University of Manitoba
Department of Sociology
Fall/Winter 2003-04
077.229 Introduction to Research Methods, Section L03
Tuesdays/Thursday, 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.
Room 137 Isbister

Instructor: Karen Kampen Credit hours: 6
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Please put 77.229 in the subject line or else the message might be deleted; please also note that I will not be held responsible for emails rejected by Hotmail accounts etc.

Required Textbook

Babbie, Earl and Lucia Benaquisto (2002). *Fundamentals of Social Research* (1st Canadian edition). Scarborough: Thomson/Nelson.

Course Objectives and Description

"Supposing is good, but finding out is better."
- Mark Twain

This quotation has two connotations in the context of this course. First, it is often assumed that sociology is based upon "common sense". However, this is far from the truth, and sociological research has often dispelled commonly held myths about the social world. The second connotation is that learning about research is ideally a process of "learning by doing", rather than passively absorbing information about how others do research. With these ideas in mind, the central aim of this course is to help students learn what social research methods are and how to apply them, both as critical consumers of research findings as well as professionals in the job market.

While the prospect of taking Research Methods (particularly, anything involving statistics) tends to be daunting to many students, if approached in a systematic manner and utilizing stimulating examples, it can indeed be enjoyable. In order to cover the large volume of new material and skills that you will gain during the course, we will spend Term 1 focusing on research design and general modes of observation, while in Term 2 we will delve into the more statistical aspects of social research. While the course is quite structured, you will have an opportunity to do some research on a topic of your own choosing during Term 2.

This course has no formal "lab" component; instead, we will do some application exercises during class time, in addition to the lectures. Students are expected to have read the relevant chapter before class, and to participate in the application exercises. A large component of your course work can be completed during class periods, which should help to keep the workload manageable and reduce your stress level. At the same time, this means that attending every class is particularly important in this course.

Evaluation

1) <u>Unit tests (19% per test x 4 tests = 76%)</u>. Each test will be based upon readings and in-class material including lectures and application exercises. Test format will include multiple choice as well as open-ended questions; details will be discussed during the term. Because class periods are short, tests will be conducted over two class periods. Please note that a basic calculator and a paper dictionary will be permitted during tests, while no other electronic devices (such as programmable calculators, electronic dictionaries or Palm Pilots) will be permitted.

Test #1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) ***October 14, 16***
Test #2 (Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 14) ***November 20, 25***
Test #3 (Chapters 7, 8, 16 pp. 411- 426) ***February 10, 12***
Test #4 (Chapters 13, 15, 16, pp. 426-463) ***April 6, 8***

2) There are two assignments in the course, designed to demonstrate your ability to apply what you have learned. Students should familiarize themselves with the referencing style of the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*.

<u>Assignment #1: Methodology and Content Analysis</u> (8%). This assignment will involve collecting original data during two class periods on ***November 27 and December 2*** and writing up a report related to these data. ***Due January 15 (during class)***

<u>Assignment #2: Statistical Analysis of Secondary Data</u> (16%). This assignment will involve the analysis of an existing data set which will be made available early in the second term, and writing up a report related to your results. ***Due April 8 (during class)***

* The last date for Voluntary Withdrawal is ***March 17, 2004.***

Grade Distribution

90-100%	A+
80-89%	A
75-79%	B+
70-74%	B
65-69%	C+
60-64%	C
50-59%	D
<50%	F

Please note: The *University of Manitoba Senate Policy #1307* requires "a post-examination review of final grades in multi-sectioned courses that will ensure an equitable correspondence between grades and level of performance in all sections." Accordingly, the final grade distribution in this course may be raised or lowered to achieve this equity and, therefore, your final grade may be changed.

Missed Tests, Late Assignments, and Missed Classes

It is crucial to provide every student with fair and equitable treatment. Therefore, make-up tests, or extensions on assignment write-ups, will be permitted only for students who have a legitimate reason, such as illness or bereavement, if documentation is provided (it will be kept confidential). Excuses such as "I have three other things due" are **not** legitimate reasons for make-up tests or assignment extensions, so please do not bother to ask. Late assignments will receive a deduction of 7.5% per day. In terms of the in-class **data collection days** listed above, students who miss one or both of these classes for legitimate reasons (as noted above) will need to provide documentation explaining their absence, and they will be required to submit a different project for Assignment #1 than the rest of the class. Any other absences will result in a mark of zero for that assignment.

If you miss a class, it is **your** responsibility to acquire lecture material, updates to our schedule, or other material, from others in the class. I will make myself widely available for help outside of class time, but will not provide a review of lectures for students who miss class. Please do not request copies of my personal lecture notes; I hear this question occasionally, and continue to be baffled by it.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on "Examinations: Personations" (p. 28) and "Plagiarism and Cheating" (p. 29) found in the Undergraduate Calendar. While consulting one another about your assignments is acceptable conduct, please bear in mind that you must submit original work. On the other hand, students are strongly encouraged to study together for tests; it makes all of this more enjoyable!

Disruptions due to excessive talking or early departures from the classroom are especially distracting to large classes. Please be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of others in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in disbarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the start of class.

WebCT

This course will have a companion website which can be reached at the following link:

http://www.umanitoba.ca/campus/ist/cms/webct

This page shows you how to log into WebCT. If you do not have a home computer, you can access the site from one of the campus labs (e.g. Dafoe Library). For any technical questions re: WebCT, phone 474-9788 or use the email addresses on the above page. The website is designed to make accessing various things convenient. It will include portions of *PowerPoint slides*, and *other documents* or *announcements* (in MS Word). The PowerPoint postings are designed to facilitate better note-taking in class, and will not be a substitute for attendance. Your *grades* will also be posted here, not on walls or doors. Grades cannot be released via telephone or email (a violation of U of M privacy policy).

Tentative Schedule

In order to provide you with a manageable workload in terms of reading and studying, the course has been divided into four units. They correspond with the textbook as closely as possible. The lectures and your reading schedule should follow the order listed in each paragraph below. In Term 2, the reading workload will be substantially reduced because of the need to focus on quantitative data analysis and statistics (which your textbook covers only briefly) as well as the need to allow for time in the computer lab and mid-term break. I will discuss upcoming topics as we go along. We may not have time to discuss some of the chapters in class, especially in Term 2, but they should be considered independent study readings; these chapters will be identified throughout the year as necessary.

September 4 – October 16: In this unit we will introduce ourselves to the ways that social scientists approach human inquiry, including modes of scientific thought (Chapter 1); the influence of sociological paradigms upon research (Chapter 2); the idea of causation and how we can establish it (Chapter 3); specific research designs, such as cohort, trend, and time series (Chapter 4); the ways that researchers conceptualize, operationalize and measure things in the social world (Chapter 5); and finally, the way that researchers construct scales and indexes (Chapter 6). Test #1 will take place over two class periods on October 14 and 16.

October 21 – December 2: Next, we will have an in-depth examination of how surveys are conducted (Chapter 9); then we shift our focus to qualitative research, including field research, interviewing, and data analysis (Chapters 11, 12, 14). We end the term with a look at unobtrusive research, including an introduction to content analysis (Chapter 10). Test #2 will take place over two class periods on November 20 and 25. Then we can relax and have some fun at the end of the term by conducting our own data collection for a content analysis assignment, to be performed in class on November 27 and December 2. A handout for Assignment #1 will be distributed around that time.

January 6 – February 12: Next, we will discuss how researchers select samples appropriately (Chapter 7); this is followed by a brief discussion of experimental designs (Chapter 8, including the preceding section on ethics). We will begin to examine elementary quantitative analysis, both univariate and bivariate (Chapter 16, pages 411-426). We may have an introduction to the SPSS lab during this unit, and students will be expected to decide upon a topic for their second assignment around the same time; a handout on the Assignment #2 will be provided in January. Please note: Assignment #1 will be due on January 15 during class; and, there are no classes on February 17 and 19 due to mid-term break. Test #3 will take place on February 10 and 12.

February 24 – April 8: The remainder of the course will be focused on quantitative data analysis and statistics, including multivariate analysis and the elaboration model, as well as descriptive and inferential statistics (Chapter 16, pages 426-463, and Chapter 15). You should also read Chapter 13, on Evaluation Research, near the end of the term. We will probably spend approximately half of our time in the classroom and the other half in the lab, which should enable you to conduct most of your analyses for Assignment #2 during class. Test #4 will take place on April 6 and 8, with Assignment #2 to be submitted during class on April 8.