

Semester:	<b>Spring 2020</b>
Course Number:	<b>10:775:395</b>
Course Title:	<b>Research Methods</b>
Lecture Day/Time:	<b>Hybrid</b>
Lecture:	<b>Tuesday, 1:40 PM - 4:40 PM <a href="#">BE-013</a></b>
Lab Section 8:	<b>Online, Weekly assignments due Saturday @ 8PM</b>
Course Instructor:	<b>Dr. Debbie Borie-Holtz, Assistant Professor</b>
Contact Information:	<b><a href="mailto:dbholtz@scarletmail.rutgers.edu">dbholtz@scarletmail.rutgers.edu</a></b>
Office Hours and Location:	<b>Tuesday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm, CSB, 33 Livingston Avenue, Room 256 Thursday, 11 am to 12 noon, via Webex or phone (Additional hours available by appointment.) See Canvas Home page for grad assistants' office hours and contact info.</b>
Required Text:	<b>Chambliss &amp; Schutt. 2015. <i>Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation</i>, 6th Edition. (5th Edition acceptable)</b>
Additional Materials:	<b>Readings and datasets are on Canvas. SPSS is available in the computer labs and on the Rutgers network.</b>

## **Catalog Course Description**

Application of research concepts and skills applied to public health, public policy, and planning. Includes development of original and online data sources, coding, appropriate selection of statistical methods for analysis, and professional presentation of results.

## **Course Overview**

This course is designed to introduce students to research methods for public health, health administration, planning and public policy. Basically, the course is an introduction to the fundamentals of social science research. The main goal is for you to learn to design and interpret research so you can solve problems and make informed decisions. During this semester, you will learn how to ask questions, how to probe for answers and how to evaluate the answers we get as a result of research. The emphasis of the class is on gaining the ability to think logically and critically about social science research. We will cover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but more time will be spent on the former. You will work with datasets this semester and conduct statistical analysis using Excel and SPSS, a computer software package. Your final assessment for the course will be a team-based, data analysis paper using a dataset in SPSS. As part of the final project, there will be a mandatory meeting to review your design plan during the week of 4/21.

Although we do not assume any previous work in methodology, we expect that you have successfully completed the statistics course required for Bloustein majors. The goal of this class is NOT to make you into expert statisticians or quantitative researchers, but into educated consumers – and often critics – of the research of others. Equally important, this class should give you a firm foundation upon which to stand as you complete your internship and/or senior seminar requirements for your major.

All course work will be completed through the following tools which will be introduced early in the semester and include: Assignment Tools, Qualtrics (linked to Canvas) and Google docs (shared folders, word and excel docs) on Canvas.

## Class Lectures

This is a 4 credit course consisting of both a lecture and lab period. Lecture instruction is provided through an in-class lecture each week. To assist you in mastering the materials, weekly Powerpoint slides highlighting the most important learning objectives from each lecture are posted on each week's lesson page, along with the weekly assigned text readings. On most weeks, there is a lecture activity/exercise to complete for which you must attend class in order to participate. On some weeks, an exercise will begin in lecture and completed as homework that will be due along with the lab deadline.

Lecture activities/exercises are worth 1.5 points each that contribute towards the "participation and engagement" component of the course. Please bring a tablet and writing instrument to class each week.

## Labs

Lab work is arranged in a way that applies the class lecture -- labs are NOT intended to "teach" the class lecture materials. It is recommended that you review the class lecture activities before completing the lab activity. Lab sessions are designed to gain some hands-on practice with the concepts we learn in lecture. Labs are structured around cases, discussions and exam practice.

Labs exercises also contribute towards the "participation and engagement" component of the course. Labs are worth 1.5 points each week and you must complete the work by the deadline to receive credit as stated above on the syllabus. Please note that some lab exercises will require access to SPSS software in order to complete the assignment. SPSS may be purchased at a discount through the Rutgers software portal, or accessed in the campus computer labs or through the virtual Rutgers network. Please determine early in the term which method you will use as access to SPSS is a critical requirement in the course.

## TOTAL POINTS

In a typical week, you have the opportunity to earn 3 points towards your "participation and engagement" course grade component.

Beginning with the Course Introduction (week 1) and concluding with Lecture 12, you will have had an opportunity to earn approximately 36 to 40 points. Although you only need to earn 30 points towards this course component at the “A” level, the points you earn in excess of “30” will be applied towards extra credit. On occasion, a lecture or lab assignment will be mandatory and cannot be skipped.

On limited occasions, there may be an additional opportunity to earn extra “participation and engagement points.” Generally, these will occur when something is happening in the news on a policy or public health front that links to our lecture materials. A Canvas announcement will inform these opportunities. Typically, this extra engagement points will be generated by contributing to blog posts or Tweeting about issues relevant to topics in the news that are applicable to our course content.

### Extra Practice/Extra Credit

Extra credit is only earned by completing engagement and participation points greater than 30 points. Extra course points will be weighted at a total of 3.0 points which will be added to the final course grade. To be eligible to receive extra course points, all four major module assignments must be submitted on time. A waiver of this policy may be provided at the discretion of the professor based upon extenuating circumstances.

### **Communication policy**

Please reach out to us with questions! There are many opportunities to reach us. Although our Grad Assistants are assigned to specific students on the rosters and by section, you may meet with any member of the Instructional Team. To help you during the course, we have arranged for office hours to be offered at varying times of day and weekdays. Please check the schedule for times and availability that are most convenient to you.

### Office hours

Office hours are posted on a Canvas under the course overview section. We ask that you schedule your appointment by signing up to the Office Hour Google doc on Canvas as this helps us ensure that we are available at the time you requested. If you need to cancel your appointment, please remove your name from the scheduling block so that another student may take advantage of this time block. If you are running late, please update the scheduling block as well. Please see the office hour links posted on Canvas to schedule an appointment.

Office hours are available face-to-face, virtually through Rutgers Webex or via a phone appointment. Please pay close attention to the mode when scheduling your appointment. On some days, for example, I may only be available online by webex or by phone.

### Email requests

When sending email, the subject line (re:) in the email should always state “**Methods + Section No.**” This will help us respond to your inquiries more quickly. We promise to always respond within 48 hours. Please copy me on all emails you send directly to your TA and copy your lead TA on emails sent directly to me.

In order to guarantee a response, you should always plan to email at least 24 hours before a deadline. Questions sent less than 24 hours before the assignment due date may not be answered.

If you want or need a quicker response, we ask you to post to the **Question Forum on Canvas**. We will respond to the forum questions on a daily basis. This will also help ensure that you receive a timely request and that we are all “on the same page.” Additionally, it is the best way to “raise your hand” to ask a question and to hear the answers to the questions posed by other students. As such, it is a good idea to check the question forum several times a week.

In order to guarantee a response, you should always email or post a question at least 24 hours before a deadline. Questions sent less than 24 hours before the assignment due date may not be answered.

## **Course Learning Goals**

- 1) An understanding of the logic of scientific inquiry and how to measure concepts
- 2) An ability to develop a research hypothesis and a complementary research design
- 3) An awareness of different types of data collection and analyses – both qualitative and quantitative
- 4) An introduction to analyzing quantitative data to test your own ideas about relationships between concepts

## **Public Health Learning Goals (832 Majors)**

*Students will:*

- 1) Think critically in public health
- 2) Effectively communicate public health information
- 3) Develop, apply, and analyze concepts from research methods and basic statistics
- 4) Develop a research question and write a coherent research paper
- 5) Understand and apply professional ethics

## Public Health Course Assessment (832 Majors)

The following assignments will assess the course learning goals. All students will meet the same Course Grading Requirements.

- 1) Think critically in public health
  - *Each student will complete weekly lab activities.*
- 2) Effectively communicate public health information
  - *Students must complete group and individual writing assignments.*
- 3) Develop, apply, and analyze concepts from research methods and basic statistics
  - *Each student will complete three module assignments and learn SPSS.*
- 4) Develop a research question and write a coherent research paper
  - *Each student will write a final research paper.*
- 5) Understand and apply professional ethics
  - *Many of the weekly topics include complex ethical considerations which we will discuss in class and students will include in their writing assignments.*
  - *Students are also required to obtain CITI Human Subjects Certification.*

## Course Grading Requirements

Your grade will be based on:

45% - Module Assignments

- Module 1 Exam: Lit review, measuring concepts and hypothesis formation (15%) - Due 2/24 @ Noon
- Module 2 Exam: Survey design, question wording and methodology (15%) - Due 3/29 @ Noon
- Module 3 Exam: Design plan cross-sectional study and analysis prep (15%) - Due 4/19 @ Noon

25% - Final Paper: Running, interpreting and analyzing data (25%) - Due 5/7 @ 10 AM

- Students will work in teams of 2 or 3 on the final paper
- Requests to complete the paper as an individual must be pre-approved by the professor
- The final paper requires a mandatory meeting during the week of 4/21. Missing this critical F2F meeting will reduce your final paper grade by 5 points.

30% - Weekly assignments (Due weekly by Sunday @ 8 PM - no extensions for late weekly submissions.)

- Over the course of the semester, you have the opportunity to earn 30 course points through a combination of lecture and lab activities. Please take note of weekly deadlines that must be met in order to earn points.
- Points earned in excess of 30 points will count towards extra credit for a total weighted score of 3 course points, as described above.
- Each week (weeks 1 through 12) you may earn 1.5 points by attending your weekly lecture and completing the lecture activity in class. At times, a lecture activity may be assigned as homework and it will be due by Sunday @ 8 PM.
- Each week (weeks 1 through 12) you may earn 1.5 points by completing the lab exercise due by Sunday @ 8 PM.

## ***Gradebook***

Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A=90-100; B+=87-89; B=80-86; C+=77-79; C=70-76; D=60-69; F=59 and lower.

Students are responsible for managing their progress in the course. An Excel document is provided for tracking your progress. Review and practice of this grade calculator will be required early in the term.

Student progress reports will be provided twice over the course of the semester.. Extra credit points earned will be reported at the end of the term. You may also schedule an appointment in office hours at any time if you want to receive a progress update. Due to FERPA regulations, we are not permitted to transmit or release grades via email.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity is vital to the mission of Rutgers, to education at Rutgers and membership in the Rutgers community. It is a core value that supports trust among students, and between students and teachers. It is also a shared value; administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it.

Academic dishonesty is not an individual act that affects only the students involved. It violates communal trust, impacts other members of the community, and is an offense against scholarship. For this reason, any instance of cheating or plagiarism will be dealt with harshly.

Honesty matters. As a shared value, administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it. See the Rutgers Academic Code and Academic Oath at:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

## **Attendance and Cancellation of Classes**

In accordance with Rutgers University regulations, attendance is expected. In a face-to-face format, attendance is akin to completing the weekly activities. If you wish to advise us of an illness or extenuating family circumstances that prohibit you from making progress in the course during any week, please use the link below:

<http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/courses/registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class>

## Ground Rules

Collegial and respectful conduct is expected in class and all online posts and emails exchanges. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. To facilitate this process and your learning, we will adhere to some basic rules:

- All module assignments must be completed on time, typed in 12-point font, and submitted per the assignment instructions. Module assignments will be marked down a half letter grade per day. Module exams cannot be submitted later than one week after the due date; missed assignments will receive a “O.”
- Late submissions for homework assignments and extra credit are **NOT** permitted as described under the **course syllabus**.
- All assignments including lecture homework, lab exercises and extra credit will be submitted through Canvas, Google Docs, or Qualtrics – please pay attention to submission instructions each week.

- Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible.
- If you will be missing a lecture/lab because of a religious holiday or observation, please let one of us know during the first week of the semester.
- If any questions or concerns arise, please come see one of us! Office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus. If you cannot make office hours, please request an appointment as described under our **Communication Policy**.
- This syllabus may be subject to minor revisions - please note latest revision date that appears in the footer area.

## A Few Words to the Wise

- Seek help early! Don't wait till the last minute if you are having difficulties.
- Get missed notes from a classmate! We will not hold individual meetings to provide summaries or repeat class material.
- And have some fun, learning something new this semester!

Week	Assigned Readings	Topic Area
Week 1: 1/21	No readings	
Week 2: 1/28	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 1 & 2	Fundamentals
Week 3: 2/4	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 3	Ethics

Week 4: 2/11	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 4	Concepts and Measurement
Week 5: 2/18	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 5	Sampling
Week 6: 2/25	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 6	Research Design
Week 7: 3/3	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 6	Experimental Design
Week 8: 3/10	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 7	Survey Design
Week 9: 3/24	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 9 & 10	Qualitative Studies
Week 10: 3/31	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 8	Quantitative Analysis
Week 11: 4/7	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 8	Quantitative Analysis
Week 12: 4/14	Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 13	Analytical Writing
Week 13: 4/21	Mandatory Meeting	Module 3 Review
Week 14: 4/28	Follow-up Reviews	