Focus Group Design and Survey Instrument Assignment:

Qualitative research methods can often aid the development of survey instruments or other data collection tools that would be used more for quantitative analysis. In particular, observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups can be used to pre-test questionnaires or survey instruments, as well as used to generate ideas for question development in the first stages of instrument development. This two-part group exercise asks you to translate data and information you gather qualitatively from an in-class focus group into a short survey instrument.

Part One Focus Groups. You will be assigned to small groups on Wednesday, January 15th. In class on Wednesday, January 29th each group will conduct a focus group on a topic of their choosing that relates to Syracuse University, the Maxwell School, or public policy issues in some way. Use the materials from the coursepack to guide the development of a focus group guide and to prepare for implementation of the focus group session in class. Each group will turn in a copy of their focus group guide at the end of class.

Groups will be comprised of 5 to 7 students; each group will take a turn administering a focus group and serving as focus group participants. Focus group sessions will last for ½ hour, so please prepared to begin immediately at the start of class. Groups are strongly encouraged to take notes regarding participant responses and how well participants understood questions.

Part Two Survey Instrument. Using the focus group guide and the notes from your focus group session, each group will then develop a short 10 to 15 item questionnaire or survey that will be administered to Prof. Allard’s PPA 722 sections. Survey instruments are due at the beginning of class on Monday, February 3rd. Prof. Allard will compile the survey questions and administer them to the class on Wednesday, February 5th – the data from these surveys will be analyzed in class on Monday, February 17th.

This assignment comprises 20% of your first-half grade or 10% of your overall course grade. Each group will be graded on how well focus groups are designed and implemented. Did the group encourage participation? Did the participants understand the topic? Were the participants engaged in the material? Did the group prepare enough questions? Further, groups will be assessed by the quality of the survey instrument. Did the group draft well-written questions? Will the questions elicit useful, valid, and reliable responses? Does the instrument make any assumptions about information on the part of the respondent? Does the instrument have a logical flow? For closed-ended questions, did the group select proper response categories? Finally, was the instrument well-constructed and styled?