

# PA 8120: Analysis & Decision Making (Online)

Fall 2021 Syllabus  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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<https://calendly.com/dscheller/fall-2021-meeting-calendar>

## Course Description

PA 8120 is a course that focuses on how to conduct theoretically and methodologically sound quantitative research for students in public administration. Quantitative analysis is the main component of the course, but qualitative research will also be introduced. The first part of the course focuses on research design - how to ask relevant research questions and how to develop a research design. We will cover theories, measurement, sampling, and the types of designs to use based upon the specific research question and/or data availability. Students will learn how to conduct statistical analyses by hand and with the statistical software, SPSS. Basic hypothesis testing and univariate/bivariate analysis are some of the statistical topics covered in this course. Regression analysis is also a focus of the course as it is the main statistical method in academic and applied studies to examine the effects of independent variables on dependent variables. Ultimately, PA 8120 is a tools course that gives students access to concepts important for analysis in the government and nonprofit workplaces.

This course is in an online format, but is organized in a manner similar to a traditional in-person class. It is organized by week, and nearly every week has a video lecture and assignment to help improve learning and comprehension of the material. I encourage you to not get behind in the material as each week tends to build upon the previous week. It is not self-paced - take the course week by week. I have attempted to do this through the course design by focusing on weeks.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop research questions and hypotheses for empirical testing.
- Establish a research design to test research questions and hypotheses.
- Understand and conduct statistical tests by hand and with SPSS software.
- Present a research design and findings in a well-written research paper.

## Required Texts

Nishishiba, Masami, Matthew Jones, and Mariah Kraner. 2014. *Research Methods and Statistics for Public and Nonprofit Administrators: A Practical Guide*. Sage.

Please get this edition of the textbook. There is no guarantee that older editions will contain the same information. ***Other readings will be located on Canvas to supplement the main textbook or active links will be provided in the syllabus.***

## Required Software

We will be using SPSS in this class to analyze<sub>1</sub>data. You will need to rent it to complete the

assignments and the research paper. The following link contains a website where you can rent it for a reasonable price. You will need the Standard Grad Pak 26 for 6 months.

[https://estore.onthehub.com/WebStore/OfferingsOfMajorVersionList.aspx?pmv=304b1dff-5b5d-e911-8c1c\\_mnuMain=2ff73789-74c7-e011-ae14-f04da23e67f6](https://estore.onthehub.com/WebStore/OfferingsOfMajorVersionList.aspx?pmv=304b1dff-5b5d-e911-8c1c_mnuMain=2ff73789-74c7-e011-ae14-f04da23e67f6)

## Course Requirements

1. Homework (10 X 30 pts = 300 pts.): Nearly every week, an assignment will be due. The purpose of this is to keep you engaged with the material. Especially when we get to statistics, it is necessary to continually practice to fully understand the material. Homework assignments will be posted at the beginning of the week and will be due the Sunday of that week by 11:59 PM. Items on the homework requiring SPSS will be indicated on the homework assignment.

2. Research Paper & Components: The ultimate goal of the course is to combine the weekly lessons into an end product, a research paper with a quantitative focus. To help facilitate the production of a quality paper, you'll need to work on and turn in some of the components of the research paper for a grade. This will help you to develop your paper and writing skills throughout the semester. Components include:

A. Research Proposal (50 pts.): A short paper outlining your research question, hypotheses, and sources of data. The research proposal should explain what you are studying, hypotheses, and how you want to go about studying it. You'll need to have a well-defined research question, a quick overview of the relevant theory and literature, and a clear explanation of where and/or how you will get the data to answer your research question. The purpose of the research proposal is for me to help gauge the feasibility of your project for the semester and to help you narrow your focus and give advice on how to proceed.

B. Introduction and Literature Review (50 pts.): Once your project has been approved to pursue, you'll need to review the relevant literature and place your paper in the larger context of the literature. The Introduction should explain your research question and why it is important, followed by a review of the literature, what your study contributes, and culminating in the hypotheses you seek to test.

C. Data and Methodology (50 pts.): The data and methodology component of the research paper should explain how and/or where you get the data. Sampling methods should be discussed if relevant. In this section, you'll describe the variables used in the study (why they are included and how they are collected and measured). Once you have described your dataset and variables, you will explain the methodology or statistical test used and why.

D. Findings (50 pts.): Run your statistical tests in SPSS. In the Findings section of your paper, you should provide tables and graphs of your findings, along with explanations. Make sense of the numbers and inform the reader of what the numbers mean. You should also explain whether or not your hypotheses are supported or refuted.

E. Final Product (50 pts.): The final product should include Components B through D, but also add a Conclusion section to wrap everything up. Include a References page and format the paper to make it look professional.

## Grade Components

Homework (10 X 30 pts.)	300
Research Paper	
A. Proposal	50
B. Intro./Lit. Review	50
C. Data/Meth.	50
D. Findings	50
E. Final Product	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>

### Grading Scale

A+	97% - 100% (531-550)
A	≥93% < 97% (509-530)
A-	≥90% < 93% (493- 508)
B+	≥87% <90% (476 - 492)
B	≥83% <87% (454 - 475)
B-	≥80% <83% (438 - 453)
C+	≥77% <80% (421 - 437)
C	≥73% <77% (399 - 420)
C-	≥70% <73% (383 - 398)
D+	≥67% <70% (366 - 382)
D	≥63% <67% (344 - 365)
D-	≥60% <63% (328 - 343)
F	<60% (<328)

### Course Expectations & Policies

#### Homework Submissions

Please use the following guidelines when submitting homework and the research paper components:

1. Turn assignments in through Canvas or email (last resort).
2. Assignments are due by 11:59 PM on the date listed in the syllabus. Assignments not turned in at this time will be considered late and late penalties as described below will be applied.
3. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments are not required to be typed since some of the assignments will include math. Please write legibly. If I cannot decipher your writing, I will be unable to give you full credit. The research paper and its components must be typed.

#### Late Work Policy & Make-Up Exams and Assignments

Since you have ample notice of the due dates of the assignments, and their requirements, no extensions will be given for assignments, unless there is approved medical, legal (jury duty), or university documentation. Materials turned in after the indicated due date and time will automatically receive a 10% deduction. Late work will receive an additional 15% deduction for each additional 24 hours that pass in which the assignment is not turned in. It is your responsibility to ensure that I receive your materials.

#### Extra Credit

No extra credit will be offered in this course.

### **Incompletes**

Incompletes will only be given in the most extreme and extenuating circumstances.

### **Student Disability Services**

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: H&K 104, Phone: 402.554.2872, Email: [unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu](mailto:unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu))

### **Academic Misconduct**

Students are expected to adhere to all the rules, regulations, and standards set forth by the University of Nebraska at Omaha with regard to academic dishonesty (<http://www.unomaha.edu/graduate-studies/academic-integrity.php>). This statement covers plagiarism (intentional or unintentional), cheating on examinations, using or stealing others' work, and so forth. The penalty for academic dishonesty could be a failing course grade and/or disciplinary actions.

### **Diversity & Inclusiveness**

There must be a clear respect for diversity maintained in the class. This includes respect for people related to gender, sexual orientation, religious identity, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, culture and other differences (including political orientation). All of us have something to offer, and together, we can cultivate a classroom environment where individuals of varying opinions, experiences, and backgrounds are able to learn in a supportive and inclusive setting.

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

The contents of this course syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 (Aug. 23 - Aug. 29): Introduction**

- NJK. Ch. 1. pp. 2-12.
- VidGrid Videos.
- Homework 1 Due Aug. 29 by 11:59 PM.

### **Week 2 (Aug. 30 - Sept. 5): Generating Research Questions & Theory Use**

- NJK. Ch. 2. pp. 13-25.
- NJK. Ch. 3. pp. 26-46.
- Shively, W. Phillips. 2009. Selections from *The Craft of Political Research*. pp. 13-21; 25-28. (Canvas).
- VidGrid Videos.
- Homework 2 Due Sept. 5 by 11:59 PM.

### **Week 3 (Sept. 6 - Sept. 12): Pre-Research Steps: Ethics & Literature Reviews**

- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS, Political Science & Politics*. 39 (1): 127-132. (Canvas).

-Scheller, Daniel S. 2015. "Neighborhood Governments and Their Role in Property Values." *Urban Affairs Review*. 51 (2): 290-309. (Canvas).

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 3 Due Sept. 12 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 4 (Sept. 13 - Sept. 19): Research Designs**

-NJK. Ch. 4. pp. 47-71.

-Nachmias, Chava Frankfort and David Nachmias. 2008. Selections from *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 7th ed. pp. 123-128. (Canvas).

-VidGrid Videos.

**-Research Proposal Due Sept. 19 by 11:59 PM.**

**Week 5 (Sept. 20 - Sept. 26): Measurement, Sampling, & Data Collection**

-NJK. Ch. 5. pp. 72-85.

-NJK. Ch. 6. pp. 87-112.

-NJK. Ch. 7. pp. 116-126.

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 4 Due Sept. 26 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 6 (Sept. 27 - Oct. 3): Data Preparation & Descriptive Statistics**

-NJK. Ch. 7. pp. 126-148.

-VidGrid Videos.

**-Introduction and Literature Review Due Oct. 3 by 11:59 PM.**

**Week 7 (Oct. 4 - Oct. 10): Basic Data Graphing/Visualization**

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 5 Due Oct. 10 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 8 (Oct. 11 - Oct. 17): Inference, Hypothesis Testing, and One-Sample T-Test**

-NJK. Ch. 8. pp. 151-169.

-NJK. Ch. 9. pp. 171-178.

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 6 Due Oct. 17 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 9 (Oct. 18 - Oct. 24): Two-Sample T-Test**

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 7 Due Oct. 24 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 10 (Oct. 25 - Oct. 31): Two-Sample T-Tests and ANOVA**

-NJK. Ch. 9. pp. 178-191.

-NJK. Ch. 10. pp. 193-209.

-Videos over t-tests and ANOVA.

-Homework 8 Due Oct. 31 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 11 (Nov. 1 - Nov. 7): Chi-Square & Bivariate Correlation**

-NJK. Ch. 12. pp. 239-251.

-NJK. Ch. 11. pp. 222-237.

-Vid Grid Videos.

**-Data and Methodology Section Due Nov. 7 by 11:59 PM.**

**Week 12 (Nov. 8 - Nov. 14): Bivariate Regression**

-NJK. Ch. 13. pp. 253-270.

-VidGrid Videos.

-Homework 9 Due Nov. 14 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 13 (Nov. 15 - Nov. 21): Multivariate Regression & Dummy Variable Regression**

-NJK. Ch. 13. pp. 270-279.

-Vid Grid Videos.

-Homework 10 Due Nov. 21 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 14 (Nov. 22 - Nov. 28): Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15 (Nov. 29 - Dec. 5): Qualitative Data Analysis**

-NJK. Ch. 14. pp. 281-295.

**-Findings Section Due Dec. 5 by 11:59 PM.**

**-Final Paper Due Dec. 12 by 11:59 PM**