Semester: Fall 2017
Course Number: 10:775:395
Course Title: Research Methods
Lecture Day and Time: Tuesday, 10:55 am to 1:55 pm
Lab Section 3: Friday, 10:55 am to 12:15 pm
Lab Section 4: Friday, 12:35 pm to 1:55 pm

Course Instructor: Dr. Debbie Borie-Holtz, Assistant Professor
Contact Information: dbholtz@ejb.rutgers.edu
Office Hours and Location: Thursday, 4:00-5:30 pm and by appointment
Civic Square Building, 33 Livingston Avenue, Room 256

Additional Materials: Readings and datasets are on Sakai.
SPSS is available in the computer labs and on the Rutgers scarlet apps.
Catalog Course Description

Application of research concepts and skills applied to public health, public policy, and planning. Includes development of original and online data sources, coding, appropriate selection of statistical methods for analysis, and professional presentation of results.

Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce students to research methods for public health, health administration, planning and public policy. Basically, the course is an introduction to the fundamentals of social science research. The main goal is for you to learn to design and interpret research so you can solve problems and make informed decisions. During this semester, you will learn how to ask questions, how to probe for answers and how to evaluate the answers we get as a result of research. The emphasis of the class is on gaining the ability to think logically and critically about social science research. We will cover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but more time will be spent on the former. You will work with datasets this semester and conduct statistical analysis using Excel and SPSS, a computer software package. Your final assessment for the course will be a team-based, data analysis paper using a dataset in SPSS.

Although we do not assume any previous work in methodology, we expect that you have successfully completed the statistics course required for Bloustein majors. The goal of this class is NOT to make you into expert statisticians or quantitative researchers, but into educated consumers – and often critics – of the research of others. Equally important, this class should give you a firm foundation upon which to stand as you complete your internship and/or senior seminar requirements for your major.

Class Lectures

This is a 4 credit course consisting of both a lecture and lab period. Attendance and active participation at lecture is expected. All quiz materials will be drawn from the text and the lecture discussions. To assist you in mastering the materials, weekly Powerpoint
slides highlighting the most important learning objectives from each the lecture are posted on each week’s lesson page.

**Quizzes**

To measure your mastery of the lectures materials, there is a weekly quiz. Quiz questions are randomly drawn from a bank of questions focused on each week’s learning objectives that are drawn from the text, lecture slides and class lecture materials and activities. Quizzes make-up 25 percent of your overall grade. Quiz feedback is offered within 24 hours of the quiz deadline. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

**Labs**

Lab work is arranged in a way that applies the class lecture -- labs are NOT intended to “teach” the class lecture materials. It is recommended that you review the class lecture activities before completing the weekly lab assignments. Lab sessions are designed to gain some hands-on practice with the concepts we learn in lecture. Labs are structured around cases, discussions and exam practice.

Labs are worth 10 percent of the course. Missed labs will be graded as a “0”. Missing more than 2 labs will result in a grade deduction for this component of the course grade.

**Extra Practice/Extra Credit**

There is also an optional “extra practice” section with most lessons to help you grasp the lecture materials. Completing the extra practice work by the weekly quiz deadline will help you understand the lecture lessons. If you complete the practice work on a regular and timely basis, you can earn up to 3 points on your final course grade. If you missed more than three lectures, you forfeit the opportunity to earn extra credit.
Communication policy

Please reach out to us with questions! There are many opportunities to reach us.

Office hours

Office hours are posted on a Sakai. We ask that you schedule your appointment as this helps us ensure that we are available at the time you requested. If you need to cancel your appointment, please remove your name from the scheduling block so that another student may take advantage of this time block. If you are running late, please update the scheduling block as well. While we will do our best to accommodate you; however, you may need to reschedule or change the mode of the appointment to phone or Google hangout.

Office hours are available face-to-face, virtually through Google hangouts through a phone appointment. When signing up for office hours, we will expect to see you in person, unless you also indicate an alternative mode along with your contact information. For telephone meetings, please add your telephone number to the sign-up sheet. For Google hangout meetings, please add your scarlet email address.

Email requests

When sending e-mail, the subject line (re:) in the email should always state “Methods + Section No.” This will help us respond to your inquiries more quickly. We promise to always respond within 24 hours, and usually much quicker. This will also help ensure that you receive a timely request and that we are all “on the same page.”
In order to guarantee a response, you should always plan to e-mail at least 24 hours before a deadline. Questions sent less than 24 hours before an assignment due date may not be answered.

**Course Learning Goals**

1) An understanding of the logic of scientific inquiry and how to measure concepts
2) An ability to develop a research hypothesis and a complementary research design
3) An awareness of different types of data collection and analyses – both qualitative and quantitative
4) An introduction to analyzing quantitative data to test your own ideas about relationships between concepts

**Public Health Learning Goals (832 Majors)**

*Students will:*

1) Think critically in public health
2) Effectively communicate public health information
3) Develop, apply, and analyze concepts from research methods and basic statistics
4) Develop a research question and write a coherent research paper
5) Understand and apply professional ethics

**Public Health Course Assessment (832 Majors)**

The following assignments will assess the course learning goals. All students will meet the same Course Grading Requirements.

1) **Think critically in public health**
   - Each student will complete weekly lab activities.

_Last edited 09/2/17_
2) Effectively communicate public health information
   - Students must complete group and individual writing assignments.
3) Develop, apply, and analyze concepts from research methods and basic statistics
   - Each student will complete three module assignments and learn SPSS.
4) Develop a research question and write a coherent research paper
   - Each student will write a final research paper.
5) Understand and apply professional ethics
   - Many of the weekly topics include complex ethical considerations which we will discuss in class and students will include in their writing assignments.
   - Students are also required to obtain CITI Human Subjects Certification.

Course Grading Requirements

Your grade will be based on:

45% - Module Assignments
   - Module 1 Exam: Lit review, measuring concepts and hypothesis formation (15%) - Due 10/7
   - Module 2 Exam: Survey design, question wording and methodology (15%) - Due 11/4
   - Module 3 Exam - Part 1: Design plan cross-sectional study (5%) - Due 11/11
   - Module 3 Exam - Part 2: Design plan cross-sectional study (5%) - Due 11/18
   - Module 3 Exam - Part 3: Design plan cross-sectional study (5%) - Due 11/27

20% - Final Paper: Running, interpreting and analyzing data (20%) - Due 12/15 @ Noon
   - Students will work in teams of 2 or 3 on the final paper
10% - Lab exercises (Due weekly - no extensions for late submissions.)
   - Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

25% - Quizzes (Due weekly - no extensions for late submissions.)
   - Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

**Gradebook**

Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A=90-100; B+=87-89; B=80-86; C+=77-79; C=70-76; D=60-69; F=59 and lower.

Students are responsible for managing their progress in the course. An Excel document will be provided for tracking your progress during Week 2 Lab.

Student progress will be provided twice during the semester. You may also schedule an appointment in office hours if you want a progress update. Due to FERPA regulations, we are not permitted to transmit or release grades via email.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity is vital to the mission of Rutgers, to education at Rutgers and membership in the Rutgers community. It is a core value that supports trust among students, and between students and teachers. It is also a shared value; administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it.
Academic dishonesty is not an individual act that affects only the students involved. It violates communal trust, impacts other members of the community, and is an offense against scholarship. For this reason, any instance of cheating or plagiarism will be dealt with harshly.

Honesty matters. As a shared value, administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it. See the Rutgers Academic Code and Academic Oath at:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/

Attendance and Cancellation of Classes

In accordance with Rutgers University regulations, attendance is expected at all regularly scheduled meetings of a course and individual courses may set policies for maximum absences. Please refer to the link below for more specific information:

http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/courses/registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class

Ground Rules

Collegial and respectful conduct is expected in class and all online posts and emails exchanges. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. To facilitate this process and your learning, we will adhere to some basic rules:

- All module assignments must be completed on time, typed in 12-point font, and submitted per the assignment instructions. Module assignments will be marked down a half letter grade per day. Final exams cannot be submitted later than one week after the due date; missed assignments will receive a “0.”
- Late submissions for quizzes, homework assignments and extra credit are **NOT** permitted as described under the course syllabus.
- All quizzes, homeworks and extra credit will be submitted through Sakai or Qualtrics – please pay attention to submission instructions each week.
- Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible.
- If you will be missing a lecture/lab because of a religious holiday or observation, please let one of us know during the first week of the semester.
- If any questions or concerns arise, please come see one of us! Office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus. If you cannot make office hours, please request an appointment as described under our **Communication Policy**.
- This syllabus may be subject to minor revisions - please note latest revision date that appears in the footer area.

**A Few Words to the Wise**

- Seek help early! Don’t wait till the last minute if you are having difficulties.
- Get missed notes from a classmate! We will not hold individual meetings to provide summaries or repeat class material.