SEMINARY IN JUSTICE SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Course Description:

An examination of research methods applied to solving problems and resolving issues in criminal justice; focus will be on the application of the scientific method to problem-solving and program evaluation.

Learning Objectives are for graduate students to develop:

- professional and intellectual skill in formulating research questions, choosing variables as indicators, managing and analyzing data, and presenting findings
- capacity to constructively criticize and evaluate research and to be a discerning consumer of research findings
- competency in using SPSS 8.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to undertake basic and applied research.

This course is in preparation for AJ203 where the emphasis will be more upon designing an evaluation research plan, choosing methods of data collection, and developing policy implications from the findings.

Pre-Requisites: Stat 95 and AJ105 or equivalents.
Required Texts:


Course Requirements and Grading:

Non-graded weekly exercises using the computer in class and/or quizzes will be administered. A mid-term exam will involve an analysis and critique of a published piece of research. A written paper documenting the student’s own research project, is due at the end of the semester. (See separate handout for instructions on the paper.) Students are expected to give oral presentations on their final paper at this time.

Grades will be made up of 15% for the completed exercises, 35% for the mid-term exam, and 50% for the final paper. Active participation in class & above average oral presentations will provide an opportunity for students to raise their grade by one half a level.

Teaching Philosophy:

This seminar is an interactive learning experience. After a review of the components of the research process, each class session will involve hands-on interaction with data on the computer. The course also provides opportunity to pursue independent research, possibly as a prelude to a masters thesis.

In accord with departmental policy, make-up exams and acceptance of late reports after the due date will be provided only in extreme cases and only where appropriate documentation is provided. However, every encouragement is given to students who wish to learn from their mistakes and earn high grades. Make-up or re-takes of the mid-term exam can be
done at the time of the final exam. The final paper, due November 29th may be re-written and re-submitted on or before December 20th.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 13</td>
<td>The logic of measurement: validity, reliability, multiple indicators, levels of measurement &amp; units of analysis.</td>
<td><em>Lab</em>: Exploring data sets. Dowdall et al. Chpt 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>Describing a variable using frequency tables, means and standard deviations, modes &amp; medians; graphic illustrations using histograms, pie charts and scattergrams.</td>
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<td>Recoding and modifying variables</td>
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<td>Creating composite measures and indexes</td>
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<td>Crosstabulation and correlation</td>
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<td>Measures of association – lambda, gamma, Chi-Square, Pearson’s r</td>
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Oct 25    MID-TERM EXAM

Nov 1     Introduction to theoretical modeling.
           *Lab*: Multivariate analysis. Dowdall et al. Chpts 17 & 18
           Regression, *t* tests, analysis of variance, epsilon

Nov 8     Path analysis.
           *Lab*: Multivariate analysis (cont.) Dowdall et al. Chpts 19 &
           20. Odds ratios, logistic regression

Nov 15    Preparing research reports and proposals. Weiss Chpt 13.
           *Lab*: Review.

Nov 23    NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Nov 29    Class presentations of individual research reports
           FINAL PAPER DUE

Dec 13    Class presentations of individual research projects.
           Feedback on final paper from instructor

Dec 20    Class presentations of individual research projects
           (if necessary). RE-SUBMISSIONS OF FINAL PAPER DUE
           on or before Wednesday, December 20th, 5:30pm.