USP 630: Research Design

Nohad A. Toulan School of Urban Studies & Planning
Portland State University
Fall 2019

Classroom & hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 - 11:50 am, Urban Center 220

Instructor
Liming Wang, Ph.D., Associate Professor   Email: lmwang@pdx.edu
Office: Urban Center 350D
Office hours: Mondays 4:00 - 5:00 pm, and by appointment

Credits: 4 graduate hours
(This course is a core course for Ph.D. in Urban Studies).

Recommended Prerequisite: USP 430

Course Website: This class uses D2L (https://d2l.pdx.edu/) in support of learning. You can log in with your Odin username and password.

Class Description and Objectives
Our ability to create better cities requires both an understanding of a pre-existing knowledge base and ongoing research to advance knowledge of urban processes and possibilities. As a graduate student in urban studies or public administration and policy, you must develop strong research skills. This is true whether your desired career requires interpreting and applying the research of others, or whether you choose to follow an academic path, in which advancing knowledge through research is a prime responsibility. Strong research skills are absolutely necessary for anyone hoping to have a successful academic career. They are also an essential foundation for being an effective public administrator or urban planner. Even an individual pursuing a career of advocacy for specific programs and policies will be far more effective if s/he develops strong research skills.

This course serves as an introduction to interdisciplinary research relevant to urban studies + planning and to public administration + policy. Both fields are very broad, with vast relevant literatures and research traditions that focus on everything from micro-social processes to global scale systems. However, as an introduction we will, hopefully, be able to lay a foundation for your more intensive study of particular literatures and methodologies later in your training.

• Assist students in developing skills in research design. Cultivate a research attitude.
• Introduce students to a range of research approaches.
• Help students develop skills in critical evaluation of research design and execution—and in particular, to see “qualitative” and “quantitative” approaches as complementary rather than competing research strategies.
• Develop an understanding of the relationship between theory and research methodologies.
• Expose students to research design issues encountered by real-world researchers.
• Provide students direction for developing expertise with approaches and methods appropriate to their particular areas of specialization. Developing expertise requires taking further methodology courses.

Text Books
No text book is required for this class. Reading materials come from two sources: some will be provided by the instructor; most will come from literature search conducted by the students.

COURSE WORK

Class participation (generally) 5%
Active discussion: You are expected to attend all class sessions and actively contribute to discussions.

Building class library: By 10/11 submit paper/link 5%
Throughout the course, we will analyze published empirical papers to illustrate elements of research design and methods. The class library has been started with a few exemplars that are the annual “best paper” awardees from the Journal of Urban Affairs and the Journal of Planning Education and Research. You will complete the library by meeting with your advisor and getting recommendations of at least 2 additional research pieces. These must be empirical research papers—not only theory, formal models, or literature reviews—but papers with empirical findings. These need to be article or book chapter length pieces—not books.

IRB certification: Complete by class time on Nov. 13 (week 7) 10%
University Institutional Review Boards (the IRB) provide oversight for investigators whose research designs and methods include human subjects. PSU’s Human Subjects Research and Responsible Conduct of Research trainings are online courses via CITI tutorials. This certification is a required component of compliance with basic research ethics. Use the following link to access the training materials:
https://www.citiprogram.org/index.cfm?pageID=154&icat=0&ac=0&region=1

Lab participation and write-ups 30%
We use lab time to discuss particular research design issues using research exemplars from our class library. Articles from the JUA and JPER award winners are suggested; you may also use papers gathered for the class library.

Participation: All students are expected to complete the work for each session marked lab. Come to class fully prepared to discuss the topic in your chosen research exemplar.

Write-ups: The lab write-ups are 2-3 pages covering the lab questions, plus the Text Structure Analysis form. Turn in on the day of the lab session.
1. A convincing explanation (wk 1)
2. “Interesting” research questions and method (wk 2)
3. Linking to literature (wk 3)
4. Systematic literature review (wk 4)
5. “Gold standard” evaluation (wk 5)
6. Constructs and measurement (wk 6)
7. Research ethics (wk 7)
8. Case study and comparison (wk 8)

Research journals
This course does not require you to write a proposal—you’re expected to do that later in USP 697 Urban Studies Seminar. Your research journal is a beginning step towards defining your research interests and the research designs and methods you’ll need to focus on. I strongly encourage you to journal beyond these required components of the course. Write down your ideas as you read, as you listen to job talks and conference panels, and as you observe urban life!

Research Design issues paper
Identify an important research design issue in your field/topic and research agenda and write a short (10 pages) paper discussing the issue. This issue could be one that is already on our syllabus, one gestured towards but not fully explored, or an issue that we’re not covering. Depending on how far you’ve developed your research ideas, this paper could be much focused or still quite general. We’ll discuss this more after you turn in Journal 1.

Key dates:
10/14 Journal 1: Your research question/methods ideas
12/2 & 12/4 In class presentations of your papers
12/6 Final paper due

Grading
Course grades will be assigned on a criterion-reference scale as follows:
A: 90%-100%  B: 80%-89%  C: 70%-79%  D: 60%-69%  F: <60%
In case that a grade is on the borderline, classroom participation will be used to determine the final grade.

CALENDER AND READINGS (Subject to Change)

Class periods will be devoted to lecture and using the computer to get output. The lecture material will follow its own course, predominantly in PowerPoint presentations, which will draw upon required materials from the text and supplemental readings. Please note that this schedule should be considered tentative. I will make modifications as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Wed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(9/30) Introduction to the course/each other Luker, Ch. 1-4 Babbie, Ch. 1-2 (Ragin, Ch. 1)</td>
<td>(10/2) What is social research? Elements of design Przeworski, Art of Writing Proposals [LAB 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(10/7) Research questions and hypotheses</td>
<td>Booth, Craft of Research, Davis, That’s Interesting (Luker 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(10/14) From questions to method</td>
<td>Creswell, Framework Berkeley, Nuts &amp; Bolts section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(10/21) Systematic literature reviews</td>
<td>Xiao and Watson, Systematic literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(10/28) Validities, causations</td>
<td>Babbie 3-4, Cook and Campbell C+C cheat sheet, Markuson, Fuzzy concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(10/31) Constructs and measurement</td>
<td>Paxton, social capital paper de Fillippis, social capital paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(11/11) Holiday No Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(11/18) Thick, extended, comparative</td>
<td>Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures Buroway, Extended case method Druckman, Comparative Case Study Approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(11/20) Phronetic social science</td>
<td>Flyvbjerg, Phronetic planning research Flyvbjerg, Bringing power to planning research Landman, Phronesis and narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(11/25) Qualitative inquiry</td>
<td>Creswell, 5 traditions Thomas, Typology for the Case Study Flyvbjerg, 5 Misunderstandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(11/30) Phronetic social science</td>
<td>Flyvbjerg, Phronetic planning research Flyvbjerg, Bringing power to planning research Landman, Phronesis and narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 | (11/25) Participatory Action Research
Cahill, Ethics of PAR
Lake and Ziccer, Who Says?
Research principles of some PAR projects
(links) + short video
| (11/27) Surveys + Secondary data
Freese, “Secondary analysis of large social surveys”
| [JOURNAL 5]

10 | (12/2) Presentation of research design issue
| (12/4) Presentation of research design issue
| Final paper due on Friday, 12/6

All LABS are due on Friday of the week at 10:00 am.
All JOURNALS are due before class (by 10:00 am) on the day of class as stated on the course calendar.

Labs
Use Text Structure Analysis (below) to help you with the analysis

1. A convincing explanation
Choose one article from the class library that you believe provides a convincing explanation of a research problem. What question did the author(s) pose? What alternative explanations were considered? What method was employed, and why in your opinion is the proposed explanation convincing?

2. “Interesting” research questions and method
Choose a different article from the class library. What is the topic, research question, and research problems? (Booth) State the hypothesis/findings in one of the “interesting” formulations (M. Davis). How do the authors describe the significance of their findings? How do they link the findings to a larger “interesting” problem? What appeals to you about the way the author(s) build their “martini glass”?

3. Linking to literature
Choose an article from the class library and analyze how effective and persuasive the author(s) are/were in situating the research question within the literature in the field. How did they define gaps in the literature and locate their question in relation to the field? And how is the proposed method for answering the question related? What appeals to you about the way the research links to the literature?

4. Literature review protocol
Construct a literature review protocol for conducting systematic review of literature in your area of research. Use the attached template.

5. Gold standard
Choose an article that evaluates a policy or program—i.e. has a specific ‘treatment’ and ‘effects.’ How do the authors describe the strengths and weaknesses of their research design with respect to how we know if a
policy or program is effective? How does the research design address threats to validity (that you can identify)? What do you find convincing in the evidence and what not so much?

6. Constructs and measurement
Briefly state the problem, question, and hypothesis of the research paper. What concepts are present? How are these constructed and measured? Evaluate the construct validity of the operationalization of these concepts. Does the author provide sufficient evidence of construct validity and reliability?

7. Ethics
Choose an article that includes human subjects. What does the author acknowledge, either explicitly or implicitly, about the ethical considerations of working with human subjects? What can you infer are potential ethical issues in this particular research—even ones the author may not recognize?

8. Case and comparison
Choose an article that uses a case or comparative case study design. Discuss this article in light of the various case study typologies. How does this author generalize—or not? What appeals to you in this research?

Research journals and research issues paper

You will write research journals throughout the quarter and turn the materials into a research issues paper that will be presented in Week 10.

1. Your research question and methods ideas (Wk 3)
Start funneling down from issue to topic to research questions. What questions are you interested in exploring in your PhD and beyond? What approaches to research do you think you’ll need to gain expertise in to answer these questions? (you’ll revisit this toward the end of the term)

2. Literature from your field (Wk 6)
Using the literature your advisor recommended, plus additional articles (at least two) that you find yourself, conduct a literature review and report on how your field defines research and methods. What questions arise as you read these papers—what gaps in the literature or “next steps” do you see as viable and interesting?

3. Your construct and measurement (Wk 7)
In your own field, what is one concept that is important to construct and measure with validity? Describe, discuss, and define how measurement could be operationalized.

4. Your issues in research ethics (Wk 8)
In your own work, do you expect to engage human subjects? What ethical issues—broadly defined—do you anticipate facing and how do you imagine addressing them?

5. Your research question and methods redux (Wk 9)
Revisit your ideas on questions, design, and methods. What new thoughts do you have?

6. Research issues paper (Wk 10) 10 pp-double spaced
Use this paper to explore and address a research design issue relevant to your interests and future work. How are researchers, especially those in urban and public affairs, addressing the challenges of researching in the real world?
RESOURCES

Text Structure Analysis (TSA)
Know the language of the tribe © Dannelle D. Stevens

Compare the articles for the following text structures. See how you can shape your work to match the patterns in these structures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text structure &amp; possible descriptors of structure</th>
<th>Bibliographic information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-word brief of gist of article Not sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: friendly, formal, long, colon, tone, inviting, academic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract- length, content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References- number, age, type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subheads in article- number, type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of pages:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages or paragraphs devoted to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction, lit. review, method, results, discussion, other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of figures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over all tone of article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person, 3rd person (detached)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purpose of research where stated

Research questions, clear?

Other noteworthy items

**Literature Review Protocol Template**

**Review title:**

**Reviewers:**

Name
Name

**Review question/objective:**

**Inclusion criteria**

- Qualitative vs. quantitative
- Peer-reviewed vs. grey literature
- Language
- Date
- Geographic area

**Search strategy**

- The databases to be searched include:
- The search for unpublished studies will include: ☐ Initial keywords to be used will be:

**Assessment of methodological quality**

- Number of independent reviewers:
- Quality assessment of qualitative papers:
- Quality assessment of quantitative papers:

**Data collection**

- Strategies/software for extracting qualitative data:
- Strategies/software for extracting quantitative data:

**Data synthesis**

- Strategies for synthesizing qualitative data:
- Strategies for synthesizing quantitative data:

**References**

This literature review protocol is adapted from the one by Christina M. Godfrey and Margaret B. Harrison at Joanna Briggs Institute.
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance
Students are expected to attend every class. To be excused the student must notify his or her instructor in writing (acknowledged e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident, or emergency) the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. Students must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence that is satisfactory to the instructor, within one week of the last date of the absence. The instructor will either provide the student an opportunity to make up any graded activities or provide a satisfactory alternative to be completed within 30 calendar days from the last day of the absence.

Classroom participation
Students are encouraged to come to class prepared, make thoughtful contributions to class discussions, respect others’ views, and help each other out in collaborative learning groups.

Assignment guidelines
Students are encouraged to have study groups and help each other with the assignment. However, the work submitted must be individual work. Plagiarism will be prosecuted.

Late Submission Policy
All assignments must be submitted by the end of the class session on the due date. In fairness to all students, especially those who work hard to meet deadlines, late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. Assignments and project report more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

Expected Time Commitment
The assignments, readings, and exercises will require an average of two hours per day outside class sessions.

Academic Integrity Statement
PSU’s Student Code of conduct prohibits “All forms of academic dishonesty, cheating, and fraud, including but not limited to: (a) plagiarism, which includes, but is not limited to, word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer's ideas; (b) The buying and selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (c) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (d) Unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information; and (e) Falsification of research data.”

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities
PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.
If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, https://www.pdx.edu/drc.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.

Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.

For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage (https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) for information.

**Title IX Reporting Obligations**
As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that federal, state, and PSU policies require faculty members to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. Similarly, PSU faculty are required to file a report if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child with whom they come into contact has suffered abuse, or that any person with whom they come into contact has abused a child. If you would rather share information about these experiences with an employee who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact one of the following campus resources (or visit this link):

The C.A.R.E. Team, hosted by the Dean of Student Life, is available to consult with you regarding any issues of students in distress, including sexual misconduct. For more information about the C.A.R.E. Team, visit the C.A.R.E. Team website or call 503-725-4422 to contact the C.A.R.E. Team Coordinator.

The Office of Equity & Compliance is responsible for monitoring Portland State University’s Title IX compliance.

You may make a report to PSU’s Title IX Coordinator, Julie Caron by contacting her at jucaron@pdx.edu or 503-725-4410. PSU’s Deputy Coordinator is Lisa Miller. Lisa can be contacted at lkm4@pdx.edu.

For more information about the applicable regulations please complete the required student module **Creating a Safe Campus** in your D2L.