

**SOCI 3600A: The Logic and Practice of Sociological Research
Fall Semester 2009**

Professor: Dr. Tom McNulty
Office: Baldwin 312; 542-3194; tmcnulty@uga.edu
Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30 pm
Class Hours: 11:15-12:05 (period 4)
Meeting Places: Baldwin 114A; Baldwin 219 (computer lab)
Teaching Asst.: Stephen Watts; swatts@uga.edu

Course Overview: Provides an introduction to primarily quantitative research methods in the social sciences. We will contrast different designs and review the logic and stages of the research process, including the role of theory, the testing of hypotheses, and how researchers draw their samples, evaluate their measures, and justify claims about causal relationships. The course also provides an introduction to the analysis of data using *SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)*. Computer assignments are assigned to enhance your understanding of topics discussed in class. A high degree of computer literacy is not required. It is hoped that during this course you will develop a deeper appreciation for empirical research, both as a practical skill and as a vehicle for acquiring knowledge about our social world. The major objectives of the course are to provide you with:

- ▶ An understanding of the logic of the research process
- ▶ An understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs
- ▶ The ability to evaluate empirical research in academic journals and other sources
- ▶ The skills to create and manipulate your own data sets
- ▶ The skills to apply commonly used statistical procedures
- ▶ The skills to interpret the results of statistical analysis

Required Materials (available at the University Book Store):

1. Trochim, William, M.K. *Research Methods: The Concise Knowledge Base*. Atomic Dog. This includes both hard copy & online edition (required). The online text can be accessed at www.atomicdog.com. The Registration ID for this course is **1414105806080**. You will need this number to register for this course at the Atomic Dog web site. Note that you can order the text (including online ed.) directly from Atomic Dog publishing at lower cost. More will be said about accessing the online edition in class.
2. Pavkov, T.W. and K.A. Pierce. *Ready, Set, Go! A Student Guide to SPSS 13.0 and 14.0 for Windows (2nd ed.)*. McGraw-Hill.
3. *Computer Disk*. Required to store data and assignments.
4. *A Bulldog Bucks Account*. Required for printing assignments in the computer lab.

Course Requirements: Grading is based on a point system. There are 500 total obtainable

points in the course. Your final course grade will be based on the percentage of total points you obtain. The following provides a detailed breakdown of the contribution of the various components of the course to your final grade:

1. *Class Attendance:* Attendance is crucial and **required** as each class builds on the previous session. Class attendance will count for 50 points or 10% of your final grade. 10 points will be subtracted from your final score per absence. Be sure you are clear on this policy at the start of the course.
2. *Computer Assignments:* You will be responsible for completing 6 computer assignments using SPSS, intended to enhance your understanding of topics discussed in class. These **must** be turned in at the time they are due (no exceptions). Each assignment is worth 25 points, together accounting for 30% (150 points) of your final grade.
3. *Online Chapter Quizzes:* As a means to test your understanding of the reading material, the online edition of the text includes a quiz at the end of each chapter. You will be required to complete nine chapter quizzes during the semester. The quizzes will comprise 20% of your final grade (100 total points).
4. *Exams:* There are two exams, a midterm and a final. These will test your understanding of the concepts discussed in class as well as your ability to interpret research findings. Each exam will contribute 20% (100 points) to your final grade. Exams **must** be taken at the scheduled time.

| <u>Grade Breakdown:</u> | <u>Percent</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|---------------------------|----------------|--|
| Class attendance: | 10% | 50 (minus 10 points per absence) |
| 6 computer assignments: | 30% | 150 (25 points per assignment) |
| 9 online chapter quizzes: | 20% | 100 (mean score across 9 quizzes) |
| Midterm exam: | 20% | 100 (50 multiple choice worth 2 points each) |
| Final exam: | 20% | 100 (50 multiple choice worth 2 points each) |
| Total: | 100% | 500 (total obtainable points) |

Final Grade:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| A+ 97-100% | C+ 77-79% |
| A 92-96% | C 72-76% |
| A- 90-91% | C- 70-71% |
| B+ 87-89% | D 60%-69% |
| B 82-86% | F less than 60% |
| B- 80-81% | |

COURSE OUTLINE

| <i>TOPIC</i> | <i>ASSIGNMENTS</i> |
|--|----------------------|
| FOUNDATIONS | |
| The Language of Research | Ch. 1, 1-1 |
| The Rationale of Research | Ch. 1, 1-2 |
| Validity of Research | Ch. 1, 1-3 |
| Conceptualizing | Ch. 1, 1-5 |
| Ethics in Research | Ch. 1, 1-4 |
| SAMPLING | |
| External Validity | Ch. 2, 2-1 |
| Sampling Terminology | Ch. 2, 2-2 |
| Statistical Terms in Sampling | Ch. 2, 2-3 |
| Probability Sampling | Ch. 2, 2-4 |
| Non-probability Sampling | Ch. 2, 2-5 |
| MEASUREMENT | |
| Theory of Measurement / Construct Validity | Ch. 3, 3-1 |
| Reliability | Ch. 3, 3-2 |
| Levels of Measurement | Ch. 3, 3-3 |
| <i>Introduction to SPSS</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 1</i> |
| SURVEY RESEARCH | |
| Survey Construction | Ch. 4, 4-1 |
| Interviews | Ch. 4, 4-2 |
| Survey Issues | Ch. 4, 4-3 |
| QUALITATIVE MEASURES | |
| Qualitative Measures | Ch. 6, 6-1 |
| Unobtrusive Measures | Ch. 6, 6-2 |

COURSE OUTLINE (cont.)

| <i>TOPIC</i> | <i>ASSIGNMENTS</i> |
|--------------|--------------------|
|--------------|--------------------|

RESEARCH DESIGN

Internal Validity
Introduction to Design
Types of Designs

Ch. 7, 7-1

Ch. 7, 7-2

Ch. 7, 7-3

MIDTERM EXAM

DATE TBA

COURSE OUTLINE (cont.)

TOPIC

ASSIGNMENTS

ANALYZING DATA

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Conclusion Validity | Ch. 11, 11-1 |
| Data Preparation | Ch. 11, 11-2 |
| Descriptive Statistics | Ch. 11, 11-3 |
| <i>Interpreting Frequency Distributions</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 2 & 3</i> |
| <i>Correlations & Scatter Plots</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 8</i> |
| <i>Cross-tabulation of Categorical Variables</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 10</i> |

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Introduction | Ch. 8, 8-1 |
| Classifying Experimental Designs | Ch. 8, 8-2 |
| Factorial Designs | Ch. 8, 8-3 |
| Other Experimental Designs | Ch. 8, 8-4 – 8-6 |

QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Non-equivalent-Groups Design | Ch. 9, 9-1 |
| Regression-Discontinuity Design | Ch. 9, 9-2 |
| Other Quasi-Experimental Designs | Ch. 9, 9-3 |

ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Inferential Statistics | Ch. 12, 12-1 |
| General Linear Model (GLM) | Ch. 12, 12-2 |
| Experimental Analysis | Ch. 12, 12-3 |
| Quasi-Experimental Analysis | Ch. 12, 12-4 |
| <i>Independent/Paired Samples t-Test</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 4 & 5</i> |
| <i>Regression Analysis</i> | <i>Pavcov, Ch. 9</i> |

WRITING UP RESEARCH RESULTS

Ch. 13

FINAL EXAM

TH, Dec. 10, 12:00-3:00 pm