

Draft 1/11/12

IDEV 6120 Introduction to Research

Payson Centre for International Development, Tulane University

Spring 2012 (revised course)

Instructor, Laura Murphy, PhD

Thursdays, 12.30 – 3 pm

Location: Uptown square (plus campus and community venues)

3 credits

Overview

This course provides an engaged, scholarly, and interdisciplinary introduction to the craft of research appropriate for addressing significant issues in human development in an international context. We survey the foundations of research logic and major research designs (spanning experiments and randomized control trials (RCT), to mixed method case study, to Participatory Action Research (PAR). Analytical approaches span positivist, constructivist, interpretive, and engaged or transformative epistemological foundations. We encounter common field research methods such as surveys, in-depth interviews, and observation. We cover relevant formal terminology used in discussing social science research, such as study design, validity, bias, sampling strategies, generalizability, etc. We touch on the context, ethics, and communication of research approaches, methods and findings. Students learn about research through a range of mutually reinforcing learning strategies: reading and hearing about the formal logic of research designs (through our texts and lectures), critical review of published accounts of research findings (discussing journal articles), and conducting research in the classroom and local community (the lab activities). Our emphasis is on learning the craft of **interdisciplinary social science research** involving human populations in contemporary, real-life, cross-cultural and dynamic contexts.

Extended Course Description

We will be reading about how to do research: Formal research designs we review span the spectrum of acceptable and widely used designs for generating valid knowledge for actions in different public domains (policy, development work). These range from experimental gold-standard evaluation research (i.e., RCTs, at one end), to quasi-experimental designs (cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys), to in-depth interviews, oral history, and participatory approaches at the other (among “qualitative” approaches), and combinations of “mixed methods”. Specific topics that we cover include “data” (numbers, texts, sources and handling) and “sampling” (i.e., of documents, populations), both large n (statistical) and small n (in qualitative enquiry). We will review core vocabulary such as hypotheses, validity and reliability, bias, sampling strategies, and “units of analysis” (i.e., individual, household, family, community, nation-state). We appreciate different sources of data for research (especially dissertations and organizational research), such as original data collection and the use of ‘secondary data’ from existing datasets.

We will be reviewing published accounts and findings: We read, review, and discuss exemplary examples of empirical research (in the field of development) using different approaches.

Examples reflect the predominant emphasis on survey research and quantitative data analyses in development (such as household welfare and well-being surveys, statistical analysis of economic growth and technology). We review in-depth case studies of communities, mixed methods studies of population knowledge and behaviors (health and family planning). We appreciate the task of critical interpretive enquiry of historical documents, contemporary interview transcripts, and GIS (forests in West Africa), and participatory livelihoods and poverty research with community groups (WB Voices of the Poor, Robert Chambers). These examples help link different designs and epistemological foundations to the appropriate use of statistical analytical techniques, personal in-depth interviews, direct and participatory observation, desk review, and content analysis of documents. We will look at examples of poor quality research and articles to compare and contrast with top-quality research and publications reflecting different research approaches and domains.

We will be doing hands-on field research: Students will encounter many tools (through reading and review) and will actively practice using a few, selected tools for “doing research”. These tools help with conceptualizing, planning, conducting, analyzing, and communicating research. These include: the conceptual framework, household roster, household survey instrument, and the critical literature review. Some of the hands-on activities deal with these tasks: conduct of individual interviews, developing a sampling frame and strategy, identifying suitable respondents in a population, developing and pre-testing a questionnaire and/or in-depth interview (IDI) guidelines, designing data entry forms, entering data from questionnaires and fieldwork, transcribing an interview, and training a team of enumerators to use your tool.

Also covered, but not central to the class mission: The class activities expose you to related topics of writing skills and styles for research (different types of proposals, technical writing language, dealing with qualitative data, academic vs. practitioner publishing and publications, major journals in development). We inevitably will touch upon some concerns of funding, budgeting, politics and the social context of research (foundations, NIH, NGOs, USAID, with attention to opportunities for graduate students and differentiating individual, scholarly effort vs. large team and institutional research. We address the formal requirements of “IRB review” for research with “human subjects”. We also touch on a range of ethical issues involved with contemporary scholarship with vulnerable populations (as “human subjects” or active “participants”, contrasting biomedical science with interdisciplinary applied research, plus delving into some personal, operational, and cross-cultural ethical dilemmas). Students will prepare (if not actually submit) an application to the Tulane IRB system if their project calls for it.

Format

The class meets once a week for 3 hours at uptown square. We will combine discussion, assignments and exercises. I integrate different pedagogical strategies on the philosophy that you will learn about research through a range of mutually reinforcing learning strategies. These include (1) **doing research** (with and for others) and reflecting upon the tasks and process. These are the “Labs” in the schedule below. We will identify questions (about poverty, health, sustainability, etc.) and actually try to answer them throughout the class, systematically building on new concepts and approaches, using our campus and community as a laboratory. All students will be involved at some point as study subjects, fieldworkers, the “principal investigator”, analyst, etc. You will be engaged in designing and conducting research at increasing levels of independence and complexity during the class. Since this hands-on approach is insufficient for appreciating the formal epistemological foundations and language of research;

students will also learn by **reading and hearing about research logic and rules** from different disciplines (anthropology, geography, economics, planning). Authors explain the epistemological foundations of different approaches to research design and practice, and elaborating on the relevance of specific study designs and their purpose, strengths and weaknesses. The main issues and lessons are highlighted in the “mini-lectures” that draw out different themes. Finally, you will also (3) learn to **read and critically review research results**, on development topics from a range of publications, such as peer-reviewed journals, manuscripts under preparation for submission to a journal, conference papers, development agency monographs, field reports of NGO surveys, and other “grey-literature”. We will read and discuss texts to unpack the research question, research approach, study design, sampling strategies, and analytical techniques. We draw from classic and notable examples of empirical studies and literature reviews. We will appreciate the various trade-offs, decisions, and parameters that lead to published work.

Target audience

The course is specifically designed for Payson Center masters and doctoral students. It has a focus on applied interdisciplinary research in cross-cultural, international settings. Students from other graduate programs and departments (Latin American Studies, GHSD, CCC) are welcome if space allows and their preparation deemed adequate. Students are expected to have taken and passed IDEV 6110 (basic statistics) or an equivalent course. Check with the instructor.

Learning objectives

By the end of the class, students who read the texts, actively engage in the class exercises, do the assignments, and practice the tools provided in their own projects will leave with the following knowledge, skills and research-related competencies:

- Language: Grounding in terminology and vocabulary and ability to use terms correctly to plan, describe and interpret research. See attached list of terms.
- Epistemology: basic familiarity with the epistemological foundations underlying interdisciplinary social science research (i.e., positivist, constructivist, and transformative)
- Study design: Grasp of the basic logic and assumptions of major formal study designs (i.e., experimental, quasi experimental, non-experimental, impact evaluation, ethnographic case study, participatory approaches, developmental evaluation)
- Sampling: Grasp of the range of concerns related to sampling of “populations” and data sources we draw on for research .
- Reading “the literature”: Able to plan, conduct, keep track of, analyze and draft a critical literature review for a specific purpose (paper, proposal, study design, as research itself)
- Choice of research approach and design: Ability to argue different study designs in general terms, and in relation to epistemological and practical/logistical limits and trade-offs, and discuss appropriate methods and tools relevant to a design
- Carry away a “Field Research Toolkit” –possess a familiarity with commonly used tools for field research (such as a household survey instruments, conceptual frameworks, data entry tasks, observation) and how to keep learning, and where
- Ethics: Conversant in and able to discuss formal ethical issues in research with human subjects; prepared to compile a formal application to IRB for his/her own study, with exposure to larger ethical issues involved in cross-cultural field research.
- Correctly find and use research findings: have a list of relevant journals, organizational researchers, keywords and critical lenses to extract and use relevant information from published research for project design, scholarly research and other needs.

PhD vs. MS students

If you are currently enrolled in a doctoral program at Payson (or elsewhere), you will be held to and assessed at a higher standard than MS (MA or MPH) students.

- MS (MA, MPH) students are expected to demonstrate a basic knowledge of research terminology and designs, an ability to work effectively with others in research teams, to design and carry out basic data collection and straightforward analysis (i.e, descriptive reports, project assessments, using basic uni-and bi-variate statistics and cross-tabs and narratives). MS students (I envision) are being prepared to, for example: recruit researchers (write job descriptions for, hire and work with) for more rigorous studies such as impact assessments for donors/funders when those are called for. MS/MPH will need to interpret and use research findings for program design, understanding your beneficiary population, and to design and implement applied research (baseline survey for a project evaluation, participatory needs assessment for practitioner/agencies such as NGOs, CBO partners). MS students in this class will be expected to participate actively in field data collection, sampling, data entry, documentation, etc.
- PhD students will be expected to perform at a higher level of professionalization, independent critical thought, and to show a sound theoretical grounding behind the study/research tasks). Greater rigor of analysis comparable with academic standards of research approaches (rather than NGO operational or in-house research). They will be expected to conceptualize, craft and communicate for an academic (interdisciplinary development studies) audience. Their work in this class will aim to be epistemologically sound and rigorous (whether quantitative or qualitative) and “applied” (addressing real social problems in a community, rather than aspects of disciplinary theory). PhD students in this class will be expected to generate their own research question(s), to lead fieldwork and supervise data analysis, as well as participate in fielding a survey, interviewing respondents, data entry, transcription of interviews, direct observation, and other tasks.

Assessment

20-30% Individual written assignments. Three two-page individual homework assignments worth 5-10 points each. These are thoughtful, integrative, and analytical writing exercises, building on lectures and readings in particular, and incorporating insights from labs as pertinent. These represent your own work. See schedule for timing and brief description. More details will follow. Submit via email to the instructor by the due-date.

20-30% “Lab” activities. Several short reports at about 5 points each. You will be engaged in specific class exercises and in the community, such as interviews, observation, group discussions, sampling households. I will observe your involvement, which counts for part of your grade. You will also write a very short (1/2 - 1 page) report documenting the field activities, your involvement and “lessons-learned” from fieldwork. These might have shared content with other group members as well as your own observations on the process.

30% Final project: This is a comprehensive and synthetic research project, either completely individual (recommended for PhD students) or group (for MS/MPH/MA) but with unique components. You will address a specific research question with fieldwork, desk review or

proposal. Options: This could be a proposal, manuscript or report. The emphasis is on the research question, design, and application of research logic, structure and tools to suit the problem and question. The project does **not** require the attainment of sophisticated statistical techniques or other specific methodological skills outside the scope of this class, although you should point out your gaps.

- Final product: hand in a written document: a manuscript (academic research findings written as if for peer-review journal publication), a report (applied research for project design/policy audience), a proposal (for future work), or a critical, selective and well-constructed literature review (on an approved topic).
- Presentation aspect: Students will present work to the class mid-April via oral, electronic, and poster presentations and are expected to incorporate constructive feedback into their final project.
- The final project is due during exam week (early May).
- Approval: All student projects will be submitted by mid-March and must be approved by me in advance. Not getting approval puts you at risk of a poor grade. Students will consult with the instructor to propose their final project. See description of expectations for MS and PhD level work, which might affect the type of final project that will be suitable for you.

10% Participation: To get full participation points, students should generally maintain a positive, collaborative attitude, and engage whole-heartedly in classroom discussions and field activities. You should keep up with the readings and assignments, be prepared for class discussions and exercises, and attend the majority of class sessions (or contribute to and help make-up for missed sessions, especially involving your peers). This grade will be based on the instructor's observation, attendance records, and your self-report at the end of the class, so plan to keep notes.

5% Ethics of "human subjects" research: Students will do the following **by March 1** for 5 points (1) complete the online CITI course (2) turn in their certificate of completion to the instructor; and (3) visit IRBnet, create an account, read all procedures for applying as a student for IRB review, and write a ½ page comment on the board, process and protocols. Late reports will be marked down a point/day.

Also note: If your final project entails you collecting your own data, apart from the class activities, and especially if you expect to use data in your thesis or dissertation--whether or not you do data collection for this class; you should draft protocols and other aspects of your complete application (details on IRBnet) and include it as an appendix to your final class project. If you intend to pursue the research (say, for the summer), you should then actually submit the application for review.

Texts and resources

Required texts

- Perecman and Curran: *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods* by Ellen Perecman and Sara R. Curran, Sage Publications, Inc; 1 edition (January 24, 2006). Paperback, used good quality is okay. We read most of the essays and you can draw on bibliographic sources for examples of research of different types.

- Creswell, *Research Design Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* Sage Publications, Inc. 3rd edition (July 15, 2008). Paperback, used good quality is okay. This provides a very basic grounding in social science research logic and study design for applied research, focusing on mixed-methods.

Optional additional references (highly recommended for PhD students).

- H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, good for insight into the conduct of field research, specific methods and analytical techniques
- William Trochim's online resource, good for more discussion of formal scientific research, quantitative approaches, study designs, and the glossary:
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/>

Additional readings and resources: You will be asked to review and keep track of many documents. These include peer-review articles, project reports, manuscripts in progress, research project proposals, examples of IRB (ethical review) applications, survey instruments, transcribed interviews, and other materials that supplement the two main texts, mini-lecture powerpoint slides, our field protocols for labs. These will generally be available on blackboard site.

List of articles. We will critically and selectively review published articles, research reports and other types of publications to appreciate different elements of the research process.. They will touch on diverse substantive topics and reflect different approaches, scales, units and methods. Depending on your final project, you will, be expected to draw from appropriate articles to incorporate into literature review, discussion, design, etc. Following is a provisional list of (incomplete) citations, themes and research angles. We will update this list during class.

- Bryceson, Deborah F. on deagrarianization and livelihoods in rural Africa. Economic geographer reviewing and synthesizing findings on changes in economic activities among contemporary sub-Saharan African populations. Example of synthetic, multi-country review.
- Chambers, Robert. *Putting Farmers First*, classic in livelihoods and participatory methods drawing from farming systems research. Senior scholar in critical development studies.
- Ellis, Frank et al. *Livelihoods Research in Africa*. Examples of village-level participatory livelihoods research and project reports, vs. academic publications on country-level findings.
- Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine*, especially the chapter on discourse analysis of World Bank documents (non-human subjects, interpretive enquiry). Dissertation research (Anthropology) turned into a book.
- Harvey, Paul and Laura Murphy. *HIV/AIDS and Humanitarian Action*. example of an organizational working paper/report that resulted from a (formative) desk review and key informant interviews on a new topic for specific audiences (humanitarian NGOs and researchers).

- Kremer et al, deworming Kenyan schoolchildren: contemporary classic in RCT for impact evaluation. See IPA website for more examples of randomized controlled trials for development evaluation.
- Lawrence et al. Impact of mobile phones on economic growth. Example of comparative country-level analysis of economic data. Models, data sources, analytical techniques.
- Melissa Leach and James Fairhead on Rethinking West African Deforestation, in PDR. A significant piece of critical, interdisciplinary research on environmental trends and populations; using contemporary anthropological, geographic, and historical (original sources) forms of enquiry.
- Murphy, Laura, . Cattle, Coffee and Income... Ecuadorian Amazon. In *Human Organization*. Household survey, quantitative analyses on well-being linked to environmental concerns, insights from field observation. Sampling and process of research, dissertation research turned into published article.
- Murphy, Laura et al. “How do we know what we think we know...AIDS in Africa” in *Human Organization*, as an example of a literature review as research itself; process, tools, indicators, narrative discussion. Also example of critical assessment of limits of current research: scale, measures, etc.
- Narayan, Deepa et al. *Voices of the Poor report of the World Bank, from the 1990s*. Focus on the **methodology** of this participatory poverty assessment conducted in countries around the world. The World Bank took on board participatory approaches to understanding poverty, drawing from the “capabilities approach” (i.e., role of theory in shaping research) and a team of anthropologists (contributing to multi-disciplinary project).
- Quinn-Patton, Michael on *Developmental Evaluation*. His new text explains alternative forms of evaluation undertaken by stakeholder groups and organizations themselves, in contrast to objective external impact evaluations (i.e., RCT, such as the deworming study.) This is influenced by complexity thinking and dynamic systems.
- USAID’s Report on Madagascar Integrated Population – Environment Program. Example of experimental evaluation of NGO projects and interventions in highland Madagascar linking rural health, development, and environmental outcomes.
- Watkins, Susan and Naomi Rutenberg, et al. *The Buzz around the Clinic* and the Malawi diffusion and ideation study. See project website. Example of use of journals and fieldnotes to examine sensitive topics such as HIV and family planning/contraceptive use among women in western Kenya. Inter-relationship of quantitative and qualitative enquiry.

Journals we draw from

- *Population and Development Review (PDR)*
- *World Development*
- *Human Organization*

- *Journal of International Development*
 - *Journal of Peasant Studies*
 - *Economic Development and Cultural Change (EDCC)*
 - *Information Technology and International Development*
 - *Latin American Research Review*
 - *Journal of Area Studies*
 - *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*
 - *African Studies*
 - *Innovations (MIT press)*
- Others TBD

Schedule: Class topics, lectures, vocabulary, readings, assignments, and labs/field activities

Each class meets in Uptown Square. We will usually combine mini-lectures (15-30 minutes), discussion (30-60 minutes), and class exercises/labs within the classroom setting and in the local community. Some lab activities will inevitably spill-over after hours, evolving into your homework building on specific field assignments. You will be expected to organize your time to complete the tasks at hand, i.e., observation, sampling, interviews, data entry, etc. It will be a good idea if you do not generally book anything immediately after class formally ends 3.00 pm, as you will usually find it expedient to stay focused and continue lab activities, especially fieldwork in the community.

Thursday, January 19 Introduction to Research for International Development

Mini-Lecture (Part I of 2): “What constitutes sound research for development practice?”

Introduction to ‘research’ as systematic investigation of questions about what people/institutions know, perceive, do, understand; and how, why we might influence them. Overview of the spectrum major standard research approaches and study designs, when they are appropriate, what they are generally good for (and not), and related terminology (see list of vocabulary) from formal experiments to ethnography, with “mixed methods” in the middle.

Key Concepts: “gold-standard”, positivist social science research: experimental designs, randomized trials (RCT), randomization, random selection, treatment and control groups, before and after, causation, positivist epistemology, generalizability, universality, validity, reliability, bias, question, hypothesis. Norms of qualitative enquiry, knowledge claims, interpretive enquiry, subjective vs. objective, ethnographic, historical, participatory, “applied” development research, transformative research and developmental evaluation, “mixed methods”, case study approaches, hermeneutic approaches to generating knowledge, determinants, risk factors, and other terms/language.

Readings: Perelman and Curran, Forward, Introduction, Part I; Cresswell, Glossary, Chapters 1 - 3. Handouts: Research fundamentals, vocabulary. Reference: Trochim’s online text

“Lab” #1: “Who are we?”

In - class activity based on a structured questionnaire provided by the instructor and interviews with your peers. These provide a baseline for working with each other throughout the class, allowing us to gauge interests and prior skills relevant to conducting research (theory, design,

languages, and field methods). The activity exposes you to interview scripts, instruments, the consent process, and the concept of learning from “others” (human subjects). It will serve as a foundation for learning about data collection, entry, data management and analytical issues. Try to interview at least one other student.

Lab report #1a. Write up the findings (field notes and/or complete verbatim interview transcript). List the tasks. Aim for one page (beyond field notes/transcript itself). Hand in via email before midnight on 1/25.

January 26. Research Fundamentals

Mini-Lecture (Part 2 of 2: “What constitutes sound research for development practice?”

Continued. Lecture and discussion around key terms and major categories of formal research designs, as introduced in our texts and with examples.

Reading: Perelman and Curran, Chapters 1-7 (you can skim 1, 4 but they are recommended for all); Creswell, Part I (1 -3), Part II (7, 8, 9). Other reference readings as examples of research TBD.

Lab #1b: Who are we? (Continued)

Comparing In-depth interview vs. questionnaire responses. Data entry, transcription, reflection on the instrument and process of interviewing. Document your lab activities for the report.

Lab #1b report: document and describe (about a page) the activities we did as a class to learn about the “study population” of budding researchers. Comment: What was most difficult?

February 2 Theory and Qualitative Enquiry

Mini-Lecture “Role of theory in shaping research”

What’s a theory? How theory matters. We draw from published research articles to reveal how different conceptual frameworks, worldviews, and theories of knowledge shape the formal structure of research and how information is generated. Shaping research questions, need for hypotheses testing research (positivist, objective research) vs. theory-generation, the aims of empirical knowledge vs. deeper understanding and subjective meaning of phenomena (qualitative, in-depth). Examples of positivist enquiry (Murphy 2001 and other examples), critical political ecology (Leach and Fairhead on West Africa). critical forms of enquiry (Chambers and Ellis on participatory livelihoods research).

Mini-Lecture and exercise Qualitative approaches and techniques

Overview of the domain of qualitative enquiry for development research. We will appreciate that ethnographic is not rapid, focus group discussions are often not focused, qualitative findings can also be quantified, participatory methods often exclude, and other mysteries of ‘qualitative’ enquiry. Rigor, validity, plausible extensions to other populations, idiosyncratic rich description. The importance of triangulation, voice, multiple perspectives, subjectivity vs objectivity, standpoint, grounded theory, mixing qualitative into quantitative, and vice-versa.

Readings: Curran and Perelman, Ch 8, 9; Creswell: Part II Chapters 8, 9, 10

Introducing Lab #2: Social Innovation and entrepreneurship for human development in New Orleans

Students will work in teams to develop research questions, instruments, sampling strategy, identify respondents; you will conduct (some) fieldwork and manage the findings. You will find guidance from mini-lectures, readings and reinforced by your assignments. You will explore participatory and direct observation method) as well as develop sampling strategy and pilot-test individual, household or firm/business survey instrument amenable to quantitative analysis. See detailed description below to be updated for the class and student's interests. We introduce the lab, break into groups, and begin planning the work over the next weeks.

Individual Assignment #1: Describe yourself as a researcher, identify a current research interest of yours in relation to study designs and epistemological issues raised in lectures and readings, and propose a possible final project. Two pages maximum. Due by 2/8

February 9 Sampling and Fieldwork Practicalities

Mini-lecture. Sampling and Choice of Study Participants

Beyond random, randomized, and non-random—in research, we are nearly always drawing samples of something. This lecture surveys issues in choosing study participants, linking theory and practice: Formal sampling, statistical power, survey research as a field, sampling for qualitative enquiry, snowball, convenience, quota, random, cluster-based. Sampling bias, internal validity, external validity, knowledge claims, connection between type of sampling and theoretical underpinnings of research approach and the topic. Sampling frame, selection techniques. Rapid/Quasi-random Sampling strategies using google maps, transect walk. You will have an assignment to compare and contrast two distinct sampling strategies for our current lab and the pros/cons of each.

Readings: Perelman and Curran Ch 6; Creswell Chapters 8, 9. Additional reference materials TBD

Lab #2. Sampling for social Innovation/Entrepreneurship research

Build sample frame or use the one provided. Find 2-3 specific households in your study site to interview using structured instrument or semi-structured guidelines. Complete the visits and call-backs for assigned households. Conduct at least one interview yourself. Record all data appropriately.

Lab report #2: Document your group's field activities and your role in them: sampling frame, selection, responses, the actual respondents, process, and issues that arose. Comment: What was most surprising? What worked well?

February 16. Rapid Assessment, Field Teams and Practicalities

Mini-Lecture: Short primer on user-centered research and rapid appraisals.

Lessons from human-centered design and rapid appraisals that draw from ethnographic and participatory paradigms but adapt them for more short-term use and quick turnaround.

Mini-Lecture: The Field Team and Field Research Tasks

Roles, labels, tasks, logistics, scheduling, procedures, material needs, and practical aspects involved in conducting surveys, IDIs, focus group discussions with real people. EpiData, data entry, recording information. Budget, supplies, equipment. Overview, examples from fieldwork in New Orleans so far and by the instructor (examples from Kenya).

Lab #3: Social Innovation/Mardi Gras as Development Project, Problem and Intervention
Work in teams. Advance / conduct field research activities (observation, interviews, group discussion) that can identify or assess interventions to improve Mardi Gras. We will shift from classroom to “the field” and use all our tools and techniques encountered so far to observe, record and document behaviors around parades, street life, etc. (Parades roll out uptown this evening and all weekend.)

Readings: Curran and Perecman, Ch 3, 5, 8; Creswell Chapters 8, 9, 10
References: Qualitative methods (manual), Human-centered design (IDEO manual)

February 23 Literature Review

Mini-Lecture: “Common myths and misconceptions about research”

Topics: the uses and abuses of statistics, sampling (it’s everywhere), experiments and rigorous designs, the limits of control, the formal logic of versus the messy reality of the research process, the “policy-maker” and other consumers of research, “practical” vs. “academic”, Formative vs. summative evaluations, the process of research

Lab #3: Students present and share on Mardi Gras observation exercise (methods, findings, lessons-learned)

Mini-lecture: “The Literature Review”

Literature review and desk review as systematic research. How to identify, read, review, write about, and assess journal and other publications. The differences between peer review and grey literature, dissertations and manuscripts, books and journals, reports and monographs. Hints for extracting and learning from published work, process and product of a review process. Annotated bibliography vs. the narrative, critical review. Handouts and examples of “literature review” as process, output (Murphy et al 2005). Examples of literature reviews by students for research prospectus. The desk review as a publishable report (Harvey and Murphy 2004). Related topics: systematic review, meta-analysis.

Readings: Creswell, Ch 2, 3, 4.
Handouts (Literature Review packet, tools for conducting literature review, Murphy et al 2005 and other articles)

Individual Assignment #2: Construct a table to guide a critical literature review for your own final project topic or a current lab (these can be the same). Search for, download and list citations for 8-10 substantial empirical articles in relevant peer-reviewed journals and/or from appropriate institutional sources. Identify suitable keywords, categories. List the general research problem area and specific questions you are pursuing. Complete at least one row/entry. This will be a page cover sheet, and attached sample table and entry. Due by 2/28

March 1 Learning from published research

Student-led Mini-Lecture. “Reading and Interpreting Findings”

How to read a journal article, interpret the research question, approach, and findings, read between the lines, and present and discuss findings from other researcher’s work. The case of

“Duflo and Kremer et al” vs. Robert Chambers (RCT contrasted with participatory evaluation. How (and what) to read: academic journals, white papers, monographs, conference proceedings, NGO reports, etc. How to use and cite findings in your (academic, applied) work.

Readings: the specific articles (to be selected) under review. Creswell and Curran and Perelman and other resources as reference. Also see handout: “The Research Question”

March 8 Current Development Research

Student led Mini-Lecture: Study designs in current development research

Review of study designs in a range of contemporary development research, including economic impacts of mobile phones, farm productivity, impacts of AIDS in Africa, micro-credit for households, livelihoods and capabilities, project evaluations. Presentation of an approach to constructively and usefully critiquing research (epistemology, study design, methods, analysis, reporting, interpretation, gaps)

Readings: We will choose from list of articles above or other approved top-quality empirical research. Creswell 5, 6,7; Curran and Perelman, Ch 7.

Lab #4: Work on student-generated research on social innovation/development in New Orleans to integrate insights from these established research projects. Identify theoretical framework, research purpose, question, approach, study design, sampling

Individual assignment #3: critically review a top-quality journal article (empirical research or a published literature review) relevant for your proposed final project. About 2 pages. Due by midnight 3/12.

March 15 Spring break, no class

Project work: Students should be pursuing their individual projects

Readings: get caught up on all readings

March 22 Measuring what?

Student-led Mini-lecture/Discussion. Indicators, measurement

Concepts, constructs, measures, indicators, variables, sensitivity, specificity, measurement error, latent variables. Discuss different indicators we are using in labs and independent research. Related indicators and concepts to different types of research.

Readings: Creswell Chapter 8, Examples: USAID report on Madagascar Integrated Pop Environment Research, Indicators for M/E research

Activity/Lab: students pursue final research projects taking recent critiques, ‘constructs’ and ‘indicators’ into account. We will organize fieldwork in the city, as needed, depending on student projects.

March 29. Open session

Topics and Readings TBD as we deem necessary. This may be a time to provide skills, discuss specific study designs, etc. Topics could be proposal development (prospectus or grant proposals), writing about research, specific study designs and trade-offs, or specific field methods.

April 5 Field and Research Ethics, IRB again

Mini-lecture: Ethical concerns in field research (going beyond formal bureaucratic procedures): professional ethics, research permits, translations, cross-cultural dilemmas, personal ethics, the ethics of not doing research.

Class exercise: Discuss ethical issues in specific research projects and New Orleans field activities. Review formal IRB protocols and forms. Note: you should have already completed CITI certificate and explored IRBnet (by end of February).

Lab: We will organize relevant fieldwork for student projects as needed.

Readings: Perecman and Curran, Part II, Ch 11, 12. Creswell, Ch 4.

April 12 Student Presentations

How and what to present? Formal academic, peer, and practitioner audiences; questions, methods, study sites, findings, implications. Presentations on our class labs (2 & 3). Selected individual student final projects (as ready). Electronic/Paper "Poster" and formal aural presentations to the class in panel or individual paper or poster sessions. Constructive feedback from students and instructor. Invited guests as relevant (community members, other faculty).

Readings: summaries of student projects, Curran and Perecman Ch 12, Creswell Ch 4, 5 & 6. Other reference material may be assigned.

April 19 Student Presentations

Students present research for final project (preliminary work, plans and issues so far). These will be electronic, verbal, and poster presentations to the class as a whole, to solicit constructive feedback from students and instructor. Invited guests as needed and as relevant (community members, other faculty).

Readings: summaries of student projects, Curran and Perecman Ch 12, Creswell Ch 4, 5 & 6

April 26 Wrap-up: Your toolkit

What study designs, lenses, data collection techniques, analytical approaches are most useful to you? What do you need to be aware of; what do you need to further develop to use in your work. How can you keep learning about research? What classes to take and methods to learn more about research? (i.e., social theory for development, techniques such as advanced econometrics, structural equations, network analyses, demographic techniques, epidemiological study designs and analysis, GIS, formal qualitative methods, participatory approaches, and other topics.)

Readings: electronic manuals, websites, syllabi, and other resources

Lab #5: What's in your field toolkit and why? What are you leaving out? What do you need to learn more about?

May **Final project due**

Your individual final project (proposal, report or manuscript) will be due via email during exam week.

Appendix 1. Research-related Terminology

Accuracy (precision)	Hypothesis	Principle Investigator (PI)
Analysis	Impact	Probability-based
Applied research	Incentive	Protocols
Approach	In-depth interview (ID)	Proof
Archives	Index	Proposal/Prospectus
Argument	Indicators	Protocol(s)
Attrition	Indirect Observation	Qualitative approaches
Bias	Informant	Quantitative approaches
Bivariate statistics	Informed consent	Quasi-experimental methods
Case Study	Institutional Review Board (IRB)	Question
Categorical data	Instrument (i.e., survey)	Questionnaire
Causality	Interdisciplinary	Random
Census	Interpretative approaches	Randomization
Cluster sampling	Interview	Rapid techniques
Comparative Study	Internal validity	Regression (statistics)
Conceptual Framework	Justification	Reliability
Consent (oral, written)	Key Informant	Representative
Construct	Knowledge claim	Research design (study design)
Content analysis	Latent variable	Response rate
Continuous variables	Limits	Respondent
Control (group)	Literature Review	Respondent driven sampling (RDS)
Critical theory	Livelihoods	Sample
Cross-sectional	Longitudinal	Sample size
Cultural Domain Analysis	M/E	Sampling strategy
Data (Datum)	Measurement	Sampling frame
Data Analysis	Method	Scale (Likert)
Data quality	Methodological	Scale (geographic, temporal)
Determinants	Missing data	Science, scientific
Developmental Evaluation	Mixed-methods	Secondary data
Direct Observation	Model	Semi-structured Interview
Empirical	Monitoring & Evaluation	Social Sciences
Enumerators	Multi-disciplinary	Statistics
Epistemology	Multivariate Analysis	Study site
Ethics	"N" (small n, large N)	Subjective (vs. Objective)
Ethnography	Narratives	Survey
Evaluation	Non-parametric statistics	Theory
Experiment	Non-random	Time Allocation Study
Exploratory	Non-response (survey)	Trade-offs, limitations in research
Fact	Observation	Transcripts
Field methods	Objective (vs. subjective)	Transformative research
Fieldwork	Participatory research	Treatment (group)
Focus group discussion (FGD)	Participant Observation	Triangulation
Formative	Pilot	Truth(s)
Generalizability	Policy-relevance Policy	Units of analysis
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Implications	Universe
Geographic positioning system (GPS)	Population	Univariate statistics
Guidelines	Positivist approaches	Universe
Hermeneutic approach	Power (statistical)	Validity
Household survey	Power (critical theory)	Variables
Household roster	Precision (v accuracy)	Vulnerable populations
Human subjects	Pre-test/ Post-Test	
	Pre-coded (questions)	
	Primary data	

Appendix 2. Description of Possible Labs (field components)

Students work in small groups to advance methods and skills needed to address questions (given by the instructor to start with) and to develop their own research questions and carry them forward. We will adapt themes for investigation in our New Orleans, Tulane campus, tourist and other populations based on on-going research projects of the instructor and colleagues. Paragraphs below describe potential field-exercises or “labs”. Students (esp. PhD students) can use these labs to advance their own affiliated research questions (lab #2 and 3) or brand-new self-identified questions (lab #4) to generate an original final project. MPH/MS/MA students can build directly on these labs and propose a final project using methods and findings from labs 1, 2 or 3. Everyone will be working to understand how to use and apply appropriate study designs, relevant techniques, analytical methods, field methods, and logistics (field teams, data management, budgeting) and ethical issues that can form your ‘toolkit’.

Lab #1 Who are we? (weeks 1-2+)

Individual (pre-coded) survey and one-one interviews to yield quantitative and qualitative data on our group (students, professors, TAs, visitors) and generate issues about research design and practice. Topics: Socio-demographics (age, sex, education, marital status, place of birth, migration history, dependents, family, household, health status), Personal skills and assets (UG and graduate degrees, languages, hobbies, degree program at Tulane), Daily activities (work schedule, class schedule, travel, availability for projects), Food/shopping habits, Knowledge of New Orleans, Research interests (topics, problems, places, theories of development, issues in development) and prior experience (classes, projects, programs, computer programs, fieldwork, analysis).

Issues: identifying respondents, sampling issues, confidentiality, survey instrument structure standards (and pitfalls), ways of asking questions (pre-coded, open), practice data entry and analysis, numerical, string and narrative responses.

Lab #2 Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Development in New Orleans (spanning weeks 2-5+ depending on interests)

Research topic(s): Social innovation and social entrepreneurship are new approaches to finding ‘sustainable’, scale-able solutions to pressing social problems such as poverty, ill-health, inequality, violence, etc. We’ll investigate a few of the following specific questions in our community here to learn more about it. *How common is this phenomenon in a population (of what?)? What does this idea and vision mean to different people, and why? “What works” right here : which social ventures and innovations are effective? Which are scale-able? How can we elicit social entrepreneurial action to address social problems in New Orleans? What problems exist in New Orleans that can be addressed through SE/SI? How do different disciplines research the phenomena?*

Learning activities are of two sorts: (1) Students will refine or add a question or analytical theme of interest (gender? Technology?) to our draft instruments and general research approach (household survey in NOLA neighborhoods). We will design, implement tools for, and carry-out research to address our questions in the Uptown Square, Pearl Neighborhood, and Tulane campus. (2) Students will join in a community-based participatory forum with a community partner (LifeCity) and help observe, record, document and report on participatory research methods.

Lab #3 Investigating “Mardi Gras as Development” and “Complex Cross-Cultural Phenomena: Tourists, Carnival, Krewes” (spanning weeks 3-6+ depending on interests)

Research topic(s): What is the net human developmental benefit of participating in Mardi Gras events? (to whom?) Which ‘interventions’ (events, parades, balls) are most effective in producing happiness? (for whom?) How can our idea (i.e., social entrepreneurship venture, new technology, new government policy, behavioral intervention, pilot project, etc.) make Mardi Gras “more effective”? What are the developmental costs of “Mardi Gras”? Elaborate a question and study design, pilot test instruments to address this question. Students can make this their final project, too.

Learning activities: Articulate a question, develop specific field protocols, and conduct field-based data collection-- one-one interviews, key informant interviews, and/or organize a focus group discussion to investigate the question. Relevant participants could be Tulane students, out-of-town tourists, local tourists, local businesses, krewe members, city officials, non-profit organizations, or other relevant informants. Investigate other data sources on this topic.

Lab #4 Student-generated field and desk research (weeks 6-10+ depending on interests)

Students can continue with our class projects (above), or investigate new questions for this phase. Develop a plan, work with professor, invite people to your team, develop the conceptual framework (what’s related to what?), identify relevant respondents or sources, identify (learn?) tools and techniques you need to carry it out, and get started. This will happen in parallel with in-class lectures and discussions on study designs, issues, and techniques. You don’t need to complete the entire project during the class itself.

Lab #5 Field Research Toolkit (week 13-14)

We review, compare and share insights on the research design tools we encounter in this class including: annotated bibliography, the critical “live” literature review, participant observation, spot checks, field notes, study design, experimental designs, rapid assessment, participatory engagement, household survey, In-depth interview (IDI), group discussions. Data entry and management tools include EpiData, Excel, Word/Text, SPSS, Stata. Thinking tools include log-frames, conceptual frameworks, (real) brainstorming, mental maps, Prezi, PPT, field journal, and writing exercises. Physical tools include paper notebooks, tape recorders, cameras, PDA, paper survey instruments, pen and pencil, cellphones, and your laptop. Which of these do you expect to carry with you, where in the world?