

Dear Prospective GH 811 Students,

I highly recommend taking GH 811 with Professor Stokes. I particularly recommend that you take it if you are currently in research or believe you may be in the future. The class provides a “how to” on conducting research; from strategically formulating a research question, to conducting mix-methods data gathering, to performing analysis using R and NVivo, you will gain a lot of experience, knowledge, and skills in GH 811. In general, the class is paced well, but the workload is demanding. It requires a lot of teamwork, which is the reality of conducting research. By the end of the class you will have what it takes to function well in the field of public health research. In this letter to you I will give you advice on how to take advantage of all this class has to offer.

Advice on Group Process

Good teamwork is essential, absolutely imperative, to this class. At the beginning of the class you will be placed on a team with two or three other students. It is important that you take the creation of your team charter seriously and members abide by what is listed in it throughout the semester. My team did this and we worked fantastically together. Another component that helped my team was to have “check ins” and “check outs.” My team would meet for one hour after class to work on the week’s assignments; at the start of the every meeting, we would each discuss how the week is going and how everyone is feeling about the class and assignments. We would then spend the next hour or so working on the week’s deliverable. It was important during this time that everyone was comfortable with the assignment. Sometimes this would require that we spend time reviewing class concepts together or doing extra research online. Then we would together on the assignment. At the end of the meeting, we would each give the other teammates a compliment about what they

did well during that meeting. For example, “I thought you did a great job taking notes this meeting; it helped us stay organized.” This was a really good way to end each meeting and helped group dynamic a lot. I would *highly* suggest your team does this.

Group Decision Making

It is best that your team finds a date and time for a weekly meeting and sticks with it through out the semester. Having a consistent weekly meeting helps to ensure that work is done equally, communication is clear, and that all team members are comfortable with one another and the work the others are doing. It is also helpful to have a weekly meeting because there are a lot of decisions to be made through out the semester that each team member should have equal input on. In addition to standing meetings, I suggest working through Google Drive and making folders for each week. Being organized also helps a lot in maintaining the moderately heavy flow of class assignments.

Practical Application

This class is probably the best class I have taken at BU SPH that has given me skills to directly use in the “real world.” After taking this class I feel confident in my ability to formulate a unique research question and utilize skills in qualitative and quantitative data gathering. What perhaps is most useful is now having the skills to analyze data. This class spends a lot of time using R and sometimes NVivo. It is useful to stay on top of course work so you can take advantage of using these two softwares as they are very relevant in the field of research. It is important to seek assistance and go to the TA sessions regularly. By the end of the course, if you stay up on the class materials and put in full effort, you will have a strong skillset to use in your future career. In conclusion, I highly recommend taking GH 811 with Professor Stokes.