

POLS 7400, Section OLA  
Research Methods for  
Public Administration  
Fall Semester 2020

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### Purpose

This course acquaints M.P.A. students with the rationale, logic, and methods of the scientific method and research in the political-science subfield of public administration. The course content includes development of research theories, operationalization of concepts, methods of gathering and analyzing empirical evidence, and ethical principles of research.

### Syllabus Supplement

Please examine the "Syllabus Supplement," which is available in the "Syllabus" module of our D2L course.

### Learning Outcomes

- Know how to conduct research in accordance with the scientific method, including the development of research theories and the objective analysis of discoveries.
- Understand how to cope with the subjectivity of social-science concepts, how to operationalize concepts, and methods of measuring concepts.
- Understand the theory and method of sampling and the interpretation of such results of sampling as survey research.
- Be able to explain the usefulness of research for discovery in public administration and public policy.
- Know the ethical principles expected of social-science researchers.

The Online Environment

## 1. GENERAL RULES

This course is delivered in an asynchronous environment, which means that you will be working on your own schedule, subject to the necessary assignment deadlines. Here are some general rules:

- Course discussion is an important part of your learning experience and your grade.
- Complete your weekly assignments before you move on to the next week.
- Always check to see whether there are any new course announcements.
- For the purposes of this course, all times are expressed in U. S. Eastern Time ("ET").
- Don't wait to learn how to use D2L.
- Use the assigned UNG E-mail account and not your personal E-mail account.
- Should a technical problem arise, address it immediately.
- Observe course "netiquette" and be considerate of others at all times.

It is your responsibility to make sure you have computer hardware and software that allow you to read and send E-mail, access the Internet, and enter the D2L website. You will normally use D2L to communicate with me or to turn in assignments.

## 2. COMPUTER SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

In order to effectively participate in this class, you need to be able to use E-mail, type, save and attach documents to your communications, log in to D2L, post messages on discussion boards, and save and upload documents in various formats, including but not limited to Microsoft Word and Adobe-pdf format. If you have questions regarding any of these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### 3. COMMUNICATION IN D2L AND BY E-MAIL

- Always include a subject line ("POLs 7400: [Topic]").
- Remember that without facial expressions some comments may be taken the wrong way. Be careful in wording your E-mails. Use of emoticons might be helpful in some cases. Do not write in all capital letters.
- Use standard fonts. You never know what fonts someone else's machine can read!
- Avoid sending large attachments.
- Special formatting such as centering, audio messages, tables, html, etc., should be avoided unless necessary to complete an assignment or other communication.
- Respect the privacy of other class members.

#### **STUDENT HELP RESOURCES**

◆ UNG Service Desk contact is (706) 864-1922 or at [helpdesk@ung.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ung.edu).

◆ For 24/7 support, go to <https://D2LHelp.view.usg.edu/>

◆ Citation Styles: APA - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>

◆ D2L Tutorials: [https://my.ung.edu/departments/distance-education/Pages/eLearning%20\(D2L\)/Placing-a-Support-Help-Desk-Ticket.aspx](https://my.ung.edu/departments/distance-education/Pages/eLearning%20(D2L)/Placing-a-Support-Help-Desk-Ticket.aspx)

### Course Requirements

#### 1. READING

There is one required textbook. It is:

Babbie, Earl. (2016). *The Practice of Social Research*. 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Cengage Learning. (ISBN 978-1-305-10494-5)

#### 2. BULLETIN-BOARD DISCUSSIONS

I have developed a set of questions about the readings for 13 of the weeks' modules (including the first week, when your introduction of yourself will count as part of the discussion contribution). You are required to post answers to any two of the questions. Your answers must be posted on the Discussion board

before 12 noon ET on Friday of the course week. Late participation will be penalized (minus 1 point). Then you are required to respond to any two of your classmates' posts before 12 noon ET on Monday at the end of the course week. You will not be able to make any submissions after that. When submitting your answers, be sure to include your name and which reading(s) your answers are addressing. Make sure to properly cite the reading(s) by providing name of author, title of material if there might be any ambiguity, and page number(s). The answers should not be of the "I agree" or "I disagree" type, but they should address broader theoretical or analytical themes. The answers should not merely re-state the author's words, but should reveal reflective and critical analysis.

For example:

"I am Desirée Devotee. Concerning Question 3: Social-science researchers agree on a set of principles about the proper use of subjects, such as voluntary participation, minimization of harm, and protection of subjects' identities (Babbie, 2016, pp. 62-68). These principles have arisen because of 'horrendous actions' of medical researchers in the past, such as the Nazi scientists who conducted medical experiments on prisoners of war during World War II (Babbie, 2016, p. 63)."

- Desirée

I will grade it as a 2 because you followed the format and demonstrated that you read the material, but it does not show critical analysis. On the other hand, perhaps a student's answer were formulated differently, like this:

"I am Desirée Devotee. Concerning Question 3: When social scientists conduct research with subjects, they have obligations to the subjects. This principle is based on, among other ideas, American political norms that protect individuals' civil liberties (Babbie, 2016, p. 62). Therefore, social scientists acknowledge that subjects' participation in research must be voluntary, that subjects must be advised in advance about any risk, and that the research can proceed only after the subjects have given their informed consent (Babbie, 2016, pp. 62-64). Babbie (2016, p. 65) adds, 'The clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interests and well-being is the protection of their identity. . . .' Should deception of the

subjects have been necessary, the reason for the deception should be disclosed to them during the debriefing. As Babbie (2016, pp. 68-69) explains, it is improper to leave the subjects 'with bad feelings or doubts about themselves based on their performance' in the research."

- Desirée

I will grade this question as a 3 because you followed the format and also demonstrated critical review of the material.

Your weekly questions will be graded using the following criteria (Point Range 3-0):

- 3 = Student adheres to all requirements of posting--that is, the student submits two answers before noon on Friday, responds to two classmates' posts before noon on Monday, title of message clearly references discussion theme, answers make proper reference to reading, and/or answers make proper citation of readings by giving page numbers. Participation is extensive and coherent; some of the week's themes are discussed; arguments are clearly stated; topic/theme/controversy builds from and into the course's topics and goals; student clearly makes an effort to build on the week's discussion by effectively incorporating material from the course and other courses.

- 2 = Student adheres to some or most of the requirements of posting--that is, the student submits two answers before noon on Friday, responds to two classmates' posts before noon on Monday, title of message clearly references discussion theme, some readings are not clearly or properly referenced, and/or some answers are not properly cited or lack page numbers. Some themes are discussed; discussion refers to the readings but misses on originality or freshness (lacks effort to interpret material in an interesting and original way); discussion would have been enhanced by the use of additional sources (both in quality and quantity).

- 1 = Student has not adhered to requirements of posting--that is, student submits fewer than two answers before noon on Friday, student responds to fewer than two classmates' posts before noon on Monday, answers are vague or general, there is no title of message or document does not refer to the readings, there is no proper citation of material or reference is inaccurate, and/or there is no citation of pages or page number is inaccurate. Participation was not consistent, sufficient, focused or logical;

few postings are offered throughout the week; contributions consist mostly of sparse postings such as "I agree," "Yes, you are right," "I see your point"; contributions stray from the week's theme.

- 0 = Student did not participate in that week's discussion.

*Your contributions to the class discussions will account for 39 percent of your course grade.* Participation in class discussions plays an important part in this course, both as a component of your course grade and as a way of learning the material. I expect you to contribute actively to the discussions that will be occurring throughout the course. You are encouraged to offer your own issues and questions for discussion, but they must be appropriate to the subject matter. Participation means adding your own comments and responding to those of others. Because students will not be online at the same time, the course will use the discussion board, and not chat rooms, for the course discussion. Weekly class discussions must be completed before you move on to the next week. Weekly class discussions will close at noon each Monday at the end of the class week. You will not be able to participate for credit after that.

#### Discussion Group Guidelines:

- Discussion is the heart of the course, so don't be bashful.
- Complete your weekly assignments and that includes class board discussions before you move on to the next week.
- Review the discussion threads thoroughly before joining the discussion.
- Try to maintain threads by using the "Reply" button rather than starting a new topic.
- Do not make insulting or inflammatory statements to other class members.
- Read the comments of other class members thoroughly before entering your remarks.
- Be positive and constructive in group discussions.
- Respond in a thoughtful and timely manner.

## Chat Guidelines:

Because there is no expectation that either students or the instructor will be online at the same time, there will be no course chat room or chat discussions.

## 3. EXAMINATIONS

There will be a midterm examination that you will take during Week 7 on Wednesday, September 30, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. EDT or Thursday, October 1, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. EDT. The exam will have 10 short-answer questions. It will account for 17 percent of your grade. There will be a final examination that you will take during Week 16 on Wednesday, December 2, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. EST or Thursday, December 3, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. EST. The exam will have 10 short-answer questions. It will account for 17 percent of your grade.

Here are your options for taking the exams:

Midterm examination	Wednesday, Sept. 30, 1-2:30 p.m. EDT	ProctorU (ProctorU will charge a fee)
	Thursday, Oct. 1, 7-8:30 p.m. EDT	ProctorU (ProctorU will charge a fee)
Final examination	Wednesday, Dec. 2, 1-2:30 p.m. EST	ProctorU (ProctorU will charge a fee)
	Thursday, Dec. 3, 7-8:30 p.m. EST	ProctorU (ProctorU will charge a fee)

You will need to arrange to take the exams while being supervised by ProctorU. "The fees charged for a proctored exam depend on the length of the exam and how far in advance of the exam the reservation is made." For more information, see the Web page at this URL address:

<https://my.ung.edu/departments/distance-education/Pages/Students-ProctorU.aspx>

**ProctorU is an online proctoring service that allows you to take your exam from the comfort of your home. ProctorU is available 24/7, however you will need to schedule your proctoring session at least 72 hours in advance to avoid any on demand scheduling fees. Creating a ProctorU account is simple! All you will need to do is visit (<https://go.proctoru.com/session/new>) and select the "Test-Taker" option.**

Please be sure to review the Exam Readiness Guide located at the following link to prepare yourself and your workspace for your appointment.

<https://www.proctoru.com/exam-readiness-guide>

ProctorU encourages you to visit the Test It Out page to ensure you have the best possible testing experience. You will be able to test your equipment and connect ProctorU representative for tech support if needed.

<http://www.proctoru.com/testitout>

In order to use ProctorU you will need to have a high-speed internet connection, a webcam (internal or external), a Windows or Mac Operating System, and a government issued photo ID.

ProctorU Student Support can be contacted via the LiveChat feature located at ProctorU.com, by email ([help@proctoru.com](mailto:help@proctoru.com)) or by calling [855-772-8678](tel:855-772-8678).

If you don't take an examination when it is scheduled, the grade will be zero.

#### 4. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

You are expected to write a research proposal--at least 12 pages long. This paper should propose some sort of inquiry in public administration and/or public policy. The research proposal accounts for 26 percent of your grade. When you are ready to submit your paper, use the "upload a file" function to submit the document to the assignment dropbox. These papers will be analyzed for plagiarism and originality by Turnitin.com. The deadline for the paper is Friday, November 20, at noon (U. S. Eastern Time). No late papers will be accepted!

Your research proposal should be based on the structure suggested in the Babbie textbook on pp. 500-507.

- *Abstract (not required)*. A finished research paper would properly have an abstract that summarizes the paper and explains what you discovered (i.e., your conclusion). In so far as this is a proposal and not a finished paper, no abstract is required.

- *Introduction*: The first part of your paper is an introduction of about one page.

- *Literature Review*: Present a review of literature that will lead to your theory and analysis. Your theory will need to be based in the knowledge base of our discipline, so this is where you present a portrait of the literature with which you have become

familiar. One of your sources *must* be the Babbie textbook. You should also refer to at least five other *peer-reviewed* sources pertaining to public administration and/or public policy. Web sites (other than reproductions of peer-reviewed articles), magazine and newspaper articles, etc., *will not count* in the number of peer-reviewed sources. *Do not write an annotated bibliography!* An annotated bibliography will get you a failing grade on this assignment. If you want to see a paper that has a literature review in the acceptable format, you can review Parts A, B, and C of the sample paper for which a link appears on the Web site at this URL address:

<http://faculty.UNG.edu/bfriedman/Courses/APAmod.html>

Your literature review should be at least six pages in length.

- *Theory/hypothesis statement(s)*. Present a theory statement that you would like to use as the basis of your future analytical exploration. The theory statement should theorize how two concepts are related. Explain how you will operationalize the concepts (i.e., specify operational definitions and indicators). This part of your paper should be one page or more in length.

- *Identification of method*. Explain the kind of statistical analysis that you would plan to use to determine whether the theory statement can be supported by empirical observation. This part of your paper should be about a page in length.

- *Analysis and findings (not required)*. In so far as you are not required to gather data and analyze them, you will not write a part of the paper that analyzes data.

- *Bibliography*. Conclude with a list of references cited. (Of course, use APA style.) No specific length is required, but you must (a) list all the sources you use and (b) list only the sources you use.

Students are required in all M.P.A. courses to use full-blown APA style on *all* papers (including research papers, analytical papers, written case-study assignments, etc.). You may wish to obtain a copy of the style manual. It is available, for example, at this Web site:

<http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>

Failure to use APA style properly will result in a penalty of up to 20 points (the average penalty will probably be 10 points). Please refer to the Web page at this URL address for more information:

<http://faculty.UNG.edu/bfriedman/Courses/APAmod.html>

Please take note of the following miscellaneous rules about writing that appear on the Web page at this URL address:

<http://faculty.UNG.edu/bfriedman/Courses/MiscRule.html>

## 5. CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

The integrity code of the University of North Georgia--"On my honor, I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, evade the truth, or tolerate those who do"--reflects the university's commitment to academic integrity. The "Academic Integrity Policy" (2020-2021 *Undergraduate Bulletin*, at [https://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=28&navoid=927#academic\\_integrity\\_policy](https://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=28&navoid=927#academic_integrity_policy) ; see also the Student Handbook) and the "Academic and Professional Integrity Policy" (described in the 2020-2021 *Graduate Bulletin* at [https://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=29&navoid=984#Academic\\_and\\_Professional\\_Integrity\\_Policy](https://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=29&navoid=984#Academic_and_Professional_Integrity_Policy) ) are incorporated herein by reference. Please note that in this course, as in all others at UNG, plagiarism and other forms of cheating are expressly prohibited. Your papers will be analyzed for plagiarism and originality by Turnitin.com. Any student who commits plagiarism or cheating may receive a reduced grade, which may involve a failing grade, and his or her matriculation in the M.P.A. Program may be terminated by the M.P.A. Advisory Committee. A report of the incident will be provided to the university's Academic Integrity Council. The council and the provost may take additional action, which may include a formal reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion.

## 6. COMPOSITION

The first week's course content includes instructions about "Composing Messages and Papers." The instructions are incorporated in this syllabus by reference. I expect graduate students to write coherent English. Persistent errors of syntax, grammar, word choice, etc., can adversely affect your scores on assignments.

## 7. COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE

Both federal and state laws forbid the unlawful duplication of copyrighted computer software or other reproductions of copyrighted material. In accordance with these policies, the University of North Georgia expressly forbids the copying of such materials supplied by or used in the university. Unlawful duplication of copyrighted materials by a user may result in disciplinary action by the university pursuant to the Student Code of Conduct (Non-Academic Infractions--Prohibitions, Theft), and/or possible criminal action by the owner of the copyright.

## 8. INCORPORATION OF OTHER CONTROLLING AUTHORITY

The contents of the following are incorporated by reference:

- All of the rules, regulations, and standards published in UNG's undergraduate and graduate bulletins.
- The supplementary information that appears on the Web page at this URL address:

<http://ung.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-guidelines/supplemental-syllabus.php>

## 9. ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

*If you need this document in another format, please contact Julie Saunders by E-mail ( julie.saunders@UNG.edu ) or by telephone (706-864-1628).*

### Course Grades

Your instructor uses the conventional grading scale: 90-100%, A; 80-89%, B; 70-79%, C; 60-69%, D; below 60%, F.

Course grades are available on BANNER within about two business days of the end of final examinations. Except in emergency situations, please do not request grades by telephone, E-mail, or similar method.

Schedule of Assignments

<u>Week</u>	<u>Beginning Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1	Aug. 17	Welcome Introduction of Participants Orientation to Technology Composing Messages and Papers Protection of Privacy and Intellectual Property Quiz (counts as 1 percent of course grade)	
2	Aug. 24	Human Inquiry and Science	Ch. 1
3	Aug. 31	The Scientific Method and Research Design	Ch. 2 (pp. 44-59) Ch. 4
4	Sep. 7	The Ethics and Politics of Social Research	Ch. 3
5	Sep. 14	Conceptualization, Operationaliza- tion, and Measurement	Ch. 5
6	Sep. 21	Indexes, Scales, and Typologies	Ch. 6
7	Sep. 28	Midterm Examination (Wednesday/Thursday)	
8	Oct. 5	The Logic of Sampling	Ch. 7
9	Oct. 12	Experiments	Ch. 8
10	Oct. 19	Survey Research	Ch. 9
11	Oct. 26	Qualitative Field Research and Unobtrusive Observations	Ch. 10 Ch. 11
12	Nov. 2	Evaluation Research	Ch. 12
13	Nov. 9	Qualitative Data Analysis	Ch. 13
14	Nov. 16	Quantitative Data Analysis RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE	Ch. 14
15	Nov. 23	Fall Break	

Beginning  
 Week . Date . Topic Reading  
 16 Nov. 30 Final Examination (Wednesday/Thursday)

POLS 7400 assessment rubric

Criteria	4 (HIGHEST)	3	2	1 (LOWEST)	Score
Sources for research	Student searched for and referenced at least five germane peer-reviewed sources. Student referenced the textbook.	Student searched for and referenced four germane peer-reviewed sources. Student referenced the textbook.	Student searched for and referenced three germane peer-reviewed sources. Student referenced the textbook.	Student referenced fewer than three germane peer-reviewed sources and/or did not reference the textbook.	
Literature review	Well-written. Student synthesized (compare, contrast, limitation) in-depth information from relevant sources, discussing and presenting content clearly and effectively.	Well-written. Student offered in-depth information from relevant sources and explained content clearly and effectively.	Student offered information from various sources with limited citations limited substance, distracting bias, unclear writing, discipline-specific jargon, and/or irrelevant content.	Student provided general and non-technical information from various sources with limited contribution and points of view. Description of the literature is very vague, too general, or filled with discipline-specific jargon that makes it very difficult for the reader to comprehend what is being proposed	
Theory/hypothesis statements	Specific theory/hypotheses statements are included in the proposal and they are directly connected to the material reviewed in the Introduction/literature review	Theory/Hypotheses statements are included in the proposal, and their connection to the material reviewed in the introduction/literature review is good	Some theory/hypotheses statements are included in the proposal, but they are unconnected to the material reviewed in the introduction/literature review	No theory/hypotheses statements are included in the proposal	
Identification of method	Processes and procedures are well stated, manageable, appropriate and comprehensive.	Processes and procedures seem logical and adequate for executing the project.	Processes and procedures for executing the project are vague.	Processes and procedures outlined are inappropriate or unclear.	
References, APA formatting and spelling, grammar, and mechanics	Paper and/or references are formatted in correct APA style. Few spelling or grammatical errors.	Paper and/or references have minimal APA formatting errors. Few spelling or grammatical errors.	Paper and/or references have significant APA formatting errors. Errors on almost every page.	Rules of APA style are largely disregarded. No reference page included. No apparent proofreading done.	