POLI 420-01  
Office Hours:  MWF11:00-11:50am  
Class Meeting: LS 129  

Instructor:  
Office: 210 Lyon Science  
Office Phone: 910-672-2001  

POLI 420 - RESEARCH METHODS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

I. Course Description:
This course is concerned with methods and approaches for conducting public policy research and analysis. The students will be provided with the tools to gather, process, interpret, then intelligently and cogently communicate the results in a report that describes what was discovered from the research. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of the logic of scientific inquiry to appropriately identify research public policy problems; state research questions; define research variables; state hypotheses if necessary; select the research design, the methods of data collection and analysis. The course covers both quantitative and qualitative research strategies.

II. Course Objective:
The primary objectives of the course are:

1. To provide the student with the skills to structure research problems and questions, gather information, analysis and interpret data, and communicate their findings effectively to others;
2. To engage and expose the student an awareness of what others in the career field are doing and saying about the common problems through the reviewing of literature.
3. To acquaint the student with the means of establishing credibility of competing theories and claims contains in research reports.
4. To provide the student with an ability to verify the reliability and validity of new information about public policy problems and solutions to those problems.
5. To provide the student with an ability to make quick, intelligent decisions in an era of rapid change and uncertainty.

II. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES  See course shell for university services and notices.

Upon the successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

a. Explain the basic model for conducting research projects, considerations for data collection and analysis, and basic research methodologies.

b. Identify a research problem, develop a comprehensive research design, and formulate a research proposal consistent with the standards of the university’s Directed Research Project (DRP).

c. Determine the nature and extent of information needed to effectively address the topic; efficiently locate, determine the validity, and critically evaluate the resources; and apply the information to accomplish the specific purpose (report, case analysis, factual requirement, problem solving, planning).

d. Construct and implement a refined information search using various resources (the University
Library collections and services, scholarly journals in a field of study, the World Wide Web, and online database or other sources appropriate to the topic), select relevant and valid information sources, use this information ethically and legally avoiding plagiarism and composing proper APA references, synthesizing this information to reach informed conclusions with supporting rationale, and present the conclusions.

e. Apply principles of APA style and writing mechanics to the formation of long analytical research reports.

f. Use stages of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, revising, editing and proofreading) to develop and evaluate content, coherence, and clarity of research writing.

g. Devise and present effective informative and persuasive oral presentations.

III. Course Grade:

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<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion/Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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IV. Public Policy Research Project

Each student is expected to select a single major public policy problem area published in a recent (i.e. within the last two months) newspaper article, magazine or new paper editorial and develop a research proposal for systematically studying the problem.

The guidelines for preparing the proposal are attached to this syllabus. The guidelines should be followed in the order in which they are listed. You may choose any particular public policy problem according to your interest. This is the single most important assignment of the course—worth 40 percent of the course grade—and therefore the preparation of the case study should begin immediately. Each student is required to make an oral presentation of the proposal. Each presentation should not exceed 20 minutes, and will be followed by a maximum of 10 minutes of constructive questions and discussion delimited to relevant course contents. The final paper, not including bibliography, should be between 15 to 25 double-spaced typewritten pages in length. This is a formal paper, and therefore, citations should be appropriately referenced. It is due on December 2nd. Late papers will not be accepted.

V. Class Attendance

Students are required to attend all class sessions and participate fully and constructively in class discussions. Each unsubstantiated absence will result in 3 points deduction from the student’s final grade.

VI. Scholastic Dishonesty

Although students are allowed to discuss and exchange ideas on issues related to their papers, the final product of the weekly assignments and case study should be independently prepared. Therefore, the Jackson State University (JSU) scholastic dishonesty policy as outlined on page 23 of the JSU Graduate Catalogue will be strictly enforced in this course.

VII. Required Texts: (Available at the University Book Store)


COURSE OUTLINE AND EXPECTED WEEKLY LEARNING OUTCOMES

DATE | TOPIC AND ASSIGNMENT
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Week 1 | **Course Introduction**
| ❖ Review of books and course requirements
| ❖ Questions about the course
| ❖ Definition of Research
| ❖ Characteristics of Research
| ❖ Values of Research
| Assignment: Leedy & Ormrod, chp. 1

Week 2 | **Research in Political Science & Public Administration**
| ❖ Research Areas
| ❖ Research Topics and Themes
| ❖ Research Methods and Strategies
| ❖ Definition of Research Ethics
| ❖ Research on Human Subjects
| Assignment: Leedy & Ormrod, chp. 5

Week 3 | **Research Process**
| ❖ Logic of Scientific Inquiry
| ❖ Steps in the Research Process
| ❖ Defining the Research Problem
| ❖ Research Focus
| ❖ Research Topic Information
| ❖ Preparing a research worksheet
| Assignment: Leedy & Ormrod, chp. 2 & 3
| In-class Handout

Week 4 | **Research Problem**
| ❖ Discuss types of projects that are not appropriate research projects
| ❖ Identify strategies for finding a legitimate problem
| ❖ Effectively state a research problem, following the guidelines noted in the text
| ❖ Describe the role of subproblems in research
| ❖ Use strategies for delineating your research to prevent misunderstanding
| Assignment: Ch. 3, Leedy & Ormrod (2010)

Week 5 | **Review of Related Literature**
| ❖ Discuss the purpose of literature review
| ❖ Identify different areas where you can start and continue your search
| ❖ Evaluate suggestions for maximizing your efficiency at the library
Week 6

**Introduction to Research Designs**

- Quantitative Research Designs
- Qualitative Research Designs
- Combination Research Designs
- Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs

Assignment: Leedy & Ormrod, chp 7
Isaac & Michael pp. 15-60
In-class Handout

Week 7

**Quantitative Research Fundamentals I**

- Units of analysis
- Conceptual Definition of Variables
- Operational Definition of Variables

Assignment: In-class Handout

Week 8

**Quantitative Research Fundamentals II**

- Units of Measurement
- Research Hypothesis
- Null Hypothesis
- Database Construction
- Review of Midterm Exam

Assignment: In-class Handout

Week 8

**Midterm Exam**

October 15-18

**Spring Break**

Week 9

**Writing the Research Paper**

- Describe the organization and format of a research proposal
- List the guidelines for writing your first draft
- List the guidelines for revising your proposal
- Discuss common weaknesses in research proposals

Assignment: Ch. 6, Leedy & Ormrod (2010) and APA Manual.

**Statement of the Problem**: This is the second section to your APA final formatted paper. It should consist of three to four sentences where you describe what the problem is. The first sentence is a general sentence about the problem. The second is a more specific description, and the third an even more specific description, leading to the fourth which transitions the reader to what you plan on doing about the problem in your paper. The sentence starts with, “Therefore, this proposal will....”

Week 10

**Documenting and Crediting Sources using APA-style**. Distinguish between common knowledge information and source material to avoid plagiarism and develop accurate paraphrases, summaries, and quotations
Apply APA style to format components of the paper including title page, abstract, text, tables, figures, reference list, footnotes, and appendices

Apply APA style to develop the Reference List

Construct proper APA brief and long block quotations

Employ proper APA style to cite periodicals

Employ proper APA style to cite books and other separately published materials

Employ proper APA style to cite audiovisual sources

Employ proper APA style to cite electronic sources

2nd Written Assignment due

Assignment:
Refer to American Psychological Association (2010) APA manual and/or Perrin’s (2009) Pocket Guide to APA (Note: the pocket guide is an optional resource, but it is bundled with the required Raimes (2008) writing guidebook)

Research Questions: This is the third section to your APA final formatted paper. The major research question or hypothesis is derived from the statement of the problem. The research question or hypothesis can be broken into applicable manageable sub questions or sub hypotheses. These questions are going to guide your research. They are going to be all the questions from which the answers will help you solve, educate others about, or further explore your problem. All of them should be guiding questions that are open questions, not yes or no questions but questions that when asked and answered will help you figure out a solution to your problem.

Week 11

Data Collection Methods

Research Population
Research Sample
Primary Data
Secondary Data
3rd Written Assignment due

Assignment:
Leedy & Ormrod (2010). Chp 7

Week 12

Questionnaire Construction

Questionnaire Construction Process
Surveys
Type of Questions
Writing Questions
Reliability of Survey Instrument

Assignment:
Leedy & Ormrod (2010). Chp 9

Week 13

Descriptive Research (Quantitative). Discuss a variety of research methods for quantitative research

Explain why a correlation between two variables does not establish a causal relationship between them
Discuss strategies for implementing survey research
Evaluate checklist and rating scale methods
Compare and contrast sampling strategies and their limitations

Assignment: Leedy & Ormrod (2010) chp 9
**Significance of the Study:** This is the fourth section to your final paper. This is where you show your passion about the topic. Why is it important to you? This section is also the researcher’s opportunity to explain why it is a significant research problem under study in theory and/or practice.

- **November 25-28**  
  - Easter Break
- **Week 14**  
  - Proposal Presentation
- **Week 15**  
  - Final Exam
- **Week 16**  
  - Final Paper due