

GPA 8072 – RESEARCH METHODS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

FALL 2006

Students in this class will learn to evaluate and interpret research that expands knowledge in non-profit organizations. The course is designed for decision makers who want to understand what is researchable and have the knowledge to assess whether research is being conducted rigorously and in a manner appropriate to the context. Students will learn the basics of research design, study common research methods and practice basic data collection and interpretation techniques.

The class is intended to be practical and applied. Outside speakers who currently work in the public and the private sectors and who either conduct or use research will be brought in to lecture frequently. Students are encouraged to use course assignments to advance their real-world knowledge in the current professional positions or as tools for completing their capstone papers.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand frameworks for research – what can be researched, what cannot
- Be able to critically assess research – methodological soundness, role of context, scope of application, possible utilizations
- Define researchable questions
- Learn to read research critically. Identify what parts of context are important to interpreting results. What generalizations can and cannot be made. Identify methodological improvements.
- Identify “best source” data; see relationships among types of data
- Identify levels of measurement and understand their appropriate applications
- Understand the role of statistics in research – including the limitations of statistical interpretations
- Identify subjectivity and be able to discuss the role of subjectivity in research

SCHEDULE

Date	Content	Reading Assignment	Assignment Due
SEP 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Information Sheet○ Discussion○ Investigation or research – the news.○ Essential research concepts		

SEP 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Frameworks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Logic models ○ Research question ○ Lit reviews 	Mark, Chapter 5	Project flow chart.
SEP 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Collection Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviews ○ Surveys 	Internet Links <i>Logic Modeling (2)</i> <i>Lit Reviews (2)</i>	Logic Model – 10%
SEP 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where did it come from and why is it necessary ○ Reliability & validity in qualitative research ○ Qualitative design 	Mark, Chapter 6	
OCT 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finding patterns ○ Linking data ○ Using computers in qualitative research 	Mark, Chapter 7	
OCT 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethnography ○ Case studies ○ Long interviews 	Mark, Chapter 8	
OCT 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics - Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Central tendency ○ Contingency tables ○ Chi-square 	Mark, Chapter 9	
OCT 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parametric Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Randomness, normal distribution, independence ○ T-tests ○ ANOVA 	Class hand-outs.	Interview Notes – 10% Lit Review – 25%
NOV 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charts ○ Tables 	Class hand-outs.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other interpretations 		
NOV 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilization & Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reporting ○ Writing strategies ○ Managing relationships in research 	Class hand-outs.	Test – 15%
NOV 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cost-benefit Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uses & misuses ○ Identifying and measuring benefits ○ Interpretations 	Class hand-outs.	
NOV 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural Sensitivity ● Research Ethics 	Mark, Chapter 10	
DEC 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present Design Statement 		Design Statement – 25%
DEC 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present Design Statement 		Topical Paper – 15%

TEXT

Evaluation: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding and Improving policies and Programs, Mark, Henry & Julnes, 2000

Other readings will be assigned by the instructor and will be either handed out in class or available on the Internet.

ASSIGNMENTS

Program Flow Chart – Due: September 14

This is an assignment that should take each student approximately 10 minutes to complete. It will be used as a foundation for the logic model assignment to be turned which is to be turned in the following week.

Logic Model – Due: September 21

Logic models are often required by government agencies or by foundations to help organizations articulate what steps they will take to achieve outcomes. Logic models help groups arrive at consensus about anticipated cause-and-effects and make it easier for organizations to explain their means and mission to others. Logic models evolve as process understanding evolves and the one that is turned in on September 21, will be allowed to change as knowledge accrues.

Criteria:

- Programmatic, not strategic
- Observable outcomes
- Accurately describes the process flow

Interview Notes – Due: October 26

Each student will conduct an out-of-class interview for the purpose of shedding light on a research question. Notes from the interview will be shared with the interviewee and modified as needed before being handed in.

Lit Review – Due: October 26

Students will complete a lit review. Students should review at least 10 articles before selecting 6 for the lit review. Explain the criteria for including or excluding an article from the review and show the pattern among the articles that helps to answer a research question or frame the design or a research project.

Criteria:

- Breadth of sources
- Relevance of selections
- Shows pattern
- Frames questions

Test – In-class on November 9

The test will cover all material covered in the class through November 2. Questions on the test about statistics will measure student ability to interpret statistics, not calculate them.

Design Statement – Due: December 7

Students will design a research or evaluation project based on their logic model and lit review. Each student will present his or her design statement to the class at one of the last two class sessions for discussion and critique.

Criteria:

- Well-defined questions
- Triangulated content or methods
- Efficient data collection
- Appropriate analysis
- Methods appropriate to purpose (What about unmet purposes? Might there be other purposes stakeholders would want that can't (shouldn't) be met?)

Topical Paper – Due: December 14

Students will develop a paper on some topic of research or program evaluation. More details about the paper will be given the first evening of class.