

BUS 230: Business and Economics Research and Communication

Instructor Information

James Murray, Ph.D.
Office: 403T Wimberly Hall
Email: jmurray@uwlax.edu

Meeting Time / Location

Discussion Session: 2:15pm - 3:40pm Monday Room 2102 Centennial Hall

Lab Sessions:

- Section 01: 2:15pm - 3:40pm Tuesday in Room 216 Wimberly Hall
- Section 02: 3:55pm - 5:20pm Tuesday in Room 216 Wimberly Hall

Course Description

This course explores the scientific method as used in business and economic research. Specifically, it looks at the five main steps in the research process: the identification and definition of the research problem, research design, collection of the data used to study the research problem, statistical analysis of this data, and the interpretation and presentation of the results of the study. Students then apply this knowledge to an actual business problem in order to complete an original research project.

Course Learning Objectives

For successful learning, it is important that you understand why we do the reading, lectures, assignments, projects, etc, we do. Everything we do in this class is meant to achieve the learning objectives below. It would be useful for you to pay careful attention to what learning objectives the lectures and assignments are meant to achieve. The learning objectives for this course are the following,

1. Develop the ability to define a research problem. Formulate research questions and hypotheses that are measurable, well-defined, address the overall problem, are directly related, and reflect the scope of the problem.
2. Recognize and use the appropriate techniques to collect or use survey data to address a research problem.
 - (a) Recognize the ethical responsibilities of conducting human subjects research.
 - (b) Compare the advantages and disadvantages of different survey methods.
 - (c) Identify sources of respondent and administrative error and develop the ability to construct and administer a survey instrument that minimizes these errors.
 - (d) Recognize the implications of probability vs. non-probability sampling on the interpretation of primary data.
3. Interpret data using statistical analysis.
 - (a) Identify and compare the types of measurement scales used in conducting research.
 - (b) Analyze the scale of measurement to determine the types of descriptive and inferential statistics that can be used to interpret data.
 - (c) Formulate conclusions and recommendations based upon statistical results.
4. Develop the ability to effectively communicate research results both written and orally.
5. Develop the ability to critically evaluate limitations, errors, and biases in research.
6. Develop the ability to work productively with a team on a substantial project.

CBA Learning Outcomes

The course learning objectives above contribute to the larger learning goals for all College of Business Administration (CBA) majors,** which are the following,

1. Communication* - the ability to convey information and ideas effectively:
 - (a) Deliver effective oral presentations
 - (b) Create well-written business reports
 - (c) Use communication to work effectively with others in a business context
 - (d) Use communication technologies and tools professionally and appropriately
 - (e) Adapt communication style to diverse audiences.
2. Decision Making and Critical Thinking* - the ability to evaluate alternatives and understand the ramifications of those alternatives within a given business context:
 - (a) Identify problems
 - (b) Acquire appropriate information to frame business decisions
 - (c) Develop alternative approaches or solutions
 - (d) Evaluate the potential impact of alternatives
3. Global Context of Business - the ability to integrate global perspectives in business decisions:
 - (a) Recognize the role of cultural diversity in business decisions
 - (b) Analyze the global impact of political, social, economic, and legal issues on business decisions
4. Major Competency - proficiency in the primary functional area of study:
 - (a) Understand current business practices in the primary functional area
 - (b) Apply functional area concepts and decision-making techniques and tools appropriately
 - (c) Incorporate concepts from other functional business area into the primary area
5. Social Responsibility* - the ability to consider the effects of business decisions on the entire social system
 - (a) Demonstrate an awareness of social and ethical responsibilities
 - (b) Recognize the importance of standards of ethical business conduct
 - (c) Recognize and analyze the ecological, social, and economic implications of business decisions

* The learning activities in this class are especially designed to further these CBA learning outcomes.

** Developed by faculty with input from students, alumni, and business community. Adopted by faculty vote on January 21, 2010.

Textbook

The textbook from Textbook Rental is actually a combination of chapters from two textbooks:

- Zikmund, W.G., B.J. Babin, J.C. Carr, and M. Griffin (ZBCG). (2010). *Business Research Methods*, 8th Edition. Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.
- Carver, R. and J.G. Nash (CN). (2012). *Doing Data Analysis with SPSS Version 18.0*, 5th Edition. Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

Online Resources

Class website: <http://www.murraylax.org/bus230/fall2011/>. Most material handed out in class will be posted on the class website.

Desire2Learn will be used for turning in homework assignments, taking quizzes and exams, and communicating grades.

Office Hours

Regular office hours are 9:00am-11:00am Mondays and Wednesday and Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00am-9:00am. These are times when you can drop by unannounced and expect me to be in my office. If you would like to make an appointment for a different time, please check my calendar and send me an e-mail. Keeping up with the material usually requires frequent office visits, so frequently coming to my office for questions may be essential to your success.

Office hours are not a substitute for attending class. Except when missing class for very extreme circumstances that were promptly discussed with me, it is not acceptable to use office hours to ask questions about material you missed while not in attendance.

Outside of my regularly scheduled classes and office hours, my availability changes all the time. You can visit my calendar at <http://www.murraylax.org/calendar.html>. It is constantly updated.

Assessment

Learning will be assessed through weekly quizzes, homework, and exams. The grading breakdown will be:

Quizzes / In-class Exercises / Homework : 25%

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Research Project: 35%

Grade Breakdown

93-100 A 67-76 C

89-92 AB 57-66 D

81-88 B 0-56 F

77-80 BC

I reserve the right to scale every person's grade up by the same amount on any graded item in the event that much of the class falls short of the scale above. However, even if the grades are significantly low, there is no guarantee that I will ever do this.

Quizzes / In-class exercises

There may be announced quizzes, unannounced (pop) quizzes, and in-class exercises given throughout the semester. Adequate preparation for these will involve reading ahead for class and completing homework assignments on time. Classes will begin with your questions so that you can resolve any problems with assigned work before the quiz begins. Quizzes may sometimes be open book and/or open note. Sometimes in-class exercises will be given, some of which must be done in small groups. Homework assignments outside of work for your project will be given on occasion, and be similar to in-class exercises and exam questions.

Research Project

Learning how to conduct and complete a group research project is the main goal of this course. The research project assignment has the following characteristics:

1. *Work in assigned groups*: One of the goals of this class is to learn how to work with a team on a substantial project. Employers often stress that they seek people who can work productively with a team as well as have the discipline to work independently and stay on task. While the project is a group project, it will be necessary for the group members to often divide tasks and work independently. Like the real world, you do not get to choose who you work with.
2. *Weekly meetings (with minutes!) with group members*: You are required to meet with your group once per week outside of class. Minutes are a written record of what you discussed during your meeting. You must submit minutes for every meeting.
3. *Team Contract*: A contract that your group will write and all agree to. The contract specifies where/when you will meet, how group meetings will be conducted, how group decisions will be made, how conflicts within the group will be resolved, how free-rider problems will be addressed and dealt with, etc. The purpose of the contract is to ensure that your group can work well together throughout the semester even though challenges may arise.
4. *Choose a research question*: This is a difficult, underestimated stage of the research project. You need to find an question that (1) is focused, (2) you can argue is important to answer, (3) whose answer is unknown or not fully known, (4) can be motivated in a literature review, and (5) that has the ability to be answered by collecting and analyzing data.
5. *Collect primary data*: You must develop your own survey and collect data. Much of the class will focus on collecting samples, writing questionnaire, treating research participants ethically, etc.
6. *Completion of the National Institute of Health (NIH) Tutorial*: Because data collection involves human subjects, before you collect data you must complete this tutorial which describes procedures for collecting data when human subjects are involved.
7. *Written Research Proposal*: Prior to collecting data you must submit a written research proposal which (1) states the research question, (2) briefly introduces the research; (3) describes in detail how you will be collecting data, including the precise questionnaire and informed consent form that you will use; (4) describes briefly how the data is likely to be analyzed; and (5) describes how or why the data and methodology are likely to answer your research question.
8. *Write a research report*: The research report does not have a page requirement, but a complete report might be about 20-30 double-spaced pages (not including appendices). A complete research report includes the following sections: (1) an introduction (literature review can be included in the introduction); (2) a full description of your methodology, detailed enough so that a reader could replicate it; (3) a full description of your results; and (4) discussion and conclusion.
9. *Present a research report*: All the research projects will be presented by the entire group on the last day of class, and on final exam day.
10. *Peer evaluation*: You will complete forms from time to time during the semester which asks you to evaluate how well your group members contribute to the project, and each of your group members will similarly evaluate you. You will receive grades based on having completed these forms and based on how well your peers evaluated you. Also, during your oral presentation to the class, your audience will evaluate your presentation. Similarly, you will evaluate your classmates oral presentations.

Research Project Deadlines

Below is a list of weekly assignment that are specific for your project, along with anticipated deadlines. These deadlines are subject to change to give the class flexibility in completing their projects. See the class website for a up-to-date deadlines.

Date	Week	Description
Tuesday, Sept 6	Week 1	Assigned to groups. Begin working on contract. Begin brainstorming ideas.
Tuesday, Sept 13	Week 2	Contract due. First meeting minutes due. Turn in 4-5 ideas for project.
Tuesday, Sept 20	Week 3	Title of project, and one-sentence thesis statement due.
Tuesday, Sept 27	Week 4	First draft of introduction due. Annotated bibliography due.
Tuesday, Oct 4	Week 5	First draft of questionnaire due. Informed consent due. Peer-evaluation #1 due.
Tuesday, Oct 11	Week 6	Research proposal due.
Tuesday, Oct 18	Week 7	Exam 1 on Tuesday.
Tuesday, Oct 25	Week 8	Qualtrix survey due. Target date to send out surveys.
Tuesday, Nov 1	Week 9	Second draft of introduction due, including sources.
Tuesday, Nov 8	Week 10	First draft of methodology due. Peer evaluation #2 due.
Monday - Tuesday, Nov 14-15	Week 11	No project deadlines.
Monday - Tuesday, Nov 21-22	Week 12	Exam Monday! No class Tuesday (Thursday classes).
Tuesday, Nov 29	Week 13	First draft of results section due.
Tuesday, Dec 6	Week 14	Presentations!
Saturday, Dec 17 (Section 01) Monday, Dec 19 (Section 02)	Week 15	More presentations! Final draft of entire research report due. Peer evaluation #3 due.

Research Project Grade

Your entire research project is 35% of your final grade, but that total is broken down into the following categories:

Category	Contribution Towards Project Grade
Weekly project-specific assignments	25%
Written paper	50%
Oral presentation	25%
Peer evaluation	May cause an increase or decrease in overall project grade.

Exams

There will be two mid-term exams during the semester. Exams will be composed of multiple choice, short-answer, and problem solving questions based on material covered in class and material from the textbook and any other readings handed out in class. The exam dates are as follows:

- Exam 1: Tuesday, October 18.
- Exam 2: Monday, November 21.

Attendance

Attendance is required to receive credit for quizzes, in-class exercises, and exams. However, if you need to miss a class day or exam day because of illness or emergency you can be excused and arrangements can be made for you to make up missed work. Attendance to your group meetings is always required, unless your group excuses you for illness or emergency according to the terms of your group's contract.

E-mail Guidelines

I insist on the following e-mail etiquette rules (many of these are also recommended by the College of Business Administration). Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in a reply with a friendly reminder to follow these e-mail guidelines.

- Allow one business day to elapse before getting a reply.
- Questions sent by e-mail should be able to be answered with only a few words, such as 'yes' or 'no' questions. Questions whose answers involve explaining class material are not appropriate over e-mail. For answers to these questions you should come to office hours, or send an e-mail requesting we meet at a different time.
- Always include a subject that is brief but still has sufficient detail, *including the class your are in (BUS 230)*.
- Look at your class notes and syllabus before sending an e-mail. Do not ask a question whose answer is on the syllabus or announced in class (unless you missed class for a legitimate reason).
- Always spell check, grammar check, and re-read your e-mail before sending it.
- When requesting to meet with me outside of regularly scheduled office hours, consult my calendar (<http://www.murraylax.org/calendar.html>) and suggest a time we meet in your first e-mail correspondence.

Classroom Behavior

Please adhere to these behavior guidelines:

- No using mobile phones or other personal electronics during class (i.e. no text messaging, e-mailing, or surfing the web with mobile phones). If you do text message during class, you agree to give me the right to take your phone for the remainder of the class, and write my own text message from your phone to whomever you were communicating with.
- Please refrain from talking to those around you when I or one of your classmates is talking to the whole class. Even if you have a quick question like, "What did he just say?" do not whisper the question to your neighbor. Instead ask me.

Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, or hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the instructor and the Disability Resource Services office (165 Murphy Library, 785-6900) at the beginning of the semester. Students who are currently using the Disability Resource Services office will have a copy of a contract that verifies they are qualified students with disabilities who have documentation on file in the Disability Resource Services office. It is the student's responsibility to communicate their needs with the instructor in a timely manner.

Academic Dishonesty

I follow the policy stated University Academic Handbook with regard to cheating and academic dishonesty. The student handbook can be found online at http://www.uwlax.edu/studentlife/eagle_eye.htm. In the event a student is caught cheating I will pursue the harshest penalty that the University will allow, regardless of how small the offense may appear.

Preliminary Topics Schedule

Below is list of topics and the main readings for this class. This is a preliminary schedule; time constraints and the needs of the class might result in re-arrange the schedule. Details about the dates these topics are covered will be posted on the calendar on the class website, <http://www.murraylax.org/bus230/calendar.html>

Dates	Week	Description
September 5-6	Week 1	Introduction to the class. Discussion of group contracts and minutes.
September 12-13	Week 2	Business Research Process (ZBCG, Ch 4), Problem definition (ZBCG, Ch 6)
September 19-20	Week 3	Business ethics (ZBCG, Ch 5), NIH tutorial
September 26-27	Week 4	Survey research (ZBCG, Ch 9), Scale of measurement (ZBCG, Ch 13)
October 3-4	Week 5	Finish scale of measurement, Questionnaire design (ZBCG, Ch 15)
October 10-11	Week 6	Computerized questionnaires: Qualtrix. Sample design (ZBCG, Ch 16)
October 17-18	Week 7	Finish sample design. <i>Exam 1 on Tuesday, Oct 18.</i>
October 24-25	Week 8	Descriptive Statistics (ZBCG, Ch 20), SPSS intro (CN, Sessions 2-5)
Oct 31-Nov 1	Week 9	Continue previous week work, Inferential Univariate and Bivariate stats (ZBCG, Ch 21-22), Stats in SPSS (CN, Sessions 10-12)
November 7-8	Week 10	Continue previous week work, Correlation, Chi-squared test of association (ZBCG, Ch 23, Stats in SPSS (CN, Session 20)
November 14-15	Week 11	Continue previous week work.
November 21-22	Week 12	<i>Exam 2 on Monday, Nov 21.</i> No class on Tue, Nov 22 (go to Thursday classes)
November 28-29	Week 13	Presenting and communicating results (ZBCG, Ch 25)
December 5-6	Week 14	Presentations
Sat Dec 17, 10am-12pm (Section 01) Mon, Dec 19 2:30-4:30pm (Section 02),	Final Exam Week	Presentations. Final research report due.