American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

School of Arts and Humanities
POL500
Research Methods in Social Science
3 Credit Hours
Length of Course: 8 Weeks
Prerequisite(s): None

Course Description (Catalog)

This course in research methods prepares the student to understand materials and issues associated with but not limited to the logic of the scientific method, research design, and qualitative and statistical analysis of data. Students will be afforded the opportunity to conduct research on a current issue as it relates to the US Congress. The course is intended to provide a foundation from which the student may use the knowledge and practices gained in this course throughout the rest of their graduate program.

Course Scope

This course of study will take the student through the various steps of a traditional research design. The student will select a specific and appropriate research topic on the US Congress which will be approved by the instructor. With the approved topic, the student will begin to acquire the basic information and tools in order to complete a research proposal. By accomplishing exercises, the student will gather information, assess materials, and analyze data. This will result in the submission of a final research proposal.

Course Objectives

1. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools.
2. Describe and examine the scientific method.
3. Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.
4. Develop research questions and/or hypotheses for a given topic.
5. Write a literature review for a given topic.
6. Anticipate ethical issues related to research.
7. Evaluate data associated with research findings.
8. Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies.

Course Delivery Method

This masters-level course will offer the student a highly interactive virtual classroom. Each week’s lesson will have a course announcement, assigned readings, a discussion board assignment based on either course readings or an internet-based project, and lesson notes provided by the instructor. The course will provide the student with the necessary knowledge of research methods and on-line research tools to develop a hypothesis, collect data, and draw a conclusion that will advance the students knowledge skills in the selected field of study. Since the student is expected to fully participate in discussions, interact with the instructor and other students, and complete the various steps of a research design, reading assignments and assigned projects should be completed in a timely manner.

Course Materials

Required Readings:


- Student Website available online at http://www.sagepub.com/creswellrd4e/main.htm
- Creswell (Your textbook) Chapter Lesson Notes available in the eClassroom under Lessons
- Weekly Lesson notes for each week are available in the eClassroom under Lessons

Additional Readings:


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Evaluation Procedures

Grades for this course are based upon classroom participation and the following grading instruments:

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<tr>
<th>GRADE INSTRUMENTS:</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments (5)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums (8)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Proposal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</table>

* Additional information on Forums

See Resource Section of the Sakai Classroom for specific rubrics. Each Forum assignment requires that each student provide at least two substantive replies to other student posts. The criteria for substantiveness includes the following:

1. The reply is in a complete paragraph, and is at least 150 words in length.
2. The reply genuinely adds new information or fresh insight.
3. It does not simply summarize what another student has said. Example: “I really like your post, especially when you said...”
4. The reply is supported by at least one source, similar to the original Forum response.

Should a student fail to make at least two substantive replies, the penalty is a 20% of the total score; 10% for each reply. As well, if the reply is not substantive, then you may also be docked up to 10%. On the other hand, if the reply is exceptional, then an additional 10% may be added to your overall score for that assignment.

* Additional information on the Final Research Proposal

In this course, you will be developing a formal research proposal on a topic as it relates to the US Congress. A formal research proposal shall be prepared in accordance with the standards of the academic
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discipline. The formal proposal must provide a clear and lucid description of a question or problem and a proposed method of answering the question or solving the problem. Proposal drafting is considered a learning process and helps the students avoid oversights and possible mistakes. The proposal should explain the question or problem to be investigated and convince the research paper professor and department that the question or problem merits investigation. It should show that the student has read the relevant and recent literature on the subject and it should contain a list of materials consulted during the preliminary stages of research. In general, the research proposal should include background information related to the research topic, purpose of the research, and investigatory procedures to be used. The formal proposal should not exceed ten (10) pages (proposal title page not included) and is due at the end of Week 8 of the course. There are many topics worth investigations such as:

- individual members of Congress
- state delegations
- regional delegations
- Congressional members by party
- Congressional members by gender
- Congressional members by race/ethnicity
- Congressional members by age
- Congressional members by income
- Congressional members by education
- Congressional members by religion

In addition, Congress is seemingly the most researchable branch of government. There are floor votes. There are committee votes. There are bill sponsorships, co-sponsorships, and amendments. There are position statements, speeches, and media interviews. There are websites. There are Tweets, Blogs, and Facebook pages. There are campaign contributions and expenditures.
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## Course Outline

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Course Objective(s)</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
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</table>
| 1  | Basic Concepts of Research | □ CO 1 Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools. □ CO 2 Describe and examine the scientific method. □ CO 4 Develop research questions and/or hypotheses for a given topic. □ CO 6 Anticipate ethical issues related to research. □ CO 8 Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies. | Required Reading: Preface & Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 Creswell  


Week 1 Assignment: Online Library Exercise |
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<th>Hypothesis Development</th>
<th>Required Reading:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>CO 1 Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools.</td>
<td>Chapters 5, 6, 7 Creswell</td>
<td>Week 2 Forum: Topic Selection &amp; Refined Hypothesis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CO 2 Describe and examine the scientific method.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Week 2 Assignment: Hypothesis Exercise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CO 3 Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly articles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO 4 Develop research questions and/or hypotheses for a given topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO 8 Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Required Readings: There are no new readings this week. Review Chapters 1-7 Creswell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CO 1 Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Week 3 Forum: Topic Selection &amp; Refined Hypothesis II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO 3 Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Week 3 Assignment: Literature Review</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CO 5 Write a</td>
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</table>
| 4 | **Purpose Statement** | CO 1 Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools.  
CO 2 Describe and examine the scientific method.  
CO 3 Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.  
CO 4 Anticipate ethical issues related to research. | Required Readings: There are no new readings this week. Review Chapters 1-7 Creswell, special emphasis on Chapter 6  
Additional Readings: none | Week 4 Forum: Purpose Statement  
Week 4 Assignment: None  
Mid-term Examination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | **Data Collection** | CO 3 Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.  
CO | Required Readings: Chapters 8-10 Creswell  
Hamilton, L., "Noncompetitive Elections for Congress." Center on Congress at Indiana University. Internet. Available from | Week 5 Forum: Data Collection  
Week 5 Assignment: Data Collection Exercise |
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| 6 | Content Analysis | 7 Evaluate data associated with research findings. CO 8 Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies. | http://centeroncongress.org/noncompetitive-elections-congress, accessed 1 January 2012. 


| 7 | Research Proposal | CO 8 Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies. | Required Readings: Review Chapters 8-10 Creswell 


Week 6 Assignment: Content Analysis Exercise 

Week 7 Forum: Research Proposal Evaluation 

Week 7 Assignment: None – work on final research proposal |
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<th>8</th>
<th>Surveys and Research Proposal</th>
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<tr>
<td>CO 1</td>
<td>Demonstrate proficiency in the use of selected research methods and tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO 6</td>
<td>Anticipate ethical issues related to research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO 8</td>
<td>Judge the usefulness of various research approaches: content analysis, survey and field research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and case studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO 9</td>
<td>Develop a proposal for a research study.</td>
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**Required Readings:** Review all Creswell

**Additional Readings:** None

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**Week 8 Forum:** Surveys

**Week 8 Assignment:** Final Research Proposal

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**Policies**

Please see the **Student Handbook** to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

- Drop/Withdrawal Policy
- Plagiarism Policy
- Extension Process and Policy
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Disability Accommodations

WRITING EXPECTATIONS
All written submissions should be submitted in a font and page set-up that is readable and neat. It is recommended that students try to adhere to a consistent format, which is described below.

- Typewritten in double-spaced format with a readable style and font and submitted inside the electronic classroom (unless classroom access is not possible and other arrangements have been approved by the professor).
- Arial 12-point font.
- Page margins Top, Bottom, Left Side and Right Side = 1 inch, with reasonable accommodation being made for special situations and online submission variances. Please do not right justify your margins!

CITATION AND REFERENCE STYLE
Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the Turabian Style Manual. The following link may help:
http://www.newhaven.edu/library/Guides/StyleGuides/Turabian/
To access the manual using the APUS course site click on:
  - Online Library
    - Tutorial and Student Studies Center
    - Information Literacy Style Manuals/Citations
    - Approved Manuals
    - Chicago/Turabian

LATE ASSIGNMENTS
Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. For each day that the assignment is late, the assignment is penalized 5% of the maximum grade.

TURNITIN.COM
Turnitin.com is a web-based plagiarism prevention application licensed for campus use.

Turnitin.com analyzes electronic submissions of student writing, compares them to the contents of a huge online database, and generates a customized Originality Report. The database used to produce this analysis contains a massive collection of documents available on the Internet from both free and commercial sources, as well as the full texts of all other papers that have been previously submitted to Turnitin.com.

The Similarity index is based on the amount of matching text to a submitted paper:

Blue = no matching text
Green = one word to 24% matching
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Yellow = 25 -49% matching text  
Orange = 50-74% matching text  
Red= 75-100% matching text

Your assignments will be automatically submitted to Turnitin through the assignment submission tab. There is no need for you to do anything. However, if your similarity index is above 25%, you should revise the submission and resubmit prior to the deadline. If it is above this percentage, generally it signals that you have not used enough of your own analysis or made an attempt to paraphrase the sources. You will find the APUS library writing center website helpful when trying to understand how to paraphrase from a source.

NETIQUETTE
Online universities promote the advance of knowledge through positive and constructive debate--both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting-basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the fun and excitement of learning that does not include descent to personal attacks, or student attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Educator classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.

- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and--especially--satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;), :), 😊

AIR FORCE GRADE POLICY-Not Accepting Grade Changes  
(Please read the Air Force memo below)

It is important to let Air Force students know to submit any grade appeals or exception extension requests immediately upon the end of a course. If a corrected grade is not submitted within the Air Force deadline, the Air Force will force tuition reimbursement, even if a failing grade has now been changed to a passing grade.

It is also important that any Air Force students who appeal and receive a grade change from an F send a copy of their updated grade report immediately to milta.reimb@us.af.mil or take a copy into their Education office to request their grade be updated. Unfortunately the Air Force portal only allows our office the ability to post missing grades or change Incomplete grades in their online portal. We do not have access to change a grade in the AI Portal once a final grade has been submitted.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT
Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.
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Academic Services

ONLINE LIBRARY RESEARCH CENTER & LEARNING RESOURCES
The Online Library Resource Center is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Center provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to orc@apus.edu.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors’ publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through subscription services.
- **Turnitin.com:** [Turnitin.com](http://Turnitin.com) is a tool to improve student research skills that also detect plagiarism. Turnitin.com provides resources on developing topics and assignments that encourage and guide students in producing papers that are intellectually honest, original in thought, and clear in expression. This tool helps ensure a culture of adherence to the University's standards for intellectual honesty. Turnitin.com also reviews students' papers for matches with Internet materials and with thousands of student papers in its database, and returns an Originality Report to instructors and/or students.
- **Tutor.com:** Students have access to ten free hours of tutoring service per year through [Tutor.com](http://Tutor.com). Tutoring is available in the following subjects: math (basic math through advanced calculus), science (biology, chemistry, and physics), accounting, statistics, economics, Spanish, writing, grammar, and more. Additional information is located in the Online Library. From the Online Library home page, click on either the “Writing Center” or “Tutoring Center.” All login information is available.

- The AMU/APU Library Guides provide access to collections of trusted sites on the Open Web and licensed resources on the Deep Web. The following are specially tailored for academic research at APUS:
  - Program Portals contain topical and methodological resources to help launch general research in the degree program. To locate, search by department name, or navigate by school.
  - Course Lib-Guides narrow the focus to relevant resources for the corresponding course. To locate, search by class code (e.g., SOCI111), or class name.
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_selected bibliography_


