research
CFU 6
Prof. Brigitte A. Seim (Zimmerman)

Course Description:

This course presents an introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods. It addresses the theoretical, ethical, and practical aspects of conducting research in local and global contexts. Students will learn how to collect and analyze empirical information from multiple sources such as interviews, focus groups, written records, and surveys. Students will develop the skills necessary to understand and critique the methods of evaluation in others' work. Students will design and develop their own research plan for a capstone project, honors thesis, or other research study as their final project for this course.

Teaching Method:

This course is participatory, students are expected to read required materials prior to class meetings, prepare questions and notes, and actively participate in group discussions. The main objectives for this course are as follows:

- 1) Students will develop an understanding of research design as applied to questions of global significance.
- 2) Students will become responsible consumers of research output, able to comprehend, critique, and build on research produced by both academics and practitioner organizations. Ultimately, students will be able to judge whether the methods and evidence employed by others constitutes a firm, evidentiary basis for policymaking, program scale-up, or widespread organizational endorsement.
- 3) Students will learn concrete, marketable, practical and multi-method skills for research- or evaluation-based careers.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

Topic 1	Week 1: Research Questions, Causal Inference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2011. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice</i>. World Bank Publications. Ch. 2-3 • Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra and Esther Duflo. 2004. "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India". <i>Econometrica</i>, 72 (5): 1409-1443.
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Topic 2	<p>Week 2: Research Ethics and Cross-Cultural Research, Sampling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2011. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice</i>. World Bank Publications. Ch. 11 Flick, Uwe. 2011. "Ethics in Qualitative Research". In <i>Designing Qualitative Research</i>. SAGE Publications. 1-9. McClendon, Gwyneth H. 2016. "Race and Responsiveness: An Experiment with South African Politicians". <i>Journal of Experimental Political Science</i> (3) 1. 60-74 Hobbes, Michael. 2014. "Stop Trying to Save the World: Big Ideas are Destroying International Development". 1-17 Gelman, Andrew. 2015. "When good governments (or any government) base policies on bad research". <i>The Washington Post: Monkey Cage</i>. Scacco, Alexandra. 2008. "Who Riots? Explaining Individual Participation in Ethnic Violence". <i>Columbia University</i>.
Topic 3	<p>Week 3: Matching, Difference-in-Differences, Randomized Control Trials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2011. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice</i>. World Bank Publications. Ch. 4, 6, 7 Gilligan, Michael J. and Ernest J, Sergenti. 2008. "Do UN Interventions Cause Peace? Using Matching to Improve Causal Inference". <i>Quarterly Journal of Political Science</i> 3. 89-122 Malesky, Edmund, Cuong Nguyen, Anh Tran. 2013. "The Impact of Recentralization on Public Services: A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of the Abolition of Elected Councils in Vietnam".
Topic 4	<p>Week 4: Surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2011. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice</i>. World Bank Publications. Ch. 12 Fowler, Floyd J. 2008. <i>Survey Research Methods</i>. SAGE Publications. Ch. 1-2 Kerwin, Jason T. 2016. "Scared Straight or Scared to Death? The Effect of Risk Beliefs on Risky Behaviors". <i>University of Minnesota</i>. 1-50
Topic 5	<p>Week 5: Interviews, Focus Group Discussion, Participant Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mack, Natasha, Cynthia Woodsong, Kathleen M. MacQueen, Greg Guest, Emily Namey. 2005. <i>Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide</i>. Family Health International. Modules 1-IV Koter, Dominika. 2013. "King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa". <i>World Politics</i> (65) 2. 187-232 Wolff, Brent, Barbara Nyanzi, George Katongole, Dea Ssesanga, Anthony Ruberantwari, and Jimmy Whitworth. 2005. "Evaluation of a home-based voluntary counselling and testing intervention in rural Uganda". <i>Health Policy and Planning</i> (20) 2. 109-116 Wyrod, Robert. 2008. "Between Women's Rights and Men's Authority: Masculinity and Shifting Discourses of Gender Difference in Urban Uganda". <i>University of California San-Francisco</i>.
Topic 6	<p><i>Research Design Paper and Data Collection Instrument Due via Course Website</i></p> <p>Week 6: Content Analysis, Observational Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilson, Steven L. and Yoshiko Herrera. 2016. "Content Analysis: A User's

Guide to Goals, Methods, and Software”. *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*.

- McClendon, Gwyneth H. and Rachel Beatty Riedl. 2016, “Individualism and Empowerment in Pentecostal Sermons: New Evidence from Nairobi, Kenya”. *African Affairs* (115) 458. 119-144
- Ferree, Karen E. 2006. “Explaining South Africa’s Racial Census”. *The Journal of Politics* (68) 4. 803-815
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”. *American Political Science* (97) 1
- Faye, Michael and Paul Niehaus. 2011. “Political Aid Cycles”. *American Economic Association* (102) 7. 3516-3530

Pilot Results Write-Up Due via Course Website

Topic 7 Week 7: Research Design Presentations

Weekly Reading:

Readings for this course are listed above and will be made available to students via a course website. The majority of your investment in this course will occur outside of the group sessions. You should expect to spend a significant amount of time reading, taking notes on the reading, reviewing your notes from class each week, and working on the assignments. I highly recommend you prepare reading summaries, either in study groups or individually.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

The class requirements include: in class participation and discussion; a research design paper based on anticipated (or hypothetical) research project; drafting and piloting a data-collection instrument for your project; and a presentation of your research design and pilot results during the last week of classes.

Grading Summary:

Final grades will be determined as follows:

20%	Research Design Paper
20%	Research Design Pilot
20%	Research Design Presentation
40%	Participation

Research Design Paper, Pilot, Presentation:

At the end of the semester, you will write a research design paper based on your anticipated capstone project. Part of this paper will include drafting a data collection instrument that draws on at least one of the methods learned in the course. You will pilot this data collection instrument (using an out-of-sample population of your peers) and then turn in a write-up and present the research design and pilot results in one of the last sessions of the course. More detailed assignments for these items will be posted on the course website.

Participation:

You are expected to attend all course sessions. This is your opportunity to ask questions, discuss readings and other course material, and engage in activities that will deepen your understanding of course topics. Your participation grade will be based on: 1) attendance; and 2)

the quality of your participation, including demonstrating you have thoughtfully completed the reading. I expect students to come prepared, and to be respectful, attentive, and actively engaged. In classroom discussions and activities are an integral part of this course, intended to be additional learning opportunities. If you must be absent at any point, please notify me via email as soon as possible, ideally before that course session begins.

Grade Determination:

Writing and public speaking are essential to success in many careers. Students will be held to professional standards. Students should not submit first drafts and should carefully proof read all work. The following factors will be considered in evaluating student assignments:

- **Content:** Responds to the assignment's questions. Develops and supports a central thesis. Provides a focused argument throughout the essay/talk.
- **Clarity and Presentation:** Writes/speaks clearly by: developing a coherent, well-organized argument; arranging sentences in a logical and coherent manner; using correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar; and providing correct citations in the APA format.
- **Comprehensiveness:** Reviews the relevant literature and material, shows an in-depth understanding of the topic, and critiques differing points of view on the topic.
- **Creativity:** Draws the reader/listener in and engages him/her in the topic. Makes an original contribution to the topic. Presents material in an interesting and unique way that elucidates the ideas.
- **Accuracy:** Free of obvious errors. All facts are derived from assigned course material and properly cited.

CLASS POLICIES:

Plagiarism

You are encouraged to form study groups to review course material and discuss general approaches for assignments. However, you are expected to complete assignments independently. Plagiarism of published work is an ethical violation. Any two assignments that are submitted containing the same sentences will be considered a breach. In written work (including overheads or handouts used in presentations), words drawn from others should be indicated by quotation marks and ideas drawn from others should refer to their source. If you are unsure about what needs to be cited, please talk with me.

