
Psyc 8102: Research Methodologies in Behavioral Sciences

This syllabus contains the policies and expectations established for this course. Please read the entire syllabus carefully before continuing in this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for all students. Unless you are prepared to abide by these policies and expectations, you risk losing the opportunity to participate further in the course.

Instructors

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Course Overview

This course provides an integrated graduate level study of the nature of science (e.g., its goals, principles, values), the primary quantitative methodologies and methodological considerations in the behavioral sciences, and associated practical considerations. Topics include foundational concepts across the behavioral sciences (e.g., sampling, measurement, theory, hypothesis testing, etc.), and the evaluation of specific methodologies (e.g., experimentation, observation, survey, archival). Practical research considerations are also covered (e.g., basics of APA writing, IRB process and forms, development of experimental protocols). The overall goal of this course is to build a cohesive understanding of the scientific method and the critical thinking skills necessary to effectively design, execute, and evaluate social science research.

Specific Pedagogical Objectives

- Be conversant in the basic principles and concepts of the scientific method (e.g., its goals, principles).
- Be conversant in the principles and issues involved with sampling and measurement.
- Gain general understanding (including advantages and limitations) of the major quantitative research strategies in the behavior sciences.
- Be able to integrate various methods to effectively investigate research questions.
- Be able to evaluate the appropriateness of conclusions and identify limitations of published research given the methodologies used.
- Develop basic research skills such as data management, scientific writing, and handling local IRB procedures.

Course Format

This course is a doctoral seminar. As such, it will involve a combination of lecture, discussion, activities, assignments (e.g., research proposals, IRB protocols, etc.), and other activities deemed appropriate by the instructors. **Critically, by enrolling in this course, you are accepting the responsibility to come to class prepared and actively engage in discussion. Unless you are prepared to abide by these policies and expectations, you risk losing the opportunity to participate further in the course.**

Tentative Course Outline

See Canvas for the list of topics covered by week and the associated reading material and assignments.

Course Materials

Required text book: Whitley, B.E., & Kite, M.E. (2013). *Principles of research in behavioral science (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional Readings: Each week, required readings will be posted on Canvas. All readings are to be completed prior to class. Students should be prepared to discuss the readings at a level consistent with normal standards for doctoral level courses.

Canvas: This course will use the Canvas system to support our teaching and learning goals. All announcements, updates, additional reading materials, and assignments will be posted on Canvas. Most assignments will be submitted via uploading to Canvas. Students are responsible for downloading those materials and having them accessible in class. If you need technical assistance for any reason, submit an online request via HelpDesk Online at <http://helpdesk.uncc.edu> or contact the Student Computing Help Center at (704) 687-6400.

Student Evaluation

Final grades: Final grades are based on the proportion of total points earned from all evaluations using the following scale: A \geq 90%; B \geq 80%; C \geq 70%; U < 70%.

Exams: It is anticipated that there will be two exams (e.g., a mid-term and a final). Each exam will be an in-class, paper-based essay format. Students are obligated by the UNCC academic integrity code to complete exams without help from others. Arrangements for alternative examination dates or times must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the posted time. Post-hoc make-up exams are not allowed.

Assignments: A number of written assignments will be given out during the semester (they will be announced in class and distributed via Canvas as indicated above). In addition, **a larger term paper (i.e., research proposal) will be due at the end of the semester.**

Participation: Active and constructive participation is part of your grade. Thus, you need to be in attendance to participate. This grade is based on the instructors' evaluation of the **quality of your constructive contribution** to the class. **Participation points equal 10% of the total exam points.**

Additional Course Policies

Personal Conduct

We will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect, **with emphasis on honest, open intellectual debate, logical analysis, and empirical argumentation.** Students are expected to conduct themselves in a similar manner. Active participation in class is an expectation of this course. The logical analysis and critique of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is similarly welcome. Please be aware that the purpose of this course is to enhance not just content expertise in methodology, but also to build your critical thinking skills. Developing sound, empirically based and logically based arguments is a core skill for any scientist. The inability to conduct one's self in a professional, civil, but yet intellectually honest manner may result in losing the opportunity to participate in this class.

Revisions to Syllabus

The course instructors may modify the standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced in class [or by email] and will be posted on Canvas.

Instructor's absence or tardiness

If we are late in arriving to class, you must wait a full 20 minutes after the start of class before you may leave without being counted absent, or you must follow any written instructions we may give you about an anticipated tardiness.

Disability accommodations

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Academic integrity violations

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available online at: <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html>

As a condition of taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Any submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. No student papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com without a student's written consent and permission. If a student does not provide such written consent and permission, the instructor may: (i) require an additional essay to be written in a proctored setting, and/or (ii) require the cover page and first cited page of each reference source to be photocopied and submitted with the final paper.

Computers & other Mobile Devices

It is recognized that mobile devices (smart phones, laptops, iPads, etc.) are becoming the preferred medium for many students and professionals. You are encouraged to use your preferred method for taking notes in class FOR CLASS PURPOSES only. If at anytime the use of such devices becomes disruptive, or is being used for non-class related activity, you may lose your right to use such devices in class for the remainder of the year. Much like driving, you should not be texting during class.

Please note; research shows that people still learn best by taking actual notes by hand on paper. That means, listening, thinking, and then writing brief informative notes (not copying what I say). Using digital technology for note taking does not improve performance. In fact, it seems to hurt it.

Policy on Late Submission of work

A general rule, we do not accept assignments, exams or quizzes submitted after the deadline. Material may be accepted if accompanied by medical documentation or other official documentation of an emergency.

If you are anticipating any of the following problems, please start and submit your assignments early (this list is not exhaustive): computer glitches; being the victim of street crime; bad planning or organization; a Senate filibuster; embarrassing messages from "Mom" on your facebook wall; animal attacks; hurtful comments by a close friend; "good lovin' gone bad"; a disappointing credit report; seeing a family member on *Cops*; a potential appearance on TruTV's "World's Dumbest ..."; being struck by falling space junk; unforeseen cataclysmic acts of one or more deities, fairy folk, or other lesser demons and imps; generalized fear of intimacy; generalized fear of logic and rationality; suburban malaise; urban ennui; additional cuts to higher education funding; a date ending in an interview by Chris Hansen; rude tweets from presidential candidates; a Tardis landing in your backyard; being in a glass case of emotion; trouble with your Toyota accelerator pedal; loss of hope in your audacity or vice versa; the debilitating shame of buying a Justin Bieber CD; dating a Kardashian; losing your "mojo"; being threatened with "cement shoes" by the mob; encountering a Weeping Angle; solar flares; realizing milk was a bad choice; realizing its Wednesday a day too late, etc.