Research Methods for International Development Policy and Practice
INTL DEV 160
Course Syllabus
Summer 2015 (Session C)

Instructor: Ruth Carlitz
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Class Time/Location: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-3:05PM, Bunche 3211
Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:00AM-12:00PM, Bunche 3288
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Students will learn how to conduct and critique research that informs international development policy and practice. The course will familiarize students with the conceptual and methodological challenges that arise when researchers attempt to measure political phenomena, assess changes over time, or demonstrate a causal relationship between policies and social outcomes. The study of these challenges will be grounded in practical approaches to research conducted by and for governments, aid agencies, and non-profit organizations. Students will apply what they learn to develop a research proposal that explains how they would evaluate a current international development project in a country of their choosing.

NOTE: Friday, August 14, 2015 (end of Week 2) is the last day to drop this course on MyUCLA and receive refunds according to the refund policy. That is also the last day to enroll in this course on MyUCLA without a $50 late add fee.

Assessment

Class Participation (10%): Class attendance is not sufficient to earn a high participation grade. Students are expected to be active during class. Unexcused absences will count against your participation grade, as will tardiness (being more than 5 minutes late to class). As a means of encouraging participation and focus, this course has a strict NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY.¹ You will be expected to take notes by hand and come to class prepared with printed copies of the readings and notes to facilitate discussion.

Pop Quiz Questions (20%): Every Tuesday (beginning Week 2) you must prepare five pop quiz questions on the readings for that Tuesday and the previous Thursday to test your fellow students’ knowledge on key concepts from the reading. Questions will be due by 9AM and must be posted on the course website.

Pop Quizzes (10%): Every Tuesday at the beginning of class you will take a short quiz, composed of a selection of questions written by your fellow students and me.

¹ This includes laptops, cell phones, and tablets.
Impact Evaluation/Research Proposal (60%): Students may either:

- Work in groups of three to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) based on the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)’s Open Window, which accepts impact evaluation proposals of socio-economic development interventions in any sector. The proposals must be based on actual development projects, which have either not been evaluated or have not been evaluated in the manner that students are proposing.
- Work individually to develop research proposals for the Open Government Partnership (OGP). These proposals will generate ideas for assessing progress towards the OGP’s ultimate outcome indicators.

In addition to turning in a written proposal, students will present their proposals during our last class meeting. Detailed guidelines for the group and individual assignments have been posted on the course website, along with a number of additional useful resources.

Academic Integrity

As a student and member of the University community, you are here to get an education and are, therefore, expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. You are evaluated on your own merits, so be proud of your accomplishments, and protect academic integrity at UCLA. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct. When a student is suspected to be involved in academic dishonesty, the Academic Senate requires that the instructor report the allegation to the Dean of Students’ Office. If you have any questions about this, please see me or send me an email. You may also refer to: http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/assets/documents/StudentGuide.pdf

Campus Resources

- The Undergraduate Writing Center offers UCLA undergraduates (and non-UCLA students) one-on-one sessions on their writing. To make an appointment, go to www.wp.ucla.edu/uwc.
- College Academic Counseling is available during to UCLA students only during the summer. See http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html. For advising/counseling, non-UCLA summer students should contact the Summer Sessions office (http://www.summer.ucla.edu/). The Student Affairs Officer in the Summer Sessions office is Lola Green (lgreen@summer.ucla.edu).
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is also available to UCLA students during the summer: http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/.
- The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) is open all summer, five days a week and is available to both UCLA and non-UCLA students. Students with documented disabilities or who wish to be assessed should register with them as early as possible (Week 1 if possible). You should contact OSD ASAP if you wish to avail yourselves of its services: http://www.osd.ucla.edu/.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1

Aug. 4: Introduction to Course


Aug. 6: Introduction to Impact Evaluation


Decide whether you will be working individually or in a group for final project.

Week 2

Aug. 11: Basic Principles


Aug. 13: Research Strategies


Final project workplans due.

Week 3

Aug. 18: Counterfactuals


Aug. 20: Bias


Week 4

Aug. 25: Randomized Controlled Trials


Midterm progress reports due.

Aug. 27: Mixed Methods


Week 5

Sept. 1: Ethics and Positionality


Rough drafts due.

Sept. 3: Putting Impact Evaluations to Use


Week 6

Sept. 8: Replication and Open Data


Sept. 10: Final Presentations/Final Proposals Due
Optional Reading
Believe it or not, the first draft of this syllabus contained twice as much reading. There is just a lot of interesting stuff out there on impact evaluation – way more than we can possibly cover in 6 weeks. Consider the required reading listed above to be the “highlights.” If you want to dig in to some of the topics presented above in greater detail, consider the below:

Basic Principles


Counterfactuals


Bias


Randomized Controlled Trials


Mixed Methods


Ethics/Positionality


http://rachelstrohm.com/2015/04/05/why-im-not-doing-fieldwork/

Replication and Open Data