PPOL5120 (SOSC5790) Research Methods in Public Policy  
Spring 2020

**Course Description**

This course is designed for first-year MPhil/PhD students in Public Policy. The purposes of the course are to introduce to students key concepts in research methods, and to help them develop skills in the design of empirical research used in the analysis of policy problems. Specific emphasis will be on the use of quasi-experimental designs in policy research, as well as on their potentials and limitations.

Upon completion of the course, students should 1) understand the logic of policy research on causal relationship; 2) have a working knowledge on key research designs for generalized causal inference, with a good understanding of their potentials and limitations; 3) be able to put together a research proposal on a given research topic in their chosen fields; and 4) gain practical experience in conducting policy research.

**Required Textbooks**


**Assessment and Grading Criteria**

Details for each assignment will be provided in class:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
<td>(Week 4)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>(Week 9)</td>
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<td>Assignment #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>(Week 13)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion</td>
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**Course Outline and Readings**

*Please note that this outline may be subject to change to adapt to students’ needs along the way.*

**Week 1 (Feb 25): Fundamental Concepts in Policy Research**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 1


- Chapter 2. Inquiry, Theory and Paradigms (pp. 44-61)
- Chapter 4. Research Designs

**Week 2 (March 3): Theoretical and Practical Impacts of Policy Research**


**Week 3 (March 10) Dimensions of Rigor in Research (1)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 2.


**Week 4 (March 17): Dimensions of Rigor in Research (2)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 3.


**Week 5 (March 24): Experimental Designs**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapter 8, 9, 10.


**Week 6 (March 31): Quasi-Experimental Designs (1)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapter 5.


**Week 7 (April 7): Quasi-Experimental Designs (2)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 6 and 7


Keys, B., T. Mukherjee, A. Seru, and V. Vig, Did Securitization Lead to Lax Screening? Evidence from Subprime Loans," December 2008


**Week 8 (April 14): Non-Experimental Designs (1)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapter 4


**Week 9 (April 21) Non-Experimental Designs (2)**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapter 4


**Week 10 (April 28) Big Data and Data Analytics for Policy Research**


**Week 11 (May 5) Generalized Causal Inference**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 11, 12, 13


**Week 12 (May 12) Thinking Critically about Research Designs**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chapters 14


**Week 13 (May 19): Presentations**

During this session, students will present their draft term papers