

PST 315: Methods of Policy Analysis and Presentation

Course Syllabus

Prof. Jack Reilly

Fall 2026

Course Information

Class

Time: Tuesdays, 3:30 PM – 6:15 PM

Location: HB Crouse Hall, Kittredge Auditorium

Instructor

Professor Jack Reilly

Office: Eggers 225F (in the Policy Studies suite)

Office Hours: Friday, 11 AM - Noon and 3-4 PM, and [by appointment](#)

e-mail: jlreilly@syr.edu

Undergraduate Course Assistants

Your Undergraduate Course Assistant (UCA) is your supervisor for the semester and your first point of contact for questions about the course and your project.

Course Description

The purpose of this experiential-learning methods course is to teach you how to write a professional report, characteristic of a nonprofit, academic, or government agency. This course will help improve your research sophistication and understanding of social science research and will further your skills in the Microsoft Office suite. The instructor will lecture, hold discussions, and administer trainings in class, and students will be responsible for completing assignments by applying taught skills.

During our class, you will be assigned a client based on your interests. You will be acting as a research consultant to your assigned client, your Undergraduate Course Assistant will act

as your supervisor, and the professor will act as the CEO. You will spend approximately 90 hours developing surveys, collecting and analyzing data, giving and receiving feedback, and creating a report for your client. Your goal is to satisfy the client and meet the standards of conduct and performance set by the supervisors and CEO.

Chain of Command

Direct any questions about expectations first to your supervisor — that is, your UCA. They will elevate them as needed.

Prerequisites

PST 101, MAX 201, and admittance to the Policy Studies major.

Learning Objectives

1. Frame a research question and define a research scope
2. Gather information and data from a variety of sources
3. Judge sources' credibility, authority, relevance, bias, and accuracy
4. Calculate results, support arguments, and draw conclusions
5. Demonstrate software and technology proficiency
6. Present conclusions or data visually, clearly, and succinctly

Required Materials

Computer access with Microsoft Office. **No textbooks are required.**

Microsoft Office

As a current student, you can use your SU student electronic account to download and install Office 365 applications (including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) on up to five computers (PC and Mac) and five mobile devices (iPhone, iPad, Android). Students should download Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint in the first week of class.

While you can technically use Office on mobile devices, you should use a full computer (Mac or PC) for data analysis in the class. The mobile versions of the applications are not feature complete.

Online Course Resources

Blackboard is our internet-based course platform: <https://blackboard.syr.edu>. Log in with your NetID and password. Nearly all assignments are submitted through Blackboard; the Project Application is submitted through a Qualtrics link instead.

This website holds the course syllabus, schedule, and assignment descriptions. Please note that class attendance is the primary source of course-related announcements and material.

Course Schedule

Class meets Tuesdays. **Assignments and responsibilities are due Friday** of the week listed, with one exception: the [Final Presentation](#) is submitted by **Monday night** of Week 14 and presented in class the next day.

Week	Main Topic	Due
1	Course Intro	Project Application
2	Working With Clients	Client Email
3	Client Meeting (No Class)	First Client Meeting
4	Individual Meetings	Finalized Contract/Timeline, Second Client Meeting
5	Data & Surveys	Organizational Assessment, Weekly Task Plan
6	Excel & Coding	Draft Executive Summary, Excel Coding Workshop
7	Graphing & Methods	Excel Graphing Workshop
8	Fall Break	Practice Report
9	Individual Meetings	Formatted Report Shell ¹
10	Professional Materials	
11	Work Time	Rough Draft
12	Individual Meetings	
13	Presenting Your Work	Final Report
14	Student Presentations	Final Presentation
15	Wrap-Up	Professional Materials, Final Reflection

Assignments

Instructions for each individual assignment are posted on the [assignments](#) page.

Major Assignment Overview

Organizational Assessment: An assignment to help each student learn about their agency and project.

¹The Formatted Report Shell includes a revised Executive Summary, your spreadsheet, and your codebook.

Practice Report: This assignment gives students the opportunity to practice and receive performance feedback on the skills necessary for the final Client Report, including calculations, scaling numbers, qualitative coding, making graphs, and more.

Final Report and Presentation: A report created for each student's client that has a breakdown of the data collected (through a survey or data files) by the student or organization. The report includes an introduction, methods section, findings, and appendices; the presentation is a distilled slide deck and presentation from the report itself.

Professional Materials: A Cover Letter, Resume, LinkedIn Profile, and draft Reference Letter, intended to prepare students to apply for jobs. Students are required to meet with an A&S advisor for review of professional materials.

Final Reflection: A reflection that ties together the various components of the course and experiential learning experience. You will take findings from your Final Report and consider how they could potentially inform policy-making and organizational change for your client.

Group Projects

The substantial majority of projects in PST 315 are individual projects. However, occasionally a client may request a group project that two or more students will complete together.²

Group projects have a single deliverable and final project, but group projects are broader, deeper, and more complex, requiring more hours than an individual project. Those hours get spread across numerous individuals, who must coordinate to shape the final deliverable together.

Individuals in a group must complete their own individual work for the course (workshops and individual assignments), while groups are collectively responsible for production of the final project and deliverable. The table below describes this on a per-assignment basis.

All students in a group must submit all assignments to Blackboard, **even when those assignments are identical.**

Assignment	Submission
Project Application	By Individual
Finalized Contract/Timeline	By Project ³
Organizational Assessment	By Project
Weekly Task Plan	By Project ⁴
Draft Executive Summary	By Project
Excel Coding Workshop	By Individual
Excel Graphing Workshop	By Individual
Practice Report	By Individual
Formatted Report Shell	By Project
Rough Draft	By Project

²A "group project" in this context is a project with a single deliverable authored by multiple students. A group project does *not* include a client who offers several related projects that have separate deliverables.

Assignment	Submission
Final Report	By Project
Final Presentation	By Project
Professional Materials	By Individual
Final Reflection	By Individual ⁵
Professionalism	By Project and/or By Individual

Evaluation

Points	Evaluation	Submit to
2	Project Application	Qualtrics link
3	Finalized Contract/Timeline	Blackboard and Client
10	Organizational Assessment	Blackboard
2	Weekly Task Plan	Blackboard
3	Draft Executive Summary	Blackboard
2	Excel Coding Workshop	Blackboard
2	Excel Graphing Workshop	Blackboard
10	Practice Report	Blackboard
3	Formatted Report Shell	Blackboard
3	Rough Draft	Blackboard
45	Final Report	Blackboard and Client
5	Final Presentation	Blackboard and UCA
5	Professional Materials	Blackboard
5	Final Reflection	Blackboard
+/- 0	Professionalism	Ongoing

Professionalism

Professionalism points can be earned throughout the semester for demonstrating exceptional professionalism to your client, UCA, or Professor Reilly. Taking initiative to go above and beyond basic course requirements is strongly encouraged and will be rewarded. Professionalism points may also be subtracted for actions that are unprofessional (failure to send client emails on time, absence from class, etc.).

Caps

³Groups must use this opportunity to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for the project. Unless otherwise requested by the client, one individual should have primary responsibility for contacting the client after the first meeting. Your UCA and/or Professor will assist you in structuring your group roles.

⁴Groups must create task timelines for each individual in the group.

⁵Individuals in groups must indicate what elements of the final deliverable were completed by each group member.

There is a cap of **+5 points** and **-10 points** toward your final grade.

HOW TO GAIN AND LOSE PROFESSIONALISM POINTS

Attendance To be considered excused, you must email your UCA *before* class. Upon approval, your absence may be excused. Students may have one unexcused absence without penalty. Additional unexcused absences will result in the loss of a professionalism point per absence. Repeated lateness will incur point loss.

Class Work Time Class is primarily a period for work time on your projects. You may not leave class early unless you have completed work on all assignments for the week *and* there is no more work you could feasibly do on your project. If you have done so, you may ask your UCA for an early exit.

Emails to Client CC your UCA on **all** emails with your client, or you will lose one professionalism point per email. Only CC Professor Reilly if your UCA has instructed you to do so. UCAs reserve the right to deduct points for slapdash language or intent in emails to clients.

Emails to UCAs and Professor Exercise professionalism when emailing UCAs and Professor Reilly. UCAs reserve the right to deduct points for slapdash language or intent in emails to Professor Reilly and/or UCAs.

Deadlines and Meetings Failure to attend any scheduled meeting — including meetings with your client, your UCA, Professor Reilly, or an A&S advisor — will result in a loss of 3 points per meeting.

Client Presentation Some clients ask for a presentation of their own. Students who give a presentation to their client earn an extra professionalism point. See the [Final Presentation](#) assignment.

Client Evaluation If a client reaches out with a valid and reasonable complaint about your performance or professionalism, this will result in a loss of up to 10 points, at the discretion of your UCA and Professor Reilly.

Other Other exceptional or unprofessional conduct not listed here can result in a gain or loss of professionalism points accordingly, at Professor Reilly's and the UCAs' discretion.

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments must be turned in on time unless otherwise noted or approved. Each day late will be subject to a per-day penalty unless a prior arrangement for an extension is given. Assignments more than 7 days late will not be accepted unless an exception is granted by the Professor.

Blackboard's assignment portal indicates whether an assignment is late; UCAs will notify you of points lost when an assignment is submitted late. Late penalties only accrue on business days (Monday through Friday). The late penalty for all assignments is **one point per late day**, with a maximum of half of the assignment's points off.

Extensions may only be granted by Professor Reilly.

Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Point/Credit	Class Points
A	4.000	94 – 100
A-	3.667	90 – 93.99
B+	3.333	87 – 89.99
B	3.000	83 – 86.99
B-	2.667	80 – 82.99
C+	2.333	77 – 79.99
C	2.000	73 – 76.99
C-	1.667	70 – 72.99
D	1.000	60 – 69.99
F	0	59.99 or less

Campus Academic Resources & Policies

The following reflects the approved campus-wide academic policies of Syracuse University. For more information and detail, please consult the full documentation of University policies at <https://policies.syr.edu>.

Academic Integrity

As a preeminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University places academic integrity at the forefront of learning and considers it a core value and guiding pillar of education. The University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) provides guidelines for completing academic work with integrity. Students are required to meet both course-specific and University-wide academic integrity expectations, such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity.

Upholding academic integrity includes the protection of faculty intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share an instructor's course materials — including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials — without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and presenting them as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the school or college offering the course. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Artificial Intelligence

Based on the specific learning outcomes and assignments in this course, artificial intelligence is permitted on the following: brainstorming, exploring or explaining concepts, troubleshooting, editing, spelling and grammar checks. AI may not be used to generate original prose text for your assignments or conduct analysis. See each assignment, quiz, or exam instructions for more information about which artificial intelligence tools are permitted and to what extent, as well as citation requirements. If no instructions are provided for a specific assignment, then no use of any artificial intelligence tool is permitted. Any AI use beyond what is detailed in course assignments is explicitly prohibited except when documented permission is granted.

I, as the instructor, may use generative AI tools to help develop and check course materials. When I do, I take full responsibility for reviewing and verifying all AI-generated content to ensure it is accurate, appropriate, and aligned with our learning objectives. All course materials were originally written by my (or a UCA's) hand and final materials represent my professional judgment about what will best support your learning.

Disability Statement

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion and is committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation. I invite students to meet with me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success, in collaboration with the **Center for Disability Resources (CDR)**.

To discuss disability accommodations or register with CDR, visit <https://disabilityresources.syr.edu>, or contact the center at 315.443.4498 or disabilityresources@syr.edu for more detailed information. CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with you to develop an access plan. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible.

Discrimination or Harassment

Syracuse University does not discriminate and prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship status, reproductive health decisions, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity and/or gender expression, shared common ancestry, or any other status protected by applicable law.

Any complaint of discrimination or harassment related to any of these protected bases should be reported to Sheila Johnson-Willis, associate vice president and chief equal opportunity and Title IX officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services (621 Skytop Road, Suite 1001, Syracuse, NY 13244; equalopp@syr.edu; 315.443.4018). She is responsible for coordinating compliance efforts under various laws including Titles

VI, VII, IX and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Faith Tradition Observances

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For any observances occurring before the academic drop deadline, students must notify faculty at least two academic days in advance. Students register their observances using MySlice.

Health & Wellness Considerations

All of us need a support system, and many students benefit from the use of counseling services. Your well-being and mental health are important to me, to your academic success, and to your ability to thrive at Syracuse University.

The Barnes Center at the Arch, located at 150 Sims Drive on the South End of campus near the JMA Wireless Dome, works with students to identify and address issues related to personal growth, self-confidence, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, academic difficulties, and career indecision. Visit <https://ese.syr.edu/bewell> to see the range of available resources. Syracuse University provides counseling services to students at no cost, available 24/7, 365 days, by calling 315.443.8000.

Blackboard

This course uses the Blackboard Learning Management System. You can access Blackboard at <https://blackboard.syr.edu>. Use your NetID and password to log in. Through Blackboard, you will be able to:

- Access course materials, assignments, and resources
- Submit assignments
- View grades and feedback
- Participate in course discussions
- Communicate with your instructor and classmates

For technical assistance with Blackboard, contact the ITS Service Center at 315.443.2677 or help@syr.edu.