

Research Methods I
Conflict 610-Section 002
Fall 2006

Faculty: Tiffany Howard, E-mail: thoward3@gmu.edu

Time: Wednesday, 7:20-10:00pm

Location: ICAR, Arlington Campus, Truland Building, Room 666A

Office Hours: Arlington Campus, Truland Building, Room 616, Tuesday, 6:00-7:00pm
and By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended primarily as an introduction to study design, data collection, and measurement. Beginning with problem formulation, design strategies, indicator construction, validity threats, and sampling, the course moves on to take up in detail a variety of approaches as exemplified by such topics as field studies, experiments, survey methodology, aggregate data utilization, contextual studies, cross-sample linkages, longitudinal studies, and cross-cultural approaches. Emphasis is placed on recognizing the relationship between theoretical and substantive questions; the methodology employed and the analytical strategies that are utilized.

In this course we will focus on developing the conceptual tools necessary to design and assess empirical research studies, and developing the technical and basic computer skills necessary to work with both quantitative and qualitative data.

By the end of this class I hope that you will have learned: (1) how to ask a focused research question; (2) how to design a measurement strategy for important concepts embedded within your research question; (3) how to design a research study to answer your question; (4) how to employ your research design to properly analyze your data; and (5) how to present the results of your research study using the appropriate techniques.

BASIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) You must read the assigned readings before you come to class.
- 2) Turn everything in on time- This means that I will not grant extensions if you ask for them within 24 hours of the deadline. The university policy on the grade of incomplete will be followed in this course.
- 3) Ask questions when you don't understand something; chances are you're not alone.
- 4) Don't miss class- I am willing to accommodate reasonable absences if notified in writing 24 hours prior to class or if your are ill a doctor's note is submitted by the next class meeting.

- 5) All assignments must be typewritten unless otherwise stated.
- 6) Please check <http://webct.gmu.edu> frequently. I will post assignments, announcements and collect papers using that site.
- 7) All assignments must adhere to standard Times New Roman-12pt font and must be double spaced unless otherwise stated. I will deduct points from your grade if you fail to adhere to this format.

ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS/INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Please turn OFF all cell phones upon entering the classroom!!! In cases of an emergency, please inform me that you are expecting a call prior to class.
- 2) Honor code violations will not be tolerated. If you have any questions regarding the honor code please go to <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>.
- 3) If you require accommodations from the Disability Resource Center to assist you with this course please contact me immediately so that we can make the necessary arrangements.
- 4) If for some reason class is cancelled please go to <http://webct.gmu.edu> I will either conduct class using the Discussion board or post relevant assignments so that we remain on schedule.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) Creswell, John W. (2003). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd Edition. Sage Publications.
- 2) Salkind, Neil J. (2005). Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 2nd Edition. Sage Publications
- 3) Punch, Keith F. (2003) Survey Research: The Basics. Sage Publications
- 4) Boruch, Robert F. (1997). Randomized Experiments for Planning and Evaluation-A Practical Guide. Sage Publications.
- 5) Druckman, Daniel. (2005). Doing Research. Sage Publications.
- 6) Maxwell, Joseph A. (2005). Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, 2nd Edition. Sage Publications.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- 1) Weisburg, Herbert F., Krosnick, Jon A. & Bruce D. Bowen. (1996). An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis. Sage Publications
- 2) Levin, Irwin P. (1999). Relating Statistics and Experimental Design. Sage Publications.
- 3) Kalton, Graham. (1983). Introduction to Survey Sampling. Sage Publications.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Students will be graded based on the following:

- 1) Seven short assignments are due throughout the course each worth 5% of your grade=35%
- 2) A ten page research design is due **October 25** via webCT by 7:00pm. It is worth 15% of your final grade.

OR

- 3) The rough draft of your research paper is due **October 25** via webCT by 7:00pm. It is worth 15% of your final grade
- 4) A (max) twenty-five page research paper is due **December 11** via webCT by 10am worth 30% of your grade.
- 5) Active and constructive participation is worth 10% of your grade. This does not mean simply talking. Your comments should demonstrate that you have carefully read the readings for the week.
- 6) Attendance is worth 10% of your grade. For every unexcused absence your final grade will be reduced by 5%.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1-August 30- Introduction to Course

Readings- *We will begin discussing research proposals from <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/DissPropWorkshop/examples/>

Week 2-September 6-- Building the Necessary Framework to Develop a Successful Research Design

Readings- *Creswell, Preface and pp. 1-69
* Druckman, pp. 1-52

Week 3-September 13- Identifying the Research Problem and Developing the Research Questions and Hypotheses

Readings- *Creswell, pp.87-118
*Maxwell, pp. 65-78

[In Class] Assignment #1 Due-You must submit a research problem, question, and your hypotheses-maximum length-3 pages

Week 4-September 20- Data Sources

Readings- *Creswell, review pp. 36-37

[Out of Class] Assignment #2 Due-You must provide the citations for two data sources:
quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Example:
Quantitative=Survey Data; Qualitative=Focus Group Data;
Mixed=Combination of several sources of both.

Week 5-September 27- Data Collection

Readings- *Creswell, pp. 156, 164, 185-188

[In Class/Out of Class] Assignment #3 Due-You are responsible for collecting data from one data source-
This could mean constructing a dataset, conducting an interview, obtaining archival documents (examples include memoirs, personal documents, birth marriage and death certificates, etc.), administering a survey, or observation (examples include writing up what you observe or presenting a photograph.) There is no page requirement but successful completion of the assignment must demonstrate that you understand how to properly gather data from the selected source.

Week 6-October 4- Survey Design

Readings- *Creswell, pp. 155-162
*Punch-entire book
*Druckman, pp. 123-162

[In Class] Assignment #4 Due- You are responsible for designing a survey-3-5 pages

This entails:

- 1) Presenting the problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)
2. A description of the scale (variable, construct). The scale represents the variable you are interested in. Each scale requires 3-10 questions. You must have a minimum of three scales and a maximum of six scales.
3. Your questions and sample answers (answers that you would expect respondents to provide.)

Week 7-October 11- Experimental Design

Readings- *Creswell, pp.162-175
*Boruch, pp. 1-38; 71-163; 195-235
*Druckman, pp. 53-119; 303-309

[In Class] Assignment #5 Due-You are responsible for designing an experiment (quasi)-3-5 pages

This entails:

- 1) Presenting the problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)
- 2) Presenting the type of experiment
- 3) Defining the control group and the treatment group or groups
- 4) Providing a discussion justifying why participants are assigned to either the control or treatment group. Example: Are subjects randomly assigned?
- 5) Describing the treatment or intervention. How would you manipulate the variables to test your hypotheses. Example: Does the introduction of this diet pill (the treatment) produce better weight loss results in the treatment

group than the control group which were given a sugar pill? Be very clear about how would you control for the effect that external factors have on the results. Example: age of participant, race of participant, original weight at the beginning of the study, family history of weight loss, health factors, economic background, etc.

Week 8-October 18- Descriptive Statistics

Readings- *Salkind, pp. 19-76

Note: Please use SPSS or STATA to do the assignments at the end of the chapter. We will review the answers in class.

Week 9-October 25- Correlations, Hypothesis Testing, and Inferential Statistics

Readings- *Salkind pp. 77-192

***RESEARCH DESIGN OR ROUGH DRAFT DUE!!!!**

Week 10-November 1- ANOVA, Simple and Multiple Regression

Readings- *Salkind, pp. 193-260; 299

*Druckman, pp. 167-200

[Out of Class] Assignment #6 Due-You are responsible for completing a problem set that tests your knowledge on how to obtain descriptive statistics, develop appropriate variables for the concepts you are interested in, and utilize regression techniques and significance tests.

Week 11-November 8-Qualitative Data Analysis

Readings- *Lofland &Lofland, pp. 181-203 (Handout-I will provide)

*Creswell, pp. 188-195

*Maxwell, entire book excluding Chapter 4.

*Druckman, pp. 229-292

[In Class/Out of Class] Assignment #7 Due-You are responsible for conducting a five minute interview with one subject and transcribing your interview. You must analyze the data from this interview.

Your paper should include the following:

- 1) The problem, research question, and hypotheses- (these can be from Assignment #1 if applicable)
- 2) A description of the variable or construct that you are interested in and the questions that will help you capture this variable or construct.
- 3) Your transcription- The questions and the respondent's answers- Please record your interview onto a cassette and submit it with the assignment in class.
- 4) A discussion interpreting your interview. In this discussion you should indicate whether or not your hypotheses were confirmed. There is no page requirement

Week 12-November 15- Reliability and Validity

Readings- *Creswell, pp. 195-197
*Salkind, pp. 273-295
*Mawell, review Chapter 6

Week 13-November 22-NO CLASS-THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14-November 29- Interpreting and Defending Your Results/Conducting Ethical Research

Readings- * <http://www.gmu.edu/pubs/osp/human1.html>
-Read the four PDF files on this page.

*Please bring in Assignments #6 and #7. We will interpret the results from both assignments. Be prepared to defend your results in class. I suggest you prepare a basic presentation to organize your thoughts. Failure to bring in your assignment will be recorded as a class absence.

*Guest speaker or Court TV Video on the Milgram Experiments (TBD).

Week 15-December 6-Discuss Research Papers

*Your research papers will test your grasp of the topics covered throughout this

course. You may use any of the previous assignments to assist you with writing your paper. You must either collect original data or obtain existing data to assist you with the completion of your research paper. You must then properly analyze the data using the techniques that you have learned. This IS NOT a research design it is a research paper. You must present your results, interpret them and then defend them. Your paper should be no longer than 15 pages excluding bibliography and title page.

Your paper should demonstrate that you know how to:

- 1) Identify a problem; develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses to address the problem.
- 2) Describe the type of design you intend to use to help you conduct your research. This involves identifying the data sources you intend to use, the methods of data collection, the measurements you plan to develop and the type of analysis you plan to employ.
- 3) You must then analyze the data you have.
- 4) Finally, you must interpret and defend your results.
- 5) You MUST cite all sources and provide a bibliography. Refer to your APA manual for proper format.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus without notice; however, I will make every effort to inform you prior to any changes