Syllabus for PhD Seminar on Research Methods and Design

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IS 298A, Information Studies, UCLA  
Research Methods and Design  
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**IS 298A  
PhD SEMINAR ON RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN**

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Course overview ................................................................. 1  
Learning outcomes: .................................................................. 2  
Assignments and Grading ............................................................ 2  
Office Hours ............................................................................. 2  
Course Materials ....................................................................... 3  
Schedule of Course Topics and Activities .................................... 5  
Course Activities ....................................................................... 5  
Sept 24, Topic 1: Course introduction, overview and review ........ 6  
Oct 1, Topic 2: Ethics in research; human subjects protection .......... 6  
Oct 8, Topic 3: Reliability, Validity, and Bias ............................... 7  
Oct 15, Topic 4: Research design and operationalization of concepts ........................................ 8  
Oct 22, Topic 5: Experimental and quasi-experimental research .......... 8  
Nov 5, Topic 6: Randomization and sampling ............................... 8  
Nov 12, Topic 7: Survey research ............................................. 9  
Nov 19, Topic 8: Qualitative field research .................................. 9  
Dec 3, Topic 9: Data analysis .................................................... 10  
Dec 10, Exam week: Topic 10: Course review and wrap-up ........... 10

**Course overview**

This is the core PhD seminar in research design for the Department of Information Studies, covering a range of social science research methods for studying human behavior. It follows, or is offered concurrently with, 291A, *Theoretical Traditions In Information Studies*. Graduate students in Information Studies or related fields (education, communication, public policy, management, psychology, etc.) who have not taken 291A but who have extensive background in epistemology or research methods may enroll with instructor’s permission. Also prerequisite is at least one course in descriptive and inferential statistics.
The course is conducted as a workshop, drawing upon students’ research projects as cases. We will survey quantitative and qualitative research designs and address research ethics and the protection of human subjects. The first week of the course will provide a brief review of epistemological issues, basic concepts of research design, and a refresher in statistical concepts. The course is intended to prepare students for further study on specific methods and to assist in preparation for the PhD qualifying exams.

Students will begin to build their personal libraries on research methods via the course readings. Materials include popular textbooks on social science research methods and the primary publication manual for social science research.

Students will develop a research project and will present an analysis of research reported in a journal article in class.

**Learning outcomes:**

1. Students will become conversant with a range of research methods used in social settings, including experimental, quasi-experimental, and qualitative methods.

2. Students will identify and describe the elements of reliable and valid research and means to reduce bias in research.

3. Students will present critiques of published research using appropriate concepts in research design.

4. Students will develop a research design on a topic of their choosing, using an appropriate method.

**Assignments and Grading**

- Reading assignments weekly, to be completed prior to class sessions
- Major project 50%
- Short assignment: selection, analysis, and presentation of a research article 25%
- Class participation and mastery of readings 25%
- Grading policy: Late papers will be accepted only with instructor permission in advance. They will be marked down 2 points per day late.

**Office Hours**

Office hour time is essential for developing your seminar project papers and for selecting journal articles for the article critique assignment. Students are expected to meet individually with the instructor at least twice during the term.
Office hours are Mondays, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Please sign up in advance by Doodle. While you are welcome to stop by during office hours, most slots fill up in advance. If you are not able to keep an appointment, please cancel it on the Doodle as early as possible so that someone else may have the slot.

**Course Materials**

One of the objectives of this course is to assist students in building a personal library on research methods and design. The texts are classics that will assist you in your research career (and in writing your seminar paper). Other assigned readings will be available via CCLE, the course management system. Bring your texts and other readings to class with you (in print or digital form) on days they are assigned, as we will be referring to them.

As discussed in the CCLE forum prior to the start of term, the Babbie 13th ed, APA manual, and Shadish, Cook, and Campbell are available in LuValle bookstore. You are welcome to acquire these elsewhere, but be sure you get the correct editions. The Lofland book is available free online.

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Schedule of Course Topics and Activities

These course topics and meeting times are presumed final unless we determine otherwise in class discussion. If students are available, we will meet earlier in exam week. All readings are to be completed in advance of the class meeting. Students are graded on class participation and mastery of readings (see assignments and grading). Bring your assigned reading to class (books and articles; latter can be in print or on your laptop/tablet). The assignments are explained in documents separate from this syllabus.

Course Activities

Week 0 (September 24): Topic 1: Course introduction and overview; topic assignments discussion. (Bring IRB certificate to class and upload to CCLE.)

Week 1 (October 1): Topic 2: Ethics in research; human subjects protection. Confirm journal article topic assignments.

Week 2 (October 8): Topic 3: Reliability, validity, bias; Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles. (Seminar project proposal due)

Week 3 (October 15): Topic 4: Research designs; operationalization. Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles.

Week 4 (October 22): Topic 5: Experimental and quasi-experimental research. Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles.

Week 5 (October 29): No class meeting: Prof. Borgman in Tokyo

Week 6 (November 5): Topic 6: Randomization and sampling; Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles.

Week 7 (November 12): Topic 7: Survey research; Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles.
Week 8 (November 19): Topic 8: Qualitative field research; Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; others introduce next articles

Week 9 (November 26): No class meeting: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 10 (December 3): Topic 9: Data analysis; Workshop 1 or 2 student seminar project topics; 1 or 2 students present journal articles; Seminar project papers due Friday, December 11, 5pm (upload to CCLE site; Word files much preferred)

Exam week: (Dec 10 or earlier in week) Course review and wrap-up: Summary of readings, methods, and designs; preparation for qualifying exams and dissertations

**Sept 24, Topic 1: Course introduction, overview and review**

The course will begin with a general overview of topics and a review of basic statistics.

Readings:

Babbie:

- Preface, xv-xxi
- Part 1: An introduction to inquiry
  - Ch 1: Human inquiry and science
  - Ch 2: Paradigms, theory, and social research
- Ch 16: Statistical analyses

Current news on research ethics:


**Oct 1, Topic 2: Ethics in research; human subjects protection**

Prior to class: take CITI course on Social and Behavioral Research: (allow at least 2 hours): http://training.arc.ucla.edu/ucla/. Bring your certificate to class.
Babbie, Ch 3: The ethics and politics of social research

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Ch 9: Practical Problems 1: Ethics, participant recruitment, and random assignment


Recommended readings:


Oct 8, Topic 3: Reliability, Validity, and Bias

Babbie, Part 2: The structuring of inquiry, overview
  Ch 4: Research design (discussions of causality)
  Ch 5: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

Shadish, Cook and Campbell,
  Ch 1: Experiments and generalized causal inference
  Ch 2: Statistical conclusion validity and internal validity
  Ch 3: Construct validity and internal validity
  Ch 9: Practical Problems 1: Ethics, participant recruitment, and random assignment


Recommended readings:


**Oct 15, Topic 4: Research design and operationalization of concepts**

Babbie (continuing discussion from topic 3)
  Part 2: The structuring of inquiry, overview
    Ch 4: Research design
    Ch 5: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

Shadish, Cook and Campbell
  Ch 2: Statistical conclusion validity and internal validity
  Ch 3: Construct validity and internal validity

**Oct 22, Topic 5: Experimental and quasi-experimental research**

Babbie
  Part 3: Modes of observation, overview
    Ch 8: Experiments

Shadish, Cook and Campbell,
  Ch 4: Quasi-experimental designs that either lack a control group or lack pretest observations on the outcome
  Ch 5: Quasi-experimental designs that use both control groups and pretests
  Ch 6: Quasi-experiments: interrupted time-series designs


**Nov 5, Topic 6: Randomization and sampling**

Note: Be prepared to explain the differences among indexes, scales, and typologies, and to outline a sampling plan for your research project.

Babbie
  Part 2: The structuring of inquiry
Ch 6: Indexes, scales, and typologies
Ch 7: The logic of sampling

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Ch 8: Randomized experiments: Rationale, designs, and conditions conducive to doing them


Recommended readings:


Nov 12, Topic 7: Survey research

Babbie
  Part 2: The structure of inquiry
    Ch 6: Indexes, scales, and typologies (continued)
  Part 3: Modes of observation, overview
    Ch 9: Survey research

Nov 19, Topic 8: Qualitative field research

Lofland & Lofland, Introduction, Part I, Part II (pp. 1-178)

  Ch 1: "Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture" (pp. 3-30) http://www.sociosite.net/topics/texts/Geertz_Thick_Description.php

Recommended readings:

Babbie
  Part 3: Modes of observation
    Ch 10: Qualitative field research

**Dec 3, Topic 9: Data analysis**

Babbie  
Part 3: Modes of observation  
Ch 11: Unobtrusive research  
Ch 15: The elaboration model

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Ch 11: Generalized Causal Inference: A Grounded Theory

Lofland & Lofland, Part II (pp. 179-230)

**Recommended readings:**

Babbie  
Ch 13: Qualitative data analysis


**Dec 10, Exam week: Topic 10: Course review and wrap-up**

Summary of readings, methods, and designs; preparation for qualifying exams and dissertations.