

Research Methods

Last Updated: Thu, 12/18/2025

Course prefix: PUBP

Course number: 3130

Section: MG

CRN (you may add up to five):

28431

Instructor First Name: Michelle

Instructor Last Name: Graff

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course introduces methodological concepts through the lens of pragmatism, the perspective that research should be problem-centered, consequence-focused, and supportive of applied action. You will not only learn about methodological concepts and their interrelationship, but also their application in support of comprehension and good policy decisions. Assignments will help develop hands-on skills, especially data collection, analysis, and communication that will serve you throughout your academic and professional careers.

For students majoring in public policy this course is important as preparation for your Task Force class. One of the key skills that we will focus on is developing research proposals that clearly specify research designs aimed at informing the policy process. This is a skill set that you will use during the first semester of your Task Force year as you work with a client to develop, specify, and present a research design that can address an applied policy problem.

Course learning outcomes:

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the underlying philosophical and policy-related motivations for systematic research.
- Construct conceptual frameworks to analyze and present logical arguments.
- Know “where to start” when investigating research questions utilizing exploratory methods.
- Explain key methodological concepts and their interrelationship.

- Design and conduct research studies within different contexts to maximize their trustworthiness and legitimacy.
- Systematically collect various types of data from a myriad of sources.
- Analyze data to understand and explain their interrelationship.
- Present research findings and designs through concise, well-structure “briefs”.

Required course materials:

Course text: [The Practice of Social Research, 15th Edition](#) by Dr. Earl Babbie. You can find this text through other platforms for less than what is listed at the bookstore.

Additional materials: As a member of this class, you have access to the class Canvas site. Links to course readings are available on that site. So too is information on assignments and exams. We will also use the Canvas site throughout the semester.

Grading policy:

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Attendance policy:

I do not have an attendance policy.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area of instruction. Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward the following broad Orienting Question: How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable you to meet the following Learning Outcomes: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Critical Thinking
- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Inquiry and Analysis
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion
- Problem-Solving
- Teamwork
- Time Management