

AECO 5870

Research Methods

Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. Terry Clower
Office hours: By appointment
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Meeting time: See class calendar for assignment due dates

Classroom: The World Wide Web. Cool!

Goal: Provide students with an introduction to the methods of conducting research in the social sciences.

Objectives: At the end of the course, students should have moderate skills in critically evaluating reports of research for appropriate research design. Specifically, students should be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the type of methodology employed in a research report.
2. Understand issues of data validity and reliability.
3. Identify the type of data collected and its appropriateness for the analytical measures used in the research.
4. Identify and understand the limitations and appropriateness of sampling used in the research and its implications for inferential conclusions.
5. Have moderate ability to identify a research methodology appropriate to a given research question.
6. Understand the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the research methods reviewed in the course.
7. Understand ethical issues in the conduct of research.
8. Be able to perform basic data analyses.
9. Be able to prepare a quality research proposal.

Text:

Investigating the Social World (6th ed.), 2009
Russell K. Schutt
Pine Forge Press, an imprint of Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA

Optional Sources:

The Basics of Social Research (2nd ed.) 2002
 Earl Babbie
 Wadsworth-Thompson, Belmont, CA (ISBN 0-534-51904-0)

Reading Statistics and Research, 1974
 Schuyler Huck, William Cormier & William Bounds, Jr.
 Harper Collins New York (ISBN 0-06-042976-3)

Understanding Research Methods: An Overview of the Essentials (3rd ed.), 2002
 Mildred L. Patten.
 Pyczak Publishing, Los Angeles, CA (ISBN 1-884585-47-7)

Data Analysis: An Introduction, 1995
 Michael Lewis-Beck
 Series: Quantitative Applications in Social Sciences No. 07-103
 Sage Publications Thousand Oaks, CA (ISBN 0-8039-5772-6)

Reading Statistics and Research, 1974
 Schuyler Huck, William Cormier & William Bounds, Jr.
 Harper Collins New York (ISBN 0-06-042976-3)

| Week | Topic | Readings* |
|-------------|--|------------------|
| 8/30 | Lesson 0: Introduction | |
| 9/6 | Lesson 1: Social Setting of Research | 1 |
| | Lesson: Research Proposal | |
| 9/13 | Lesson 2: Philosophy of Science | 2 & 3 |
| | Lesson 3: Research Process, Lit Review, Ethics | |
| 9/20 | Lesson 4: Operationalization and Measurement | 4 |
| 9/27 | Lesson 5: Sampling | 5 |
| 10/4 | Lesson 6: Research Design / Causation | 6 |
| 10/11 | Lesson 7: Experiments | 7 |
| 10/18 | Lesson 8: Surveys | 8 |
| 10/25 | Lesson 9: Qualitative Field Research | 9 |
| 11/1 | Lesson 10: Qualitative Data Analysis | 10 |
| 11/8 | Lesson 11: Evaluation Research | 11 |
| 11/15 | Lesson 12: Historical & Comparative Research | 12 & 13 |
| 11/22 | Thanksgiving Week – Check Course Calendar for Ongoing Assignments due before Thanksgiving. | |
| 11/29 | Lesson 14: Descriptive Statistics | 14 |
| | Lesson 15: Correlation Statistics | handout |
| 12/6 | Lesson 16: Matching Data to Multivariate Techniques | handout |

* Unless otherwise indicated, all readings indicate chapters in Schutt

Grading:

Grades will be based on the following:

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|---|-----|
| Quizzes (points as marked on each quiz) | 15% |
| Article critiques | 30% |
| Exercises (10 pts each) | 25% |
| Research Proposal | 30% |

Homework:

Article reviews will consist of the student selecting and writing a 3-4-page critique of an article that illustrates the corresponding research methodology. Articles should be selected from a wide range of disciplines including, but not limited to, economics, information science, public policy, sociology, marketing, cognitive science, behavioral sciences, or health sciences. In other words, if you review an article published in JASIS (Journal of the American Society for Information Science), I would not expect to see more than one other article from the information science literature during the course of the semester. Be prepared to discuss your article.

Exercises assigned for each lesson will be posted on the class calendar. Some exercises require you to participate in a bulletin board discussion. I expect meaningful contributions from each of you in these discussions. You will note that throughout the lessons, I refer to these discussions as "posting to the bulletin board" or similar phrasing. You access the bulletin board through the "Discussion" button in Blackboard.

Each exercise has instructions. All written assignments must be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Quizzes cover the reading materials for the specified lesson. The quizzes are my measure that you have read and understand the material.

Research Proposal:

The research proposal will serve as a term paper for which you will select a topic, write a research question, conduct a literature, and select and describe a proposed methodology for answering your research question. Your textbook includes "exercises" at the end of each chapter that will guide you through the process of writing a research proposal. Many of these exercises will be assigned and graded as part of the overall research proposal. I must approve your research topic and will be available to discuss your selection through email. If you run into a particularly difficult snag, we can schedule an appointment to see me. Select a topic you find interesting and this can be a fun process.

ADA accommodation:

If you require accommodation for a special need, you must notify the instructor prior to the 12th class day as specified in the academic calendar. If you have questions about an accommodation, please see the ADA advisor for the Institute of Applied Economics.

Religious holidays:

Since this course does not require you to be present on a specific day within each week's assignments, you should accomplish each assignment around any religious holidays you choose to observe. If there is a conflict, you must notify me, the instructor, in writing by the date noted in the academic calendar.

Statement on academic dishonesty

I encourage you to discuss exercises and assignments with your classmates; however, I expect you to do your own work. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and could lead to very serious disciplinary action (see undergraduate catalog or the student handbook). Academic dishonesty includes copying assignments from your classmates or from work submitted in previous semesters. A presentation on plagiarism and proper citation of published and unpublished work will be available on the course website. If you have any questions regarding this issue, contact the instructor.