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EMP: 877 Research Methods (3 credits)

Overview of Course:

You will design a project up to but not including the actual data gathering. The project includes all of the following elements: Formulation of a Research Problem. Conceptualization and Operationalization. The Written Project Summary. Choice of a Research Method. Ethical and Political Considerations

Course Topics:

Preliminary Considerations:

- Research Methods/Data Phobia
- How to Study for the Course
- Importance of Class Attendance/Participation

Part I: Overview of the Research Process

- Human Inquiry and Science
- The Relationship between Theory and Research
- The Nature of Causation
- (Babbie, chap. 1;2)

Part II: The Structuring of Inquiry

- Introduction to Research Design
- How to Design a Research Project
- Conceptualization and Measurement
- Operationalization
- Indexes, Scales, and Typologies
- The Logic of Sampling
- (Babbie, chap. 4; chap. 5;6;7; appendix a; chap. 17)

Part III: Modes of Observation

- Experiments
- Survey Research
- Field Research
- Unobtrusive Research
- Evaluation Research
- (Babbie, chap. 8;9;10;11;12)

Part IV: Analysis of Data

- (Babbie, chap. 13;14,15,16)

Part V: The Social Context of Research

- The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
- The Uses of Social Research

(Babbie, chap. 3)

Learning Objectives:

- 1) to present the interrelationships between theory and data in the research process;
- 2) to provide an understanding of the major issues and basic techniques of social science research;
- 3) to provide opportunity to delve into the research venture first-hand by completing individual and group projects.

Student Competencies

- 1) the ability to read and interpret research articles;
- 2) the ability to use qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection;
- 3) the ability to measure variables and variable relationships;
- 4) the ability to develop a formal research project, including:
 - a) formulation of problem statement;
 - b) construction of theoretical framework;
 - c) operationalization of concepts;
 - d) construction of relevant hypotheses;
 - e) procedures of data collection;
 - f) procedures of data analysis.

Audience:

Open to all students in the Distance Masters or Doctoral program.

FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

- **Telephone Contact:** Students should arrange all telephone communications with the instructor by email beforehand. An initial phone contact to clarify course objectives and develop a schedule should be made prior to beginning the course. This contact should be scheduled within the first few weeks of commencement of the semester. After this, periodic telephone communication can be arranged with instructor. All telephone calls will be at student's expense.

- **Email Contact:** Reflection on and questions about the coursework papers and field placement internship should be addressed via email monthly or as needed. Students are always encouraged to contact the instructor via email whenever a problem arises.
- **Communications:** It is requested that students stay in weekly or every other week correspondence with the instructor using email. The student should also set up periodic telephone conversations, at their expense, to discuss problems, concerns, or determine the direction of their course work. Students are always encouraged to contact the instructor by email, fax, or telephone whenever a major concern may arise. It should be understood that as mature students, it is the responsibility of the students to stay in contact with their instructors. The instructor may be able to set up one-on-one discussions with the student using Skype. Students should check email frequently for professor and EMU messages.

NOTE: All lessons, coursework and papers from both the student and professor must be copied to lessons@energymedicineuniversity.org

Students will normally send communications via email and submit papers as MSWORD format files attached to email messages. Synchronous Internet sessions may be used for “chat sessions” using Yahoo Messenger Chat or Skype. Check with your instructor on the type of communications he uses.

Internet Forums: Please contact our Registrar to be included in the EMU Internet forums.

Length of Course:

Length of this Energy Medicine course is five (5) months or one (1) semester.

COURSE DELIVERY STYLE

Distance Education - Coursework is completed at a location determined by the student utilizing a computer that has the ability to play audio and video clips, with Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Reader, along with a current web browser, internet connection and email address. Contact and communication with distance students is typically conducted by telephone, Internet, Skype, text chat, and email. Students are also encouraged to contact the University by facsimiles, and postal mail, and by personal visit to the University.

Required Textbook:

Babbie, Earl. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research* (13th. ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.

Your textbook has many “bells and whistles” supplementary resources available online from Wadsworth (Cengage Learning). The website includes chapter-specific resources, including tutorials, links, exercise, flashcards, and datasets. See, for example, www.cengagebrain.com

Recommended reading:

American Sociological Association. *Style Guide*.

** Miller, Delbert. 2002. *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement* (6th ed). Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Galvan, Jose. *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

Pan, M. Ling. *Preparing Literature Reviews*.

Patten, Mildred. *Proposing Empirical Research: A Guide to the Fundamentals*.

Pyrzack, Fred. *Writing Empirical Research Reports: A Basic Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

** Note: I strongly recommend that everyone become familiar with Miller's handbook.

Course Requirements:

- 1) Mid-term exam
- 2) Final exam
- 3) Research Proposal (see further instructions)
- 4) Assignments and Projects

Grading Policy:

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Mid term exam | 30% |
| Final exam | 30% |
| Research Proposal | 30% |
| Class grade | <u>10%</u> |
| | 100% |

Note: your class grade will comprise the "assignments and projects" section of the course, as well as my assessment of your participation in the course. If all goes well, these assignments will be "verbal" rather than "written." This is contingent on you being prepared to enthusiastically discuss the assignments. If, however, you "requests" written assignments (either explicitly or implicitly), I will regretfully comply.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This assignment will give you experience in formulating a research problem and designing the appropriate method by which to gather and evaluate data relevant to the specific research questions flowing from your problem statement. See especially Babbie, appendix a; chapter 17.

You will design a project *up to but not including* the actual data gathering. The project should include all of the following elements:

1) Formulation of a Research Problem.

This component includes the process of moving from a general idea of interest to a specific, empirically observable research problem statement.

- a. What general social phenomenon interests you?
- b. What does the literature say about the phenomenon? Review the literature to see how others have dealt with the issue you selected. Look for this literature in the social science reference sources, such as *Social Science Abstracts*, *Psychological Abstracts*, *Sociological Abstracts*, various social sciences indexes and the on-line catalog for the book collection. Find the appropriate sources and READ! (See guidelines for evaluating and criticizing sources.)
- c. State the purpose of the study. The purpose statement "establishes the direction of the research."
- d. Develop specific research questions, specify the concepts central to your study, and if you can at this point, isolate your variables and formulate hypotheses.
- e. Provide a theoretical framework. Drawing from the literature reviewed, develop a model explaining how and why your variables should relate to each other as expressed in your hypotheses. In most cases your theory will be articulated using "middle-range" concepts (see Merton).

2. Conceptualization and Operationalization

- a. Provide a nominal definition of the central concepts in the study. The nominal definition provides boundaries for the concepts, indicating precisely what is in and what is out. Once you define the terms, use them consistently.

b. Provide operational definitions of the concepts. From the nominal definitions indicate the dimensions of the concepts and provide at least one (more often more than one) empirical indicator for each of the dimensions. These indicators will relate directly to your hypotheses either as variables or values of variables.

2a. The Written Summary

Write a summary of your review of the literature and conceptualization process, showing the path of prior research and integrating and synthesizing what is known in the area as it relates to your proposed project.

3. Choice of a Research Method

a. Indicate what method or strategy you will use to gather the data necessary to test your hypotheses. Why is this method most appropriate for your study? What are its main advantages and disadvantages? What kinds of problems or concerns will you have to consider when using this method?

b. If you need a sample, what procedures will you use to get it? Who or what is your target population? Be sure to distinguish clearly between units of analysis, observation units, and sampling units. What do you anticipate will be the strengths and weaknesses of your sampling procedure, especially as it relates to generalizing your results to include your target population?

c. Provide and discuss the instruments and procedures you will use to collect the data. Discuss the validity and reliability of your instruments.

4. Ethical and Political Considerations

a. Discuss potential ethical problems as they pertain to the participants of the study.

b. Discuss problems of ideological and political bias in relation to the goal of objectivity.

****DUE DATES:** Abstracts and Complete Citations - Midterm

Final Paper – Two weeks before the end of semester. (Note: I will read and comment on any proposal in any form before the due dates. If necessary, I will suggest specific revisions.)

A Note on Internet Research:

I strongly urge you to use the resources of the web to help you in your work. But, remember that while there are wonderful resources available, at the same time any putz can put up a web page. In short, there are enormous opportunities for information, and there are sites of questionable validity and reliability. Be adventurous! (but exercise your budding discriminatory powers)

Wadsworth, the publisher of your textbook, has some wonderful internet resources and links. See the main site at: <http://sociology.wadsworth.com>

I will be glad to supply suggested links and resources upon request.

Citation Style:

The official EMU citation style is the American Psychological Association (APA) must be used.