

POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007

Professor Paul E. Tracy
972-883-2040; ptracy@utdallas.edu; 2.126 Green Hall
Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:00-7:00p, and by appointment

Pre-requisites: None.

Any graduate student in the School of Economics, Political & Policy Sciences is welcome to enroll and encouraged to take the class early in their graduate studies. Students from other graduate programs who are interested in social science research methods are also welcome.

Course Description

This course on research design is the first in a series of graduate courses which expose graduate students to methodology as used in the social sciences. The course will survey the research design enterprise and cover a host of issues surrounding the measurement and collection of data, and other procedures that influence whether a research study will lead the investigator to scientifically rigorous information. This course explains various strategies for devising social science studies, compares the relative benefits of various designs, and identifies the tools necessary to conduct studies that will yield data worthy of analysis and interpretation. This material will be valuable not only for students who will conduct research and administrators who must evaluate the research of others, but also for those who, in the course of daily lives, wonder how and why people behave and organizations function as they do.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- Students will understand the first five stages of social science research, listed below.
- Students will develop a research design capable of executing stages 6-8 in order to investigate a social science relationship of their own choosing.

Stages of Social Science Research

1. Define a research problem.
2. Formulate a meaningful hypothesis.
3. Conduct a literature review to determine what is known about the research problem.
4. Identify dependent, independent, and intervening variables.
5. Formulate a research design.
-
6. Conduct the study.
7. Analyze and interpret the results.
8. Implications for future research and/or policy.

Required Textbooks and Materials

Please purchase and bring to class the book listed below. Other assigned readings will be made available on WebCT or on library reserve.

Cresswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (ISBN: 0-7619-2442-6)

Recommended Resource – *The Encyclopedia of Social Measurement* (2005). Available in the reference section of the library.

POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007

Course Structure

The outline of course topics and reading assignments are provided below. The course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and activities. During most sessions, the class will begin with a presentation of techniques, issues, and concerns that are the most important for the methodological topics for that week. Then there will be an open discussion which relates these issues to substantive examples within the social sciences. Students are especially encouraged to share examples in class; the more practice we get at evaluating research design, the better methodologists you will become!

- 1. Aug. 16 Preliminary Issues in Social Science Research**
 - The Design Framework *Read: Creswell, Chapter 1.*
 - The Extant Literature *Read: Creswell, Chapter 2.*
 - Ethical Concerns *Read: Creswell, Chapter 3.*

- 2. Aug. 23 Epistemology & the Role of Theory in Social Science Research**
 - Induction, Deduction, Hypotheses & Propositions, the Scientific method
Read: a. Epistemology – WebCT
b. Creswell, Chapter 6.
 - Theoretical Foundations *Read: Creswell, Chapter 7.*

- Note:** Be prepared to discuss issues for the social scientist surrounding epistemology and researcher objectivity.

- 3. Aug. 30 Designing the Research** **Assignment #1 due.**
 - Choosing a problem *Read: Creswell, Chapter 4.*
 - Purpose of the Study *Read: Creswell, Chapter 5.*

- 4. Sept. 6 Methodological Approaches I**
 - Quantitative Research *Read: Creswell, Chapter 9.*

- 5. Sept. 13 Concepts and Variables**
 - Hypotheses, operationalization, levels of measurement, scales & indices.
Read: Measurement1 – WebCT

- 6. Sept. 19 Selection of Research Subjects** **Assignment #2 due.**
 - Populations, sampling strategies, units of analysis, attrition and weighting.
Read: Sampling – WebCT

- Note:** Come prepared to share the research problem you will propose to study. You should propose to study a relationship that is explanatory, predictive, or evaluative. No exploratory, descriptive, or comparison proposals will be allowed.

- 7. Sept. 26 Standards for Assessing Social Science Research** **Assignment #3 due.**
 - Measurement Concerns: Reliability and Validity
Read: Measurement2 – WebCT

**POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007**

8. Oct. 3 Experimental Designs

- Types, elements for construction, strengths and weaknesses, & implementation issues.

Read: Experimental-designs – WebCT

Note: Be prepared to discuss how your topic might be investigated through an experimental design and what difficulties would need to be overcome.

9. Oct. 10 Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Designs

- Types, purposes, strengths and weaknesses, implementation issues, and examples.

Read: Cross-sectional Designs – WebCT;
or <http://www.graduateresearch.com/King.htm>

Note: Be prepared to discuss the comparative advantages of using these design types in your proposed research.

10. Oct. 18 Methods of Quantitative Data Collection

- Surveys and Archival Data *Read: Data-collection – WebCT*

11. Oct. 25 Methodological Approaches II

Assignment #4 due.

- Qualitative Research Read: Creswell, Chapter 10.

12. Nov. 1 Methodological Approaches III

- Mixed Methods Research Read: Creswell, Chapter 11.

13. Nov. 8 Finalize Research Proposals

14. Nov. 15 Finalize Research Proposals Continued

15. Nov. 22 No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

16. Nov. 29 Research Proposals are due by 7:00pm in my office, 2.126 Green Hall.

Grading

Semester Assignments = 40%

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Assignment 1 | Due: Week 3 | August 30. |
| 2. Assignment 2 | Due: Week 6 | September 19. |
| 3. Assignment 3 | Due: Week 7 | September 26. |
| 4. Assignment 4 | Due: Week 11 | October 25. |

Research Proposal = 60%

Sixty percent of the course grade will be based on the final research proposal, due Nov. 29, which should also become part of your doctoral program portfolio.

POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007

Instructor Policies & Expectations of the Students

Active attendance. Students should come to class meetings ready to discuss the topics and assigned materials for the week. Research methods are best learned by doing, so there will be several opportunities to practice. Assignments culminate in a final research design proposal in which students convey their skills in research design and readiness to proceed to other methodology courses.

Progress and achievement. The course activities and assignments are designed to provide a foundation in research design and multidisciplinary methods for graduate students in the social sciences. Activities and assignments will require different levels of attention, time, and skill; in part, because students enroll in the course with various backgrounds, knowledge, and biases about social science methodology. Students are advised to meet with me to discuss his or her interests in methodology, progress in the course, and most certainly if problems arise.

Collegial interaction. Especially given our different substantive and methodological interests, it is important that class participants be open-minded and respectful of one another. In addition to being courteous and responsible, it is important for learning that students attend class, so repeated absence or tardiness, regardless of the reason, will not be considered favorably. Moreover, except in unusual circumstances, *late submissions and make up assignments will not be allowed.* Written work is expected to be turned into the professor on or before the assigned date. Electronic copies are discouraged.

Field Trip Policies, Off-campus Instruction and Course Activities

Off-campus, out-of-state, and foreign instruction and activities are subject to state law and University policies and procedures regarding travel and risk-related activities. Information regarding these rules and regulations may be found at the website address http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel_Risk_Activities.htm. Additional information is available from the office of the school dean. Below is a description of any travel and/or risk-related activity associated with this course.

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD publication, *A to Z Guide*, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the *Rules and Regulations, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System, Part 1, Chapter VI, Section 3*, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391).

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work or material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details).

Email Use

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

Course Withdrawal

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

POEC 5310 / CRIM 5310 Research Design I
Fall 2007

Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of **F**.

Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is:

The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22

PO Box 830688, Richardson, Texas 75083-0688, (972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)

Essentially, the law requires that colleges and universities make those reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against tape recorders or animals (in the case of dog guides) for students who are blind. Occasionally an assignment requirement may be substituted (for example, a research paper versus an oral presentation for a student who is hearing impaired). Classes enrolled students with mobility impairments may have to be rescheduled in accessible facilities. The college or university may need to provide special services such as registration, note-taking, or mobility assistance.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.