MLS 5303: Applied Research Methods
Course Syllabus

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Contacting Me:

You are welcome to e-mail, text, or call me with any questions or comments about the course. I will always try to return any e-mails within 24 hours. But Please Note: I am mostly unavailable Monday-Friday between 6:30am and 5:30pm because I do not have access to my UTEP e-mail account while I am at work. If you have an urgent issue during these times, please text me, and I will respond as soon as I can.

Course Description:

During our short, three weeks together, we will focus on the “research loop” and the basic steps in the social science research process: developing research questions, determining research design, collecting data, and analyzing data.

Expected Outcomes:

This course is intended to an overview of several key components of the research process. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1) Understand the scientific process and the steps of the research loop.
2) Use and understand the key terms associated with the steps of the research loop.
3) State a research question and develop specific hypotheses.
4) Define the variables associated with the research hypothesis.
5) Conduct a literature search to embed a research question in what has already been done.
6) Identify appropriate methods to analyze a research question:
   • Measurement of Variables
   • Research Design
   • Sampling
   • Data Collection
7) Present a research idea and “mini” design proposal in writing.
8) Identify methodological weaknesses in other research (i.e., identify statistical lies).
9) Communicate and cooperate with colleagues regarding research issues.
Required Textbooks:


http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbook/3

*Note:* This is a free e-book. The pdf is also posted on Blackboard.


*Note:* Both the paper copy and e-book are available through places like Amazon, or a free pdf version is available at https://archive.org

Mode of Delivery:

This course is 100% online. Although it is self-paced in that you are able to complete the readings and lectures at your convenience, I expect that you will complete the lectures and readings within a specific timeline in order to meet the specific due dates given for the major course assignments.

I’ve broken the course down into 3 units. Each unit is expected to take about 1 week and ends with a specific assignment due on a specific date (the last date in that unit). I assigned readings and material for 4 of the days for each unit. It’s up to you to decide what day of the week you will complete the assigned readings and activities. For example, maybe you’ll choose to complete Day 1 on Monday, Day 2 on Tuesday, Day 3 on Thursday, and Day 4 on Saturday. That’s the type of schedule I had in mind when I designed the course. But maybe you’ll cram it all in on Saturday. Although I strongly discourage you from trying the “cram it all in one day” technique, the choice is yours. You just need to make sure all assignments for each unit are completed by the close of that unit (Sunday night at 11:59pm at the end of each week).

In Case of Technical Difficulties / What to Do If Blackboard is Down

Let me know if you run into any technical difficulties, and I’ll do my best to help.

I hope that we won’t run into any major technical difficulties, but I have had the online platform go down for a couple days before during one of my courses. If this should happen, I will give extensions for assignments. If you cannot get something to upload, you can e-mail it to me directly. If you need access to course materials, I can e-mail you copies. Please notify me by e-mail or text if you run into any issues. Technical difficulties are just part of online courses, and we’ll work through them together.
Assignments:

Please note – assignments are due at 11:59pm (Mountain Time) on the day/date specified.

There are three types of assignments you’ll complete as part of this course.

Discussion Board Posts: You will be asked to complete 4 discussion board posts. I encourage you to post regularly and to interact with one another through this course component. You may pose new questions or topics, respond to others’ posts, or ask me questions directly through the discussion boards. Discussion board posts must be completed by the last day of each unit (although I encourage you to post earlier in the unit so that we can get a true discussion going).

Quizzes: There are 3 required quizzes, on due at the last day of each unit. The quizzes are intended to help you check your understanding on key lecture topics. You can use your notes and your book to help you complete the quizzes.

Exercises: There are 3 required exercises, one due at the last day of each unit. The exercises build upon each other to help you practice some of the most important aspects of preparing and writing a research proposal. More information on each exercise will be provided on Blackboard.

Assessment:

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Note: You have the option to complete two extra journal assignments, each worth 2.5 bonus points. Journal assignments are only seen by the instructor, and no class members will know whether you choose to take advantage of these opportunities for bonus points.

ADA Statement:

UTEP seeks to maintain an inclusive environment. If you have a disability or suspect that you may have a disability and would like reasonable accommodation, please 1) let me know at the beginning of the course and 2) contact the UTEP Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO) at 915-747-5148.