York University  
Social Science 3800 6.0A  
Development Studies Research Methods  
Fall 2010

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This course introduces class-members to the principle research methods and techniques used primarily in International Development. Since development research and policy agendas are undergoing considerable evolution and change, it focuses on the more practical issues and problems of researching development policies, programs, and projects. In addition to introducing research methods commonly used in the Social Sciences, this course aims to aid students in learning about applied research methods and evaluation practices, both qualitative and quantitative, especially the tools/frameworks that are promoted by the international donor community.

STRUCTURE OF THE CLASS
This course will be organized around a three-hour weekly session consisting of primarily lectures and presentations by class-members. In the first half, the class will meet for lectures on the topic at hand that will serve as the basis for developing a better understanding of relevant methodical issues. The second half will be devoted mainly to presentations, where the class-members will have the opportunity to present group/individual projects pertinent to the issues, themes, and concepts that are included in the course outline.

The course director will use the last few minutes to summarize the topic of the day. In both sessions, the class-members will be able to respond to a broad range of methodological issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class-members are expected to make efforts to do all assigned readings in advance of class and to submit the assignments on time. You will also need to demonstrate your serious interests in the field of development studies.
Participation:
Based on careful reading of source materials listed in the course outline, everyone is required to participate in and contribute to both class discussions and presentations. Participation grades will be based on contributions to class discussions and attendance records. More than four absences in the 2010-11 Fall and Winter sessions will result in a failure in the participation mark.

Presentation:
Each of you will be required to make at least two oral presentations to the class based on your critical evaluation of a published research. I would strongly encourage you to choose an article/book chapter to identify methodological/ethical errors. You are asked to thoroughly consult with your course director before finalizing your topic.

The main purpose of your presentation will be to identify the key research method/technique used in your chosen article/chapter: How data/information/insights are collected? What procedure is used to construct key concepts? How reliable is the data? To what extent do the information/data represent the population? How the conclusion is written? Are the variables logically connected? Can you identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used in your selected study?

When preparing for your presentation, I would strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines noted below:

- Regardless of the size of your group, you must not spend more than 45 minutes on presenting your analysis. The class is expected to use the remaining 30+ minutes to discuss various issues critical to your presentation. In other words, you have to manage time well, giving others an opportunity either to raise questions or to make meaningful comments. Be sure to distribute the allocated time equally among all the presenters;

- You will be required to provide evidence that you have worked together, as a team rather than as an individual, on your presentation. Several weeks prior to the presentation, the group will meet to discuss, among other things, how the workloads will be distributed equally among all the team members. Please keep in mind that this assignment should provide you with an opportunity not only to get to know each other well, it also should allow you to learn from each other’s knowledge and experiences.

- You will have to engage the other class-members in such ways that everyone gets an opportunity to actively participate in debates/discussions.

The presenter(s) will be encouraged to use overheads, videos, and other audio-visual aids simply to make the presentation both stimulating and interesting. The presenter(s) will also be required to submit a 3-page written summary (double spaced) of the presentation topic in advance, which will include, among other things, a brief summary of the
arguments used in the chosen article, an assessment of the author’s arguments, and a bibliography of the works consulted.

In order to facilitate debates and/or discussions, the written summary must be submitted to the instructor via the Internet at least two days prior to the class at which it will be presented.

The presentation schedule will be finalized by the second week of this term.

Survey-based essay:
The goal of this assignment is to help class-members become familiar with the process of carrying out an academic study.

Using the survey research method, you will be required to carry out a research study on a topic of your choice. For the purpose of this rather intensive course, the assignment will be carried out in two separate stages. In the initial stage, you will be required to put together a short questionnaire designed to test a hypothesis/assumption. In particular, you will design a questionnaire that can be self-administered to prove or disprove the relationship of the variables stated in the hypothesis/assumption. Your specific task would be to choose a suitable topic, break it down into different kinds of variables, develop an ethical code of conduct, and prepare a set of questions for use in a self-administered questionnaire.

This initial assignment would be no more than 5 pages in length (double-spaced, the font size must be 12 points or higher) which will include a statement of the problem, the identification of the key variables chosen for your research, the questionnaire, and a brief description of how will you address ethical concerns. This rather short assignment will be due on or before November 10, 2010. Late submissions will be marked down 5% per day.

The second stage will involve you to administer the questionnaire, compile the data and write an essay based on the findings of your study. The questionnaire should be administered among a group of selected students/participants. The essay will be no more than 10 pages in length (double-spaced, the font size must be 12 points or higher) which will be due on or before March 2, 2011. Late submissions will be marked down 5% per day.

Both of the assignments will be graded on the basis of the content (relevance, accuracy, comprehensiveness and concepts will be examined very carefully), research (issues that will be examined: quality of research, the effectiveness of your questionnaire in soliciting information/data), and presentation/organization (be sure to aim for clarity, use a standard academic format and avoid grammatical mistakes).

The following guidelines are likely to help you meet the expectations of carrying out a survey-based research project:
Choosing the topic:
Choose a topic that you would like to explore in your research. While I would encourage you to focus on a development issue in your research, you may also want to pick up a topic that does not fit easily into the development category but the topic has some relevance for our methodology course.

Develop a hypothesis:
Identify the key assumptions that you would like to explore in your research. You will need to do some research on your chosen topic not only to make you familiar with the literature, but also to develop a hypothesis. Instead of developing new assumptions/hypotheses, you may want to use a prevailing assumption that can be obtained from the writings of an author/scholar.

Breaking the topic down into a few variables:
You will need to identify the broad categories that reflect the theme of your research. In other words, you will have to break the topic down into a few variables that can be measured/analyzed through the administration of your survey.

Preparing the questionnaire:
Each of the categories should generate a list of questions for your survey. Before you select a question, think about its effectiveness in generating clear response from the participants. If the question seems relevant, then, find a creative way of phrasing it, making sure that it avoids all kinds of ambiguity. Keep in mind that an ambiguous, long question can easily produce flawed data.

Selecting your samples
Based on a systematic technique (that we plan to discuss this week), select your samples. Make sure that the samples do represent the characteristics of the population.

Testing the questionnaire
Once the questionnaire is prepared and the samples are selected, you will make an effort to pre-test the questionnaire to determine its effectiveness in eliciting useful information. If necessary, make changes to your questionnaire before you start administering it.

Processing your data
After completing your survey, you will need to process the data based on the broad category of your study. Now is also the time for you to analyze the data and think about the way you would to present them.

Writing the report
Based on the findings of your study, you will be writing the report. Be sure to use a standard academic style for your essay and include the bibliography. Do not go beyond the page limit. Add the questionnaire to your appendix.
**Examinations:**
There will be a mid-term and a final examination. Both the mid-term and final exams will be held in class on the on the last day of our meeting in each term (i.e. December 8, 2010 and for the Fall term and March 30, 2011 for the Winter term).

**Academic Integrity Tutorial**

Please note that plagiarism is an academic crime. No one will be allowed to paraphrase or copy the words of other authors without providing appropriate citation.

All class-members are strongly encouraged to become familiar with appropriate academic practices by visiting the University’s Academic Integrity web site at http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity. You must read the section ‘For Students’ and complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial: http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/. In addition to helping class-members understand various aspects of academic integrity, this tutorial would play an important role in assuring that class-members do not breach the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

Survey-based essay:
  Part I: Constructing a questionnaire: 10%
  Part II: survey-based essay 20%
Mid-term: 15%
Final Exam: 20%
Oral presentation (10x2): 20%
Participation and Attendance: 15%

Please note that non-submission of work without an approved extension from the instructor will be accredited with the mark of "0". In order to receive a final grade, the class-member will have to receive a grade in each of the distributions noted above.

**Missed Exam policies**

The class will adopt Professor Canel’s missed exam guidelines which can be found at http://www.yorku.ca/ecanel/policies.html.
REQUIRED TEXT


A Course Kit

While the text is available for purchase at the University bookstore, the course kit can be accessed through the Program’s office at 322 Founders College.

OTHER READINGS

In addition to the assigned course reader, this course will also use the following books as supplementary texts (alphabetically organized):

- Berg, Bruce L., Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995);
- Brown, Kathleen et, al., Research Methods in Human Development, 2nd edition (CA: California State University, 1999);
- CIDA, Results-Based Management Policy Statement (Hull: CIDA, 1996);
- DANIDA, Logical Framework Approach: A Flexible Tool for Participatory Development (Copenhagen: DANIDA, May 1995);
- Eade, Deborah (ed.), Development Methods and Approaches: critical reflections (London: Oxfam, 2003);
- Nachmias, David and Chava Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social Sciences (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976);
- OECD, Development Assistance Manual: DAC Principles for Effective Aid (Paris, OECD, 1992);
- Posavac, Emil and Raymond G. Carey, Program Evaluation Methods 5th edition (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997);
- Rahman, Muhammad Anisur, People’s Self-Development: Perspectives on Participatory Action Research (London: Zed Books, 1995);
- Rao, Aruna and Catherine Overholt, Gender Analysis in Development Planning: A Case Book (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1991);
- Rubin, Frances, A Basic Guide to Evaluation for Development Workers (London, Oxfam, 1995);
• Williams, Suzanne, The Oxfam Gender Training Manual (Oxford: Oxfam, 1994);
• World Bank, Getting Results: The World Bank’s Agenda for Improving Development Effectiveness (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1994) and

Section One: Basic Issues in Development Research

Week One (September 15): What is Development Research?


Recommended:

Week Two (September 22): Evaluation Research: understanding the performance of development intervention programs


Strongly Recommended:
Recommended:

- CIDA, *Results-Based Management Policy Statement* (Hull: CIDA, 1996);

Week Three (September 29): The Scientific Method

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 1 (pp. 5-26).

Recommended:


Week Four (October 6): Varieties of Social Science Research

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 2 (pp. 32-41).

Week Five: Reading Week—No class meeting.

Week Six (October 20): Basic Elements of Research

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 2 (pp. 41-56) & Chapter 5 (pp. 116-132).
Strongly Recommended:


Recommended:


Week Seven (October 27): The Research Design

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 4 (pp.79 -112).

Strongly recommended:


Recommended:


Section Two: The Methods of Development Research—qualitative techniques

Week Eight (November 3): Survey and Field Research: questionnaire and interview

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 9.
Recommended:


Week Nine (November 10): The Logic of Sampling

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 7.

Recommended:


Part I of the survey-based essay (the questionnaire/proposal) is due.

Week Ten (November 17): Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic Research


Strongly Recommended:


Berg, Bruce, Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 2nd edition (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), pp. 120-159. (This book can be accessed through Scott’s Reserve Section)

Recommended:


Week Eleven (November 24): Understanding Focus Group Research


Strongly Recommended:


Recommended:


Week Twelve (December 1): Ethical Issues in Social Research

- Babbie and Benaquisto, Chapter 3.

**Strongly Recommended:**

**Recommended:**

**Week Thirteen (December 8):**
Mid-term Exam.

*Please note that articles/book chapters with an asterisk mark are included in the Course Packet.