

University of California Washington Program

GENERAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

Fall Quarter: September 21- November 30

Tuesday class: 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Zoom: <https://ucdc-edu.zoom.us/j/7705907853>

Instructor: Dr. Loubna Skalli Hanna

E-mail: loubna.hanna@ucdc.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Wednesdays 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Please email me for an appointment and use the Zoom link for all office hours

Course Description

The general research seminar introduces you to some of the main tools of social science research methods. You will learn *and* apply tools that will help you a) ask and try to answer critical questions about the world around you; b) understand the logic and significance of evidence-based research for analytical writing, policy recommendations and decision-making; and. c) explore research tools for your own research project. You will learn how to formulate focused and researchable questions, identify reliable data and relevant sources, and produce a robust literature review. You will also learn the uses and merits of case studies, and develop tools to reading statistical analyses and findings to better support your own research projects. Finally, you will be introduced to the elements of a policy brief and will be encouraged to use your internship experience to apply your research skills for the final research project.

Ultimately, this class aims to strengthen your research competence and confidence in using tools relevant to whatever career path you choose.

Course Instructor

I am a scholar-practitioner with subject area expertise in the politics of development, gender, youth and communication. I taught at numerous universities in Morocco and the United States, including the American University's School of International Service and the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. I am the author, co-author, and editor of numerous publications in my subject areas. I consulted with numerous intern/national development organizations and agencies including USAID, the World Bank, World Learning, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of State and the Global Fund for Women. I earned my BA from Mohamed V University in Rabat (Morocco), my MA in socio-cultural anthropology from Essex University (England) and my PhD from the Pennsylvania State University, USA.

Learning Objectives

Goal #1: *Students will develop skills to make evidence-based arguments.*

Objective #1: Students will write an evidence-based research paper or policy brief.

Goal #2: *Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in their course.*

Objective #2: Students will write an argumentative research paper or policy brief related to the work of their internship organization.

Goal #3: *Students will be able to communicate persuasively in writing and orally.*

Objective #4: Students will write and discuss their research and class materials and assignments.

Goal #4 *Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments, and use empirical evidence to research and apply theory to practice.*

Objective #5: Students will complete several critical thinking and writing assignments.

Course Materials and Accessibility

No books are required for purchase for this course. However, the below book is accessible for free via your library: we will use a few chapters from it.

Hammond, M. and J. Wellington. 2020. Research Methods. The Key Concepts. Routledge

All the reading assigned in this syllabus and any added throughout the term is required. This means that you should read all of the material BEFORE the class meeting and be ready to use it for your graded assignments (if relevant) EVEN IF we do not discuss it in class. See the Weekly Schedule below for dates and assignments. You should have assigned readings available for reference in class.

** I reserve the right to make changes to the course materials as the term progresses.**

Teaching Style and Expectations

This is an interactive and learner-driven class. I combine numerous methodologies and activities that call for your active presence and engaged participation. We use class time for discussions, practicum, problem-solving activities, and, only occasionally, mini lectures. You are expected to do your assigned weekly readings, follow current events to reflect on and relate them to our class discussions and assignments. I will also invite guest speakers from DC-based research centers and Think Tanks to share with us their experiences and expertise in conducting evidence-based research.

Course Responsibilities and Assignments

Course Requirements

Participation	15% of Final Grade
Practicum (4)	40% of Final Grade (each practicum is worth 10%)
Literature Review	15% of Final Grade
Final Paper or Policy Brief	30% of Final Grade

Participation: 15% of final grade

Your grade for participation will depend on your attendance and active participation in all sections and activities of this class. Your grade will reflect the quality of your engagement with the assigned readings, your participation in sync and async assignments as all we other unscheduled supplemental exercises that might arise based on the class needs.

Please be sure that your internship supervisor understands that you will be in class every Tuesday 1:00pm-4:00pm and attend to these rules. All absences require an explanation, whether these are for personal or professional reasons.

Practicum: 40% of the final grade

One of the main objectives of this class is for you to acquire and apply the research methods tools we discuss during the Quarter. The practicum is an opportunity to *learn by doing*. Each practicum is designed to broaden and deepen your understanding of one specific research tool.

There are 4 practicums in total; each is worth 10% of your final grade. The schedule is:

Practicum 1: October 12	(Research Question)
Practicum 2: October 19	(Literature Review)
Practicum 3: October 26	(Policy Brief Analysis)
Practicum 4: November 9	(Case study analysis)

Further details about each practicum will be posted on Canvas and discuss in class ahead of the due date.

Literature Review: 15% of Final Grade

Details about the literature review will be posted in Canvas early in the semester and will be discussed in class. This assignment is due Nov. 16

End of the Semester Project: 30% of Final Grade (including the 5% of proposal)

You will select one of two options for your end of the semester project: academic paper or research brief. You will work on developing different sections of the research project throughout the Quarter and during the research Labs. Your final grade on the project will reflect your efforts at meeting the different milestones I have set for you to deliver a high-quality research piece. The project proposal is due November 2 and receives 5% of the grade)

Details about this assignment will be posted in Canvas and discussed in class.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. **You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C.** You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

*Several campuses require 20 page research papers for major or other course credit. Students should check with their campus advisors before turning in a final paper that is less than 20 pages in length.

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.

Policy on Late Assignments

Keeping up with the work in a class like this is very important. The assignments are scaffolded, which means they build on each other and rely on the completion of the one before.

Assignment deadlines are firm to keep us on track, but also to provide predictability in your schedules. Still, life happens and you may find that you miss a deadline. Been there, done that.

I encourage you to submit late assignments rather than not submit at all. While you are likely to be docked points for lateness *if you haven't provided an excuse*, I don't judge! You are much better off with some points than no points, and you're definitely better off with feedback than no feedback. So, get in your work even if you take a bit of a hit on points.

For every 24 hour period after the date and time that the assignment is due, the grade received for the assignment will be decreased by one (1) part of a grade. The 24 hour periods include weekends. For example, if you turn in an A quality assignment on Wednesday before 11:59p, after it was due on Monday at 11:59p, then the assignment will be 2 days late and you will earn a B+ on that assignment. If you turn in a B quality assignment at that same time, you will earn a C+.

You may submit assignments early, but I don't grade assignments early.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

[Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872- 8937). ***Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.***

[Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on accommodations for students with disabilities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Course Outline & Readings

September 21: Introduction

- Syllabus: objectives and expectations
- Class Activity & intellectual warm-up

September 28: Which Scientific Research and Why

Hammond, M. & J. Wellington. 2020. *Research Methods*. Routledge. Pp. 155-159, and 166-168.

LEANN ZARAH. 2021. *7 Reasons Why Research is Important*
<https://owlcation.com/academia/Why-Research-is-Important-Within-and-Beyond-the-Academe>

October 5: The Research Question -I

“The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge.”

1.K. Petchko. 2018. Chapter 6. “Research Questions, Hypotheses and Purpose Statements”. *How to write about economics and Public Policy*. Pages 93-118.

2.Giles, Jim. 2011. “Social science lines up its biggest challenges.” *Nature*, Vol. 470: 18-19.

3. Class Activities

October 12: Research Question -II

1.*Practicum 1*

2.K. Petchko. 2018. “Identifying Literature to Review.” **Chapter 4** in *How to write about economics and Public Policy*. Pp. 51-68

3.Alison W. Brooks & Leslie K. John. 2018. The Surprising Power of Questions. It goes Far beyond exchanging information.

<https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-surprising-power-of-questions>

October 19: Literarure Review

1. *Practicum 2: beyond summary*

2.K. Petchko. 2018. Chapter 11. “Situating a Study: The Literature Review.” *How to write about economics and Public Policy*. Pages 207-221.

October 26: The Policy Brief

Practicum 3: Analyzing Elements of a Policy Brief

Laura ffrench-Constant. “Research to Action: The Policy Brief”

Policy Brief 1. UN. 2020. COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health.

<https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/UN-Policy-Brief-COVID-19-and-mental-health.pdf>

Policy Brief 2. 2016. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PREVENTS HOMELESSNESS

https://leo.nd.edu/assets/206997/hppc_policy_brief_august_2016_final.pdfResearch Brief 3

Policy Brief 3. 20198 Food Waste

https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/plp_uploads/policy_briefs/2018-10-16_PB_on_Food_waste.pdf

November 2: Writing Lab 1

End of the semester project:

- a. Submitting the research proposal
- b. Presenting/defending the proposal

November 9: Case Study Analysis

Practicum 4: critical review

Hyett N, Kenny A, Dickson-Swift V. Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *Int J Qual Stud Health Well-being*. 2014 May.

Flyvbjerg B. Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2006;12(2):219-245. doi:[10.1177/1077800405284363](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363)

November 16: Writing Lab II

- Your Literature review is due Today
- Peer Review of the literature

November 23: Evidence Matters

Enten, Harry. 2017. "Fake Polls are a Real Problem." *FiveThirtyEight*, August 22, 2017, accessed January 2, 2021.

Villasenor, John. 2017. "Views among college students regarding the First Amendment: Results from a new survey." Brookings Institution, September 18, 2017, accessed January 2, 2021.

Rampell, Catherine. 2017. "A chilling study shows how hostile college students are toward free speech." *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2017

November 30: Writing Lab III

One-on-one meeting -Finalizing End of the Semester Project

Submission of final paper: Date to TBD