

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

MPA605 – Fall 2025 Research Methods for Public Managers

Saturday 9:00 – 12:00

Instructor Clifford Frasier

Office: Block C3 Room 4.017

Office Hours: Tuesday 18.00 – 20.00 & by appointment.

Meetings are held either in the professor's office or by video conference.

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Teaching Assistant (TA): Nursultan Salgarayev

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Office: Room 4.055/2

TA Office Hours: Wednesdays 13:30 – 14:30 & by appointment

Course Description

This course aims to provide students increased understanding of the scientific research process and the tools they will need to read and conduct empirical research in organizational settings. Students should expect to read and analyze scientific literature, write briefs or reports, perform basic qualitative and quantitative analysis. Upon completion of this module, students will know the structure and components of an empirical research paper, the key elements of the scientific method, and different types of investigations developed by the public administration research community. The course will equip students with the relevant tools to develop their final Master's Project.

Course Aims

- 1) Understand quantitative and qualitative research methods relevant to organizational research.
- 2) Learn the different types of investigations developed by the public administration research community.
- 3) Understand the standards for ethical research with human subjects.
- 4) Know the structure and components of a Masters Project (MP) research paper.
- 5) Prepare a high-quality written MP plan and present it to peers and faculty

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course the student will be expected to be able to:

- 1) Employ quantitative and qualitative methods in decision making
- 2) Understand how qualitative techniques are used in social research assessments
- 3) Understand how quantitative techniques are used in social research assessments

4) Employ analytical tools to collect, analyze and interpret data, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques

5) Complete CITI Certification and understand the importance of Ethical Human Subjects Research.

In order to pass this course, you must make a satisfactory attempt at all assessment tasks (below):

NASPAA Course Assessment Plan:

NASPAA MPA Student Learning Outcome	MPA 605	Grade component	Summative/ formative	Assessment Type
1. To lead and manage in public governance				
1.3. Develop and apply effective leadership and teamwork skills	X	Class participation	Formative	Active involvement in class discussions and research groups
3. To analyse, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions				
3.1. Employ analytical tools to collect, analyse and interpret data, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques	X	Final research proposal	Summative	Policy written communication
3.2. Employ quantitative and qualitative methods in decision making	X	Final research proposal	Summative	Policy written communication
3.3. Develop ability to think critically about policy and administrative choices	X	Homeworks 1-3	Formative	Active involvement in shaping group research project.
3.4. Generate new knowledge or synthesis of existing information pertaining to a critical question, issue of problem related to public administration	X	MP group assignments; Final research proposal	Summative	Policy written communication
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective				
4.1. Understand and apply professional codes of conduct to situation and decisions	X	Research presentation; Peer evaluation	Summative	In-class presentation; anonymous, formal peer assessment within research groups
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry				
5.1. Recognise, consider, respect and balance competing perspectives related to administration and policy	X	Class participation	Formative	Active involvement in class discussions and research groups; and in shaping group research project.
5.2. Communicate results of analysis to diverse audiences by means of oral presentations, written documents and digital media	X	Research presentation; Final research proposal	Summative	In-class presentation; Policy written communication

Grading and Assessment:

Activity	Date	Weighting (%)	CLOs
Class participation (includes peer evaluation)	on-going	15%	1,2,3,4,5
In-class quiz 1	Sept 6	5%	1,2,3
Completion of CITI training and certificate	Sept 13	5%	5
Homework #1	Sept 20	4%	1,2,3
MP group assignment: introduction with problem statement	Oct 5	10%	1,2,3
MP group assignment: lit review with annotated reference list	Oct 19	10%	1,2,3
Homework #2	Oct 25	4%	1,2,4
Homework #3	Nov 1	4%	1,3,4
In-class quiz 2	Nov 15	5%	1,2,3,4
MP group final presentation	Nov 22 – Nov 29	10%	1,2,3,4,5
MP group final proposal paper	Exam week	25%	1,2,3,4,5
Submission of peer evaluation form	Exam week	3%	

Class participation. This is awarded for contributing to a productive learning environment over the course of the term. All students in the course benefit from high levels of class attendance and participation, so you are expected to prepare and attend. Missing classes, being unprepared to discuss readings during sessions, and/or under-contributing to group processes will lower this portion of your grade.

Policy on browsers. This course honors a *no browser policy* during class time – relevant to cell phones, tablets, laptop computers, etc. Browsers are only allowed when the internet is required during in-class exercises. If students wish to check readings posted on Moodle, they should download such readings either before class or during the break. There will be no internet browsing during the seminar. To build collective support for this policy, students will be asked to sign a No Browser Policy Agreement at the beginning of the semester. Part of the student's participation grade depends on active listening to the lectures and to other students during the class, so students who violate the *no browser policy* risk forfeiting class participation points at the instructor's discretion.

Standardized GSPP Grading

Letter Grade	Percent range	Grade description (where applicable)
A	90-100	Excellent, student meets the highest standards in completing the course assignments.
A-	85-89	Excellent, student meets most of the highest standards in completing the course assignments
B+	80-84	Very good, student meets the high standards in completing the course assignments
B	75-79	Good, student meets most standards in completing the course assignments
B-	70-74	More than adequate, student shows some reasonable command of the course material
C+	65-69	Acceptable, student meets basic standards in completing the course assignments
C	60-64	Acceptable, student meets some of the basic standards in completing the course assignments
C-	50-59	Acceptable, while failing short of meeting basic standards in several ways
F	00-49	Failing, very poor performance

Moodle and Readings and Assignments

Moodle is an e-learning platform used at NU.

Moodle login page: <https://moodle.nu.edu.kz/login/index.php>

If you have problems with your Moodle account, please contact HelpDesk.

Email: helpdesk@nu.edu.kz; phone: 6200

All announcements will be delivered through Moodle or via the faculty instructor's email. Slides, if used, will be posted after class. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the semester with notice provided. Materials and assignments will be posted to Moodle.

Examples of completed assignments from past years of this course are not posted on Moodle and are not used as teaching material.

Attendance and Absence

Students are expected to attend all classes. Students who do not attend classes from the first day may be penalized or administratively withdrawn from the class.

Unexcused absences will be penalized by deducting 5% of the final grade for each unexcused week of absence.

Unexcused absence:

An unexcused absence is when students miss classes for reasons not accepted by the School. Arriving late or leaving class early without appropriate documentation/ justification will be counted as an unexcused absence. Some reasons for an unexcused absence include:

- 1) missing bus;
- 2) working at a job;
- 3) sleeping too late;
- 4) going on a business trip.

Excused absence:

If unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance, student must notify the Graduate Teaching Assistant and course instructor in advance.

Some examples for an excused absence are: death of a family member; student's illness or injury.

If a student provides a medical certificate verified by University Health Center (UHC) then absence is counted as excused.

The time limit for submission of documentation for absences (including, but not limited to medical certificates) is 3 (three) working days after the condition preventing student from attending is over. Medical certificates (or photocopy) issued by a clinic other than University Health Center has to be verified by UHC.

In cases other than student's illness, it is the course instructor who makes the decision on granting excused absence after considering documentation provided by a student.

Late/missed submission of assignments

- Re the in-class quizzes, students are permitted to take a make-up only if they have a *prior* arrangement with me (a prior arrangement is defined as at least 24 hours in advance) or supply UHC-verified documentation or Dean's permission excusing their absence due to serious illness or another family problem. Travel, conflict with another activity or job, and other nonmedical reasons are not acceptable excuses for missing the deadlines printed in this syllabus.
- Turning in an assignment beyond the deadline leads to an automatic grade reduction of 10% of the assignment for each calendar day (including the day of lateness and each subsequent day).
- Technical difficulties uploading assignments to Moodle will not excuse late assignments. If Moodle is frozen and will not upload, then please email a copy directly to me with a timestamp before the deadline.

Student Misconduct

The students and faculty at Nazarbayev University are very concerned about academic integrity. Each student should have the assurance that the rules of the game are understood by everyone and enforced equally. Students are expected to adhere to the University's academic integrity policy, which may be found posted at: <https://nu.edu.kz/media/prospective-students/NU-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf> Every student is expected to maintain academic integrity and is expected to report violations to me.

The NU Academic Code of Conduct lists academic integrity as one of six important values. According to this Code, we have agreed to 'make every effort to understand what counts as plagiarism and why this is wrong.' To avoid giving the impression that you are passing off other people's work as your own, you will need to acknowledge conscientiously the sources of information, ideas, and arguments used in your assignments. For this purpose, you will use the in-text citation style according to the American Psychological Association:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/basic-principles>
<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/basic-principles/author-date>

Students should review carefully the definitions of: plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of documents. **All** written work that students submit must abide strictly by the University's academic integrity policy. Penalties will follow the below guide:

Homework, presentation slides, papers (Turnitin):

- 20%+ similarity → automatic 20% grade reduction
- 25%+ similarity → automatic 25% reduction
- 30%+ similarity → Instructor's discretion

The best way to avoid the above problem is to adhere to the policy of **never ever copy pasting** anything anywhere in your assignments. All work submitted will be checked by university software to detect AI usage and plagiarism.

Repeated violations, and/or significant violations of the policy will result in the imposition of Category A, B or C penalties, according to the University's Student Code of Conduct.

AI policy:

In the course, we appropriate a recent analogy comparing the introduction of AI to the introduction of plastics into the industrial economy decades ago, in

Lobe, A. (2025, January 8). AI is the new plastic – how the web suffers from digital waste. *NZZ*. <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/ki-ist-das-neue-plastik-wie-das-web-unter-digitalem-muell-leidet-ld.1864889>).

The introduction of plastic and later AI both increase productivity and the possibility of creating useful products, while simultaneously increasing garbage and increasing the demand for authentic, higher quality work. The uses of AI tools (Grammarly and ChatGPT) in this course is therefore limited. It is improper to use these tools: to generate output and present it as your own

work or idea; or to generate an output, paraphrase it and then present it as your own work or idea. Keep in mind that it is wrong to represent yourself as having produced something when you didn't produce it.

1. For this course, the only acceptable AI tools to use are: Grammarly and ChatGPT ('Open AI').

2. Below are the limited but acceptable uses of the above tools:

- Grammarly: assistance with grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- ChatGPT can be used:
 - to find and retrieve information, but not to verify information.
 - as a search engine (similar to Google Scholar) to identify sources for literature review.
 - as a 'research assistant' to locate information. Keep in mind that information retrieved by ChatGPT cannot be considered as "true" and therefore must be verified by other sources.
 - as an agent to propose ideas for your consideration – ideas such as (a) draft problem statements based on reviews of literature, (b) draft research questions that respond to problem statements, (c) methodological choices for how to analyze data and for how to present findings (keep in mind that ChatGPT cannot judge between methodological options and cannot explain adequately why the methodology is appropriate to your study).

3. Below are unacceptable uses of the AI tools:

- To verify information.
- To compose your assignments. ChatGPT should not compose your homework, your group assignments (including sections of group assignments such as the methodology section of your group's final proposal paper), nor should it compose any slide of your presentations.

4. Anything *generated* by AI needs to be followed by an intext citation, as well as a citation in the reference section, as per the APA guidelines articulated in the following link:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

5. Assignments that are prepared out of class must include a slide or a page dedicated to one of the below acknowledgments:

- **"No content generated by AI technologies has been used in this assignment."**
- **"I acknowledge the use of (1)** [*specify Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>) or ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>)*] **(2) to** [*specify what the tool was used for, e.g. (a) to generate materials for background research in the drafting of this assignment, (b) to improve the spelling and grammar of the document, (c) to refine the academic tone and accuracy of my work, including grammatical structures, punctuation, and vocabulary, (d) to refine the logic of paragraphs in the following sections or subsections (list the sections), (e) other usage specified*]. **(3) I entered the following prompts on** [*specify the date, such as 5 April, 2025*] : [*specify exactly the prompts,*

such as “How many hospitals are currently operating in Kazakhstan?”] (4) The output from the AI was then [specify how it was used, such as (a) included in the second paragraph of Appendix B in modified form, (b) further modified to better represent my own tone and style of writing; and in all cases was acknowledged by in-text citations/s.]

6. All students must sign our course AI agreement policy.

Special Learning Needs Policy

Nazarbayev University is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive education environment for all students, with and without special learning needs*. If you have, or suspect you have, a special learning need, please contact the Special Learning Needs Committee (SLNC). This committee exists to provide academic support to students with qualified special learning needs. Please contact the SLNC as early as possible, within the first several weeks of the semester, to ensure you receive the fullest support available.

If you have approved SLNC accommodations, please share them with your teaching faculty in a timely manner to enable their implementation in the course. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not apply until your teaching faculty has received them.

*This includes conditions that may be physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and psychological in nature.

Email contact: NU_SLNC@nu.edu.kz

Please see the full NU Policy: [Support for Students with Disability and Special Learning Needs Policy and Procedures](#)

Additional Administrative Details

- You are responsible for obtaining any materials distributed in or outside of class.
- Please use my office hours!

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 (Aug 23) Course overview

- Part 1: Course overview
- Part 2: Laying groundwork
 - Masters Project (MP) Research group formation
 - Research topic development

Readings:

- Chapter 1 in Booth et al. (2008). The craft of research.
- pp. 27-29 in Creswell. (2003). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.
- Mash, B. (2014). African primary care research: Choosing a topic and developing a proposal.
- To prepare for next week's in-class exercise read: p. 3 in Patten, M. L. (2002). Proposing empirical research

Week 2 (Aug 30) MP structure & problem statement

- Part 1: Structure of the MP
- Part 2: Laying groundwork
 - MP Research group formation
 - Formulation of problem statement
- In-class exercise
- In-class quiz (ungraded)

Readings:

- pp. 25-33 in Kabir, S. M. S. (2016). "Problem formulation and objective determination." in Basic guidelines for research. An introductory approach for all disciplines.

For further reading:

- Newman, I., & Covrig, D. M. (2013). Building consistency between title, problem statement, purpose, & research questions to improve the quality of research plans and reports.
- Instructions for how to log-on to CITI

Week 3 (Sept 6) MP Introduction & Lit Review, and ethics in research

- Part 1: First sections of the MP:
 - Introduction
 - > Background/context
 - > Problem statement
 - > Purpose of study (objective)
 - > Research question

- Literature review
- Part 2: Ethics in research
 - CITI certificate
- Guest speaker: Professor Peter Howie
- In-class exercise

● **In-class quiz (graded)**

Readings:

- Research question: pp. 9-11 and 85-91 in Bryman (2012).
- Literature review: Chapter 5 (pp. 98-128) in Bryman (2012).
- Sample lit reviews:
 - Keller et al. (2011). Promotores and the Chronic Care Model: an organizational assessment.
 - D'Andrea & Daniels. (2007). Dealing with Institutional Racism on Campus: Initiating Difficult Dialogues and Social Justice Advocacy Interventions.
 - Chang et al. (2021). Rapid Transition to Telehealth and the Digital Divide: Implications for Primary Care Access and Equity in a Post-COVID Era

Ethics in research:

- pp. 188-196 in Booth et al. (2008) (beginning w section 13.3), & pp. 271-274 in Booth et al. (2016). The craft of research.
- Chapter 6 in Bryman (2012)

Week 4 (Sept 13) Principles of social science research

- Part 1: Social science research
 - systematic/controlled
 - reliability
 - validity
 - trustworthiness
- Part 2:
 - Types of research suitable to the MP
- Guest speaker: Akbota Yelmurat, Director of the NU Writing Center
- In-class exercise

● CITI certifications **due (graded)**

Readings:

Reliability, validity, trustworthiness:

- pp. 45-50 in Bryman (2012)
- Stahl & King (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Types of organizational research:

- Needs Assessment: Altschuld, J. W., & Lepicki, T. L. (2009).
- Process study:
 - Steckler, A. E., & Linnan, L. E. (2002). Process

evaluation for public health interventions and research.

- Examine Figure 1 in Moore et al. (2015)
- Program evaluation or implementation study:
 - p. xvii, and Chapter 1 (pp. 5-29) in Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey (2015)
 - Coop Gordon et al. 2019. An implementation study of relationship checkups as home visitations for low-income at-risk couples.
- Outcome evaluation: Kellaghan, T., & Madaus, G. F. (2000). Outcome evaluation.
- Case study:
 - Bryman (2012), pp. 66-72
 - Eller Gerber Robinson, pp.155-165

☉ Homework assignment #1: review of an organizational assessment paper.

Week 5 (Sept 20) Principles of research design

- Part 1: Research design components
 - type of design
 - research questions (and hypotheses if appropriate)
 - measurement: indicators and variables
 - data
 - sampling strategy
 - data collection techniques
 - data analysis methods
- Part 2:
 - Unit of analysis
 - Discussion of homework #1
- Practice quiz (ungraded)
- Guest speaker: Venera Niyazbayeva, NU Library
- ☉ Homework #1 **due (graded)**

Readings:

Type of design:

- quantitative: Bryman (2012) pp. 159-182
- qualitative: Bryman (2012) pp. 379-414
- mixed methods: Bryman (2012) pp. 627-652
- inductive vs. deductive: Bryman (2012) pp. 36-37
- descriptive: Eller, Gerber & Robinson (2018), pp. 11-12, 93-94, 116
- comparative: Bryman (2012) pp. 72-75

Research questions: Bryman (2012), p. 9

Measurement:

- indicators, measures and operationalization: Bryman (2012) pp. 163-167
- sampling:

– Bryman(2012) pp. 183-207 and pp. 415-429

Unit of analysis: <https://pressbooks.pub/scientificinquiryinsocialwork/chapter/7-3-unit-of-analysis-and-unit-of-observation/>

Week 6 (Sept 27) Qualitative methods general overview

- Part 1: Qual methods overview
- Part 2: Who is included in the study? Intro to sampling.
- In-class exercise
- In-class practice quiz (ungraded)
- Guest speaker: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Nursultan Salgarayev re Literature Review
- MP groups' announcement/oral summary on research site

Readings:

Qualitative methods overview: pp. 14-19 in Creswell (2003)

Sampling in qualitative studies: pp. 416-429 in Bryman (2012).

- MP group project assignment: Introduction (with problem statement)

Week 7 (Oct 4) Qualitative data collection

- Part 1: Collecting data
 - Observations
 - Interviews
- Part 2: Collecting data
 - Interviews (continued)
- In-class exercise: interviewing
- In-class practice quiz (ungraded)
- MP group assignment: Introduction (with background and problem statement) **due (graded)**

Readings:

Observation methods:

- pp. 269-287 and pp. 430-467 in Bryman (2012)
- Ciesielska, Boström & Öhlander (2018)

Interview methods:

- pp. 468-499 in Bryman (2012)

- MP group project assignment: Lit review & annotated reference list

FALL BREAK

Week 8 (Oct 18) Qualitative data collection and analysis

- Part 1: Focus groups
- Part 2: Interview and focus group data analysis

- Coding basics (Bryman, 2012, chapter 24)
- Analysis basics
 - > Content analysis (and its cousin thematic analysis)
 - > Framework method
 - > Ethnography

● MP group Lit Review with annotated reference list **due (graded)**

Readings:

Focus group methods: pp. 500-520 in Bryman

On coding:

- Neuman, W. L. (2011) pp. 477-486 (pay special attention to subsection **Coding Qualitative Data** (pp.480-482))
- Taylor, C. & Gibbs, G. How and what to code.
<http://www.acrn.eu/cambridge/downloads/files/How%20and%20what%20to%20code.pdf>

Content Analysis:

- Humble, N., & Mozelius, P. (2022).
 pp. 557-559 in Bryman (2012)
- (For further reading: pp. 288-309 in Bryman 2012)

Framework method: Gale, N. K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., & Redwood, S. (2013).

Ethnography: pp. 430-467 in Bryman (2012).

● Homework #2: Fill-out observation protocol at student's worksite.

Week 9 (Oct 25) Qualitative data analysis. Quantitative data collection.

- Part 1: Lab exercise: NVivo exercises
- Part 2: Survey methods
 - Sampling continued: random, stratified, purposive, convenience, snowball
 - Sample size
 - Variables and operationalization
 - Survey question design
- In-class practice quiz (ungraded)
- Discussion of homework #2

● Homework #2 **due (graded)**

Readings:

Survey methods:

- sampling: Bryman (2012) pp. 183-207
- variables:
 - Bryman (2012) p. 336

- Eller Gerber Robinson (2018 pp. 96-99 -Variables, measures, measurement error
- question design: Bryman (2012) pp. 237-239
- Homework #3: design a 5-question survey for your worksite. Explain what each question operationalizes.

Week 10 (Nov 1) Survey data analysis

- Part 1: Properties of types of variables
- Part 2: Descriptive statistics
 - Normal distribution
 - Central tendency measures
 - Standard deviation
 - Charts and graphs
 - Discuss Homework #3
- Homework #3 **due (graded)**

Readings:

Types of variables:

- pp. 335-336 in Bryman (2012)

Normal distribution:

- p. 196 in Bryman (2012)
- pp. 352-354 in O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner (2008)

Descriptive statistics: pp. 335-339 in Bryman (2012)

Week 11 (Nov 8) Survey data analysis (continued)

- Part 1: Bivariate correlation and multiple regression. Multiple regression will address:
 - Dependent variable
 - Independent variable/s
 - Controls
 - Constant
 - Error term
 - Missing data
- Part 2: Lab exercises w SPSS/Stata

Readings:

Bivariate correlation and multiple regression:

- pp. 339-352 in Bryman (2012)
- See also:
 - pp. 430-446 in O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner (2019)
- Missing data: p. 333 in Bryman (2012)

Week 12 (Nov 15) Preparing for MP group deliverables

- Part 1: Final sections of the MP
 - Discussion (w limitations)
 - Conclusion (w management recommendations)
- Part 2: Guest speaker
- In-class exercise
- **In-class quiz #2 (graded)**
- Questionnaire of topics to review

Readings:

Review generalizability, causality, and measurement: pp. 175-177 in Bryman (2012)

How to write recommendations:

- Read <https://researcher.life/blog/article/what-are-implications-recommendations-in-research/>

Week 13 (Nov 22) MP group presentations

- Part 1: Review (based on questionnaire)
- MP group presentations

Week 14 (Nov 29) MP group presentations; course wrap-up

- MP group presentations
- Course wrap-up
- Course evaluation due

- **December 4** by end of day: Final papers **due (graded)**
- **December 5** by end of day: Submission of peer evaluation form **due (graded)**

References

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- Newcomer, K. E., Hatry, H. P., & Wholey, J. S. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass & Pfeiffer Imprints, Wiley.
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- Newman, I., & Covrig, D. M. (2013). Building consistency between title, problem statement, purpose, & research questions to improve the quality of research plans and reports. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 25(1), 70-79.
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