

**CAMOSUN COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**SSRM 280: SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS:  
COURSE OUTLINE FOR WINTER 2008**

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**OFFICE:** E304 **PHONE:** TBA  
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**COURSE CONTENT:**

This course focuses on qualitative and quantitative approaches to social science research with special emphasis on:

- **Understanding the research process.**
- **Having the foundation to formulate intelligent research questions and hypotheses.**
- **Being able to identify variables and their levels of measurement.**
- **Being able to think critically about data.**
- **Using SPSS in processing and analyzing data.**
- **Interpreting SPSS outputs.**
- **Writing analytical research essays.**

It adopts a problem solution-centered orientation to the use of research procedures and statistics. Specifically, the course introduces students to (1) the scientific method; (2) the central methodological concerns of science regarding conceptualization and measurement and their relations to validity, reliability, generalizability, causality, and sampling; (3) the role of deductive and inductive logic in designing research; (4) the methods and techniques of collecting qualitative and quantitative information; (5) computer-aided analysis of quantitative data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS); and (6) the politics and ethics of social science research.

**COURSE ORGANIZATION AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

The course uses interactive lectures, examinations, laboratory sessions, and written report to help students to:

- **Know and understand the basic principles, methodologies, methods, and techniques of social science research,**
- **Have basic hands-on experience with research procedures, particularly the use of SPSS in data analysis, and**
- **Lay a good foundation for a higher level social science research methods course.**

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

**Frank E. Hagan.**

**2003: Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.  
Boston: Pearson Education.**

**RESERVE TEXT****Robert R. Pagano****2003: Understanding Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.****EVALUATION COMPONENTS:**

In Class Test#1	10%
Labs Assignments	40% (2 assignments, 20% each)
In Class Test#2	20%
Final Exam	30%

**Specific details of the required elements associated with each element are discussed below.**

**In Class Tests (60% of Total Grade)**

The test and final exam will consist of approximately 20-40 multiple-choice questions and students will have the entire class time to complete the test. It should be noted that the test will have approximately 1-5 bonus questions – also multiple choice – in addition to the regular test questions. The purpose of having the bonus questions is to give students an opportunity to score 100% or higher on the test. *The first test will cover Chapters 1-3 and Appendix A; the second test will cover Chapter 12, but only on the topic of descriptive statistics, pages 353-363, 379-382, and the final exam will take place during the official examination week; a more precise date will be announced in class. The final exam will cover chapters 5-6, Chapter 12 on inferential statistics and Chapter 7.*

**LAB ASSIGNMENTS (40% of Total Grade)**

There are just two labs associated with this course. The labs require you to analyze two data sets that will be handed out in class after the first in-class test. The lab portion of the course is very straight-forward and it should not take students more than 20 minutes to complete the lab assignments using SPSS.

However, **the difficult part is to write a research report on the data that you have analyzed with SPSS.** Indeed, it should be noted that a majority of the grade assigned to each assignment will be based on the student's ability to interpret and analyze data in a critical fashion. Numbers do not speak for themselves; it is the job of the researcher to make sense of the data that is set before them and to interpret its significance for a given audience.

If you should end up in a career as a data analyst or a researcher, it is very likely that the results of your analysis will be studied by individuals who may have very little, if any, background in research methodology and/or elementary statistics. As such, it is imperative that you are able to convey the important aspects of your study in a clear, concise and well-articulated manner so that a broad range of people may be able to plainly understand the significance of your research.

**In composing your research paper, assume that the reader does not know anything about the topic or discipline in question. As such, it is up to you to clearly explain concepts, theories and the meaning of the output derived from statistical formulas and what it is that graphs and charts are describing in as clear and straightforward manner as possible!!!**

*You are not writing a mystery novel but an academic paper. As such, do not leave your reader guessing or confused with what you are going to be arguing or demonstrating in your paper.*

**As such, every lab assignment should be written in a structured format with the following headings:**

HEADINGS	BASIC REQUIREMENTS	TOTAL POSSIBLE MARKS OUT OF 100	YOUR GRADE
INTRODUCTION	Tell the reader what your research report will be about. What is it that you will be trying to argue, how will you be trying to substantiate your argument and why is your study important.	30	/30
DATA ANALYSIS	<p>In this section, tell the reader the results of your computational analysis. Be as detailed and as specific as possible, but try to avoid jargon and explain your analysis in a clear manner. If you do use technical terms, try to give a brief explanation of the term(s) you are using and cite all sources used. <b>YOU NEED TO USE AT LEAST TWO REFERENCES!!!</b> Examples on how to cite information is presented later in this outline.</p> <p>Please note: You are not writing a mystery novel but an academic paper. As such, do not leave your reader guessing or confused with what you are going to be arguing or demonstrating in your paper. Do not leave your reader wondering what it is you are trying to say. For example, do not write things like: <i>“There are lot of guns in the U.S. that’s why they have high homicide rates.”</i> This is a very vague statement and leaves the reader wondering how the two are explicitly connected.</p> <p><i>Most importantly, look at your data in a critical fashion</i> and explain what it is the data is trying to tell you. <i>An example of critical thinking is presented on the next page.</i> Come up with possible explanations as to why the data is behaving the way it is. Indeed, much of the grade in this section will be based on the quality of the critical thinking you demonstrate in your analysis.</p>	40	/40

<b>CONCLUSION</b>	In this section, <i>summarize what you did in your paper and the findings of your research.</i> Discuss the importance of your study, any problems you encountered in conducting your research and how you could improve and expand upon what you did in a future project.	<b>30</b>	- <u>30</u>
	<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>/100</b>
	<b>NO HEADINGS</b>	<b>-20</b>	
	<b>NO BIBLIOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>-30</b>	
		<b>FINAL TOTAL</b>	

Earl Babbie<sup>2</sup> stated that critical thinking essentially involves five steps, these being:

- a) **Observe the way things are;**
- b) **Ask why they are this way;**
- c) **Suggest an explanation;**
- d) **Then ask yourself, if this explanation is true, or you think has merit, what else must (or might) be true;**
- e) **Look to see if it is true.**

So, for example – a hypothetical example at that – let’s say as an analyst you do some number crunching and discover that Hungary has one of the highest crime rates in the world and you feel that this a direct result of monumental economic reforms that were undertaken in 1956.

Well, if this is the case, logic would dictate that you should discover that before 1956, crime rates in Hungary were very low – is this the case?

If logic follows, other nations that had tried drastic economic reforms might also have very high crime rates – do they? Look it up.

Lastly, one could argue that people who were very young, or not even born in 1956, would be relatively unaffected by the drastic economic changes, and as such, crime rates among this specific demographic would be much lower – is this the case? Look it up. Find out.

In short, critical thinking forces you to dig deep into your data and to extract possible explanations of why a given set of data is behaving the way it is.

**As such, it is required that students seek out at least two academic references – (e.g. books, journals, documents) in order to back up a statement or line of reasoning they have**

<sup>1</sup> **Note: You are expected to have a minimum of two references in your bibliography. If you hand in your paper with just one reference, you will lose 15 marks. In addition, do not pad your bibliography; that is, if you do not directly cite a reference or use it in any fashion, do not bother listing it in the bibliography.**

Earl Babbie

1986 *Understanding Ourselves*. Belmont, CA: Wadworth.

**with respect to interpreting the data presented in the lab assignments<sup>3</sup>. *You may use your textbook as one source if you sincerely feel it is useful.***

For example, going back to the above example and the related critical thinking questions, if you were studying crime rates in Hungary, you might want to look up historical references that give you an idea of what Hungary was like before 1956 to see if crime rates before economic reforms were decidedly different.

Similarly, you might look up information on another country that underwent drastic reforms (e.g. Russia) to see if great economic changes correlate with a surge in crime rates.

**One very important thing to note is that you will most likely not find the TRUE reason why crime rates – or whatever phenomenon that you are studying – went up or down in a given year or why it behaved the way it did over a certain time.**

Social phenomena is so complex that often it is practically impossible to find the absolute cause of a particular social trend or pattern.

**As such, what you, as a researcher, are trying to do is to put forth reasonable explanations for why something is the way it is and then to back it up with documented evidence.**

So, for example, if you feel that homicide rates increased substantially in a given nation because that nation experienced a recession or economic depression during a specific time period, do some research and find sources that would tell you how that nation was doing during the time period you are interested in. **Was it going through a recession? If so, you have evidence that bolsters your argument. However, if the economy was doing well, you need to come up with another explanation.**

It is important to note that evidence that does not support your argument is important, too, so do discuss it since it may provide clues as to what alternative factors may be influencing the phenomenon you are studying.

**Lastly, please cite any factual evidence or explanation that is completely not your own, or that you derived from a book, periodical, tv, or the internet.**

### **CITING REFERENCES WITHIN THE RESEARCH ESSAY**

- (1) “Researchers who focus on causal relations usually begin with an effect, then search for its causes” (Neuman,1997:107) [**Author’s last name, year book was published, page number of cited material**].

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<sup>3</sup> **NOTE: if you do use references in your assignment, please be sure to cite all sources used in the body of your paper; as such, your paper must have a proper bibliography. Please see pg 7 of this outline for more information.**

**CITING REFERENCES IN YOUR BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- (2) To cite a journal article: (e.g. **Kent, Susan**  
**1995 “Unstable Households in a Stable Kalahari**  
**Community in Botswana.” American Anthropologist**  
**97 (2): 292-312).**
- (2a) To cite a book: Macionis, John J., S. Mikael Jansson and Cecilia M. Benoit. 2005 **Society: The Basics**. Toronto: Prentice-Hall.
- (2b) To cite a movie: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Warner Brothers. 2002.
- 3) To cite something from the internet, the website and the date the cite was visited should be included. For example:

**United States Department of Energy**  
**1996 *Impact of the Human Genome Project*. March 3**  
**[<http://www.gdb.org/Dan/DOE/prim5.html>]**

**Remember, references in your bibliography must be in alphabetical order by last name of the principal author of the work you are citing. Lastly, do not bother listing references in your bibliography that you did not explicitly use.**

For more information on citation styles, please consult the *Style Manual for the Social Sciences* available at the bookstore or at the Camosun Library.

**IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE DUE DATES FOR THE RESEARCH ESSAYS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED. TWO PERCENT A DAY WILL BE DEDUCTED FOR EVERY DAY AN ASSIGNMENT OR ESSAY IS LATE.**

In evaluating the examination papers and essays the emphasis will be on understanding and analysis, rather than the recitation. Avoid memorizing sentences, in particular when it is not clear to you what the sentences mean. Papers indicating memorization will receive a grade zero. As for analysis, your learning strategy should be to understand the relationships among facts, not the facts alone. Another important point is illustration; after discussion and analysis give examples from current or historical developments in society. This will show that you understand the concepts and theories and are able to apply them to society as tools for analysis.

A grade of zero will be granted for absence during examinations, unless the student produces a medical certificates confirming serious illness and writes the substitute exam within one week of recovery.

### Examination Procedures

All examinations must be written in the section of the course in which the student is officially registered.

A grade of Zero will be granted for absence during examination, unless the student produces a medical certificate confirming serious illness and writes the substitute exam within one week of recovery.

### Grading System

**The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:**

A+ = 95 - 100%	B = 75 - 79%	D = 50 - 59%
A = 90 - 94%	B- = 70 - 74%	F = 0.0 - 49%
A- = 85 - 89%	C+ = 65 - 69%	I = See Calendar for Details
B+ = 80 - 84%	C = 60 - 64%	AUD = Audit

*W = Official withdrawal has taken place.*

### Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following acts:

- (i) Giving, receiving, or obtaining unauthorized information during any type of examination or test;
- (ii) Obtaining or providing unauthorized questions or answers relating to any examination or test prior to the time of the examination or test;
- (iii) Asking or arranging for another person to take any examination or test in one's place;
- (iv) Plagiarizing, that is, appropriating the work of another or parts or passages of another's writing, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as a product of one's own mind or manual skill.
- (v) **Disruptive behavior/Disorderly conduct.** This includes any behavior that interferes with the provision of College services or of instruction or interferes with any member of the Camosun College community by students and any others accompanying them. Examples: verbal outbursts, physical gestures, actions or interruptions which limit or interfere with the provision of College services or instructional activities; unwarranted and unreasonable disturbances during any Camosun College related activity.

Academic misconduct will result in a grade of "F" for the entire course. The students should note that in accordance with the college policy quoted above, mere access to unauthorized information (for example, texts or lecture notes) constitutes academic misconduct. It is not necessary for the instructor to prove that the information has been used by the student.

### **Tape-Recording in the Classroom**

In order to ensure free and open discussion of controversial ideas by the students, tape-recording of the proceedings is not permitted in class. Exceptions, however, will be made for students who are visually impaired or are unable to write due to physical disability.

### **Procedure Changes**

In order to deal with the day-to-day management of the course, new procedures or revisions to procedures may be implemented from time to time throughout the semester. Such procedures and revisions will be announced in class for two consecutive sessions before they are implemented. It is the responsibility of each student to keep informed of such developments.

All matters that are not covered by this course outline are governed by official college policies and procedures.

## **Course Content and Readings**

### **Topics and Readings**<sup>4</sup>

#### **January**

Week 1:	Chapter 1: Introduction to Methods
Week 2:	Chapter 1: Introduction to Methods
Week 3:	Chapter 3: Research Design; pages 70-91, only.
Week 4:	Chapter 2: Ethics in Research

#### **February**

Week 1	APPENDIX A: The structure of a journal article.
Week 2	Chapter 12: Descriptive Statistics; pages 353-363, 379-382, only.
Week 3	Chapter 12 continued
Week 4	Chapter 5: Sampling Theory

#### **March**

Week 1	Chapter 6: Survey Research; Chapter 4: pages 115-124, only.
Week 2	Chapter 12: Inferential Statistics; pages 369-373.

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<sup>4</sup> Since the statistical theory presented in your book is very superficial, it is recommended that students consult the following text, which will be put on reserve in the library, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the issues discussed. The text is called: **Understanding Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences** by Robert Pagano.



Week 3 Chapter 12: Inferential Statistics continued.

Week 4 Chapter 7: Participant Observation

### **April**

Week 1 REVIEW SESSION

***\*\* It should be noted that the above schedule is tentative and is listed here only as an approximate guide for the student.\*\****

### **Recommended Materials or Services to Assist Students to Succeed Throughout the Course**

Students are encouraged to utilize support services available at the Writing Centre to prepare for their essay exams.

### **LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS**

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, Registrar's Office or the College web site at <http://www.camosun.bc.ca>

### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICY**

There is an Academic Conduct Policy. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, Registration, and on the College web site in the Policy Section.

[www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-8](http://www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-8)

