

BUS 486

SENIOR SEMINAR—RESEARCH SECTION

Spring, 2009

Dee Birnbaum
328 Buckman
843-3995 (office); 454-6080 (home)
Office Hours: 3:30-5 p.m. TTh (and by appointment)

Course Objectives

Students will learn to:

1. Search on-line data bases for scholarly articles;
2. Identify a body of literature in the social/behavioral sciences that is applicable to the solution of practical business problems and write a critical review of this literature;
3. Identify and delineate a feasible research project from the body of literature in #2;
4. Write a testable hypothesis that follows from #3;
5. Write a comprehensive research proposal that includes methods for collecting and analyzing data using the project outlined in #3;
6. Distinguish among different types of research, e.g. qualitative versus quantitative, applied versus basic, macro-level versus micro-level;
7. Identify and distinguish among the different paradigms that form the basic assumptions underlying different research philosophies;
8. Distinguish between reliability and validity;
9. Distinguish among the different types of reliability and validity;
10. Identify strengths and weaknesses of different research designs and methods;
11. Operationalize (concretize) abstract concepts.

Required Reading

W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches*. NY, Pearson, 6th edition, 2006

Exams

There will be two exams. The first will focus on your textbook readings and class notes and your ability to apply your textbook readings and class notes to characterizing short statements describing research. The final exam will focus on critically evaluating scholarly research literature. The first exam will be weighted as 25 percent of your grade and the second will count as 25 percent of your grade.

You will vote as a class to determine when your first exam will take place. If the date the class chooses for the exam is an inconvenient time for you, I will try to schedule an alternative time for you, space permitting, as long as your preferred time is earlier than the scheduled date and time of the exam. The final exam will take place on the date and time scheduled by the Registrar's office.

Research Project

Except for those of you who are continuing a research project from BUS 361, you will form groups of two to four students to define and work on your research project together. Each student in the group is expected to contribute to each step of the project (i.e., searching data bases, reading and interpreting the articles and writing the final paper). Your end-product will be a research proposal that includes an integrative review of the scholarly literature relevant to a subject of your choice, a methods section and an analysis section. For this class, you will **NOT** be expected to actually collect and analyze data, but you must devise a plan to do so.

The integrative research review should focus exclusively on scholarly literature on your subject. Your review should be issue-oriented, **NOT** a journalistic account of literature arranged in chronological order of appearance. At the end of the literature review, the reader should know what the current state-of-the-art in the field is. What do scientists know and what continuing questions remain about this subject? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the work that has been done? How would your research project add to our knowledge about this subject?

One of the most difficult parts of the project will be to carve out a feasible, yet meaningful project—one that attempts to tackle an important issue, but one that could be done.

Some of you might be working on a research project for Economics Senior Seminar and/or Personnel & Human Resource Management. You may not use the same project for this course. You are permitted to use a topic that is related to your HRM or economics research, but it must encompass a substantial amount of additional literature that you are not using for your other project.

To help you with your project, we will dedicate one class session to working with Prof. Rech in the library. She will teach you how to conduct a search of the scholarly literature on-line. Your textbook readings will help you to understand the research process as will the class lectures. Students sometimes have difficulty identifying an appropriate set of research questions, understanding how to match data collection methods, research questions and data analysis methods. Actually, it is the entire research process that students have difficulty visualizing. The more students read about research and read research articles, the more quickly they begin to understand how to proceed. By early February, you should have settled on a topic. We will discuss the topics you have chosen in class to guide your work and to give other students examples of appropriate topics. Throughout the process, I will be available to you inside and outside class to offer guidance.

The research project will count 50 percent toward your final grade, but you will not be able to pass the course without completing the project and presenting it to the class. Please see the separate sheets that list the criteria I will use to grade your project. Your project is due April 2, 2009. The presentations will be scheduled for the last week of class.

Class Topics & Assigned Readings

No specific dates are listed because progress in the course will be determined by the needs of students. You should plan to read two chapters per week of the textbook. Each chapter is approximately 20 pages.

Class Topics

How to investigate a topic
Factual Statements
Standards of Evidence
Usefulness of Theory
Standards of Theory Adequacy
Paradigms
Citations & Grammar

Reliability & Validity
Writing Hypotheses
Review of basic statistics

Assigned Chapters

#1 Science & Research
#2 Dimensions of Research
#3 Theory & Research

#4 Meanings of Methodology
#5 Literature Review & Ethics
#6 Qualitative & Quantitative Research
#7 Measurement
#8 Sampling
#9 Experiments
#10 Surveys
#11 Nonreactive/Secondary
#12 Quant Analysis
#13 Field

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Criteria for Evaluation of Projects/Papers

| | Poor | Acceptable | Advanced |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Question/Topic | Unsophisticated. Does not draw on any material from the course. | Makes a minor contribution to the literature such as introducing a new variable or a replication with new types of data. | Makes a significant change in established model, significant contribution to the literature. |
| Literature Review | a.) Incomplete, few scholarly sources. Poor integration or analysis of existing literature. | Complete. Demonstrated understanding of cited articles. | Complete. Demonstrated understanding of articles and their place in the larger literature. Demonstrated understanding of shortcomings of literature (advanced critical thinking). |
| | b.) Uses historical chronology as organizing framework or has no logical framework for organizing literature. | Literature partially organized by key issues. | Literature review organized by key issues, including conflicting perspectives and methodological problems. |
| Model | Poorly constructed, reflecting poor understanding/integration of social/behavioral science concepts. | Accurate, but simple model, or a minor change in an existing model. | Advanced modeling or a significant change to an existing model; making a unique contribution reflecting an understanding of models and modeling techniques from upper level courses. |
| Empirics | Poor selection of a data source; proposed use of unsophisticated data analysis such as simple correlations. | Selection of an appropriate data source. Use of standard regression analysis or other more advanced statistical techniques. | Selection of a unique data source. Proposed use of regression analysis or other advanced statistical techniques accompanied by appropriate application of those techniques. |
| Writing | Poor grammar. Poor organization. Incomplete citations. | Clear presentation of question, literature review, model, empirics, results and conclusions using correct grammar and well-organized format for scholarly writing. Proper citations used. Technical writing style employed. | Same as "acceptable" plus advanced correct use of jargon, reflecting ability to understand scholarly literature, and technical writing style and format following published academic articles. |
| Oral Presentation | Poor organization. Little demonstrated understanding of project. Extraneous material presented. | Clear oral presentation of question, literature review, model, empirics, results and conclusions using well-organized format, following demonstrated format for scholarly presentations. Demonstrated understanding of the material; ability to field questions from fellow students. | Clear oral presentation of question, literature review, model, empirics, results and conclusions using well-organized format, following demonstrated format for scholarly presentations. Demonstrated understanding of the material; ability to field difficult/technical questions from fellow students and professors. Advanced correct use of jargon, reflecting ability to understand scholarly literature. |
| Scientific Objectivity | Does not identify obvious limitations of proposed study. | Identified obvious limitations of proposed study. | Identifies obvious and more subtle limitations of proposed study. |

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