Research Methods and Problem Solving

Course prefix: PUBP

Course number: 3130

Section: OA

CRN (you may add up to five):
88766

Instructor First Name: Gordon

Instructor Last Name: Kingsley

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

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:

The required textbook for this class is *The Practice of Social Research, 15th Edition* by Dr. Earl Babbie.

Grading policy:

We will use the course website on Canvas for accessing (and updating) the syllabus, all assignments, as well as grading and assignment feedback. Please consult these materials first, then reach out with questions. Here are the major assignments that you will engage in as part of this class. All work done for this class will be submitted for grading through the Assignments pages of the class Canvas site. Situations may arise where you may need more time to complete and submit assignments due to health-related or other issues. Email me in those situations before being late for accommodation appropriate to your circumstances.

Assignment	Date	Weight (Percentage)
Mid-term Exam	10/8	20%
Final Exam	12/10	20%
Project, Skill-Building Assignments	Various	20%
Research Proposal Document & Video Presentation		30%
Extra Credit: Research Peer Review		
Class Participation	Cumulative	10%

Attendance policy:

It is important that you attend all class sessions. I do note who is attending each class session and who is not. That is one of the important elements that contributes to your class participation grade (see Class Participation under the Description of Graded Components). Here is a link to Georgia Tech's statement on class attendance: https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/. At the end of the semester, I will add up any *unexcused* absences and deduct points from your class participation grade. For every three unexcused

absences your class participation grade will drop a letter grade. Please work with me to keep your unexcused absences to a minimum.

Absences. A student may miss class on occasion due to medical issues, career-building opportunities, family events, or religious observances. I ask that you let me know of these events prior to your absence so that I can record an excused absence.

Georgia Tech has a web page that describes the expectations, rights, and responsibilities of students, instructors, the Office of Student Life, and health care providers about absences. The information is intended to give students better directions as to how they should proceed to notify instructors when they are ill and need to miss class, and what kind of documentation they should provide and to whom. You can find the Georgia Tech policies at the following web page: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/. Please note that I do not require medical documentation for absences due to illness. If you experience a more serious condition that leads to more than a week of absences, then let's discuss your options, ranging from working with me to access course material and notes from class discussions to withdrawing from the class.

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