COURSE SYLLABUS

Research Methods and Public Policy

Dr. Barbara Laubenthal

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to research methods in political science and public administration, emphasizing the practical application of research skills through field-based investigation. Students will learn how to develop research designs, prepare for and conduct expert interviews, collect and analyze data, and interpret findings. A central component of the course involves interviewing representatives from government agencies in Washington, D.C. to explore how public organizations address complex administrative and policy challenges. Students will gain firsthand insight into the research process and the inner workings of government institutions while strengthening their communication and analytical research skills. Although the course emphasizes qualitative methods, students will also learn how to evaluate programs and how to conduct statistical analyses of government budgets and data.

TEXTBOOKS

Johnson, J. B., Reynolds, H. T., & Mycoff, J. D. (2020). *Political science research methods* (9th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Rassel, G., Leland, S., & Mohr, Z. (2021). *Research methods for public administrators*. Routledge.

Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bogner, A., Littig, B., & Menz, W. (Eds.). (2009). *Interviewing experts: Methodology and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Additional academic articles will be uploaded to D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. Final research paper: 30%
II. Research design proposal: 10%
III. Interview questionnaire presentation and pretest: 10%
IV. Two short presentations of a research article with a qualitative methodology: 20%
V. Test 1: Qualitative methods:10%
VI. Test 2: Quantitative methods:10%
VII. Participation: 10%

Course schedule

Week 1	Introduction Public administration: issues and questions	Shafritz et al. Rosenbloom et al.
Week 2	Public administration: issues and questions (2)	Shafritz et al. Rosenbloom et al.
Week 3	Theories and hypotheses	Johnson et al.
Week 4	Research design	Johnson et al./Bryman
Week 5	Policies and government agencies – current issues	Lecture and own research
Week 6	Qualitative methods	Bryman
Week 7	Experimental designs	Johnson et al.
Week 8	Expert interviews (1)	Bogner et al.
Week 9	Expert interviews (2)	Bogner et al,
Week 10	Preparation of questionnaires	Bogner et al.
Week 11	Field trip to Washington D.C., interviews	
Week 12	Quantitative analysis of government programs: Descriptive statistics, bi- and multivariate analysis	Johnson et al Rassel et al
Week 13	Program evaluation	Mertens et al. chapter 8-12.
Week 14	Analysis of expert interviews	
Week 15	Presentation of findings	
Finals week	Final exam	