

HSC6735 Research Methods

Class Number 19711; Section 4628

SPRING 2026

Course Description

This is a graduate-level course in Research Methods that will cover key methods and approaches to research in health education and behavior with the goal of providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to interpret and evaluate research conducted by others; to synthesize and discuss their viewpoints on this research; and ultimately to design their own scientifically and ethnically sound research projects.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students are expected to successfully:

- ✓ Identify strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches for addressing a specific research question.
- ✓ Critically and constructively evaluate research studies in health education and behavior.
- ✓ Contribute to current discussions about trends and controversies in social and behavioral research methods.
- ✓ Formulate research questions and match them with appropriate methods for investigation.
- ✓ Develop a research study design that addresses a research question in health education and behavior.
- ✓ Understand the role of the Institutional Review Board for research oversight and complete trainings to submit human subjects research.

Course meetings

Time: Tuesdays Period 8 – 10 (3 – 6 PM)

Room: FLG 0225

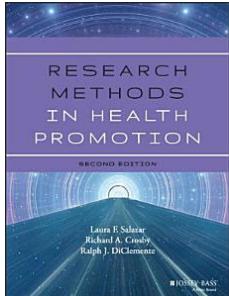
Instructor

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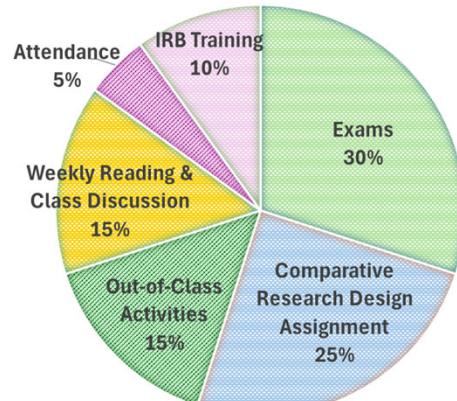
jwcheong@ufl.edu



Text & Reading Material

- Salazar LF, Crosby RA, DiClemente RJ. (2015). **Research Methods in Health Promotion (2nd ed.).** San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- **Additional Readings posted to Canvas.**

Course Activities



Grading Standards

A = 100-93	C(S) = 76.99-73
A- = 92.99-90	C-(U) = 72.99-70
B+ = 89.99-87	D+ = 69.99-67
B = 86.99-83	D = 66.99-63
B- = 82.99-80	D- = 62.99-60
C+ = 79.99-77	E = 59.99-0

See current UF Grading Policies for further details:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course Requirements

The assignments will be used to assess the student's academic standing in this course. **Late assignments are accepted with a 20% deduction for each day late.** Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

30% Course Examinations

2 Exams, 100 points each for a total = 200 points

Students will have two non-cumulative exams, each covering material presented since the previous exam.

Exams will primarily consist of open-ended (essay-style) questions, with some choice options. Exams will be closed book and closed note.

25% Comparative Research Design Assignment

Students will develop a core research question and propose study designs using each of the following research design approaches covered in the course: observational studies, experimental designs, community-based participatory research approaches, and qualitative research designs. The purpose of this assignment is to develop students' ability to align research questions with appropriate study designs and inferential goals. Students will select a substantive topic and formulate a core research question, then design multiple studies that address related aspects of the question using different research designs. Through this process, students will critically evaluate how design choices shape the types of conclusions that can be drawn, the assumptions required for valid inference, and the strengths and limitations of each approach.

15% Out-of-class Activities

50 points

Students will have attend the university's undergraduate research symposium (Tuesday, April 7. Exact time TBD) in pairs and select one empirical research poster for evaluation. Students should take a photograph of the poster (for course use only) to support accurate documentation and subsequent class discussion. The purpose of this assignment is to develop students' ability to critically assess research questions, study designs, and inferential claims as they are presented in applied research settings. Students will reconstruct the study's implied research question and design, evaluate the alignment between the design and the conclusions drawn, and identify key assumptions, limitations, and threats to inference. The evaluation should focus exclusively on the study's methodological features and inferential logic, not on the quality of the poster presentation or the performance of the undergraduate presenter.

- In-Class Component (20-minute presentation)**

Each pair will present a brief summary of their evaluation in class, using the poster image as a reference. Presentations should emphasize design–inference alignment, justified versus overstated claims, and one concrete design-based improvement.

- Expectations**

Students are expected to approach this assignment as methodologists, assuming good-faith research efforts and appropriate faculty mentorship. Critiques should be professional, constructive, and grounded in principles of research design and inference.

15% Weekly Reading Reflections & In-class Discussion

9 graded reflections, worth 10 points each = 90 points

Students will complete reflections on the course readings (Reading list posted on CANVAS)

- Before 9:00 AM on the day of class, students will respond to the following questions via CANVAS:
 - What is one thing you found interesting, surprising, or insightful about the reading, and why?
 - What is one question you had after completing the reading, and why? This may include points of confusion or questions the reading prompted.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss their responses, as these questions will serve as the basis for in-class discussion.

Course Requirements (Continued)

10% IRB/Human Subject Research Training

As part of this course, **students are required to complete the university-approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) human subjects research training (e.g., IRB 850, IRB 803C) by Tuesday, February 3.** Students must upload their IRB training completion certificates to CANVAS by this deadline. In addition, students will submit a brief written reflection identifying the most important ethical issues or principles they learned through the training and explaining how these considerations will inform their comparative research design activities in the course. This requirement is intended to reinforce ethical and regulatory considerations as integral to rigorous and responsible research design.

5% Attendance & Participation

5 points per class

You are responsible for arriving to class on time and participating regularly. Per University of Florida policy, excused absences include medical appointments or illness (with a doctor's note), deaths in the family (with documentation), and official school events (with documentation on school letterhead). Requests for additional excused absences due to medical reasons or extenuating circumstances must be supported by appropriate documentation and submitted within one week of the absence using the Excused Absence Request Form (available on the Canvas course website). Students who are absent or late are responsible for obtaining notes, announcements, and any materials covered during the missed class from classmates.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week #	Lecture Topic	Assignment Due**
Week #1, 1/13	Class Introduction; Introduction to research	
Week #2, 1/20	Philosophy of science	
Week #3, 1/27	Observational research	Topic selection for comparative research activities
Week #4, 2/3	Conducting observational research; Survey research	Completion of IRB training
Week #5, 2/10	Experimental design and randomized trials	Observational study proposal due
Week #6, 2/17	Methodological considerations for randomized trials; Quas-experimental design	
Week #7, 2/24	Measurement; Sampling	Experimental study proposal due
Week #8, 3/3	Exam 1	
Week #9, 3/10	Basics of statistical analyses	
Spring Break		
Week #11, 3/24	Qualitative research	
Week #12, 3/31	Community-based participatory research	Qualitative study proposal due
Week #13, 4/7	Dissemination and implementation	Community-based participatory study proposal due
Week #14, 4/14	Research ethics & transparency in science	Out-of-class activity (Evaluation of undergraduate poster) due
Week #15, 4/21	Exam 2	

**Most assignments are due the Tuesday prior to class. Most weeks also include Weekly reading reflections due at 9:00 AM the day of class.

Course Policies & Information

Make Up Policy:

Assignments can be turned in up to 4 days late with a 20% deduction for each day late. Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Grade Appeal Policy:

Should you want to contest a grade, you will have up to three (3) days after a grade has been posted to contact me and discuss your issue; after which the grade is final. Grades are based on a point scale and will not be rounded. No extra credit is offered.

Artificial Intelligence policy

Use of Artificial Intelligence tools, including large language models (such as ChatGPT) for written assignments are not allowed without expressed permission of the instructor.

Communication and Questions:

Students are responsible for getting a University of Florida email account (e.g., john.doe@ufl.edu) and should use this email for all university related correspondence – The instructor may not read emails from or send emails to any non-UF email addresses (e.g., john.doe@hotmail.com). Email subject should start with “HSC 6735– First name, Last name - ...” Email use does not relieve students from the responsibility of confirming the communication with the instructor. The instructor will answer your email within two business days, when possible.

You may email me through the course site with any questions or concerns you have, and I will attempt to respond to your emails within 48 hours (typically sooner). If you have an urgent issue, please email my personal UF email, jwcheong@ufl.edu

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource (DSR) Center (352-392-8565; www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation to your instructor prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the DSR office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations

Honor Code Policy:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”

The following pledge will be either required or implied on all work:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

It is the duty of the student to abide by all rules set forth in the UF Undergraduate Catalog. Students are responsible for reporting any circumstances, which may facilitate academic dishonesty. University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Academic Integrity:

All students must adhere to university regulations regarding academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to any form of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, etc.) will not be tolerated. Any student guilty of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade (E) for the course, and the matter will be forwarded to the UF Office Student Affairs and the Dean of Students.

Getting Help:

The University of Florida recognizes that pursuit of an online degree requires just as much student support as pursuit of a traditional on-campus degree and, therefore, each online program is responsible for providing the same student support services to both students who are in residence on the main campus and those who are seeking an online degree through distance learning. The following links provide support services for students:

Disabilities Resource Center

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. If you have a physical, learning, sensory or psychological disability, please visit our Disabilities Resource Center.

U Matter, We Care - Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Respect for Diversity, Focus on Inclusivity:

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be welcomed and served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity and inclusion, including but not limited to: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture.

Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. I welcome conversation about how I can improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups; please contact me in person or via email, or submit anonymous feedback via the open canvas survey (titled "Anonymous feedback submission") if you have any suggestions about ways that I might improve the quality or inclusivity of the course materials.

In addition, I will work to foster a learning environment where all feel welcomed and supported, and I will strive to get to know each student individually. To help accomplish this I maintain an open door for communication about experiences students are having during the course, in and out of the classroom. This means that if you feel your course performance is being impacted by things that are happening in your life, please reach out and speak with me. I can also help to connect or refer you to other resources if helpful. You are also welcome to submit anonymous feedback as described above.

Our respect for each other is critical to build a safe and trusting environment for all of us to learn and support each other through this course.

Student Recording:

Per the House Bill 233 Intellectual and Viewpoint Diversity Act, students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

See additional details here: <http://aa.ufl.edu/policies/in-class-recording/>

Copyright Statement:

The materials used in this course are copyrighted. The content presented is the property of UF and may not be duplicated in any format without permission from the College of Health and Human Performance and UF, and may not be used for any commercial purposes.

Content includes but is not limited to syllabi, videos, slides, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy or distribute the course materials, unless permission is expressly granted. Students violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the UF Conduct Code.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents the objectives and tentative plans for the course. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, will be communicated clearly, are not unusual, and should be expected.