# BUS 88500 Doctoral Seminar: Research Methods

**Prof. R. Benbunan-Fich, Fall 2020**

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**Office Hours:** Thurs. 5-6pm or by appt.  
**Meeting Times:** Thurs. 2.30 pm-4.30pm  
**Meetings via Zoom**  
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## Course Objectives
This course introduces doctoral students to the various research methods used in business disciplines including accounting, information systems, marketing, and management. The main objective is to enable students to design sound empirical studies and to produce publishable research papers. Throughout the course we will consider the following issues:

- Understand the diversity and commonality of research questions and methods in the business disciplines
- Identify the basic assumptions and principles underlying each method and the validity tradeoffs
- Choose the appropriate research method to answer a research question
- Recognize the advantages and disadvantages of each method compared to others and apply remedies to mitigate any validity concerns
- Develop a well thought out research proposal including expected contributions and anticipated limitations
- Review and criticize published research
- Appreciate the ethical issues related to conducting research in academic and business settings.

## Topics Covered
Conceptualization of research questions and hypothesis development, causal inference and threats to inferring causation, measurement (reliability and validity), design (experiments, quasi-experiments and surveys), as well as sampling and questionnaire development.

## Format
Each week will have a topical theme. In general, we will discuss readings related to the theme along with application exercises and assignments. Although we will provide an introduction to each topic and guide class discussions, we will endeavor to conduct this as a seminar not a lecture. Readings from each of the disciplines will be offered so that students will be able to relate the course topics to issues and problems in their own specialization.

## Expectations
During most of the semester you will be able to develop your critical thinking skills and apply your knowledge of these topics by analyzing a journal paper, writing a review of a conference paper, comparing your review to others and learning how to respond to referee reports. In general, what you will accomplish in this course will depend heavily on your reading of the assigned material (prior to class) and your active participation in the class discussions where we will integrate the readings. By the end of the course, students who have participated actively will have acquired the knowledge and skills to be educated consumers of business research and will have begun developing into competent research scientists.
Required Readings
There are three complementary textbooks that provide background information on each topic. In addition, there is a selection of journal articles to provide a deeper coverage. See list of articles below each topic in the schedule. These articles will be available online at the course website at the beginning of the semester.

Textbooks

Grading Policy
The final grade in the seminar will be based upon the following weights:
- In-class presentations and participation 10%
- Exercises/Assignments 30%
- Written Examination 30%
- Research Proposal Paper 30%

Class Attendance and Participation: Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, classes will be held via Zoom video conferencing each Thursday. In addition to connecting to the zoom meeting on time (virtual presence), students should become active participants in class discussions. To participate during the zoom meeting, students can raise their hands in the participant panel, send a question via chat, or unmute themselves and speak. If possible, students should have web cameras on and mute their microphones when not speaking. Students without video presence should be prepared to answer cold call questions at any point via voice (even if the answer is not known). Students should show that they are mentally engaged with the discussion.

Exercises/Assignments: There will be a set of in-class exercises and homework to allow students to apply what they have learned. Students will select a recent paper on the top journal in their field to understand the structure of an academic paper. This companion paper will be analyzed to illustrate issues of internal and external validity. In addition, students will be required to take Baruch's IRB online training course and obtain the “CITI certification” to conduct research with human subjects. Students will receive credit for the successful completion of the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative. Students will also be required to write a review of a conference paper to develop their skills as peer reviewers. Finally, students will learn to set up an online survey in Qualtrics.

Examination: There will be a written exam consisting of 3 or 4 open ended questions with sub-questions. The exam will probe your understanding of the methods and research issues covered in the class. Most questions will be essay questions and may be presented in the form of “research problems” for which you are asked to provide the best solutions applying the content learned in this course.

**Term paper:** At the end of the semester, each student should present an original research proposal on any topic of his or her choice, preferably combining the impact of Information Technology in his or her own discipline. This proposal will consist of two parts: (1) a structured review of the relevant literature from where the research question originated along with a set hypotheses and (2) a specific research method to collect data and test the hypotheses. In addition to a thorough description of experimental procedures, proposals should include an analysis of the potential limitations of the study, and potential threats to
validity. After receiving feedback, final proposal papers must be submitted during the final exam week. Late proposals will not be accepted.

**Course Outline**
The content of the course is organized in five modules: (1) Introduction and Production of Research Papers; (2) Validity Issues and Causal Inferences; (3) Experimental Design; (4) Measurement and Survey Research and (5) Development of a Research Proposal.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1 (8/27): Introduction**
Trochim (2001). Ch. 1: Foundations
Saunders et al. (2015). Chapters 1-3

**Assignment #1:** Select a companion paper from a top tier journal in your discipline (Due Week 2)

**Assignment #2:** Register and take online course to complete citi certification (Due Week 6)

**Week 2 (9/3): From Conceptualization to Design**
Saunders et al. (2015). Ch. 4 & 5


**Assignment #3:** Select a topic for your research proposal (Due Week 3)

**Week 3 (9/10): Internal vs. External Validity**
Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002). Ch. 2 (Internal Validity sections)
Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002). Ch. 3 (External Validity sections).
Trochim (2001). Ch. 6. Internal Validity section (pp. 172-185)

**Assignment #4:** Identify threats to internal and external validity in companion paper (Due Week 4)
**Week 4 (9/17): Experimental Designs**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chptrs. 8, 9 and 10. Randomized Experiments and Practical Problems

Trochim (2001) Ch.7. Experimental Design


**>> Assignment #5: Review a conference paper assigned by your professor (Due Week 6)**

**Week 5 (9/24): Quasi-experiments and Other Experimental Designs**

Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chptrs. 4 & 5 (Quasi-Experimental Designs)


**Week 6 (10/1): Reliability and Measurement**

Trochim (2001) Ch. 3. Reliability and Measurement Error (pp. 88-104).


**>> Assignment #6: Evaluate the measures in your companion paper (Due Week 8)**

**Week 7 (10/8): Construct validity**

Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002). Ch. 3 (Construct Validity sections)

Trochim (2001). Ch. 3. Construct Validity section (pp. 63-88)


**Week 8 (10/15): Statistical Conclusion Validity**
Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002). Ch. 2 (Statistical Conclusion Validity sections)

Trochim (2001). Ch. 10. Conclusion Validity section (pp. 257-265)


**Week 9 (10/22): Survey Research**
Trochim Ch. 4. Survey Research and Scaling


[*] Foster Thompson, L., & Surface, E.A. 2007. Employee surveys administered online: Attitudes toward the medium, nonresponse, and data representativeness. *Organizational Research Methods, 10*: 241-261.

>>**Assignment #7:** Design a pilot questionnaire in Qualtrics and collect data (Due Week 12)

**Week 10 (10/29): Sampling and Questionnaire Design**
Trochim (2001) Ch.2 Sampling

Saunders et al. (2015) Ch. 7 & 11


**Week 11 (11/5): Written Examination**
In class test with open ended questions seeking integration of readings and knowledge in the answers. Details regarding format and timing will follow.
**Week 12 (11/12): Ethical Considerations**
Shadish, Cook and Campbell, Chp. 9 (Ethical and Legal issues section pp. 280-290)


**Week 13 (11/19): Introduction to Mixed Methods**


**Week 14 (12/3): Student presentations of research proposals**
With Q&A and feedback from other students and recommendations for improvement

[*] Indicates optional readings

[**] Recommended Readings for Marketing Students

**Additional References for the Referee Report Assignment**
To write a review of a published paper, please check the following: