UNC-CH INLS 581 – Fall 2013
Research Methods Overview
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Brief Description
Almost all the material in Babbie will be covered, with a disproportionate emphasis on materials students often find most difficult to learn from the book, such as notions of validation, basic statistics (much of which is not in Babbie), etc.

My personal goal as the instructor is to increase the leadership skills in SILS Masters students by teaching them to recognize questions in the students’ professional domains whose answers could improve professional practice; to learn methods for gathering original data to increase knowledge about the domain and the answer; and to learn analytic methods that allow one to answer questions and determine the degree of confidence one can have in the answer and the scope of the answer’s applicability.

Text

Outline and Readings
(Readings preceded by "*" are optional)

Introduction: Research and its Applications.
Babbie, Chapter 1


* Sage Research Methods Online.  Available through Davis Library.


**Social Psychology of Research**

Babbie, Chapters 1-3.


**Research Design and Topics**

Babbie, Chapter 4

* UNC Institutional Review Board, Behavioral IRB, [http://research.unc.edu/ohre](http://research.unc.edu/ohre)

**Conceptualization, Measurement, Operationalization, and Variables**

Babbie, Chapters 4-5


**Questions**

Babbie, Chapters 6 (Indexes and Scales) & 9 (Surveys)


**Sampling**

Babbie, Chapter 7


**Experiments**

Babbie, Chapter 8 (Experiments) & 12 (Evaluation Research)


**Qualitative Research**

Babbie, Chapters 10 (Qualitative Research) & 13 (Qual. Data Analysis)


* Hesse-Biber, S. The Practice of Qualitative Research, Sage, 2011.


**Unobtrusive Research**

Babbie, Chapter 11

Content Analysis


Modeling and Simulation


General Analysis of Data

Babbie, Chapters 14, 16.


* JMP website http://JMP.com

* Sall, J., Lehman, A., Stephens, M., Creighton, L. JMP Start Statistics: A Guide to Statistic and Data Analysis Using JMP. Fifth Edition (2012). A good survey of social science statistics and JMP. Not required for the course, but if you want to know much more than we cover in this class about statistics, this is a good place to start.

The latest version of JMP can be obtained through http://its.unc.edu or http://software.unc.edu. If you wish to run it through the university virtual lab, go to http://virtuallab.unc.edu (a support web page is at http://help.unc.edu/help/how-do-i-log-on-to-virtual-lab/)

Evaluation

Class participation 30%,
Test 40% (Last class, Tuesday December 3),
Submitted Assignments 30%.
(Late assignments will result in a considerably lower grade for the assignment)
Research Outcomes

The following three assignments are designed to help students develop an appreciation for the outcome variables whose improvement is the goal of professional, constructive research.

Tuesday September 24. Students are expected to submit, at the beginning of class, on paper, a single sentence stating their functional area of interest (without the domain) along with a list of 7 outcome variables that might be improved by a researcher or information professional working in the area. Each outcome variable is something that can vary and that can be improved. If you were in a School of Education, desirable outcome variables used in studying how to improve teaching effectiveness might include variables such as course grades, test grades, student self-reported interest in the lecture material, judgments by an expert observer, how many yawns each student produces in a single class session, etc. To initially locate outcome variables, students might examine books on library or information system effectiveness, as well as textbooks that focus on particular functional areas or domains, e.g. reference, organization of information, management, information retrieval. One might perform a search of LIS Indexes for the keywords in the area in which you think you would most enjoy working.

Tuesday October 29. Students should submit on paper a list of 5 constructive outcome variables that can be improved upon, along with 3 bibliographic citations for each of the outcome variables (thus 15 citations.) Each bibliographic citation should be to a research publication from either a refereed journal or a refereed conference. The same refereed source may be used no more than 2 times for this assignment.

Tuesday November 26. Students should hand in (on paper) as their final course project a list of 4 constructive outcome variables. Each outcome variable should have associated with it 1 citation to each of the best 5 research articles that address the outcome variable selected. There will thus be 20 citations. Attached to each bibliographic citation should be a sentence or two of 40 words or less describing the research methodology used in this article to study the outcome variable.

Honor Code

Students should familiarize themselves with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Honor Code which is described in University publications. It should be noted that in this course, students are expected to receive (and provide) some assistance regarding the use of hardware and software in the computer laboratories and general problem solving techniques for the proposal and homework assignments. Students should NOT receive (or provide) major creative assistance or continuing minor support for projects.

Plagiarism: Student assignments that are handed in that contain more than 5 consecutive words that the instructor feels were taken from another source without proper attribution (without the proper quote marks and citations) definitely will be referred to the appropriate administrative authorities who address issues of Academic Integrity (e.g. the Honor Court). I assume that all students are equally likely to be honest and will put an equal amount of effort into considering the possibility of plagiarism for each student’s paper. The UNC Library has a tutorial at http://www.lib.unc.edu/plagiarism/.
Separate from the Honor Code but related to respect for classmates is classroom behavior. Students are expected to behave in a professional manner in class. Students in class are expected to focus on classroom discussion and materials. Students are expected to avoid student-to-student conversations during class. Use of laptop computers should be limited to taking notes for class. Similarly, materials being read (on paper or electronically) should be limited to those appropriate for the classroom lecture or discussion. Students who appear to be involved in non-class related activities during class time will be graded as not participating in class. Cellular telephones and computers should have ringers and speakers muted so as to not disturb others.