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

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Office: Department of Political Science; Wright Hall B209
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.

- 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:

Additional Readings: (Available on WebCampus):
ASSIGNMENTS

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

2. Prospectus: 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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1 This material was appropriated from http://www.politicalscience.ucr.edu/other_resources/other_resources.html
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<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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<td>January 12</td>
<td>Research as a Creative &amp; Strategic Process</td>
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<td>Week 2:</td>
<td>January 19</td>
<td><strong>No Class: MLK Day</strong></td>
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<td>Week 3:</td>
<td>January 26</td>
<td>Research Question and Methodology</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Exercise #1 (p.20 – 1 &amp; #2) &amp; (p.46 - #1)</td>
<td>Lee &amp; Fitzgerald (1996);</td>
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<td>Lee &amp; Fitzgerald (1996);</td>
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<td>Week 4:</td>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Theory and Writing Strategies</td>
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<td>Exercise #2 (p.70 - #1) &amp; (p. 93 - #1&amp;2)</td>
<td>Neiman &amp; Stambough (1998);</td>
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<td>Week 5:</td>
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<td>Putting it Together</td>
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<td>Exercise #3 (p.109 – #2) &amp; (p.126-#1, 2 or 3)</td>
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<td><strong>No Class – President’s Day</strong></td>
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<td>Week 7:</td>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Revising your Research Question and Hypotheses</td>
<td>Cresswell Ch. 7</td>
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<td>Exercise #4 (p. 142 - #1, 2 or 3)</td>
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<td>Week 8:</td>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative Methods</td>
<td>Cresswell Ch. 8 &amp; 9; Bernick &amp; Myers (2008); Nossiff (1998)</td>
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<td>March 9</td>
<td>Mix Method Approaches</td>
<td>Cresswell Ch. 10; Kahan (2001)</td>
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<td>Week 9:</td>
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<td>Examples of Good (published) Research</td>
<td>McAvoy (1999)</td>
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<td>Week 11:</td>
<td>March 23</td>
<td>Data Collection, Management &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>1st Draft of Prospectus Due</td>
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<td>Week 12:</td>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Examples of Good (published) Research</td>
<td>Gonzalez (2001)</td>
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<td>April 6 - 11</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>Week 13:</td>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Exploring Power and Ethics in Research</td>
<td>Bluhm &amp; Heineman (2007);</td>
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<td>1st Draft of Research Paper Due</td>
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<td>Week 14:</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Communicating Research Results</td>
<td>Pawson (2002)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>Presentations of research papers</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Presentations of research papers (Wed. 6pm)</td>
<td>Final Research Paper &amp; Prospectus Due</td>
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Recommended Readings:


