CONF 711, Conventions of Statistical Methodology, Fall 2008
Lecture 1, 7:20-10:00 M, Arlington: Truland Building 648

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Subject Matter and Objectives: Conflict 711 is a Ph.D. level course that is meant both to introduce a student to research techniques and to prepare the student for introductory level quantitative reasoning and analysis. The pace of the course is rather quick and we begin even before we arrive on the first day with the dreaded pre-term reading assignment. The reason for that pace will become clear as we clip along. At the end of our journey, we will not only have a good idea about what research in 21st century social science entails, but we will also have some concrete computer skills to show for it.

Texts: There are two required books for the course. The first is a general text that covers all aspects of research from types to techniques called **DR** hereafter. The second is a how to manual in which we will learn the basic aspects of statistical thinking while using a statistical processor called SPSS and it goes by **SPSS** in the assignments.

Advice: Use e-mail, office hours, and telephone, as well as lectures and labs, to get help when you need it. (Or to offer advice to me when you think I need it.)

Lectures: Lectures will focus on material covered in the readings and will involve a good deal of discussion. You be prepared to lead discussion on topics and should also bring any questions you might have. Most of the material will be general and conceptual and will not involve more mathematics than is absolutely necessary for fundamental understanding of the material.

Grading: There will be two assignments for the class. The first will be a research proposal to be turned in after we finish reading Dan Druckman's book on research design. You should think about a topic (conflict) that you would like to learn more about and begin to make decisions about how you would begin research in the area (40%). The second assignment will be a statistical project in which you analyze a dataset and write up a short 10-15 page document that summarizes what you found (40%). The remainder of the grade will be based on participation.

Topics and Readings

Week 1 Aug 25th: Doing Research on Conflict

Readings: DR Chapters 1 and 2

Having done our readings prior to class, we launch in on Druckman's opening analyses.

Week 2 Sept. 8th: Performing Experiments

Readings: DR Chapters 3 and 4

We will learn why we should all be experimentalists and why few of us ever will be.

Week 3 Sept. 15th: Survey Research

Readings: DR Chapter 5

Here we discuss what is involved in the classic social survey.

Week 4 Sept. 22nd: Doing Case Based Research

Readings: DR Chapter 6 and 7

The case method is one of the best and most flexible tools you will encounter and here is where it happens.

Week 5 Sept. 29th: Analyzing Documents

Readings: DR Chapter 9 and 10

It will be common for us to all learn from written documents and here we see two approaches to the problem such documents pose for a researcher.

Week 6 Oct. 6th: Evaluations and Application

Readings: DR Chapter 11 and 12

For the man and woman of action, we have research tools for you as well.

Week 7 Oct. 14th: Getting Acquainted *(Proposal 1 Due)*

Readings: SPSS Chapters 1 and 2

Week 8 Oct. 20th: Exploring Data and Correlation

Readings: SPSS Chapters 3 and 4

Week 9 Oct. 27th: Comparing Two Means

Readings: SPSS Chapter 7

Week 10 Nov. 3rd: Comparing Several Means

Readings: SPSS Chapter 8

Week 11 Nov. 10th: Regression

Readings: SPSS Chapter 5

Week 12 Nov. 17th: Logistic Regression

Readings: SPSS Chapter 6

Week 13 Nov. 24th: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Readings: SPSS Chapter 15

Week 14 Dec. 1st: Categorical Data   *(Final Proposal Due)*

Readings: SPSS Chapter 16