

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs

Spring 2017 Semester

Class start 1/17 Class end 4/25

Course Name: Research Methods

Course Number: LGAF 6204.LH

3 Credits

Class Day/Time: T 6 to 8 pm

Class Location: Hall of the States

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Susan Wiley, PhD.

Contact Information

Phone Number: office 202/994-8244 home 703/280-5652

Email Address: wiley@gwu.edu

Communication

Office: Monroe Hall 401, 2115 G Street, NW

Office hours: T noon to 3 & W noon to 3

Best contact is email. My home and office numbers are above. Please do not call my home number after 9 pm.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

Support for Students with Disabilities

GW's Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet in front of the Hall of the States to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

I expect you to attend class and class attendance will count towards grades "on the margin."

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Steve Billet
Director, Legislative Affairs Program
e-mail: sbillet@gwu.edu

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

Course Description and Overview

The primary objective of this class is to make students informed consumers of empirical research. During the course of the semester we will cover philosophy of science, research design, measurement and data collection, and introductory descriptive and inferential statistics. In terms of the statistical component, no formal mathematics training beyond high school algebra is expected. It is not my intention to train you as statisticians, but to give you a basic grounding in issues of sampling, conceptualization and measurement, experimental research designs, quasi-experimental research designs, correlational research designs, data collection methods, and basic issues in statistics.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand the meaning of validity in research and the four types of research validity
2. Know the components of and the uses of the three major types of research design and how and why they differ with respect to internal and external validity
3. Have a basic understanding of various types of data collection and the advantages and disadvantages of each.
4. Learn how to interpret basic univariate, bivariate, and multivariate descriptive statistics.
5. Know and be able to apply the steps and logic of hypothesis testing and learn how to construct simple confidence intervals

Course Requirements Evaluation and Grading

If you have a background in research methods and statistics there is a test-out exam available in the GSPM. If you have completed a graduate level research methods class and earned at least a "B" you should not be in this class. It will be waived.

Grades will be determined on the following basis:

- 40% Exam I
- 40% Exam II
- 20% Homework Assignments

The exams will be in-class, closed book exams. Both exams will consist of two parts. Part one will be short answer definitions and discussion questions. Part two will consist of simple computations and interpretations of statistical information. You may use one page of formulae and/or notes for part two of both exams. The second exam will not be cumulative. Study guides for both exams are available on Blackboard. I know many of you work and may need to be out of town on one of the exam dates. If your job or a family situation requires you to be absent on one of the exam dates please let me know and we will schedule a make-up exam.

Homework assignments will include simple exercises applying the concepts we discuss in class.

CLASS POLICIES

While I do not take attendance, I operate on the assumption that you have heard all announcements made in class with respect to assignments and/or changes in schedule. Class attendance and participation will be taken into account in determining final grades “on the margin.” You do not need to contact me if you will not be in class. You do need to contact a classmate for class notes, handouts, and announcements.

I do not give extra credit assignments.

Each assignment will have a specified due date. No assignment will be accepted for credit if it is submitted more than one week late except in the event of extenuating circumstances. **Please do not send assignments as e-mail attachments.**

You will need an inexpensive calculator for the midterm and the final. You may not use your cell phone, an IPOD, or a PDA on the exams. Also, cell phones must be turned off in class.

If you are having a problem with either the readings or the class assignments please inform me when the problem arises, i.e., do not wait until the day of the exam. My office and home phone numbers and my E-mail address are at the top of the syllabus. Please feel free to contact me when the need arises. (Please do not call my home number after 9:00 pm).

I will send messages concerning the class schedule and exercise due dates to your GW email account through Blackboard. I cannot add your personal email account to the Blackboard. Please check your GW email account. I will post a brief summary of the lecture to Blackboard after each class.

In the event of inclement weather please check your email before coming to class.

Required Text and Learning Materials

There are two texts available in the GW bookstore:

Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social Sciences

Note: The edition in the book store is the 8th edition. If you can find an earlier edition, that will be fine. The basic content has not changed.

Herbert Asher, Polling and the Public

Note: This is a “quick read,” is optional, and we will spend only a week discussing it

Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Additional readings are available on Blackboard

Tentative Course Calendar*

*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE OUTLINE

Jan 17	Introduction Brief Overview Science as Method Issues in Logic
Jan 24	Conceptual Foundations of Research Nachmias & Nachmias Chapters 1, 2, and 3
Jan 31	Measurement and Sampling Nachmias and Nachmias Chapters 7 and 8 Asher Chapter 4
Feb 7	Complete Measurement and Sampling
Feb 14	Generalization and Explanation: Experimental, Correlational and Quasi- experimental Research Designs Nachmias and Nachmias Chapters 5 and 6
Feb 21	Univariate Descriptive Statistics Standard Normal Curve Nachmias and Nachmias Chapter 15 Blalock: <u>Social Statistics</u> , Chapter 7
Feb 28	Review for Exam I
Mar 7	Exam I (will cover material through Univariate description)
Mar 14	No class spring break
Mar 21	Bivariate Description: Contingency Tables for Nominal and Ordinal Variables Bivariate Description: Linear Regression Nachmias and Nachmias Chapter 16 White: <u>Political Analysis</u> , Chapter 11 pages 305-324

Mar 28	Multivariate Analysis Statistical Inference Nachmias and Nahmias Chapter 16 White: <u>Political Analysis</u> , Chapter 11 pages 324-332 Blalock: <u>Social Statistics</u> , Chapter 8 White: <u>Political Analysis</u> , Chapter 12
Apr 4	Complete Inference Confidence Intervals
Apr 11	Survey Research: Mechanics of Public Opinion Polling, Polling and the Democratic Process Nachmias and Nachmias Chapters 10 and 11 Asher: Entire
Apr 18	Complete Polling Data Collection: Secondary Analysis, Focus Groups, Content Analysis Ethics in Research Review for final Nachmias and Nachmias Chapters 4 and 13
Apr 25	Exam II (Tentative date)

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.