GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism

PRLS 450-001—Research Methods (3)
Spring 2012

DAY/TIME: TR 10:30 – 11:45 a.m. LOCATION: Bull Run Hall 259
PROFESSOR: Dr. Nelson Cortes EMAIL ADDRESS: ncortes@gmu.edu
OFFICE LOCATION: Bull Run Hall 208C PHONE NUMBER: 703-993-9257
OFFICE HOURS: T: 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. or by appointment
Dept. Website rht.gmu.edu Class Website: mymasonportal.gmu.edu

PREREQUISITES
60 credits and STAT 250, DESC 210, OM 210, SOC 313, OM 250, or IT 250

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Covers the development of empirical research designs for both practical and theoretical problems in health, fitness, and recreation resources management. Includes literature review of hypothesized relationships, and formulation of research proposals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
At the completion of the course, students should be able to:
1. Define and demonstrate appropriate use of research terminology;
2. Critically evaluate published research in scientific journals and the popular press;
3. Formulate research problem statements;
4. Enumerate the values inherent in the practice of scientific research;
5. Conduct a thorough review of literature and synthesize the findings; and,
6. Prepare and sound a feasible research proposal.

COURSE OVERVIEW
Writing-Intensive Designation
As this course has been designated “Writing-Intensive” (WI) – fulfilling in part the WI requirement for all HFRR majors – you are required to complete at least 3,500 words of graded writing assignments. A series of writing exercises will be completed throughout the semester, thoroughly critiqued, and graded. Together, these will form the basis for your final research proposal. It is to your benefit to study and incorporate the comments given, as each assignment builds upon the next.

Attendance and Participation
Attendance is required for this class. Attendance will be taken during each class session. Arriving to class late or leaving early will be counted as an absence. Students are expected to be on time, attend all class meetings and be prepared for in class assignments and projects. The student is responsible for any information presented, discussed and assigned in class regardless of whether or not the student was present. Make-up tests, quizzes, assignments, or other grades will be granted for excused absences only: serious illness (doctor’s note required), official university excused absences (with proper documentation and prior notification), extenuating circumstances (PRIOR approval should be obtained or direct contact made with the instructor within 24 hours of the event). For known upcoming absences, students must contact the instructor at least one week in advance to the missed class to make up work. At the next attended class meeting the student will discuss material that is to be completed. Students will have one week from the excused absence to complete any missed assignments. It is the student's obligation to pursue any make-up work. Please be aware that any student who does not attend the
lecture during the initial drop/add phase and has not communicated with me is subject to being administratively dropped from the roster. Roll will be taken up until the last day to add a class only and will not be used in grade calculation with the exception of possible extra credit which will be dealt with at the discretion of the instructor.

**Academic Load**

Although many students must work to meet living expenses, employment and personal responsibilities are not a consideration for missed classes, late or incomplete assignments, the course content, or the course schedule (see http://catalog.gmu.edu). Student employment does not take priority over academic obligations. I recognize that many students need to work in order to meet living expenses, however, there are distinct guidelines for students in terms of the number of credit hours which should be attempted based on how many hours per week a student has outside employment. For additional information on this subject, please see the GMU Academic Catalog (http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104#Registration_attendance) for further information. Students who fail to observe these guidelines may expect no special consideration for academic problems arising from the pressures of employment.

**Honor Code**

Students are held to the standards of the George Mason University Honor Code (see http://honorcode.gmu.edu for details). Violations, including cheating and plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Committee. Student assignments may be put through plagiarism detecting software.

**Written Assignments**

All assignments must be typed in Microsoft Word. Pay close attention to spelling and grammar as these will count towards your grade on written assignments. American Medical Association Manual (AMA) of Style (10th edition) format must be used for all written work in this class (e.g., in referencing, creation of tables, and formatting headers for paper sections). **Assignments must be turned in on Blackboard/MyMason Portal by the beginning of class on the specified date due. No late assignments will be accepted.** It is recommended that students keep copies of all submitted work.

**Class Material**

I use a combination of approaches to assist your learning. These include reading assignments and discussion of the reading, learning activities that provide practical experience in research methods, analyzing research examples, and homework preparing various elements of a research proposal. You are encouraged to ask questions about the assigned reading, followed by discussion and learning activities. This means you must read the material before the class! Be prepared to be called on at random regarding the readings.

**Technology Use During Class**

As per GMU policy, all sound emitting technology is required to be turned off during the class meeting time. No sound emitting technology (e.g., cell phones, smart phones, iPads, Tablets, pagers, etc.) is allowed at any time during the class period. Students who are observed using any form of technology inappropriately (e.g., sending text messages from cell phones, visiting social networking sites from laptops, etc) will be dismissed from class for the day, counted as an absence, and not permitted to make up missed assignments. Additionally, no laptop computers (e.g., netbooks, notebooks, etc.) will be permitted for use during class time; the only exception is for use during presentations and projects and only with permission from the instructor.
E-mail Correspondence
Only messages that originate from a George Mason University address will be accepted. The following is an appropriate professional format:

Dear Dr. Cortes (Beginning salutation)

I have a question regarding one of the assignments. (Text body)

Regards, (Ending Salutation)

Dr. Cortes (Your name)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
GMU is an Honor Code University; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? First, it means that when you are responsible for a task, you will be the one to perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES:
Written communication is one of the foundation requirements of Mason’s general education curriculum. Mason’s nationally recognized writing program emphasizes writing as a process: it is not simply a way of communicating already formulated thoughts, but a way of discovering, exploring and developing new ideas. On your way to completing you proposal, you will go through the recursive processes of researching, drafting, and revising and will engage in critical thinking at all stages.

As part of the written communication component and in addition to our course objectives, upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:
• Analyze and synthesize research using methods appropriate to Recreation, Health, and Tourism (RHT);
• Make reasoned, well-organized arguments with introductions, thesis statements, supporting evidence, and conclusions appropriate to RHT;
• Use credible evidence to include, as applicable, data from credible primary and/or secondary sources, integrated and documented accurately according to AMA style;
• Employ rhetorical strategies suited to the purpose(s) and audience(s) for the writing, to include appropriate vocabulary, voice, tone, and level of formality;
• Produce writing the employs the organizational techniques, formats, and genres typical to RHT; and,
• Produce writing that demonstrates proficiency in standard edited American English, including correct grammar/syntax, sentence structure, word choice, and punctuation.

For additional information, please see https://assessment.gmu.edu/Genedassessment/outcomes.cfm

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY
This course is delivered through classroom instruction (face to face), and online assignments.

REQUIRED READINGS
Additional various readings/articles assigned

Websites and handouts as provided in class

**Supplementary materials:**
Supplementary materials will be used in class and posted on BlackBoard/MyMason Portal. Please print these materials and bring them to class so that you have access to them when needed.
EVALUATION

**Quizzes** - Short quizzes and exercises will be given on Blackboard or in class. Students are required to check Blackboard daily for quizzes and exercises.

**Research Proposal** – The creation of a research proposal is a requirement of this course. The research proposal includes a series of tasks that will be thoroughly critiqued and graded. Together, these will form the basis for your research proposal. It is to your benefit to incorporate the comments given into your final research proposal. The guidelines and grading criteria for these tasks will be available on Blackboard.

This course will be graded on a point system, with a total of 830 possible points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>#1 Topic Selection</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 Article Review</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Introduction, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Hypotheses</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Sampling Plan</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5 Methods</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6 Data Analysis Plan</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 Presentation</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8 Final Research Proposal</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Quizzes</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>830</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88 – 89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 87</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>78 – 79</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74 – 77</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 83</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 73</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 59</td>
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**Assignment Summaries**

1. **Topic Selection Assignment**
   The intent of this assignment is to encourage an early start on your research proposal including your topic selection and literature search.

2. **Article Review**
   The intent of this assignment is to increase your familiarity with quantitative evidence-based peer-reviewed journal articles. Select one of the articles you are planning to use for your research proposal. Read the article thoroughly. Summarize and critique the article.

3. **Introduction**
   The intent of this assignment is to apply your curiosity, in addition to your conceptual and practical understanding of your topic to asking questions and defining research problems. Specifically, you are to write an introduction to your research proposal, a specific statement of the problem, an integrated review of the pertinent literature, identification of variables, and testable hypotheses.

4. **Sampling Plan**
   The intent of this assignment is to describe the population, the sampling design, and the target sample size appropriate for evaluating your hypotheses.
5. Methods
The intent of this assignment is to continue development of the research proposal, specifically identifying the research design to be used, measurement tools available and detailing the data collection procedures. This assignment also includes a discussion of how you would validate and confirm the reliability of your instrument, in addition to a discussion of the possible ethical problems and their solutions for your study.

6. Analysis Plan
The intent of this assignment is to develop data analysis plan on how you would proceed to analyze your data if you were to conduct your proposed study. Your plan must include the appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

7. Presentation
The intent of this assignment is for you to share your research proposal with your colleagues via a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation. This assignment will allow you to gain experience in oral presentation skills. As part of the experience, your colleagues & I may ask questions about your study, and I will offer a summary critique intended to help you improve your final written proposal.

8. Final Research Proposal
The intent of this assignment is for you to apply your conceptual and practical understanding of your research topic to prepare a final and complete research proposal. Your proposal should illustrate your familiarity with problem formation and hypothesis development, review and critical analysis of the scholarly literature related to your study, justification of appropriate methodology, and consideration of the implications of your research. This assignment is a revision and extension of all content included in previous assignments.

Class Activities & Assignments
In-class activities will be assigned during the class meeting and due at the end of the course meeting. Out of class assignments are listed on the syllabus and will be submitted at the beginning of the corresponding class meeting time. **NO LATE assignments will be accepted!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapter/Assignment Due Date</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Jan 24  | Introduction to PRLS450  
Introduction to course  
What’s worth knowing?  
Questions and Answers | Chapter 1  
*Class Meets On Occoquan 203* |
| Jan 26  | Introduction to Research                                                | *Chapter 1*                  |
| Jan 31  | Retrieving Information  
Using the library productively  
*Guest Lecture*               | *Chapter 2*                  |
| Feb 2   | Developing the Problem and using the literature  
Developing Research Topics | *Chapter 2*                  |
| Feb 7   | Examples of Recreation, Health, and Tourism Research  
*In-Class Workday – Proposal Topic Assignment* | *Chapter 2*                  |
| Feb 9   | Research reports  
Who does research  
Ethical considerations in research  
When to believe what you read | *Proposal Topic Assignment*  
*Chapter 5*                  |
| Feb 14  | Presenting the Problem  
*In-Class Workday – Article Review Assignment* | *Chapter 3*                  |
| Feb 16  | Presenting the Problem (continued)                                     | *Article Review Assignment*  
*Chapter 3*                  |
| Feb 21  | Overview of Research Methods  
Matching questions and methods                                           | *Proposal Introduction Assignment*  
*Chapter 6, p. 101*  
*Chapter 7, pp. 117-118* |
| Feb 23  | *In-Class Workday – Proposal Introduction Assignment*                  | *Proposal Introduction Assignment*  
*Chapter 6, p. 101*  
*Chapter 7, pp. 117-118* |
| Feb 28  | Ways to select a sample  
Meaningfulness (effect size)  
Power                                                                       | *Proposal Introduction Assignment*  
*Chapter 6, p. 101*  
*Chapter 7, pp. 117-118* |
| March 1 | *In-Class Workday – Proposal Sampling Plan Assignment*                  | *Proposal Sampling Plan Assignment*  
*Chapter 11*  
*Chapter 18, pp. 329-338* |
| March 6 | Getting good data: reliability, validity, trustworthiness, credibility, and other issues | *Proposal Sampling Plan Assignment*  
*Chapter 11*  
*Chapter 18, pp. 329-338* |
| March 8 | Descriptive Research Design and Techniques                              | *Chapters 15, 16, & 17*      |
| March 13| **No Class – Spring Break**                                           |                            |
| March 15| **No Class – Spring Break**                                           |                            |
| March 20| Correlational research designs  
Causal-comparative                                                        | *Chapter 8, & pp. 303-304*  
*Chapter 9, & pp. 338-352* |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Chapter(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Experimental, and quasi-experimental designs</td>
<td>Chapter 9, &amp; pp. 338-352</td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Class Meets On Occoquan 203</td>
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<td>March 29</td>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Chapter 19</td>
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<td><em>In-Class Workday – Proposal Methods Assignment</em></td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics &amp; Inferential Statistics</td>
<td>Proposal Methods Assignment</td>
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<td>April 5</td>
<td>Research synthesis: Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Chapter 3, 4, 21, pp. 348-351</td>
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<td><em>Class Meets On Occoquan 203</em></td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td><em>In-Class Workday – Proposal Data Analysis Plan Assignment</em></td>
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<td>April 12</td>
<td>Giving a Professional Presentation</td>
<td>Proposal Data Analysis Plan Assignment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pulling Together Your Final Proposal</td>
<td>Class Meets On Occoquan 203</td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td><em>In-Class Workday – Presentations &amp; Proposal Corrections</em></td>
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<td>April 19</td>
<td>Student Presentations &amp; Feedback Session</td>
<td>ALL PRESENTATIONS DUE</td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>Student Presentations &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<td>April 26</td>
<td>Student Presentations &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Student Presentations &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
<td><em>In-Class Workday – Final Proposals</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Final Proposals (Due at 5PM)</td>
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**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course syllabus and/or schedule at any time. Students will always be informed of any changes made.

**Student Expectations**

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

**Campus Resources**
• The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

• The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

• For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, please visit our website [See http://rht.gmu.edu].

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT: The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.
Student Acknowledgement of Syllabus

I, _________________________, by signing below, attest to the following:

* I have read the course syllabus for PRLS 450 in its entirety, and I understand the policies contained therein. This syllabus serves as a binding contract for PRLS 450 between the instructor and me.
* I have a clear understanding of the due dates for assignments and examinations, and I accept responsibility for the material.
* I am aware that failure to submit assignments by the dates assigned will result in no points awarded, as late work will not be accepted.
* I understand that if I am using emitting sound technology or personal computers I will be dismissed from class for the day, counted as an absence, and not permitted to make up missed assignments.
* I understand the instructor reserves the right to alter the provided schedules as necessary and I am responsible for the assignments and examination dates for the most current version of the syllabus schedule.
* I accept responsibility for reading announcements that are sent to me via e-mail through BlackBoard/MyMason Portal; it is my responsibility to access my Blackboard/MyMason Portal e-mail for messages, or forward Blackboard/MyMason Portal e-mail as per the directions provided in the syllabus.

________________________________________       ____________________
(Signature)                                           (Date)
(Student Copy: This copy should remain attached to your syllabus)

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________________________________________       ____________________
(Signature)                                           (Date)
(Instructor Copy: Submit to the instructor at the end of the first class meeting)