

Problems in Research Methodology

Political Science 5335

Patricia M. Shields

[Vita](#)

Course Description

This course is designed to prepare students to successfully complete their Applied Research Project. This course emphasizes qualitative and conceptual aspects of research methods. It focuses on building and applying a few fundamental research and conceptual skills students often lack when they begin their Applied Research Project. For example, students are introduced to useful electronic databases. Students also learn how to organize their time materials and ideas (build a conceptual framework). Finally, students use the skills learned in class to develop their Applied Research Project prospectus.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 8:00-11:00 and 1:00-6:30
Tuesday, after class 9:15-10:15

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Students with special needs (as documented by the Office of Disability Services) should identify themselves at the beginning of the term. Texas State is dedicated to providing these students with necessary academic adjustments and auxiliary services to facilitate their participation and performance in the classroom. Students with special need should contact the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester.

Attendance policy: Student attendance is assessed through the class participation section of the course (see criteria below). Students can miss one class with no penalty. Students can make up missed classes by handing in written responses to study questions that appear below. Otherwise, students will receive an "F" for class participation for each day they miss.

Course Objectives:

1. At the end of the semester, the student will demonstrate significant analytical and evaluation skills by completing a structural analysis of three scholarly journal articles.
2. At the end of the semester, the student will demonstrate significant conceptual and analytic research skills through the successful completion of a review of the literature.
3. At the end of the semester, the student will understand the nature of qualitative research methods as applied to public administration.
4. At the end of the semester, the student will understand how conceptual foundations form the basis for all sound social science research.

5. At the end of the semester, the student will demonstrate an understanding of the connection between the research question, a theoretical framework and the research methodology through the oral presentation of a research prospectus.
6. At the end of the semester, the student will be better prepared to complete their Applied Research Project.
7. At the end of the semester, the student will demonstrate knowledge of the Author-Date referencing system found in Chicago Manual of Style 15th edition. See [\[http://www.williams.edu/library/citing/styles/chicago2.php\]](http://www.williams.edu/library/citing/styles/chicago2.php). The prospectus and literature review use this system of referencing.

MPA Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Mechanisms

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Assessment Method: Structural Analysis and Literature Review.

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate comprehension of public policy and program formation as well as the institutional and legal framework of public policy and management.

Assessment Method: Literature Review and Prospectus.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively orally.

Assessment Method: Class discussion and presentation of the prospectus.

Outcome 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to see patterns and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration.

Assessment Method: Prospectus and Literature Review.

Outcome 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management.

Assessment Method: Prospectus and Literature Review.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Paper (Literature Review) 30%
2. Background documentation (end of semester) 10%
3. Background documentation (mid semester check) 5%
3. Presentation (ARP Prospectus) 10%
4. Structural analysis of an article (3) (10 points each) 30%
5. [Class participation](#) 15%

Note: The paper, background documentation for the paper, and the presentation are all over the same topic. Thus, the paper topic constitutes 55% of your grade and, ideally, the paper will be a first draft of the literature review chapter of your Applied Research Project.

The presentation is an oral presentation of the research prospectus. Ideally, it represents an oral outline (with feedback) of the prospectus you must hand in prior to registering for the Applied Research Project.

Required Texts:

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth, (This book is to be used as a reference. You may use any edition. The chapters referenced in the assignment section of the course outline refer to the 9th edition.)

Morgan, David L. *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. (2nd edition) Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1997.

Shields, Patricia M. [*Step-by-Step: Building a Research Paper*](#), (3rd edition) Stillwater OK: New Forums Press, 2006.

Strunk, Jr., William and White, E.B. *The Elements of Style*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Latest.

Yin, Robert. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 3rd edition. Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications, 2002.

[Additional Useful References](#)

Course Outline

Date/Week	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Sept. 1 Week 1	Introduction	Review
	Check out web sites with Texas State Applied Research Projects .	Applied Research Projects.
	Getting Organized: Introduction to Step-by-Step	Chicago Manual of Style 15th edition
	Use the library	Human Subjects Protection
Sept. 8 Week 2	Thinking about Research and Science	Readings:
	The Cycle of Research: From Topic to finished product	1. Shields, Patricia. " Pragmatism as a Philosophy of Science. "
	Purpose of Research	2. Shields, Patricia. " A Pragmatic Teaching Philosophy. "
	Linking concepts/theory and purpose	3. Skim Babbie Chs. 2, 3, 4 & 5
	Conceptual Framework	4. Shields Step by Step – read all
	What is a Hypothesis?	5. Shields and Tajalli " Missing Link "
Short Writing Exercise	Study Questions " Pragmatism "	
Cycle of Research	WORK ON NOTEBOOK	
Sept.15 Week 3	What is an Applied Research Project?	Review three Applied Research Projects (ARP)
	Panel Discussion : Connecting 5335 and 5397	Study Questions ARP Each student will be assigned 3 ARPs to review from ARP website. Reading: Shields:, Patricia. " The Community of Inquiry: Classical Pragmatism and Public Administration. " <i>Administration and Society</i> (Nov. 2003) Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 510-538. [Library Database] Study Questions
		Work on Notebook

Sept. 22
Week 4

Finding Conceptual Frameworks:
Linking theory and methods

[Short writing exercise](#)

Readings:

1. Mendoza, Richard. 2007. "Explaining the Affects of Public Participation and the State of the Local Economy on Municipal Bond Elections." Texas State Applied Research Project
(<http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/256/>)

2. Ben-Dor, Gabriel; Pendahzur, Ami; Hasisi, Badi. 2002. [Israel's national security doctrine under strain: the crisis of the reserve army](#). *Armed Forces & Society*, 28 (2): 233-255.

3. [Study Questions-Conceptual Framework \(html version\)](#)

Work on Notebook

Sept. 29
Week 5

Identifying the Research Question

[Short writing exercise](#)

Assignments

Come to class with two alternative research questions written up. Be prepared to present your questions to the class. (The questions will NOT be graded. The quality and thoughtfulness of your discussion will be.) If class is missed - submit two research questions to Dr. Shields. Schedule an appointment to discuss possible ARP research questions.

WORK ON NOTEBOOK

[1st Structural analysis](#)

Oct. 6
Week 6

Moving from Theory to Methodology

- 1) Operationalization
- 2) Unit of analysis/Levels of Measurement
- 3) Sampling
- 4) Operationalizing

Conceptual Frameworks

- 5) Experimental design
Dealing with Bias and
- 6) Error: Validity and Reliability

Find definitions for the [terms](#) found in the course packet. Be prepared to discuss. [Review Methodology Chapters of Assigned ARPs]

Babbie Chs 6, 8, & 9

WORK ON NOTEBOOK

Read Shields: "[Theory: The Missing Link in Successful Student Scholarship](#)"

Note: Make appointment with Dr. Shields for next weeks notebook check. Appointments can be any time Oct.6. Notebook checks take about 10 minutes. 5% of your grade.

Oct. 13
Week 7

Introduction to Case Study Research

Notebook check Before and after class.
Schedule meetings in my office.

[Short writing exercise](#)

NOTEBOOK CHECKBRING
YOUR NOTEBOOK TO CLASS. IT WILL
BE EXAMINED AND REVIEWED BY THE
INSTRUCTOR DURING THE BREAK,
BEFORE AND AFTER CLASS. THERE
MUST BE EXTENSIVE NOTES ON 10
ARTICLES OR BOOK CHAPTERS. THIS
IS WORTH 5% OF YOUR GRADE

Readings: Yin

[Study questions Yin](#)

Work on Notebook

Oct. 20
Week 8

Using Data Bases

Work on Notebook

Oct. 27
Week 9

Library and Reference Tools

Work on Notebook

Nov. 3
Week 10

Focus Groups
Index and scales

Readings: Morgan
Babbie Ch. 7

[Study questions Morgan](#)

[Short writing exercise](#)

[Second Structural Analysis Due](#)

Work on Notebook

Nov. 10
Week 11

Putting it all together Conceptual
Framework and Purpose Statement

Classes meet Separately

ARP research purpose Statement and
Conceptual Framework Table complete.
Bring a handout for every member of class. In
the handout, include a formal statement of the
research purpose at the top of the page. Build
the conceptual framework table and link the
categories or hypotheses (working on formal)
to the literature. Be prepared to explain
conceptual framework to the class. Explain
why it connects to the research purpose.

Nov. 17
Week 12

What is a Prospectus/Proposal?
Outlining

[IRB Training](#)

Readings: Outlining tab in Step-by-Step
[Prospectus Guidelines](#) and research deadlines
[Sample Prospectus Section](#)

Babbie Ch. 8 Skim Chs. 9&11
Reread Shields: "[Theory: The Missing Link
in Successful Student Scholarship](#)"

Study Questions to be assigned

Review Shields [POSI 5397](#) web page

WORK ON NOTEBOOK OR RESEARCH
PAPER

Nov. 24	Prospectus	Download evaluation form Bring form to class - download acrobat reader to be able to print this form Presentations Bring form to class
Dec. 1 Week 13	Prospectus	Download evaluation form Bring form to class - download acrobat reader to be able to print this form Presentations Bring form to class Literature review assessment criteria
Dec. 8 Week 14	Prospectus	Presentations Bring form to class Third Structural Analysis due
Dec. 16 FINAL PERIOD	Prospectus	Presentations Bring form to class

<http://uweb.txstate.edu/~ps07/sy35fa99.htm> Supervised by Dr. Patricia M. Shields
7/29/2009

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