PLANNING, ANALYSIS, & INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
Course Number EDUC 863   Winter Semester, 2017

Location: 2320 School of Education Building

Time: Fridays from 9:00 to noon  
(see course schedule below)

Instructor:
Stephen L. DesJardins (Steve)
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Office hours: No set office hours. I would prefer that you make an appointment (via e-mail) but if you drop by my office without an appointment I will try to accommodate you.

Policy on Accommodating Students with Special Needs:
In order to enable you to be successful in this course I encourage you to talk to me as early in the semester as possible so that the necessary accommodations can be made. See http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/ for more information about services for students with disabilities.

Students Rights and Responsibilities:
I encourage you to read your rights and responsibilities as a student. Information on these topics can be found at: http://www.umich.edu/~oscr/. I would also encourage you to read the University’s General Catalogue, especially the sections that detail your rights as a student and the section that discusses the University’s expectations of you as a student. (See http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/.)

On Diversity:
I intend to present materials and activities that are respectful of our diverse world and I encourage you to provide suggestions on how we can incorporate new materials to improve the course for all students. The University of Michigan has a number of affirmative action policies and these policies can be found at: http://www.umich.edu/~hraa/oie/

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The course is designed to provide students with a foundational understanding of institutional research (IR). IR is unique to higher education. There will be readings about the activities that institutional researchers engage in, the tools they need to be successful in their jobs, the topics they study and issues they investigate. I intend to provide you not only with a solid conceptual understanding of IR, but also with insights into how IR is conducted at institutions of higher education.
The course is intended for graduate students interested in an introduction to institutional research. There are no course prerequisites.

**COURSE CONDUCT**
Class attendance is required. If you miss class, or are consistently late for class, it will negatively affect your grade. Students are expected to have read the required materials at the time the topic has begun in class. No audio or video recording of the class activities is allowed without prior consent of the instructor.

There will be a number of readings from the following two edited books as well as chapters from different volumes of *New Directions for Institutional Research* accessible at: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ir.v2012.154/issuetoc](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ir.v2012.154/issuetoc) or located on the course CTOOLS site. The Peterson et al. book (citation provided below) may be purchased, but I will provide the required chapters from it in PDF format on Canvas so buying it is not really necessary.


The Knight book (cited below) is available in electronic format through the Association for Institutional Research (AIR). You should join AIR ($45 graduate student rate; go to [https://www.airweb.org/Membership/Pages/Join.aspx](https://www.airweb.org/Membership/Pages/Join.aspx) for details) because we will be using resources from their web site from time-to-time which requires a membership for access AND the Knight book is free (in electronic/PDF format) if you join. Otherwise you could search online and find a used copy (they are cheap), but make sure you buy the 2003 edition.


**EVALUATION**
I encourage you to see me if you are having difficulty with the course materials. There are no tutors or Graduate Student Instructors (GSI) for the course.

Grades for the course will be based on class discussion and attendance (20%) writing assignments (30%), and a final paper and presentation (35% for the paper; 15% for the presentation). Grading will be A through F only (on a plus/minus scale) for three (3) semester credit hours. Incomplete grades are strongly discouraged; in any event, an incomplete must be arranged with the instructor by April 6th.

**Class Discussion:** Students should be prepared to offer comments, observations, or ask questions about the readings due for that class period. There will be large and small group discussions and projects conducted in-class and I expect each of you to contribute to these (and 20% of your grade will depend on you class participation). I believe we can learn from each other and I take participation in class very seriously.

**Written Discussion Questions:** There will be a variety of writing assignments in this class. You will receive two grades on these papers, the first grade will indicate the quality of the paper with regard to grammar, clarity, and writing style; the second grade will be indicative of the quality of
the content of your essay. These writing assignments will account for 30% of your grade. These papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due; late submissions will be subject to a reduction in the grade content grade on the assignment and will thereby negatively affect your grade in the class. I want you to write so that I can get an early evaluation of your understanding of the concepts being discussed and to give you practice communicating your ideas in writing, a skill that is required to be a successful in graduate school and in the labor market. In addition, having you write allows me to assess how well you write and to intervene if you need help communicating in written form.

**Final Paper**

Each student will also be required to write a paper that will count for 35% of the final grade (you will also present the results of your effort to class and that presentation will count for 15% of your grade). You have two options, a critique of a journal article or book chapter related to institutional research or a critical examination of an issue related to institutional research.

**Option 1:**

**Critique of a Journal Article/Chapter:** If a student elects this option it should be an article/chapter of his or her own choosing, closely related to the content of the course, and **approved by the instructor in advance**. A useful way to proceed is to submit a one or two paragraph abstract proposing the article/chapter you would like to critique.

The paper should be a *critical review* of the article/chapter which must be on a topic relevant to the course content. Your critique must also include the systematic integration of relevant sources both from inside and outside the course readings. In short, the paper should demonstrate a capacity to integrate literature in the field, the course readings, and the lectures with thoughtful analysis on a relevant topic. Be sure to select a topic that can be managed in about 20 (double spaced) pages.

The critique paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should reflect the **course content**.
2) It should be a **topic relevant to the course**.
3) It should **synthesize** and **integrate** the literature on the topic.
4) It should **critically review** the methodology, design questions, conceptual frameworks, or some other important component of the relevant study.
5) It must be **well-written** throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

**Option 2:**

**Issue Paper:** The purpose of the issue paper is to give students an opportunity to broaden their reading on an issue that is central to the content of this course, is of interest to you, and is of importance. This paper may be a subject-specific issue (e.g., the evaluation of a policy) or a methodological issue (e.g., the use of enrollment management techniques). This exercise is an opportunity to develop skills in identifying and using literature relevant to a current issue, and to develop and demonstrate the ability to make a succinct summary and a thoughtful critique of an issue relevant to the content of the course.

For the purposes of this essay, an “issue” is defined as a question of importance in the context of the content of the course, to which informed and reasonable people could give different answers. Again, before proceeding with this assignment, the topic must be approved by the instructor.
The issue essay will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should reflect the course content.
2) It should focus on an issue relevant to the course, and of some importance to society.
3) It should make appropriate use of supporting and opposing literature and evidence on the issue (drawing on at least 6-10 sources) and the student’s own scholarly reflection on the issue.
4) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

OTHER OPTIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED, such as research using data from and examining a topic of importance to an institution of higher education (e.g., an analysis of the factors affecting student enrollment/persistence/graduation at a university or college of your choosing). Nonetheless, an abstract of the option you intend to pursue, as well as a discussion of the topical area of your paper is due on February 10.

The final a paper should be presented in a formal style and should be no more than 20 double-spaced pages in length (excluding references and appendices). All references should follow standard American Psychological Association (APA) reference procedures. All final papers are due on or before the beginning of our final class on April 14. Exceptions must be arranged with the instructor by the end of class on April 7.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1: Introductions/Discussion of Course/Introduction to Content

Objectives: Permit us to learn more about each other, provide some background about the course content, and discuss the expectations that I have for the class.

Reading Assignments: None

Session 2: What is Institutional Research?

Objectives: Institutional research (IR) is a type of research that is unique to institutions of higher education. In this section our objective is to understand a bit of the history of IR and the kind of functions and activities that take place within IR.

Reading Assignments:


Also, peruse the Association for Institutional Research’s web site for resources and information about IR: https://www.airweb.org/Resources/Pages/AIR%20Resources.aspx

Writing Assignment Number 1: Find an institutional research office website and conduct a thorough examination of the office to ascertain the following: What is the official title of this office? Who is the director? Can you ascertain how many staff (excluding the director) work for
this office? What are their titles? Can you establish where in the institution’s organizational structure this office resides (e.g., Academic Affairs? Student Affairs? The Provost or President’s Office)? Can you ascertain who the director reports to? What type of functions does this office do for the institution (reporting, research...)? What is the mix of functions, that is, can you ascertain whether they mostly do reporting, research, other work? Does this office do institutional research for a single unit on campus, the entire campus, or multiple campuses within a larger system?

This list is not exhaustive, simply suggestive. Use your judgment about what else you’d want to tell someone about this office. Include one interesting fact about this office that might surprise your colleagues! This paper should be no more than two single-spaced pages (with standard margins and a Times Roman 12-point font) and will be turned in at the beginning of the January 20th class period.

Session 3: The Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Needed by IR Professionals (January 20)

DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 1

Objectives: Being an IR professional requires a specific set of skills in order to be effective. It also requires some knowledge of the organization, structure, and functioning of IR offices. In this section we will examine the different skills sets necessary to be an effective IR professional and discuss the organizational structure of IR offices and their placement within institutions of higher education.

Reading Assignments: (reading them in this order may make sense)


Canvas: Muffo, J. (1999). A Comparison of Findings from Regional Studies of Institutional Research Offices

Writing Assignment Number 2: In one single-spaced page explain what skill you think is the most important for an IR professional to possess to be effective. Provide some justification/rationale for choosing this skill. The paper is due on January 27th

Session 4: Ethical Issues (January 27)

DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 2

Objectives: In an ideal world the IR professional would not have to worry about conflict between the ideal of promoting institutional goals and the practical necessity of serving one’s boss. In the real world there are sometimes conflicts between the values of the IR professional and those of
their supervisors, policymakers, and/or other stakeholders. In this section we will discuss how an IR professional might navigate the ethical dilemmas and conflicts that they might encounter.

**Reading Assignments:**


**Canvas:** Budig, J.E. (1992). Handling the Unethical Request.

**Canvas:** DeVries, R. et al. (2005). Normal Misbehavior: Scientists Talk About the Ethics of Research.

Read “Association for Institutional Research Code of Ethics” accessible at: [https://www.airweb.org/Membership/Pages/CodeOfEthics.aspx](https://www.airweb.org/Membership/Pages/CodeOfEthics.aspx)

**Supplemental Reading:**


**IN CLASS CASE STUDY ON ETHICS**

**Writing Assignment Number 3:**

**OPTION 1:** In no more than two single-spaced pages discuss which section (Section I: Competence; Section II: Practice...Section V: Relationships to the Craft) of the AIR Code of Ethics you think is the most important and why. If you do not believe a section can be singled out as the most important, then provide your rationale for why that is the case.

**OPTION 2:** In no more than two single-spaced pages discuss an ethical dilemma you found yourself in during a job you held or in an academic setting. Explain what preparation you may have had, formal or otherwise, to help you resolve this dilemma. Also explain how the dilemma was resolved.

**Session 5: Assessment**

**(February 3)**

**DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 3**

**Objectives:** Assessment is an important function for institutions of higher education and IR professionals play a pivotal role in the conduct of these activities. In this section we will examine what assessment is about, how formal assessments are conducted, who does these and to what end. Our goal will be for you to develop an improved understanding of assessment and how it can be used to promote institutional goals.

**Reading Assignments:**


Carefully examine this website; it has valuable resources related to assessment activities.

Additional Reading:
Those interested in a comprehensive book on assessment should also see:

Writing Assignment Number 4:
Using the required readings for this week, choose one of the conceptual frameworks discussed and develop a hypothetical assessment study of interest to you. This paper should be structured in the following way: The Introduction section should briefly present the topic you propose to study (e.g., what is the level of student satisfaction of a particular program at institution X; what factors explain grades in Calculus I in a particular college?; what factors affect student persistence to the sophomore year of college?). In this section you will want to make a convincing case for why this is an important topic to research (e.g., Why would institutions care about this topic?). The Theory section should include a discussion of the conceptual framework you’ve chosen to guide the design of this study. In this section include some rationale about why you chose this particular framework (and not some other one) and how it can be used to help you think about the underlying concepts/constructs that might explain any variation in your outcome of interest. Make sure to include, if appropriate, discussions about the underlying mechanisms that you think might be operating and/or important assumptions of the framework used. You should limit the length of this paper to three single-spaced pages. The paper is due at the beginning of class next week.

Abstract of Final Paper: Prepare a brief (at most 1 page) description of your plan for the final paper. This abstract will serve as the impetus to begin a conversation with me about how to begin the process of constructing your final paper. I do not expect this description to be a full blown proposal, rather just a way for you to float some ideas about topics you might want to explore in this paper.

Session 6: Enrollment Management
(February 10)
DUE: ABSTRACT ON FINAL PAPER TOPIC & WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 4

- GUEST: STEVE LONN, DIRECTOR OF ENROLLMENT RESEARCH & DATA MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Objectives: Strategic enrollment management is now a critical function for institutions of higher education. IR professionals are increasingly playing a role in setting enrollment targets, developing strategies to hit these targets, and conducting sophisticated analyses to help promote institutional objectives. In this section we will examine what EM is about, the conceptual frameworks that underpin EM, and how IR professionals use theory and research methods in the
conduct of EM. The goal is for you to develop an improved understanding of EM and how it can be used to promote institutional goals.

**Reading Assignments:**


Before our guests’ visit, you should peruse this website: [https://enrollment.umich.edu/data-research](https://enrollment.umich.edu/data-research)


**Writing Assignment Number 5:**
For this exercise you will develop a hypothetical enrollment management research study for an institution of higher education. You have been asked by the VP for Enrollment Management at Northern University (NU) to design a statistical analysis that will allow the institution to better understand the factors related to why students enroll (or not) at NU. So your outcome of interest (e.g., the “O” in Astin’s model) is: Enrollment. Your job is to determine what inputs (“I’s” in Astin’s model) and environmental factors (“E’s” in Astin’s model) may help explain why some students who are admitted to NU enroll, but others do not. The paper should include an Introduction briefly discussing why the issue is important to NU, a Theory section laying out the conceptual framework, and a Methods section in which you discuss where the data will come from (e.g., from inside and/or outside the institution?); you need to clearly define your outcome variable and how it will be measured (e.g., continuous/categorical); you should speculate (“hypothesize”) on whether the I’s and E’s will be positively or negatively related to the outcome and why; and you should discuss a statistical method you think would be appropriate for undertaking this project (e.g., linear regression; logistic regression). Limit the length of this paper to three single-spaced pages. The paper is due at the beginning of class next week.

**Session 7: How College Affects Students**
**(February 17)**

**DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 5**

**Objectives:** Obtaining a college degree is probably as important as it has ever been. Much happens to students while enrolled in college and there is an extensive literature on the effect of college on students. In this section we will read a chapter that synthesizes what is known about how college affects students. The goal is for you to be made aware of the literature in this area and for you to gain a better understanding of how student experiences and environmental factors affect student progress and completion.
Reading Assignments:

Writing Assignment Number 6: Assume you are an analyst working for an IR director. She has instructed you to write a one page summary on the following topic: How does college affect students? Using what you learned from reading Pascarella and Terenzini’s chapter, comply with her request. The paper is due at the beginning of class next week.

**Session 8: Planning**
(February 24)

**DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 6**

Objectives: There are many models and theories related to university planning. In this section we will read about and discuss a number of the more well-known planning models. We will also examine the University of Michigan’s Accreditation Self Study Report as these often provide great insight into the history, mission, and planning activities of a university. The objective of this section is to help you become aware of the conceptual models that are often used to frame planning activities, and to gain practical insights into how they are applied in institutional settings.

Reading Assignments:
The chapters cited below are from Peterson, M.W. (1999). *ASHE Reader on Planning and Institutional Research*. Needham Heights, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing. It may be helpful to read them in the order they are cited.

Canvas: Peterson, M. W. Analyzing Alternative Approaches to Planning

Canvas: Neufeld, B. Conceptual Distinctions in University Planning

Canvas: Peterson, M. W. Using Contextual Planning to Transform Institutions

You might want to peruse the University of Michigan’s accreditation web site located at: [http://accreditation.umich.edu/](http://accreditation.umich.edu/)

Writing Assignment Number 6: Work on Final Paper

**Session 9: Data Issues in IR**
(March 10)

**DUE: FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER**

Objectives: Data is the “life-blood” of IR. In this section we will discuss many issues that swirl around data issues including access, legal frameworks, technical issues, turning data into information and knowledge. We will also look outside the institution to see how the data they
provide to the federal government can be used. The objective of this section is to familiarize you
with many of the myriad of issues that arise regarding higher education data.

**Reading Assignments:**


Peruse the contents of this Common Data Set: [http://oipr.depaul.edu/cds/main.asp](http://oipr.depaul.edu/cds/main.asp)

If you are interested in federal data on institutions you may want to take this free IPEDS on-line
tutorial: [http://www.airweb.org/EducationAndEvents/IPEDSTraining/Tutorials/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.airweb.org/EducationAndEvents/IPEDSTraining/Tutorials/Pages/default.aspx)

**Writing Assignment:** Work on Final Paper

**Session 10: Campus Climate Issues**

(March 17)

**GUEST: SIMONE HIMBEAULT TAYLOR, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT LIFE, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

**Objectives:** Issues about the campus community and the climate on campuses are often studied by IR professionals. In this section we will read what the campus “climate” is, how it differs from the campus “community,” and will examine instruments often used to study the climate and community. We will have a colleague from our Student Affairs Research Office, who has been at the forefront of studies on these issues at UM, to help us traverse this terrain.

**Reading Assignments:**

**Canvas:** Bauer, K.W. (1998). Editor’s Notes on Campus Climate.

**Canvas:** Baird, L. Campus Climate: Using Surveys for Policy Making and Understanding.

**Canvas:** Cheng, D.X. Assessing Student Perceptions of Campus Community.


**Writing Assignment:** Work on Final Paper
Session 11: Research Methods  
(March 24)

**Objectives:** My contention is that the research methods often employed by IR professionals are typically not rigorous enough to make strong statements about the programs/policies/practices often studied. In this section we will examine some research methods that are currently being used to make “causal” claims. Knowledge of these methods will be a “spring board” for you to learn more, if desired, about these methods and their application to education research in general and IR more specifically.

**Reading Assignments:**
**Canvas:** Hathaway, R. S. Assumptions Underlying Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Implications for Institutional Research.


**Writing Assignment:** Work on Final Papers

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Session 12: Budget and Finance  
(March 31)

**DUE: SECOND DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER**

**GUEST, LORI HELVEY, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Objectives:** Institutional research (IR) is a type of research that is unique to institutions of higher education. Our objective is to understand what IR-types do and the kind of skills and tools they need to succeed in these positions. I will provide examples of issues that IR folks are often asked to study and we will discuss these studies in detail.

**Reading Assignments:**
**BUDGET READINGS**
**Canvas:** Lasher, W.F. & Greene, D.L. College and University Budgeting: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?


Peruse Courant, P. N. and Knepp, M. “Budgeting with the UB Model at the University of Michigan” located at: [http://www.provost.umich.edu/budgeting/ub_model.pdf](http://www.provost.umich.edu/budgeting/ub_model.pdf)
Canvas: Education Advisory Board. Optimizing Institutional Budget Models: Strategic Lessons for Aligning Incentives and Improving Financial Performance (read the Executive Summary and peruse the rest of the document).


FINANCE READINGS
Canvas: Peruse the SHEEO website on state finance and skim the SHEEO 2014 State Finance Report located on this website: http://www.sheeo.org/projects/shef-%E2%80%94-state-higher-education-finance


Canvas: Voorhees, R. The Finance of Community and Technical Colleges.

Writing Assignment: Work on Final Papers

Session 13: TWO TOPICS: Providing & Receiving Advice
Reoccurring and Emerging Issues/Future of IR
(April 7)

Objectives: Institutional researchers are often called on to provide advice to decision and policy makers, or to act as representatives of the institution when outside consultants are hired by institutions. In this section we will examine some of the issues that arise in these circumstances and how you might navigate your way through the complexities that can arise in these situations. The objective is to prepare you for giving advice and acting on behalf of the institution when consultants are employed.

Throughout the semester we have been learning about tools that IR professionals use to analyze issues so that they can provide options to decision makers. Many times these issues cycle over time so having an understanding of recurring issues is useful. Also, it is important to have your pulse on the heartbeat of issues affecting institutions so you can be proactive. In this section we will discuss how IR professionals can know what issues tend to cycle and how they can be prepared for emerging issues.

Topic 1 Reading Assignments:
Canvas: Birnbaum, R. (2000). Policy Scholars are from Venus; Policy Makers are from Mars.

Canvas: Leimer, C. (2011). First, Get Their Attention: Getting Your Results Used


Topic 2 Reading Assignment:
**Canvas:** Delaney, A. M. The Role of Institutional Research in Higher Education: Enabling Researchers to Meet New Challenges.

Session 16  
(April 14)  
FINAL PRESENTATIONS TO THE CLASS

FINAL PAPERS, IN MS WORD FORMAT, ARE DUE ON OR BEFORE CLASS ON THIS DAY AND SHOULD BE UPLOADED TO YOUR CANVAS DROP BOX. NAME THEM LIKE THIS: LAST NAME_EDUC863_2017_FINAL_PAPER