INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Suad Ghaddar, PhD
Email: suad.ghaddar@utrgv.edu (preferred communication)
Email Policy: For all communication, please use my email (suad.ghaddar@utrgv.edu) and NOT course messages. Generally, I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. Make sure to communicate via your UTRGV email accounts. I will not respond to emails from non-UTRGV accounts.
Office Location: EHABW, Room 2.158
Office Hours: If you need to discuss any course-related issues, please send me an email to schedule a phone call or a meeting.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to provide graduate medical and health professions students with the tools to understand and critically appraise health sciences and health services research and to practice evidence-based health care. It will introduce students to different quantitative and qualitative research methods and to the foundations of evidence-based health care practice.

Prerequisites: None

TEXTBOOK AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Designing Clinical Research
Fourth Edition: 2013
Stephen Hulley, Steven Cummings, Warren Browner, Deborah Grady, and Thomas Newman
- ISBN-10: 1608318044
- Publisher: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIRED READINGS

The textbook chapters will be supplemented by weekly research articles that you are required reading. All articles or links to the articles will be provided.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Describe the different research methods and study designs in health sciences and health services research (quantitative and qualitative)
2. Critically appraise published health sciences and health services research
3. Utilize research to support evidence-based practice
Each week, a new set of readings, PowerPoint slides, assignments, etc. will be available for students to review on Blackboard. In this course, weeks begin at 12:00 am (Central Standard Time (CST)) each Wednesday and end at 11:59 pm (CST) on the following Tuesday. Announcements will be posted regularly. Make sure to check the Announcements section frequently for any schedule changes and general comments addressing common student issues. Also check your UTRGV email account regularly as announcements and other communication will be sent to that email address.

In general, each week will have the following structure.
- Introduction
- Learning objectives & to-do list
- Due dates
- PowerPoint slides
- Articles
- Discussion board (required only in Week 1)
- Collaborate session
- Sample assignment
- Assignment
- Quiz (opens on Saturdays)
- Optional resources, if any
- Next week preview
- Assignment answers (opens after grading is completed)

It is good practice to familiarize yourself with the week’s requirements on Wednesday and to make sure to open all sections of the Table of Contents.

The following is a tentative schedule of each week’s topics. Any changes to this schedule will be posted online.

**Table 1. Tentative Weekly Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Starting Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapter Readings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 0</td>
<td>February 20</td>
<td>Introductory Material</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>February 27</td>
<td>Introduction, Overview of Statistical Concepts and Study Designs</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Ethics, Evidence-Based Practice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>Methods Section</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, &amp; 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Quantitative Study Designs: Non-Experimental Designs</td>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Quantitative Study Designs: Experimental Designs</td>
<td>10 &amp; 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Qualitative Study Designs</td>
<td>20, 21, 22, &amp; 23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Review and Final Exam</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From Designing Clinical Research textbook
** These chapters are from a different textbook. PDFs of Chapters will be provided.

**Note:** Each week will include additional readings and material to review from other sources.

**NOTE ON POWERPOINT SLIDES**

The PowerPoint (PPT) slides provide an excellent outline of the readings as well as additional resources and examples aimed at enhancing student understanding of the material. Note that you are responsible for all material included in the PPT slides. Suggested studying strategy: start with an overview of the PPT slides, read the chapter(s) adding notes to your slides, use the enhanced slides to study for quizzes and the Final Exam.
GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS

GRADING POLICY

The overall passing grade for this course is 70%. To earn a passing grade, students must successfully complete a baseline survey, a course-end survey, 7 assignments, 6 quizzes, and a final exam.

All quizzes and assignments are due on Tuesdays at 11:59 PM CST, unless stated otherwise. All deadlines are hard deadlines; work submitted after the deadline will be subject to a late submission penalty. Please be sure to give yourself enough time to complete your work well before the deadline to account for any technical or unforeseen issues you may encounter.

- Late work policy: You will be penalized 10 points for one-day delay, 15 points for two-day delay. I will NOT accept assignments submitted two days after the deadline.
- In the case of unforeseen emergencies or circumstances, please contact me within 24 hours for special arrangements.

Points you receive for graded activities will be posted to the Blackboard Grade Book. Click on the My Grades link on the left navigation to view your points. Your instructor/academic coach will update the online grades each time a grading session has been completed - typically 4 days following the completion of an activity. You will see a visual indication of new grades posted on your Blackboard home page under the link to this course.

ASSIGNMENTS

You have seven assignments in this course requiring different levels of critical thinking analysis. Assignments include, but are not limited to, retrieving information related to course material, reading journal articles, and critically appraising different elements of the study design and reporting. Assignment answers will be posted, once grading is completed, in a new tab at the end of your week’s outline. Note that we will not provide specific feedback on the graded submissions since the answers will provide the necessary guidance. If you still have questions after comparing your assignment to the answer key, feel free to contact me or your academic coach for further clarification.

After submitting your assignment, please always check your assignment for any submission glitches to make sure it shows correctly. In some rare instances, an assignment will show as blank; immediately checking your submission will make things easier on everyone.

NEVER submit your assignment via email. These submissions are hard to track. Resort to an email submission only if you encounter a serious glitch at the submission deadline (Tuesday at midnight). The email will serve as confirmation that you have met the deadline. We will later ask you to resubmit in Blackboard so that your assignment is not lost.

For essay-style assignments only, please follow APA guidelines. Suggested resources for APA style include:

- APA Guidelines Video: [YouTube Link]
- APA Guidelines Webpage: [Resource from Purdue University]
- [Mendeley’s APA Format Citation Guide]

Please note

- No abstract is required for your assignments.
- [Wikipedia is not a reliable source.]
A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM

The UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) defines plagiarism as "the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission (resubmission) or incorporation of it in one's own academic work offered for credit" (UTRGV HOP, Section: STU 02-100). UTRGV considers plagiarism an act of scholastic dishonesty. As such, the Academic Integrity Violation sanctions listed below apply in cases of plagiarism.

NAMING AND SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Before you submit a document, name your file according to the format below. Avoid special characters and spaces in file names. Use a single underline _ to separate words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The name of your...</th>
<th>...should follow the format:</th>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment1a</td>
<td>LastNameFirstInitial_Assign#</td>
<td>GhaddarS_Assignment1a.doc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUIZZES

You have six multiple-choice quizzes. Quizzes can be accessed in the quizzes area. All quizzes are open-book. Keep in mind that if you do not have a good grasp of the material, you will not be able to answer the questions or to finish on time. Make sure to prepare well before attempting to take the quizzes; I also highly recommend that you attend or view the Collaborate session before attempting the quiz. All quizzes open on Saturday of each week.

Quizzes are due on Tuesday of each week. Answers will be available two days after the due date of the quiz (the morning of the following Friday). To access the answers,
- Go to My Grades
- Click on the quiz you want to check
- Click on your actual grade
- You will see what you got wrong and the correct answers

You are expected to work INDEPENDENTLY on your quiz and NOT to share quiz questions/answers with anyone! Any scholastic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students and will entail serious consequences. See section on Scholastic Integrity below.

Important note on common glitches while taking your quizzes:
1. In the past students would experience being kicked out of the quiz while taking it. I reported the issue to COLTT and they alerted me to the following potential user-end issues:
   - If the student is going in and out to other tabs, then he/she is likely to have this problem
   - If the student is taking the quiz (it opens in a new window) and closes the main blackboard window
   - If the student closes the quiz thinking they can go back in and resume
   - If the student is using a connection that is accessible by many persons (the broadband is distributed by strength of signals coming in, hence, getting kicked off the network by a “bigger truck” is going to happen when it is full). Please avoid the above. If you still get kicked out, please email me or your coach so that we can address the problem.
2. As you are taking the quiz you need to pay attention to a little detail to avoid a change in your response option as you are moving between questions. Once you select an answer among the two or four response options, make sure that you click outside the response area. If you don’t, sometimes as you are scrolling up and down, your answer choice may also move up and down resulting in an incorrect answer.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam is a comprehensive (all 7-week material is included), multiple-choice test. The final exam is open-book.

BASELINE AND COURSE-END SURVEYS
In this course, you are required to complete a baseline survey before starting your Week 1 material. At the completion of the course, you will complete a similar survey. Both surveys are designed (1) to assess student mastery of research competencies and (2) to serve as an example of a cohort study design.

DISCUSSION BOARDS

This course includes only one graded discussion board (DB), in which students will be asked to introduce themselves. Responses to other students’ posts are not required but encouraged if you would like to share your perspective.

Each week will include a General Help DB designed to provide students with a forum to discuss the week’s material and to post questions. This allows students to help one another and to benefit from other students’ answers. Keep in mind that these forums are only for student use and are NOT graded or regularly monitored by the instructor or the academic coaches. For any course-related questions and when your concern requires prompt attention, never hesitate to email me or your coaches directly.

In general, when posting to a DB, write clearly and professionally. The DB is not an informal chat room or texting thread. Your answers and replies should utilize proper language and grammar.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline &amp; Course-End Surveys (2 @ 3% each)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Introductions Discussion Board</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments (7 @ 6% each)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (6 @ 5% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades for this course will be assigned as follows:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- F = Below 70%

I = An incomplete grade is for students who encounter unforeseen emergencies and will not be considered to avoid a failing grade.

TOOLS

The following are important tools that we will be utilizing throughout the course.

BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE ULTRA

Blackboard Collaborate provides a tool for virtual meetings between students and with your professor. For a quick orientation to the Collaborate platform, please watch the following video available at this link.

A Collaborate session will be scheduled once a week to provide a quick overview of the week’s material and to address any questions you may have. If you are not able to join the live session, you have the opportunity to send me your questions ahead of time so that I can address them during the session. The session will also be recorded so that you can view it later at your convenience.

For the best experience with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, please use Google Chrome™ or Firefox® (versions 52+).
TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

COMPUTER HARDWARE

To participate in this online course, you should have easy access to a computer less than 5-years old with high-speed internet connection via cable modem, LAN or DSL. To ensure you are using a supported browser and have the required plug-ins please refer to Supported Browsers, Plugins & Operating Systems for Blackboard Learn from Blackboards resource page.

STUDENT TECHNICAL SKILLS

You are expected to be proficient in installing and using basic computer applications and to have the ability to send and receive email attachments.

SOFTWARE

- Microsoft Office’s Internet Explorer (latest version)
- Mozilla’s Firefox (latest version; Macintosh or Windows)
- Google Chrome (recommended)
- Adobe’s Flash Player & Reader plug-in (latest version)
- Virus protection
- Microsoft Office

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Blackboard you can:

- Submit a Blackboard Helpdesk Ticket
- Contact COLTT Help Desk
  Contact Information (UTRGV’s Blackboard Support)
  Location: Brownsville Campus, Rusteberg, 108, (956) 882-6792;
  Edinburg Campus, Education Complex 2.202, (956) 665-5327
  Hours: Monday – Friday 7:30AM – 6:00PM

24/7 Blackboard Support: Blackboard phone and chat support is now available 24/7. You can call COLTT main office numbers, 956-882-6792 or 956-665-5327, at any time and speak to a support representative.

UTRGV POLICY STATEMENTS

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. Make sure to contact ASA as soon as possible.

PREGNANCY, PREGNANCY-RELATED, AND PARENTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, marital status, or parental status. Students seeking accommodations related to pregnancy, pregnancy-related condition, or parenting (reasonably immediate postpartum period) are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services for additional information and to request accommodations.
STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

**Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (my UTRGV); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available:

- **Spring 2019 Module 1** February 13 – February 19
- **Spring 2019 Module 2** April 10 – April 16
- **Spring 2019 (full semester)** April 10 – May 1

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY

Integrity is a key trait that people should aspire for. Within academic settings and especially within the online environment, maintaining academic integrity is a given. However, as educators we always have the responsibility to clarify expectations. UTRGV’s Academic Dishonesty Policy is the following:

*As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.*

I would also like to draw your attention to UTRGV’s Academic Integrity Violation Sanctioning Guidelines available [here](#). As you will see, for graduate students, any type of violation is categorized as level four, which has serious sanctions and ramifications on your academic career.

For all of your UTRGV courses, all work on assignments, quizzes, exams, papers, etc. needs to be completed independently, unless otherwise specified. For this course, quizzes are open-book, open-notes. However, all quizzes need to be completed INDEPENDENTLY. Assignments, on the other hand, can reflect a certain level of collaboration among the students for clarification, guidance, etc. However, there is a big difference between seeking clarification on an assignment and copying and/or accessing/providing another student’s assignment. Group assignments are obviously an exception.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND VIOLENCE

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination. If students, faculty, or staff would like confidential assistance, or have questions, they can contact OVAVP (Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention) at 665-8287, 882-8282, or [OVAVP@utrgv.edu](mailto:OVAVP@utrgv.edu).

COURSE DROPS

Please consult with the [UTRGV Withdrawal Calendar](#) for information on key dates related to drop/withdrawal and corresponding refunds.
Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to their instructor’s office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- **Learning center**: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- **Writing center**: BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- **Advising center**: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- **Career center**: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)