**PLS 402: Research, Evaluation, and Assessment in NRRM (3 Credits)
Course Syllabus – Spring, 2015**

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| **Instructor:** | David A. Graefe, Ph.D. | **Class Meets:** | Tuesday and Thursday 2:00 – 3:15 PM |
| **Office:** | 201 Prichard Hall   | **Classroom:** | Morrow Library, Room 122 |
| **Phone Number:** | (304) 696-2608 | **Office Hours:** | Monday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PMWednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PMOr by appointment |
| **E-Mail:** | graefe@marshall.edu |

**Course Description (from catalog):**

A theoretical and practical approach to research, evaluation, and assessment of the social sciences of natural resources and recreation management.

**More Description:**

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the processes and methods used by social scientists to answer important questions surrounding natural resource and recreation management. Upon completion of this course, students will possess the knowledge required to evaluate existing research, develop appropriate research questions, design research studies, collect and analyze data, interpret research findings and report those findings in a professional manner.

**Course Format:**

Class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday each week from 2:00 to 3:15 PM, unless otherwise specified by the instructor or course schedule. Materials will be presented using lectures, in-class discussions, and class projects and presentations. Students will be expected to attend class and participate in class discussions, complete written homework assignments, take in-class exams, and prepare and present a final project.

**Required Texts, Additional Reading, and Other Materials:**

The following textbooks are required for the course:

* Babbie, E. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research* (13th ed.).

Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

* Other readings as assigned and provided by the instructor.

Assigned readings are an essential component of this course and provide students with a baseline of knowledge that will be expanded upon through more detailed and complex in-class lectures and discussions. Students will be required to complete assigned readings prior to the class period in which the material will be discussed.

Supplemental course materials (e.g., handouts, reading assignments, etc.) will be posted to Blackboard (<http://www.marshall.edu/muonline/>). I will be sending class announcements, updates, etc. using official Marshall University email address, so be sure to check this account daily.

**Desired Objectives/Outcomes:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Learning Outcomes**  | **How Practiced in this Course** | **How Assessed in this Course** |
| Students will understand the foundations of social science research | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Homework, Semester Project |
| Students will have a comprehensive understanding of the ethics of social research | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Homework |
| Students will be able to critique and evaluate existing research | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Semester Project, Homework |
| Students will be able to practice and discuss both qualitative and quantitative research methods | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Homework |
| Students will demonstrate an understanding of several sampling and data collection techniques | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Homework |
| Students will design and present a proposal for carrying out a social science research study | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Exams, Semester Project, Homework |
| Students will demonstrate basic knowledge pertaining to data analysis and summary statistics | In-class examples, discussions, Babbie, 2010 | Final Exam, Homework, Semester Project |

**University Policies:**

By enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. Please read the full text of each policy by going to [www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs](http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs) and clicking on “Marshall University Policies.” Or, you can access the policies directly by going to <http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/?page_id=802>

Academic Dishonesty/ Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates/ Computing Services Acceptable Use/ Inclement Weather/ Dead Week/ Students with Disabilities/ Academic Forgiveness/ Academic Probation and Suspension/ Academic Rights and Responsibilities of Students/ Affirmative Action/ Sexual Harassment

**Attendance Policy and Make-up Work:**

In-class participation is an essential component of this course and students will be expected to attend each class unless they have a valid excuse (see university excused absence policy). I will be happy to meet with students who miss class with a valid excuse to discuss course material and how missed work can be made up. However, I will not re-lecture to students who miss class during office hours, and it will be the students’ responsibility to catch up on missed material (e.g., readings, in-class exercises, etc.).

**Assignment Submission and Late Policy**

All assignments must be turned in **at the beginning of class** on the specified due date. Except under special circumstances with written justification, assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized with a 10% reduction in points for each day late, including Saturdays and Sundays (i.e., one day late = 90% highest possible score, two days late = 80% highest possible score, etc.). Assignments will not be accepted more than one week after the original due date.

**Evaluation Method / Grading Policy:**

Students will be evaluated in this course based on their performance in the following categories:

* Class Participation – Students are required to attend and actively participate in each class throughout the semester. Students will earn participation points by showing up for class, asking relevant questions during lectures, and contributing to classroom discussions and assignments. Contrarily, participation points will be deducted from students who make a habit of skipping or disrupting class (e.g., arriving late or leaving early, using cell phones or other distracting devices, intentionally distracting other students, etc.). Individual class participation grades will be awarded at the discretion of the instructor. Attendance may be taken at random throughout the semester.
* Homework Assignments – Students will be required to complete two written homework assignments throughout the course of the semester. The content and format will vary and will be specified for each assignment. Grading of written assignments will be based both on what is presented (content) as well as the style and adequacy of the presentation (process). Written assignments should be neat, succinct, and clear. All homework assignments must be typed (12 –point font, double-spaced), printed, and handed in at the **beginning** of class on the date the assignment is due (see Late Policy for more detail).
* Individual Project and Presentation – Students will be required to prepare a comprehensive proposal for a survey research project on a NRRM-related topic of their choice (topic must be approved by instructor). Each student will prepare a written proposal and will present this material to the class (10 minute presentation followed by 5 minutes for discussion and questions). This research project and presentation will be completed in lieu of a final exam.
* Examinations – There will be two written mid-term examinations that will be administered during specified class periods this semester (see course schedule). Any student who misses an exam due to an unexcused absence will receive a 0% for that exam (see make-up exam policy). Each midterm exam will be worth 20% of your overall course grade.

The evaluation categories listed above will contribute to your overall course grade as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Class Participation | 10% |
|  | Written Homework Assignments (two at 15% each) | 30% |
|  | Individual Project and Presentation | 20% |
|  | Examinations (2 midterms at 20% each) | 40% |
|  | **Total** | 100% |

This class will employ a weighted grading system. To determine your grade in this course, fill in your percentage score for each evaluation category below, multiply each score by its weight, and then add the values in the final grade column to find your overall grade out of 100. In addition to handing graded assignments back to you in class, I will post grades for individual assignments and exams on blackboard. However, please remember that you **must** use the weighted grading system shown below to find an accurate portrayal of your overall course grade. I am happy to meet with you to discuss your course progress/grade during office hours throughout the semester.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Category** | **Your Score** **(out of 100)** |  | **Weight** |  | **Contribution to****Final Grade** |
| Participation | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .10 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Homework #1 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .15 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Homework #2 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .15 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Exam #1 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .20 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Exam #2 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .20 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Research Proposal Paper | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .15 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Research Proposal Presentation | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | X | .05 | = | \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| **Final Grade (out of 100)** | = | **\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

Final letter grades will be determined using the following scale:

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 90-100 |  A |
|  | 80-89 |  B |
|  | 70-79  |  C |
|  | 60-69 |  D |
|  | Below 60  |  F |

The instructor reserves the right to change these values depending on the overall class performance and/or extenuating circumstances.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated in this or any other course at Marshall University. As a member of this class, it is your responsibility to read and abide by rules set forth in the official Marshall University Academic Dishonesty Policy. Acts of academic dishonesty include cheating, fabrication/falsification, plagiarism, bribes/favors/threats, and complicity (i.e., helping others to commit dishonest acts). Anyone found to be cheating, plagiarizing the work of others, or violating this policy in any other way will be subject to serious penalties including failure of the course. In extremely flagrant cases, additional sanctions may be pursued through the Office of Judicial Affairs. Please refer to the Marshall University Undergraduate Catalog for a full definition of academic dishonesty.

**Make-up Exams:**

Make‑up exams will not be given except under unusual circumstances with satisfactory written justification. Any student who misses an exam due to an unexcused absence will receive a grade of zero for that exam with no opportunity for make-up or substitution. Students who miss an exam because of a genuine emergency or university excused absence will be granted a make-up exam (provided that the reason for the absence is given prior to missing the exam – call and leave a message if you have to). Make up exams must be taken within one week of the original scheduled date. The decision whether to give a make-up exam rests with the instructor.

**Communication:**
I will post course content on Blackboard (e.g., syllabus, assignments, readings, etc.), so be sure to check for new materials regularly. Your MU e-mail address will be used to make any general announcements, last minute schedule changes, etc. I recommend that you monitor your MU email and Blackboard accounts at least once a day. Also, I will only respond to emails that you send me from your official MU email address – it is the only way for me to be sure that I am responding to you (and not someone else pretending to be you).

**Classroom Learning Environment:**
To maintain the best possible environment for learning, the following standards for acceptable behavior will be followed by all students in this class:

* Turn off all cell phones and pagers before entering class.
* Be on time for class and don’t leave early.
* Don’t have conversations during class that distract others.
* Don’t disparage other students – treat all class members respectfully.
* Don’t use profanity in class.
* Don’t use tobacco in class.

Students who violate these standards and policies will be asked to leave class and will lose participation points.

**Policy for Students with Disabilities:**

Marshall University is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with physical, learning and psychological disabilities.  University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with disabilities to contact the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS) in Prichard Hall 117, phone 304 696-2271 to provide documentation of their disability.  Following this, the DSS Coordinator will send a letter to each of the student’s instructors outlining the academic accommodation he/she will need to ensure equality in classroom experiences, outside assignment, testing and grading.  The instructor and student will meet to discuss how the accommodation(s) requested will be provided.  For more information, please visit <http://www.marshall.edu/disabled> or contact Disabled Student Services Office at Prichard Hall 11, phone 304-696-2271.

**Course Schedule:**

The following outline delineates the tentative class schedule with topics to be addressed during the course. Please note this is a tentative schedule and it may change as the class progresses:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Day** | **Topic** | **Assignment** |
| 1/13 | T | Course intro, syllabus overview, human inquiry and science |  |
| 1/15 | R | Human inquiry and science cont.  | Babbie Ch. 1 |
| 1/20 | T | Paradigms, theory and social research | Babbie Ch. 2 |
| 1/22 | R | Ethics and politics of social research, **Introduce Homework #1** | Babbie Ch. 3 |
| 1/27 | T | Research design | Babbie Ch. 4 |
| 1/29 | R | Conceptualization and measurement | Babbie Ch. 5 |
| 2/03 | T | Indexes, scales, typologies | Babbie Ch. 6 |
| 2/05 | R | Sampling | Babbie Ch. 7, **Homework #1 Due** |
| 2/10 | T | Sampling | Babbie Ch. 7 |
| 2/12 | R | Wrap-up Ch. 1-7, review Q and A for exam #1 |  |
| 2/17 | T | **Exam #1** |  |
| 2/19 | R | Exam discussion, **Introduce HW #2** |  |
| 2/24 | T | Sampling,  | Babbie Ch. 7 |
| 2/26 | R | Sampling, experiments | Babbie Ch. 8 |
| 3/03 | T | Survey research | Babbie Ch. 9 |
| 3/05 | R | Quantitative Data Analysis, Intro to SPSS | Babbie Ch. 14 **Bring observation data to class** |
| 3/10 | T | More survey research and quantitative Analysis | Babbie Ch. 14 |
| 3/12 | R | **Observation Presentations**, **Introduce Final Project**, finish quantitative and/or survey research  | **Homework #2 due** |
| 3/17 | T | **No Class – Spring Break!** |  |
| 3/19 | R | **No Class – Spring Break!** |  |
| 3/24 | T | Qualitative Field Research | Chapter. 10 |
| 3/26 | R | Review for Exam #2 | **Final Project Topics Due** |
| 3/31 | T | **Exam #2** |  |
| 4/02 | R | Exam discussion, project discussion |  |
| 4/07 | T | Qualitative data analysis | Babbie Ch. 13 |
| 4/09 | R | Evaluation Research | Babbie Ch. 12 |
| 4/14 | T | **No class – time to work on projects** |  |
| 4/16 | R | **No class – time to work on projects** |  |
| 4/21 | T | Statistical Analyses | Babbie Ch. 16 |
| 4/23 | R | Reading and writing social research | Babbie Ch. 17 |
| 4/28 | T | Final Project Presentations | **Final Project Papers Due** |
| 4/30 | R | Final Project Presentations | **Final Project Papers Due** |

Every student is responsible for all materials presented in class, including lectures, notes, and handouts. In case you are not present for a class, you should contact me to receive information about the material presented in that class. Class attendance is very important.