











Fundamentals of Inquiry & Discovery

BAAS 3020.701



Professor Info —

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Course Info —

-  Prereq: Declared BAAS major
-  Online via Canvas
-  N/A
-  N/A

TA Info —

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About Me —

I have been in higher education for 17 years. I enjoy teaching because students are getting ready for a big step into a large world, and I want to make sure they are as prepared as possible. I can teach government, economics, and statistics, so feel free to come to me with questions about any of those subjects!

Overview

The main purpose of this course is to focus on good questions and how to answer them. This is essential to making considered decisions as a leader in any organization or in your life overall. Thus, the goals of the course are 1) to provide an introduction to the concepts and techniques used to develop good questions, and 2) to structure an appropriate information gathering and analysis to answer the questions. This process is sometimes called research.

Topics will include the connection between questions and information gathering design, variable measurement, sampling, the differences between experimental and non-experimental designs, data analysis, reporting and the social context of research. Emphasis will be placed on approaches used in the social sciences (i.e., sociology, psychology, anthropology), but we will also discuss how others (i.e., natural scientists, business analysts) might approach the process.

No prior knowledge of statistics is required for this course.

Focuses on how to evaluate information and apply some of the methods commonly used by social scientists from a variety of disciplines to answer questions about social life. Topics include measuring concepts, determining the most appropriate method of data collection, constructing a survey instrument, selecting a sample, conducting basic data analysis, presenting findings and addressing the ethical and political issues associated with formal research.

Materials

Required Text

There is no required textbook for this course. However, if you plan to pursue a Master's or Doctorate degree, please let me know and I can give you a **huge** list of sources to get you headed in the right direction.

Recommended

Any required journal articles, book chapters, or other materials will be provided by me and placed in Canvas.

Technology

Access to a reliable, modern computer will be necessary. We will utilize podcasts and other forms of digital media to create a rewarding classroom experience. Plus, your grade will always be on Canvas.

Grading Scheme

15%	Discussions Boards
35%	Module Quizzes
40%	Inquiry Project
10%	Personal Process Paper

Grades will follow the standard scale:

- A = 89.51-100
- B = 79.51-89.5
- C = 69.51-79.5
- D = 59.51-69.5
- F < 59.51

FAQs

? Why do I have to take this class?

! This course is one of three required courses for the BAAS program, so ultimately this course is needed to graduate. More importantly, understanding the research process is integral to being an informed person. There's a lot of bad research out there; this course will teach you to conduct, analyze, evaluate, and critique research so that you can better know if what you are being told is truthful or at least plausible.

? I don't like research and I'm afraid I will fail. What do I do?

! Approach the class with an open mind and see what happens! In my experience, students who fail do so because they quit. So as long as you don't quit on me, the course, but most importantly yourself, you will most likely pass.

? What if I'm not good at statistics?

! This is not a statistics course. While advanced statistical methods are frequently used in many disciplines to answer research questions, this course is an introduction into how and why research is conducted. Therefore, even if your research question is answered by statistical analysis, you will not be conducting that analysis in this course.

Discussion Boards

There are a total of five discussion board assignments interspersed throughout the semester worth 15% of your final grade. They are intended to take an average of 45 minutes to one hour to construct adequately. The boards will be due in two phases – the original post is due on Wednesdays by 11:59pm, and replies are due by that Sunday at 11:59pm. **NOTE: Only the Sunday date will show up in Canvas; you must remember to make an original post by Wednesday.**

Module Quizzes

The ten module quizzes will be “open note”; however, you are expected to take each quiz with no outside help other than your readings and accompanying module materials. Quizzes will be timed (1.5 minutes per question; i.e., 15 minutes for a 10 item quiz); this is sufficient time to thoughtfully respond and check your answers. It is highly recommended that you study and be prepared beforehand since you will not have time to look up each item during the actual exam. You may NOT copy any test items or look at any copied test items from this course; doing so is an honor code violation. Quizzes may include a variety of question types including all or some of the following: multiple choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blanks. Each quiz will be available until its deadline and can be taken twice. If taken twice, the average of each will be recorded. **After the deadline, the quizzes will become unavailable on Canvas, and you will be unable to make them up without legitimate documentation (i.e., medical, judicial, or serious personal events).** Each quiz must be completed by the deadline (not just started by then). The quizzes are collectively worth 35% of your final grade.

There may be times in which you experience technical difficulties while taking the quizzes (i.e., loss of Internet connection, the test does not submit correctly). If a score does not immediately appear in the grade book after taking an assessment, this most likely means your quiz was not submitted properly. If this happens, don't panic; it will be necessary for me to reset your quiz. If this occurs, you should email me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE in order for you to have ample time to retake the quiz or exam within the allotted time period. Therefore, it is recommended that you take the assessments during this timeframe and do not wait until the last minute in case you experience any technical difficulties. Moreover, to avoid experiencing technical difficulties, it is recommended that you take quizzes in a location with reliable Internet service. They will be due according to the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

Personal Process Paper

Each student will complete a personal process paper in which they will reflect on their learning. More information and a grading rubric will be posted on Canvas. The personal process paper is on Sunday, October 12th at 11:59 pm and will be worth 10% of your final grade; no late submissions can be accepted as 12 October is the last day of the semester.

Inquiry Project

The Inquiry Project will involve creating a research-based project design that will allow you to brainstorm a research project collaboratively. This project will be completed in teams as assigned by the professor. Each small group will select a research topic and develop an inquiry project that includes conceptualization, a purpose statement, research questions, background literature, and methods. The Inquiry Project is collectively worth 40% of your final grade (each part is equally weighed); no late submissions will be accepted for any of the components. Check the course calendar for due dates as this assignment will be subdivided.

Teamwork in an Online Class

Since you will be working in teams in an online environment, I will send check-in emails to every team twice a week to see how the project is proceeding. If I hear that any given teammate isn't responding or doing what they set out to do in the agreed timeframe, I will email that student and expect a response within 48 hours with a plan to change course and re-engage in the teamwork. If my email is not answered within the 48 hour timeframe, the team has the right to remove said student from the group. This would be most unfortunate because that student will then not receive credit for ANY of the project (this includes work already completed), so they would be losing out on 40% of the course grade. **Please, don't be "that student."** Let me and your teammates know of any difficulties; in all my years of education, I've only observed people willing to extend grace and understanding when needed, never the opposite.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Investigate and evaluate the knowledge claims of both themselves and others with evidence and examples. (*Critical Thinking and Reasoning*)
2. Communicate inquiry methods and approaches appropriate to specific problems. (*Written and Oral Communication*)
3. Collaborate with others to formulate questions and develop strategies to address questions. (*Teamwork/Collaboration*)

Withdrawal Policy

The last date a student can withdraw from this class with a "W" is [Friday, September 26, 2025](#). I will not withdraw you from the course for any reason; if you desire to withdraw, you must instigate those procedures.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA Website.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Attendance Policy

Given the course is online, it is imperative to regularly engage with the content, your professor, and your teammates. I recommend setting a schedule that works for you so that you are logging in at least three times a week.

Also, in my experience, participation and engagement correlate with higher grades. Please let me know when unexpected situations arise; we can try our best to maintain continuity in the course.

Instructor Availability

Generally speaking, any question, point of confusion, or comment can easily be addressed with me via email. I will reply or otherwise address any concerns within one business day. I do not check emails on the weekends. My number one task is to help you succeed.

Professional Communication

Communicating with me doesn't have to be a formal affair; however, it is also not like texting your friend about where to meet after class. This is a great time in your academic career to learn professional communication strategies. Allow 24 hours for me to reply to all weekday emails; I do not typically check email between the hours of 6pm and 6am. I do not usually check emails over the weekend. On a more general note, here are some tips for e-mail success (and requirements for future success on the job) (hat-tip to my doctoral advisor, who used similar notes while he was at Minnesota):

- Provide a useful and descriptive subject line (ex: Question about my Inquiry Project score)
- Begin with a greeting (ex: "Dear Dr S") and end with a signature (ex: "Sincerely, Student"). Launching straight into the message is bad, but "Hi!" is poor form and "Hey Prof!" is a disaster. "Dear" and "Hi" are fine, so long as you follow both by a name or title: "Hi Professor" or "Hi Dr S".
- Be clear and concise. Write short messages, make clear requests, get to your point quickly, and offer to provide more information rather than launch into your life story.
- Check to see whether your question is already answered in the syllabus or other course materials before sending an e-mail. Also, don't ask for information before you've looked on Google. "Can you send me paper X?" makes it seem as though you don't care about your education, which we know isn't true!
- Use your official school email address. Email addresses like "hotmuffin02@hotmail.com" and "mikeygforlife@gmail.com" are just not appropriate and preclude me from replying due to federal privacy laws.
- Form: Capitalize and punctuate.

Student Expectations

I expect each student to:

- Fully read and understand the syllabus.
- Understand that due dates are just that, dates on which any given item is due.
- Have familiarity with and proficiency in common word processing, data organization, and presentation creation software.
- Have familiarity with Canvas.
- Check their UNT email at least every 48 hours.
- Come to class prepared for all activities and events happening in that class time.
- Let me know when difficulties arise.

Students can expect from me:

- Course preparedness, professionalism, and collegiality.
- Confidentiality regarding anything you may say to me regarding yourself or another (with the exception of statements made in which I am bound by law to report)
- Efforts made to help you the best I possibly can.
- Please remember, I want you to succeed!

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found [here](#).

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Cheating & Plagiarism

Students caught cheating on any given assignment will receive no credit for the assignment. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which may impose a further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or re-submission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. The use of ChatGPT or other AI to complete coursework is equally prohibited and punishable.

I want you to succeed, so you are highly encouraged to see me when questions and concerns arise. Another way to limit the probability of cheating is to start your coursework in plenty of time so you don't end up cramming. To do this, consider temporal discounting and ensure you are adequately valuing the present and the future.

Begun, the AI Wars Have

As the technological singularity creeps ever closer to reality, people in numerous industries have used AI for both good and ill. As this is an online course, the temptation to use AI instead of your own writing abilities will exist and could be significant. I reserve the right to transform any assignment into an oral assignment done at the individual level if I suspect that AI has been used to craft the writing. The reason for this policy is to ensure you can apply in an interesting way material you have learned; I am not assessing your ability to type a request into a box.

Technical Support

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues. **Please do not rely on me for technical support – I am not the person for that.**

UIT Help Desk: [UIT Student Help Desk site](#)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Time Management

It could be the case that you are a bit unsure exactly how to manage your time such that you can succeed in this course. Since all of you are different and will therefore have to put in varying amounts of effort, I cannot directly say that “five hours per week will get you an A.” However, I can say that in an 8 week course such as ours, it would be customary to invest a *minimum* of six (6) hours per week to insure a greater than 50% probability that you will pass the class. Also, due dates are just that, dates in which the assignment is due. They are not “do” dates as in “do the work on that day.”

Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments (due Sundays @ 23:59)
1	8/18	Syllabus Review & Team Formation		“get to know you” activities
2	8/25	Process of Inquiry	Module 1	All Module 1 Work due 8/31
		Components of Inquiry	Module 2	All Module 2 Work due 8/31 IP - Part A due 8/31
3	9/1	Conceptualizing Research	Module 3	All Module 3 Work due 9/7
		Background & Context	Module 4	All Module 4 Work due 9/7 IP - Part B due 9/7
4	9/8	Ethics in Research	Module 5	All Module 5 Work due 9/14
		Measurement & Sampling	Module 6	All Module 5 Work due 9/14 IP - Part C due 9/14
5	9/15	Descriptive Research	Module 7	All Module 7 Work due 9/21
		Experimental Designs	Module 8	All Module 8 Work due 9/21 IP - Part D due 9/21
6	9/22	Qualitative Methods	Module 9	All Module 9 Work due 9/28
		Mixed Methods	Module 10	All Module 10 Work due 9/28 IP - Parts E and F due 9/28
7	9/29	Create Presentation		IP - Presentation due 10/5
8	10/6	Semester Wrap-up		IP - Part G due 10/12 Personal Process Paper due 10/12

Key: **Team Assignments**; **Online Assignments**

Note: Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.