Sociology 077.739 L01
Survey Research Methods

Department of Sociology
University of Manitoba
Fall 2003
3 Credit Hours

Instructor: Dr. Lori Wilkinson    Class time: Wednesday 9:00 to noon
Office: 331 Isbister Building    Class location: 335 Isbister Building
Phone: 474-8491
Email: Lori_Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca
Office hours: Wednesdays 12:00-1:00, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology 077.739 is a graduate level course providing a general overview of 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 Winnipegers on various items will be used as the guiding example throughout the course and as the basis of the major term assignment.

The goals of this course include:

• Becoming familiar 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

Credit for undergraduate courses in both social science research methods and social statistics is required. For Sociology majors, completion of 077.448 is also required. Students who are unsure of their prerequisites should consult the instructor prior to the beginning of the course.

There is a lab component to this course. If you are unfamiliar with SPSS, you are required to attend 2-3 two-hour labs with a qualified instructor. The 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 (based on availability of lab coordinator).
REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks


Optional textbook, available for purchase (and highly recommended)

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:


A schedule of weekly readings in addition to the Fowler texts is listed on page 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 three 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.

PhD students are required to prepare an additional section to the final assignment (a detailed description and critique of the sampling procedures).

Description and Due Dates of Assignments

**Questionnaire construction assignment due: Wednesday October 22**
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 (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 class on September 17. 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. A peer review, conducted by all students will inform the instructor of the appropriate grade. Students are invited to discuss their topics with the instructor in advance of their presentation.

**Preparation of Journal Article** final paper due: Mon. December 8

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, the lab is mandatory. Lab dates and lab instructor will be made available at the beginning of the course. More details on the research project to follow.

Part One: data analysis: **due November 28**
Part Two: completed journal paper **due December 8**
Sampling description: **due December 8** (PhD Students only)

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

**Grade Weights**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>MA Students</th>
<th>PhD Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>- data analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>- journal article</td>
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<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- sampling description</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

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<tr>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
<th>A+ 90-100</th>
<th>B+ 75-79</th>
<th>C+ 65-69</th>
<th>D 50-59</th>
<th>A 80-89</th>
<th>B 70-74</th>
<th>C 60-64</th>
<th>F 0-49</th>
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- Late term papers and term paper outlines will be penalized 5% per day late (including weekends) to a maximum penalty of 35%. In the event of a medical emergency or other serious problem, extensions to the term paper may be granted but only if I am contacted prior to the deadline.
- Papers more than ONE WEEK LATE will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Any student who submits an assignment or term paper that the professor suspects is plagiarized must submit to an oral examination based on the material in the assignment/paper. Should the professor find that the paper is plagiarized as a result of this examination, the student will face immediate disciplinary action. (Please see Academic Integrity last page.)
- Students are not permitted to reschedule presentations and assignments regardless of the scheduling of examinations and assignments in other courses.
- The University of Manitoba acknowledges the right of students to observe recognized Holy Days of their faith that fall within the academic year. The instructor should be notified in writing of a student's intended absence at least three weeks in advance.
• Students with special needs (who require aids, other supports or require extra time to write a test) should introduce themselves to the instructor at the beginning of the term in order to arrange suitable testing arrangements.

The VW date for this class is November 12, 2003.

CLASS PRESENTATION TOPICS

Students will be asked to select their topic for presentation during class on September 17. Class presentations will begin on October 1. Presentations will occur weekly with one presentation per class day until all students have presented their topic. To aid in organization, the suggested topics will be presented in order of selection. For instance, the student selecting “Ethnography” is expected to present on October 1.

Presentation 1: Ethnography
Presentation 2: Case Studies
Presentation 3: Content Analysis
Presentation 4: Narrative Analysis
Presentation 5: Response Sets
Presentation 6: Sensitive Questions
Presentation 7: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods
Presentation 8: Focus Groups
Presentation 9: Quantitative Feminist Research
Presentation 10: Evaluation Research
Presentation 11: Action Research
Presentation 12: Replication and Triangulation
Presentation 13: Meta-Analysis
Presentation 14: Quantitative Historical Research
Presentation 15: Challenges in Recruiting Respondents
Presentation 16: Effects of Call-Display and other New Technology on Recruitment
Presentation 17: Obtaining Sensitive Information with FIPPA Legislation

Students are encouraged to suggest their own topics in consultation with the instructor. Some topics may be deleted according to the number of students enrolled in the course.

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, and allows students to review the course syllabus and communicate with the instructor via e-mail. The instructor hopes to update the website early in the semester. Details to follow.

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 by 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 READINGS

Note: Most articles can be found in my readings mailbox (under “Wilkinson” in Isbister 320) and are available during regular office hours for sign-out and photocopying (8:30am-4:30pm) weekdays. Other books are on reserve in Dafoe Library. They can be accessed using my name or the name of the course.

September 17: Planning Surveys

September 24: Sampling and Sampling Errors


October 1-8: Questionnaire Construction and Design (select 4 readings)


Ibid, “The Assessment of No Opinion”

Ibid, “The Fine Line Between Attitudes and Non-Attitudes”


October 15-22: **Non-Sampling Errors**


October 29: **Mode of Administration**


November 5: **Conducting Interviews and Offering Incentives**

Fowler, Floyd Jr. and Thomas Magnione (1986) *Reducing Interviewer Effects on Health Survey Data*. Boston, University of Massachusetts, Centre for Survey Research.


November 12-19: Pre-test and Multivariate Data Analysis


November 26: The Budget and the Proposal


Additional Resources (on Reserve in Dafoe)


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
• Apply appropriate data analysis
• 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:

• Critically evaluate journal articles, books and media reports
• Prepare professional research reports
• Learn to properly conduct interviews
• Training and hiring of interviewers
• Guidance in preparation of budgets and research grants
• Prepare appropriate statistical analyses with survey research data
• Organize and prepare effective professional presentations using Powerpoint

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence. Students should acquaint themselves with the University’s policy on “plagiarism and cheating” and “examination personation” found in the University of Manitoba Graduate Calendar.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

• Copying papers from the Internet
• Plagiarizing from books, journal articles and research reports
• Copying other students’ papers
• Having someone else write your paper
• Working with other students in completing assignments
• Paraphrasing an author’s ideas without proper referencing

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this course. The instructor uses a variety of methods to check for academic dishonesty and has access to software geared to uncover plagiarism on the Internet. The penalties are severe and range from failing the course to expulsion from the university. Guidelines for properly referencing your papers and assignments will be distributed in class. If you would like clarification regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please arrange an appointment to see me.