

Syllabus

Research Methods for Studying Housing, Land, and Cities

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<i>Class Times:</i>	M/W 5:15-6:30 pm
<i>Class location:</i>	BEL 203
<i>Office Hours:</i>	T/R, 1:30 pm to 3 pm & by appointment

Necessary Resources

Basic knowledge of statistics and hypothesis testing will be assumed. No textbook is required for this course for reasons discussed below. However, you will need reliable access to a primer on statistics and multiple regression analysis.

This will become an essential reference for you throughout the course. The primer can be something as accessible *Cliffs Quick Review Statistics*, *Statistics II for Dummies*, *Econometrics for Dummies*, *Statistical Analysis with Excel for Dummies*, or some other primer (or combination). Essential topics should include hypothesis testing, statistical inference, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Primers with discussions of ANOVA are highly recommended. Students should also have access to a statistical analysis software package.

Most projects can be successfully completed using an up to date contemporary version of Excel (make sure the statistical package add-on is installed). Other acceptable statistical software would include GRETL (a free on-line, open-source statistical package), SAS, SPSS, or STATA. Take advantage of the tutorials available on YouTube!

Course Overview

I quickly discovered as an employer that the most valuable workers were ones that were critical thinkers, problem solvers, and resourceful. They could also work well in a team, were generous with their time and knowledge with their co-workers, and committed to improving their writing and oral presentation skills. These qualities are also at the top of the list for desirable skills, abilities, and aptitudes for employers recruiting FSU graduates. This course is designed to help you develop these qualities and produce a product that will demonstrate their application through a quantitative research project conceived, designed, and implemented by you.

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The course is designed to help you cultivate these skills along with a deeper appreciation for the analytical skills you will need in a professional environment through a series of exercises implemented with real-time feedback and culminating in a final research paper. The approach is both applied and immersive, and the content and final product driven by your investment and commitment to the class.

My role as the instructor is to coach you through this 15 week “boot camp” for applied policy research and analysis using my experience as a professional policy analyst and think tank executive. You will learn how to identify and develop a hypothesis, conduct professional level research into the topic, evaluate the appropriateness of varied approaches to empirical analysis and apply the empirical tools and techniques necessary to your topic. You will choose your topic.

Research topics can range from the effects of local regulation or permitting on local economic development to the performance of national mortgage markets, but other topics will be considered. All research topics must be approved by the instructor. The capstone project is an applied original research paper that incorporates all the essential components of a major project, including a literature review, a methodological framework, empirical analysis of results, and discussion of policy implications.

Course Objectives

I use an immersive approach to understanding research methods in this course. We will use a series of exercises and assignments to build your skills and deepen your knowledge of a research topic and ways to approach empirically evaluating a research question. The course will culminate in a final paper that reflects the knowledge you have gained and the professional skills you have practiced over the semester. All materials and activities in this course are designed to help you achieve this objective, and mirror processes used in professional setting. My hope is that your final project will be a high-quality paper suitable to present to a prospective employer as a demonstration of what you can actually accomplish on the job.

If you apply yourself diligently in this course, take advantage of the resources and opportunities made available to you, and stay focused on the course’s tasks, you should be able to do the following by the end of the semester:

- Identify and formulate a testable research hypothesis;
- Conduct an academic literature review on a research topic and synthesize relevant trends for your topic;
- Organize data, identify appropriate empirical methods, and apply these methods to analyze your data and test your hypothesis;

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- Conceive, explain, organize, and implement a major research project;
- Effectively and constructively engage with your peers, fellow researchers, and experts to assist you (and assist *them*) in formulating, developing, and implementing a research project;
- Effectively and clearly present your research and results through oral presentations;
- Evaluate the practical public policy implications of your research;
- Identify, outline, and propose next steps for continuing research on your topic or in your area of research.
- Effectively present your research in written form.

Expectations & Assignments

I have designed this course to track with the professional environment and expectations you could expect in a working public policy research organization or think tank. Peer evaluation and participation is essential to a well functioning organization, and soliciting feedback from colleagues is an integral part of the content and production generation process. Thus, I've designed this course to maximize opportunities for your input and interaction with your peers with the goal of improving the quality of the work produced.

Classroom attendance, like coming to work in an office, is assumed. You are expected to interact constructively with your peers, offer helpful comments, provide helpful feedback, and ask questions relevant to improving the quality of the research presented in class and in the final papers. Thus, my evaluation of your performance in this course is also evaluated on your willingness and ability to assist your peers.

Assignments

Each paper is an interim step in a process of developing a final paper which will be turned on the last day of class (the Friday before finals week). While each assignment is discrete and separate, the sequence is intentional: Each assignment lays a foundation for the next assignment which culminates in a final project.

The major assignments include:

- An academic literature review on a topic your choosing on the social science research in the area of your analysis. Your literature review should be comprehensive enough to demonstrate a working knowledge of the current research and issues on the topic. The analysis should demonstrate you are capable of reading and assimilating core ideas and conclusions from academic research, usually found in peer-reviewed studies. This paper should demonstrate your familiarity with the main issues and writings on your topic, that you have explored the relevant research, and can properly cite sources and evidence.

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Typical literature reviews are 5-8 single-spaced manuscript pages using 12-point size type. A minimum of six respected, academic sources must be cited and included in the review, but the number and type of sources will vary significantly based on the topic. *This literature review is a foundational component of your final paper, and should be revised based on my comments as a section of your final paper.*

- Your methodological framework for evaluating your thesis and guiding your empirical analysis. This 4-5 page paper should include a clear statement of your hypothesis, a theoretical empirical model that shows the expected relationships between dependent and independent variables, a brief discussion of the methods you will use to estimate the model, a summary of the sources of data. This paper should **NOT** include preliminary data or analysis. Your framework will be presented in class for feedback and discussion using a powerpoint presentation. *This paper is also a foundational component of your paper, and a revised version will be included as a section of your final paper.*
- A preliminary results oral presentation that reports on your progress given to the entire class for feedback. The presentation should include first round results from empirical analysis and a tentative evaluation of your primary hypothesis(es). *Empirical results should **NOT** be final.* Comments from the class based on the presentation should be incorporated into the final paper in its results section.
- Your final paper should incorporate the previous three papers after comments have been used to revise the paper(s), refine the empirical results, and present policy recommendations based on the empirical analysis. *Your final paper is due on the Monday of finals week at noon.* The final paper should include revisions based on all the feedback you have received over the course of the semester.

Oral presentations will include a total of 8 minutes based on the following structure:

- 5 minute formal presentation, including a powerpoint presentation
- 3-minute Q&A, for a total presentation time of 8 minutes.

I will provide written feedback and guidance for each presentation during the class following the presentation. Sample evaluation and feedback forms are available on Canvas. Handouts and powerpoint presentations should be submitted directly to me via email at sstaley@fsu.edu by noon on the day of the scheduled presentation.

Policies

This course is taught as a **senior seminar**. The assignments, policies, and grading system is designed to help you increase the quality of your work to a professional grade (for someone entering the professional workforce). More information is available on the FSU student section of my personal website: <https://samuelrstaley.com/fsu-students-stuff>.

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Grades and Grading

The point scale and grade interpretation reflect my commitment to mirror professional level expectations:

94+	A	Professional level & quality
90-93	A-	Content is near professional quality but needs refining
87-89	B+	Not professional level but content is sound & high quality
84-86	B	Below professional level but core content is solid
80-83	B-	Below professional quality and requires significant improvement
77-79	C+	Well below professional quality
74-76	C	Fails to demonstrate acceptable levels of content quality
70-73	C-	Well below acceptability in terms of content and quality
69 <	D, F	Unacceptable for this course

Your final grade will be determined by a weighted average of the following specific course assignments:

1. Literature review (paper)	15%
2. Methodological framework (paper + presentation)	20%
3. Preliminary empirical analysis (presentation)	20%
4. Final paper	25%
5. In-class engagement	20%

Clearly, classroom attendance and engagement is critical to your success in the course. I will not take regular attendance. However, based on my experience teaching this course and coaching more than 150 students through this process, your inability to attend class will significantly limit your ability to process the information, reach critical milestones, and meet the performance benchmarks necessary to provide a high quality paper at the end of the semester.

Paper Style, References, File Naming Protocols

Papers should be typed, single spaced, use 12-point font size, and have 1-inch margins. Papers should have a title page, and a header and footer that explicitly identifies the author, the subject of the paper, class, date and page number. Points will be deducted for deviations from this format. All references should be sourced using the author/date reference system (e.g., (Staley 2008, p. 12)) with complete sources in a separate reference section listed by the last name of the

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author. All insights, data, and information that are not your own should be referenced. Consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* if you have questions. Proper referencing can also be found on Wikipedia. If you are unfamiliar with this citation style, you can also consult www.citethisforme.com as a guide. Choose Chicago Style and follow the directions.

Papers should be submitted via Canvas, formatted in MS Word format with the filename in the following format:

- 4618lastnamefirstnameassignment
- (e.g, 4618SmithJoAnnLitreview, or 4618JonesDerickPrelResults)

Papers submitted without following this protocol will be penalized half a letter grade.

Final Exam/Paper

This course does not have a final exam. Final papers should be submitted by noon on the Monday of Final Exam Week.

Sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation

A civil classroom grounded in the respect for the dignity of every individual, regardless of their background, identity, or experience, is critical to the success of this class in the professional world. Sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation will not be tolerated in or outside the classroom. FSU has invested significant new resources in its capacity to investigate and provide support to students who have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of intimidation. If you have experienced harassment of any kind, reach out to me or Delaney at anytime in person, by email, or by cell phone. We will put you in touch with the appropriate support services.

You are also encouraged to visit and become knowledgeable of the university Know More program and website: <http://knowmore.fsu.edu/get-help-now/>.

For now, primary contacts are:

- FSU Victim Advocate Program (24/7, including holidays), 850.644.7161
- FSU Police Department, 850.644.1234
- University Counseling Center (24/7 availability), 850.644.8255
- Refuge House (off campus resource), 850.381.2111
- File an on-line Sexual Misconduct/Stalking Report Form, https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?FloridaStateUniv&layout_id=1

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- FSU Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (including access to student and Greek life conduct codes), <https://dos.fsu.edu/srr>

Academic Honesty

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

American Disabilities Act Statement

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: 1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC); and 2) Bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating that you need academic accommodations and what type. Please do this within the first week of class.

NOTE: Updates to the course material, changes in expectations, and modifications to assignments, required readings, and other elements of this course will be communicated via blackboard. Please consult this regularly.

Key Dates

Presentation schedule and sign ups will be finalized after Drop-Add week

- Research topics and hypothesis(es) due @ noon, Wednesday, 12 September
- Literature review due @ noon, Wednesday, 26 September
- Methodology papers due @ noon via turnitin on Monday, 22 October
- Finals week! FINAL PAPERS are due at 9 am on MONDAY, 11 December