

Sociology 77.739 Survey Research Methods

Department of Sociology

University of Manitoba

Fall 2001

Instructor: Dr.

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2-3:30, or by appointment

Class meeting: Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Class Location: Room 335 Isbister Bldg.

COURSE

DESCRIPTION

Sociology 77.739 is a graduate level course providing a general overview of quantitative research methods, with the major emphasis on survey research (data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation). It is also intended to introduce graduate students to the beginning and completion of a major survey research project. The course includes lectures, projects, and student presentations. A public opinion survey measuring the attitudes of Canadian-born and immigrant participants on racism and discrimination will be used as the guiding example throughout the course.

The goals of this course include:

- Familiarization with the range of quantitative methodologies used in the social sciences
- Exploring the value of mixing research methodologies, including qualitative and interpretive methodologies
- Achieving a reasonable degree of expertise in the area of survey research techniques, including sampling strategies, data collection methods, and questionnaire design

- Analysis of quantitative data using the statistical software SPSS
- Understanding quantitative data obtained from surveys
- Improving presentation skills (orally and in papers)

PREREQUISITES

An undergraduate course in social science research methods. A course in social statistics is also strongly recommended.

A lab component is introduced this year. If you are unfamiliar with SPSS, you are required to attend 8 one-hour labs with a qualified instructor, to be introduced at the beginning of the course. These labs have been designed to assist you in the preparation of your final research paper. Lab date and times to be determined at the beginning of the class.

REQUIRED

TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

Fowler, Floyd (1993) *Survey Research Methods*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fowler, Floyd (1995) *Improving Survey Questions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional course readings will be placed on reserve in the main library. Students are also advised to be familiar with some useful introductory research methods texts. Some of my favourites include:

W. Lawrence Neuman (1995) *Social Research Methods*; Ted Palys (1997) *Research Decisions*; C.M. Judd and E.R. Smith (1992) *Research Methods in Social Relations*; Earl Babbie (1998) *The Practice of Social Research*; Winston Jackson (1995) *Doing Social Research*; and George Gray and Neil Guppy (1994) *Successful Surveys*.

Students will be responsible for reading 2-3 articles per class. The instructor will have these available at the first class at a nominal cost per student (under \$5). These articles are intended to provide background for the day's discussion and will be a valuable resource for your future research and thesis work.

ASSIGNMENTS

There is no final examination in this seminar. Students are graded on two assignments and a formal class presentation. Late assignments will receive a reduced grade (5% deducted per day for each day late, including weekends). All course requirements must be completed before a final grade is assigned.

Questionnaire construction assignment (25%) due: Wednesday November 7

This assignment involves outlining a survey research question and constructing an appropriate questionnaire. Students may

choose their own research topics. Additional information about this assignment will be provided early in the course.

Class presentation (20%) **(dates vary by student)**

Each student is expected to present a 15 minute paper on a course topic. Topics for the presentations will be chosen in the second class in September. Students will make a short presentation and will lead a short discussion about their topic. They will also prepare a paper outline of their presentation, including useful references, to distribute to other seminar participants. Students will be graded on the content and quality of the presentation and the handouts. Students are invited to discuss their topics with the instructor in advance of their presentation.

Preparation of Journal Article (55%) **due: Friday, December 7**

A dataset from which the term paper will be based is provided at the beginning of the course. For those students not familiar with SPSS, a lab will be mandatory. Lab dates and lab instructor will be made available at the beginning of the course. More details on the research project to follow.

All assignments are expected to be structurally and grammatically correct. Marks will be deducted for these mistakes.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Grade Distribution: A+ 85-100 B+ 75-79 C+ 65-69 D 50-59

A 80-84 B 70-74 C 60-64 F 0-49

CLASS

PRESENTATION TOPICS

Week 3: Presentation 1: Ethnography

Presentation 2: Case Studies

Week 4: Presentation 3: Content Analysis

Presentation 4: Narrative Analysis

Week 5: Presentation 5: Response Sets

Presentation 6: Sensitive Questions

Week 6: Presentation 7: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Presentation 8: Focus Groups

Week 7: Presentation 9: Quantitative Feminist Research

Presentation 10: Surveys in Less Literate Societies

Week 8: Presentation 11: Evaluation Research

Presentation 12: Action Research

Week 9: Presentation 13: Replication and Triangulation

Presentation 14: "Mode" Effects

Week 10: Presentation 15: Meta-Analysis

Presentation 16: Quantitative Historical Research

Additional topics may be added if the number of students exceeds 16. Some topics may be deleted if the number of students is less than 16.

WEBSITE

Students may find the contents of the website useful. It contains information on Internet sites related to survey research, good sites for data and statistical analysis, review the course syllabus, and communicate with the instructor via e-mail.

The university provides free access to computers in various labs across campus (consult General Calendar for locations). Every student receives a free e-mail account and access to the Internet. Students will not be penalized for not visiting or using the website. However, students may find the website useful for gathering electronic information and for communicating with the instructor or classmates.

COURSE

OUTLINE AND READINGS

To be distributed on first day of class

WHAT CAN

THIS CLASS DO FOR YOU?

This class is intended to introduce students to the basic principles behind conducting a major survey research project. By the end of the class, students should be able to:

- Prepare a journal article
- Conceptualize a research problem
- Link theories and literatures to research topics
- Operationalize independent variables
- Select an appropriate sample
- Design a questionnaire

- Conduct elementary data analysis and prepare data presentation
- Learn about research sensitive topics and ethical considerations
- Design and implement a survey research project from start to finish

In addition to the knowledge gained in learning to conduct a research project, this class has applications outside the course including experience in:

- Critically evaluating journal articles, books and media reports
- Preparing professional research reports
- Learning to properly conduct interviews
- Training and hiring of interviewers

PLAGIARISM

A NOTE ON

Students are advised to acquaint themselves with the University's policies on plagiarism and cheating found in the University General Calendar.