University of Oregon
Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management

PPPM 657: Research Methods in Public Policy and Management
Winter 2016 (CRN 25122)

Professor Nicole Ngo
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Email: ngo@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: M/W 11:30am to 12:30pm or by appointment

Course Description
This course is a survey of research methods used in public policy and management and builds upon Quantitative Methods. The course provides an overview of frequently applied quantitative methods, their role in the research process, and discussion of several research studies in which they have been implemented. At the end of the course, students should be able to:

• Critically read and apply research findings
  o Extract relevant and valid inferences
  o Identify tenuous and invalid conclusions

• Design and commission research for specific objectives
  o Describe a variety of methods and data types
  o Assess the likely truths that can or cannot be learned from selected methods
  o Determine the appropriate methodology for a given research question
  o Shape research to meet practical objectives

• Plan and perform applied research at a basic starting level
  o Locate and evaluate previous research
  o Design research in an ethical manner that protects human subjects
  o Conduct basic research using quantitative and qualitative methods
  o Avoid major pitfalls in data collection and research execution
  o Describe limitations of any proposed or completed study
Course Prerequisite
This course builds upon PPPM 656 Quantitative Methods in Planning and Public Policy. Students are required to have passed PPPM 656 prior to enrolling in PPPM 657 Research Methods in Public Policy and Management. This course is part of the MPA core curriculum and is limited to students who have been admitted to the MPA program. Other students may enroll with permission of the instructor.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course students will:
1. Prepare a professionally written, concise research report on a given topic of interest (including proper citations, grammar, appropriate consideration of the audience, etc.), including construction of a clear, logical thesis supported with proper evidence.
2. Constructively critique other peers’ works.
3. Conduct a professional oral presentation of their research report (e.g., clear explanation of content, eye contact, speed of speech, etc.).
4. Feel comfortable doing group work.
5. Understand and compare different statistical methods and their limitations.
6. Feel comfortable using and analyzing data.
7. Be competent in using statistical software, particularly Stata.

Course Website
The course website is located on the University of Oregon’s Canvas system. The class syllabus, announcements and other materials will be posted on the Canvas site. Please check the course website frequently for updates. In addition, make sure that the University registrar has your correct email address. I will use this email address AND Canvas to communicate with you.

Required Reading

In addition to the textbook above, students are to read assigned reports or scientific articles which will be discussed in class. Students are expected to come prepared to class having read them.

Assignments and Course Grades
The course grade will be based on the following components:
1. Draft of research proposal: 2%
   You will produce a research proposal throughout the quarter that includes the following elements:
   a) A well-thought out research question/objective (0.5%)
   b) A literature review (0.5%)
   c) Data (0.5%)
   d) Methods (0.5%)
   You will first submit drafts of these sections throughout the quarter and I will offer feedback and comments primarily on the content of the work. Although these are drafts, I expect students to turn in high-quality work with few grammatical errors. These sections will be discussed at greater length in class. The purpose of the research proposal is to help you think critically about an argument and credibly support it using the tools and resources learned in class. The research proposal could also take the form of a grant proposal or a consultation report. Students will meet with me first to discuss their research question. This is also an opportunity to improve your
writing, so I strongly suggest utilizing the PPPM writing coach, Terri Monroe, and reviewing the rubric and explanation of grading system at the end of the syllabus to understand my expectations of students. These assignments will be marked on the syllabus as “**DRP**

2. **Final research proposal:** 28% (Due the last day of class during Week 10)
   a) In-class 8-10 minute final presentation (3%). The last 2 weeks of class, students will present their final work to the class.
   b) Final written research proposal (25%). You will submit a final draft for your research proposal, which will also include (in addition to parts a)-d) listed above) an introduction, and if possible, preliminary results, to the research proposal

3. **Peer review:** 10% (2 page maximum double-spaced) (due Monday, March 7)
   Students will evaluate another student’s research proposal. The purpose is to offer constructive comments/critiques to your peers. This includes 1) a brief summary of the paper and 2) comments on individual sections of the paper that you liked or could be improved and suggestions on improving the paper. When possible offer potential solutions to some of the critiques you note. In addition to the grading rubric used to assess an writing assignment in this course (at the end of the syllabus), including grammar, avoiding colloquial language, etc., evaluation of this assignment will also be based on how well you understand the individual’s research objective, organization of the assessment, and how well thought-out and constructive critiques/solutions are. I posted example questions you could ask yourself as guidelines for writing your peer assessment on Canvas. An important tip: Do not write the peer review like you would to your peer, but as an assessment to a third party (e.g., me).

4. **Paper discussion:** 10%
   On Wednesday of weeks 3, 6, 7, and 8 and Monday of Week 4, students will get in groups of 3 or 4 and lead a discussion on a peer-reviewed scientific article discussed in the news recently pertaining to a certain theme in the last 30-40 minutes of class. Students will have the opportunity to sign up Wednesday of Week 1 and we will go through an example Wednesday of week 2. Themes include healthcare/public health policy, environmental policy, education policy, economic policy, social welfare policy, and international development. If the article you choose overlaps themes, that is acceptable. It is the group’s responsibility to post onto Canvas under the appropriate week in the “Discussion” link 1) a link to the news article and 2) A pdf of the scientific article being referenced (typically there is a link in the news article) 1 week before their discussions (e.g., if you present February 15, you must post this information onto Canvas by midnight of February 8). I strongly suggest using articles from fivethirtyeight.com, though articles from other reputable news outlets (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic) are appropriate. Articles chosen must incorporate a statistical method covered in Quantitative methods or Research methods (e.g., multiple regression, descriptive statistics, t-test, etc.). However, methods from scientific journal articles can also include qualitative, in addition to quantitative, methods. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of your news article, please contact me in advance.

   A rubric for assessment of each part is posted on Canvas.
   Part 1 (15-20 minutes): Presentation and analysis of paper
   1) Clear, concise explanation of the objective of the paper, methods, data and results, as well as its implications for policy. You can use a powerpoint or discuss it in a roundtable.
2) Well-thought out critique of both the scientific journal article (you can focus on specific sections of the scientific journal article if you want) and brief comments on the newspaper article (e.g., was there bias in the newspaper article? Did it interpret results correctly? How did the newspaper article “talk about numbers”?) Critiques don’t necessarily have to be all negative, but could suggest areas of future work or perhaps aspects you consider more interesting to focus on.

Part 2 (10-20 minutes): Leading class discussion

3) After completing Part 1, the group will lead the rest of the class in a constructive discussion about the article. I suggest you bring prepared discussion questions to address the class (e.g., What are the policy implications? Are the results meaningful? Do they agree with your critique? Why or why not? Next steps? Did they think the newspaper article accurately represented the scientific journal study, etc.).

5. Midterm (20%) and Final Exam (30%)
You will have an in-class Midterm and Final Exam that reviews the topics we discussed in class. Please note that although I will post handouts after class on Canvas, anything said in lecture (and not in the handouts) could be on the exam (i.e., I expect students to attend and actively participate in class).

Classroom Environment
In order to create a classroom in which students are comfortable expressing their opinions and perspectives, I ask that students please approach the readings and others’ contributions with both an open mind and a willingness to question one’s own assumptions and biases.

Professional Practice
This course is a core course in the PPPM undergraduate pre-professional degree program. As such, students are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times.

• Students should treat each other and the instructor with the professional courtesy and respect expected in a workplace.
• All communications relating to this course and all work turned in for this course should reflect professional standards in tone, presentation, formatting, and spelling.
• The classroom is a place of focused learning. This requires that students arrive on time, stay until the end of the class period, do not disrupt the class by leaving the room temporarily, and refrain from non-learning activities. Students who fail to adhere to these guidelines will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class session.
• I expect all course assignments to be completed using a word processor.
• Some assignments will require use of a spreadsheet program for data analysis and graphing. Some familiarity with a spreadsheet program (e.g. Excel) and statistical software, specifically Stata. This class will build upon Quantitative Methods, and in week 1 we will review some of the concepts you learned previously.
• You will also be required to use PowerPoint for a presentation at the end of the term on your final project.

Course Workload
A general rule of thumb for the expected workload for a graduate level class is approximately 3-4 hours/week per credit hour. Thus, a four credit course will require approximately 12-16 hours of effort per week. Our class meets for three hours each week, so students should expect to spend an additional 9 to 13 hours per week studying for this course.
Writing Lab
This is a writing intensive course. If you struggle with writing, I strongly encourage you use PPPM’s writing coach, Kathi Jaworski (kjaworski@write-to-know.com or 541-953-4755). You will also have access to the services of the Writing Lab: The Writing Lab begins week two of the term and closes at 5:00 pm the Wednesday of finals week. Free tutors are available. Upper-division and graduate student tutors are available on a drop-in basis or by appoint. (You must come to the writing lab to schedule your appointment.) 9:00am – 5:00pm, Monday – Friday, 72 PLC (Prince Lucien Campbell).

Documented Disabilities
Students who have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should make arrangements to see the instructor as soon as possible. They should also request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying the disability.

Calculators
We will use calculators periodically throughout the term, so please make sure you always bring one to class. A basic calculator (not a fancy graphing calculator) is all that is needed for this course, but it will not be allowed for use during exams.

Email
I will try to respond to all email within 48 hours of receiving them. It is, however, becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the quantity of email that I receive, so I ask that you make sure that you have reviewed Blackboard and the syllabus prior to sending a note about course logistics.

Late Assignment Policy
If you are unable to make it to class on the day an assignment is due, you may mail, email, or fax your assignment to me prior to the class time and date that assignment is due. Late assignments receive only partial credit. If an answer key is posted to the website, however, no late homework assignments are accepted (no credit).

Missed Class Policy
If you miss a class, please arrange to get class notes from a classmate. Instructor lecture notes are not available.

Incomplete Policy
Students are expected to behave in a professional manner and to turn in all materials at the designated time. In accordance with university regulations, an incomplete will only be given when “the quality of work is satisfactory but a minor yet essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor.”

Academic Misconduct
You are expected at all times to do your own work. Copying content from other students and submitting it as your own work is grounds for failing the class. The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor.

Plagiarism
Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at: www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

**Make up Exams: Final Exam**
Students must take the final exam to receive a grade in the course. The date and time for the final exam will not be changed to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Final exams will not be given early under any circumstances. A make up final exam will be scheduled for students who miss the regularly scheduled final exam due to serious illness or family emergency.

**Inclusion Statement**
The School of Architecture and Allied Arts is a community that values inclusion. We are committed to equal opportunities for all faculty, staff and students to develop individually, professionally, and academically regardless of ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic standing, cultural beliefs and traditions. We are dedicated to an environment that is inclusive and fosters awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity. If you feel excluded or threatened, please contact your instructor and/or department head. The University Bias Response Team is also a resource that can assist you. Find more information at their website at http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html or by phoning 541-346-2037.

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**Tentative Course Schedule**
Below is a tentative outline of the course sessions with assigned readings. Dates for some topics will inevitably change. Please rely on the class Canvas account for knowing what reading should be done for what class. It will be up to date. All the readings will be available for download on Canvas.

**Week #1**
**Monday (Jan. 4):** Introduction and foundations of research
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 1

**Wednesday (Jan. 6):** Review of quantitative methods
*Optional readings*
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 10
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapters 8 (start on p. 248) & 9 (p. 281-303)
- Optional reading: Berman & Wang (p. 17-42)

**Assignments and reminders**
- Read ****DRP Assignment 1: Research question/objective
- For next Wednesday’s paper discussion example, read the article: [Can government play Moneyball? In the Atlantic](http://example.com). Read an associated report from the article here—only read the Executive summary and Part 1 (pages 1-13) (Pdf also available on Canvas). *(Caveat: This news article is not about one specific scientific report, but I thought was more interesting with respect to using evidence based research to evaluate government policies and programs.)*
**Week #2**

**Monday (Jan. 11):** Theory, research questions, and literature review  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 2 (p. 25-38,49-53)  
  - Skip section on “Logic models”  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 17 (pg. 529-545)

*Guest lecture: Kathi Jaworski (PPPM Writing Tutor)*

**Wednesday (Jan. 13):** Research ethics- Guest Lecture from UO's Research Compliance Services, Kalindi Allen  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 16 (p. 517-525)

*In-class:* Example paper discussion

**Assignments and reminders**  
- **DRP Assignment 1** due Friday on Canvas (January 15) by 5:00 pm  
- The paper discussion for Week 4 will happen on *Monday, January 25* so the group presenting Week 4 should *post the paper by next Tuesday (January 19)*.

*Optional:* Human subjects certification  
- [Read UO's policies on research involving human subjects](#)  
- Follow the online instruction to register [here](#), then complete the training. I also posted a document by the UO which lists instructions on completing the training.  
- More information about Research Compliance Services is available here: [http://orcr.uoregon.edu/](http://orcr.uoregon.edu/)

**Week #3**

**Monday (Jan. 18):** Martin Luther King Holiday— *No class!*

**Wednesday (Jan. 20):** Measurement and sampling  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 4 (skip p. 121-123 and p. 131-133)  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 5 (skip p. 166-173)

*Paper discussion for Week 3: Social welfare policy*

**Assignment**  
- Read **DRP Assignment 2: Literature Review**  
- Next *Monday*, we will have our paper discussion, so come prepared having done the reading

**Week #4**

**Monday (Jan. 25):** Secondary and administrative data  
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 6

*Paper discussion for Week 4 today: Healthcare/public health policy*

**Assignments and reminders**  
- Midterm review items will be posted today after class on Canvas

PPPM 657 Course Syllabus 7
**Wednesday (Jan. 27):** Multivariate statistics and reproducibility in research
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 10 (skim pg. 313-322 (review); read pg. 323-333)
- Listen to the podcast “Brian Nosek on the Reproducibility Project” (about an hour long). There are also written highlights from the podcast students can read.

In-class: Discussion about the “Reproducibility Project,” where each student will be asked highlight one or two things that stood out to them from the podcast.

**Week #5**
**Monday (Feb. 1):** Causation and regression
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 11
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 13

Midterm review—come prepared with questions.

Assignments
- Read **DRP Assignment 3: Data** (due Wednesday of Week 6)

**Wednesday (Feb. 3):** Midterm

No paper discussion

**Week #6**
**Monday (Feb. 8):** Observational studies
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 12

Assignments and Reminders
- Read **DRP Assignment 4: Methods** (due Week 7 Wednesday, February 17)

**Wednesday (Feb. 10):** Natural and Quasi experiments
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 13 (p. 467-484)

Paper discussion for Week 6: Environmental policy

**Week #7**
**Monday (Feb. 15):** Qualitative methods-- *Guest lecture by Prof. Ren Thomas*
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 3

Assignments and Reminders
- **DRP Assignment 4 (Methods) due today at 5pm on Canvas**
- Peer assessment partners posted on Canvas. Please email your most updated research paper to your assigned partner by next Monday!

**Wednesday (Feb. 17):** Randomized experiments
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 14
Paper discussion for Week 7: International development

Week #8
Monday (Feb. 22): Information and resources available at UO- Guest lecture by Jonathan Cain, Government Information Librarian

Assignments and Reminders
- Bring your laptop to class next week—we will work in groups in-class using Microsoft Excel.

Wednesday (Feb. 24): Surveys and observation
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 7

In-class: Create a survey using survey monkey.

Paper discussion for Week 8: Education policy

Assignments and Reminders
- Peer assessments due next Monday, March 7 on Canvas. In addition, email your peer review to your partner (don’t need to email it to me). Look at the syllabus if you have questions.
- Bring your laptop to class next week—we will work in groups in-class using Microsoft Excel.

Week #9
Monday (Feb. 29): Presenting research and data
- Remler & Van Ryzin: Chapter 17 (pg. 545-551)
  Optional

In-class: Present results using Microsoft Excel.

Wednesday (March 2): Student presentations, Part 1

Week #10
Monday (March 7): Student presentations, Part 2

Assignments and Reminders
- Peer assessments due today on Canvas at 5pm.

Wednesday (March 9): Final Review

Final research proposal due on Canvas!

- FINAL EXAM (in-class): Wednesday, March 16 at 2:45pm.

PPPM 657 Course Syllabus
**Grading Rubric Example (will vary by specific assignment)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Unacceptable professional quality</th>
<th>Minimally acceptable professional quality</th>
<th>Adequate professional quality</th>
<th>Very good professional quality</th>
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<td>Addressing each portion of assignment</td>
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<td>Providing adequate justification</td>
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<td>• Use of literature to present issues and arguments</td>
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<td>• Development of a coherent argument or reasoned position</td>
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<td>• Exhibition of higher-level thinking, synthesis and argumentation</td>
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<td>Writing (see below)</td>
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<td>• Grammar, referencing &amp; presentation</td>
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<td>• Clear sequence of sections: logical order for writing task</td>
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<td>• Clear structure to sections</td>
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<td>• Uses subheadings effectively—reader can easily find key information</td>
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<td>• Uses paragraphs to support structure</td>
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<td>• Clear topic sentences</td>
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<td>• Links between paragraphs</td>
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<td>• Links within sections</td>
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<td><strong>Professional approach:</strong> <em>May not apply for each assignment.</em></td>
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<td>• Objective paper avoids bias and prejudice</td>
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- Assertions supported by evidence (references, clear information, citations) and not just opinion
- Uses a range of high quality sources
- Appropriate use of active and passive voice
- Awareness of audience: avoids slang, jargon and informal language
- Coherence

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<th>Grammar: Errors can raise questions about sloppiness</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Noun verb agreement</td>
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<td>- Correct use of tense</td>
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<td>- Complete sentences</td>
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<td>- Appropriate punctuation</td>
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<td>- No run on sentences</td>
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<td>- No spelling errors or typos</td>
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<td>- Other grammar issues</td>
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<th>Referencing: Provide support for assertions in accepted referencing style.</th>
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<td>- In text references (author date, page) or footnotes</td>
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<td>- Reference list (or footnotes) using proper citation format</td>
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<th>Professional Presentation</th>
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<td>- Don’t overuse bullets</td>
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<td>- Professional format (page #s, clear print + graphics)</td>
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<td>- Free of handwritten edits</td>
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<td>- Use graphics to support text, but not replace it</td>
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<td>- Proofreading</td>
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**Explanation of Grading System**

- **C+ and Lower (below 80)**
  - Unacceptable work for professionals or undergraduate/graduate courses
  - Factual errors or calculation errors
  - Poorly written (misspellings, typos, poor grammar, poor sentence structure)
  - Graphics poor (inaccurate tables, poor titles, no data sources)

- **B- (81-83)**
  - Below acceptable standards for professionals
  - Minor errors of fact or calculation
  - Poorly constructed text, unclear graphics
  - Rushed or lack of attention to overall product

- **B (84-86)**
  - Meets minimal professional standards
  - Factually and technically correct
  - Clear message to readers
  - May lack precision in language and presentation of data

- **B+ (87-90)**
  - Solid professional work
  - Factually and technically correct
  - Excellent tables and graphics
  - Falls short in some areas

- **A- (91-94)**
  - High quality professional work
  - Technically, methodologically, and factually 100% accurate
  - Fall short of highest quality work in organization, flow of text or presentation
  - Clearly conveys conclusions to audience

- **A (95-99)**
  - Highest quality work
  - Technically, methodologically, and factually 100% accurate
  - Efficient language and graphics presented with emphasis
  - Easy to navigate and follow
  - Clear about main points and evidence provided to support these points
  - All graphics are clear and titled, sources, labeled