

# **Research Methods in the Social Sciences**

## **Fall 2009**

### **(3 credits)**

## **Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Dr. Percival Santos  
**Time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 1030-1145  
**Classroom:** TBA  
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### **Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the range of methods with which social scientists work as they attempt to systematically understand social phenomena. It provides firsthand experience with the specific procedures through which social science knowledge is developed. It emphasizes the interaction between theory and research and makes explicit links with relevant ideas in the history and philosophy of science that have substantially illuminated the theory and methodology of contemporary social science. Thus emphasis will be on general procedures and epistemological issues as well as on concrete techniques. Students will be expected to work in groups and carry out a small scale research project wherein they generate and analyze data, or work with data already available from survey, historical and census materials. Teaching will take the form of a mixed lecture, workshop and seminar format that is project driven rather than content driven. This means that students are expected to select a topic and a method early on in the course and work on it throughout the term. There is a predetermined corpus of issues and theories that will be taught on the course, however the sequence and order in which any particular issue will be covered in each week will depend on the immediate relevance these will have on the particular stage of the project that the groups happen to be working on.

### **Students will do the following group tasks:**

1. Write a research project proposal (1,500 words by Thursday November 12, 2009)
2. Give class presentations on the progress of their research (at least once in the term)
3. Submit a final group research paper based on the project (4-5,000 words by Tuesday December 15, 2009)

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course students will be able to (1) conduct a small scale research project that is theoretically and methodologically informed (2) understand the general principles and methods involved in doing social research.

**Assessment:**

Student achievement of the stated course objectives will be measured in the form of (1) class presentation (2) student participation (3) and a 4-5,000 word research project to be done by a group of 3 students.

**Required Textbook**

Neuman, W.L. 2009. *Understanding Research*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

**Course Topics**

Theme 1

**The nature of empirical social research**

Subtopics: empirical evidence, critical thinking: seeing the structure of arguments, uncovering hidden assumptions

Theme 2

**Planning a research project**

Subtopics: picking a study topic, conducting a literature review, choosing a research question, writing a research proposal

Theme 3

**Qualitative and quantitative research**

Subtopics: qualitative research, quantitative research, inductive approach, deductive approach, generating and testing hypotheses

Theme 4

**Quantitative research methods**

Subtopics: measurement, operationism, reliability, validity, replicability, causality, sampling, testing, interview techniques

Theme 5

**Analyzing the quantitative data**

Subtopics: univariate analysis, bivariate analysis, multivariate analysis, statistical significance, correlation, causation

Theme 6

**Qualitative research methods**

Subtopics: ethnography, participant observation, interviews, focus groups

Theme 7

**Analyzing the qualitative data**

Subtopics: grounded theory, analytic induction, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, secondary analysis of qualitative data

Theme 8

**Writing a research proposal**

Subtopics: research objective, research procedure, hypothesis, literature review

Theme 9

**Combining quantitative and qualitative research**

Subtopics: paradigm, triangulation, complementarity, offset, completeness

Theme 10

**Market research**

Subtopics: market information, market segmentation, market trends, product research, Brand research

Theme 11

**Internet-based research**

Subtopics: ethnography of the internet, online focus groups, online personal interviews, online social surveys,

Theme 12

**Writing up social research**

Subtopics: style and tone, cause and effect, background assumptions, literature review, definition of problem, hypotheses