

Research Methods in Legal Studies and Critical Criminology  
Course Outline -- 2016

Instructor

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**Office Hours at SS1, 161:** Wednesday 12:30-1:00 p.m. and/or by appointment

Class:

Social Science 1, 161: Monday & Wednesday, 9:00-12:30 a.m.

Course descriptions:

This course is an introduction to survey research methods applied in the area of legal studies and critical criminology. Specific topics include problem formulations of research questions in the field of law and society and criminology, research design, instrument construction, drafting of opinion survey questionnaire, data collection, codification, data processing, statistical analyses, and report writing. Class topics also include the overview of both descriptive and inferential statistics with the use of two easily available statistical programs, i.e., SPSS and PSPP -- an open source statistical software which can be installed in student computers. The greater emphasis is placed on the questionnaire construction and its instrument formulation, statistical analysis of survey responses, and interpretations of analytic findings.

Opinion Surveys or Opinion Formulation

Analyzing power conflicts between the King and the Parliament in the 17<sup>th</sup> century England, British philosopher and historian David Hume once declared, “[the] force is always on the hands of the governed [i.e., the general public],” suggesting that the control of opinion was an important prerequisite for the “governor” in retarding and quieting the power of the masses. According to Hume, only by controlling the public opinion, the governor renders force “quiescent” and makes the masses to be “passive,” “ineffective,” and “subservient.” Utilizing his analysis of this power dynamics, the U.S. government and powerful corporate sectors have long collaborated in creating and supporting public relations (PR) industries to control public minds. For instance, nearly one hundred years ago, newly re-elected President Woodrow Wilson first created the “Committee on Public Information” (aka Creel Committee – a first government-sponsored PR institution) in 1917 in order to manufacture public consent for the participation in World War I, in which nearly 120,000 American ultimately died in Europe. President Ronald Reagan similarly established the Office of Public Diplomacy in early 1980s in order to influence public opinion in supporting military campaigns against Nicaragua’s nationalist movement and insurgent government. The U.S. corporate media also assisted the Reagan administration in propagating the danger of Nicaraguan “invasions” of the U.S. homeland, thereby supporting the U.S.-backed Contra mercenaries that killed tens of thousands of Sandinista government supporters. While Reagan’s propaganda agency was later declared illegal by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, today, the U.S. population remains the most “polled” population in the world, as private PR industries continue to have their finger on the public pulse for the purpose of measuring and controlling public opinions.

This class then examines practical aspects of understanding how the public opinion is formed, measured, and analyzed. The greater emphasis is on the practical, “hands-on” experience, acquisition of basic statistical knowledge and methodological skills in survey research that will enable students to construct instruments to measure, analyze, and gauge the “opinion.” These practical skills and knowledge encompass the basic understanding of the statistical concepts and analytic procedures. The use of SPSS and the open-source statistical program called PSPP will

enable students to obtain statistical indices to examine their research questions and hypotheses. In the class, all students will be exposed to a self-directed research project, ranging from the formulation of research question to the specification of a set of hypotheses for statistical testing, opinion-survey questionnaire construction, data gathering, data base construction, statistical analysis of research hypotheses, and report writing. Lastly, if there is sufficient time left for discussions, students are asked to make suggestions on how to influence the public opinion in ways of liberation and emancipation from the government or corporate-directed propaganda in the area of their research interest.

Possible Two-Student Team Collaboration & Cooperation for the Survey Research Project:

Students may form a **two-person team** to work on all required and/or extra-credit research papers (i.e., all assignments, in-class presentation, and a final paper). The team project is expected to promote student collaborations and cooperation. Since each individual is responsible for the collection of 30 respondents for a survey questionnaire, it would be advantageous to form a two-student team to maximize the number of respondents for the survey research project. You need to find a partner and notify the instructor about the partner **by the end of the first week**.

Requirements:

Attendance at lectures is essential for getting the most out of the course materials. Students who fail to attend and participate will thus fail the course. In addition, there are following three requirements: (1) an opinion-survey questionnaire; (2) the creation of “response” database and SPSS/PSPP statistical data set, and (3) final project paper with statistical analysis of survey responses (double-spaced 10 page max, excluding a title page; a copy of questionnaire; and frequency tables of every question in the questionnaire).

In-Class Presentation:

Students are also required to make three in-class presentations on their research:

- (1) The first presentation should describe the issue, i.e., research question(s) of your interest, why it is important to you, and what your hypotheses are in relation to your research question (15 min) – students must use at least **3 academic articles** to support their research questions and proposed hypotheses (at least **5 hypotheses**);
- (2) Students will present their completed questionnaires, explaining why questions in the questionnaire were included, what they are designed to measure, and how they be analyzed in relation to the hypotheses posed (15 min);
- (3) Students will present the result of statistical analysis of their data, what findings mean in light of the original questions posed, and whether or not research hypotheses are supported (20 min).

**You must submit your draft of questionnaire by the second week and your final paper by the end of fifth week.** All six requirements – the submission of (1) an opinion-survey questionnaire, (2) statistical data base, (3) final project paper, and three in-class presentations – must be submitted ON TIME to pass the course. During the posted office hours, students are invited to bring in any problems or questions concerning the readings or assignments.

Survey & Statistical Data Creation:

Each student is expected to distribute and collect at least THIRTY questionnaires filled out by the targeted respondents. The more questionnaires students are able to collect, the more powerful the analysis of statistical findings.

In order for students to be able to analyze their responses, each student is expected to install so-called "PSPP" open-software statistical program into his/her own computer. The program will be used to create the student's own statistical data base based on survey responses. More information will be given in class.

### **How to Meet the Learning/Studying Objectives and Do Well in the Class**

- (1) **Do the readings** -- You will find the class a lot more enjoyable and fruitful if you do the readings beforehand.
- (2) **Attend the class** -- Participating in class and discussions will give you opportunities to ask about the things you are unclear about -- or even unconvinced by. The class attendance counts toward final grade.
- (3) **Come to office hours** -- Office hours are a wonderful opportunity to deepen your understanding of the course material. It is also a chance for you and the instructor to get to know each other.
- (4) **Prepare for the in-class reading material presentation** -- The in-class presentation will give you opportunities to apply your knowledge and reflect your ideas about the readings and/or your chosen subject matter. Do some practice before your presentation, especially if you feel uncomfortable in talking in front of your peers.
- (5) **Complete the final paper** -- As for the completion of the final paper, it is almost best to finish the near complete draft of the final paper, **at least one week before its deadline**, so that you can spend the final week in reviewing and improving the paper. Instead of completing the paper one day or two days before the deadline, having an objective assessment of your written work for some extended period of time always gives you a fresh look at your ideas, evaluate the appropriateness of the use of diction, and bring about any insightful ideas or new materials to be included in the paper.

### **Helpful Information for Student and Student Team**

- (1) **Writing and Improve Writing Skills**. -- The Learning Support Services (LSS) may provide tutors who can help students with study habits and writing. Go to the LSS web link to sign-up for an appointment. <http://lss.ucsc.edu/>
- (2) **Warning for Plagiarism** -- Plagiarism involves using someone else's words and ideas as your own. Students who plagiarize the work of others have to be reported and are subject to failing the course. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please visit the UCSC academic integrity website: <http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic-integrity/> If you use another author's wordings (more than a few words in a row), you must put it in quotation marks and cite the sources (i.e., author, year, name of publication, and page number). For information about citation practices, visit the following UCSC Library web page: <http://library.ucsc.edu/help/research/cite-your-sources>
- (3) **Counseling and Psychological Services** -- If you are feeling stressed, anxious, or depressed, please avail yourself to help from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the Student Health Center (831-459-2628). The CAPS homepage also provides information about seeing a therapist and lists of various crisis numbers. <http://caps.ucsc.edu/>

- (4) DRC Accommodations -- Any student who needs an accommodation should contact me privately to submit Accommodation Authorization forms, discuss specific needs, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. Please contact the Disability Resource Center (831-459-2089) in Room 146 Hahn Student Services or by email ([drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu)) to coordinate the accommodations.

#### Textbooks:

All reading materials are posted in eCommons' Resources. Please download them and read them BEFORE each class. Lecture PPT will be posted in Resources following the class lecture.

#### Recommended Texts:

- \* Joseph F. Healey, *Statistics: A Tool for Social Research* (9<sup>th</sup> edition), 2012.
- \* Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 2013.

#### Evaluations:

Evaluations in the course will be based on the following elements: Three In-Class Presentation=45%; An Opinion Survey Questionnaire=20%; Statistical Data Base=15%; and Final Project Paper=20%.

### COURSE SCHEDULES

Week 1-1: Overview of the Course & Research Inquiry

Healey, Chapter 1: Introduction & Chapter 2: Basic Descriptive Statistics  
Chris Hedges, Dismantling the Liberal Class, in *Death of the Liberal Class* (2012), pp.59-108.  
Fukurai & Krooth, Chapter 2, Race in the Jury Box (2003)

Week 1-2: Numerical and Graphical Description of Data

Babbie, Chapter 15 Elementary Analyses, 375-394  
Healey, Chapter 3: Measures of Central Tendency & Chapter 4: Measures of Dispersion

**Assignment 1 (submitted by 9 a.m.):** One single-spaced paper that includes (1) who you are and what your interests are; (2) what you expect from this class; (3) how knowledge acquired from this course be applied in the future.

Week 2-1: Social Survey, Levels of Measurements, and Statistical Analysis

Babbie, Chapter 10 Survey Research, 255-278  
Healey, Chapter 5: Normal Curve: Probability and Z scores

**First In-Class Presentation:** Describe the issue, i.e., research question(s) of your interest, why it is important to you, and what your hypotheses are in relation to your research question (15 min) -- Students must use at least **3 academic articles/books** to support their research questions and proposed hypotheses (at least **5 hypotheses**);

Week 2-2: Questionnaire Construction: Survey Research -- Measurement and Scaling  
William Sims Bainbridge, Chapter 4 Developing a Questionnaire & Chapter 5 Free-Form Items

Peter M. Nardi, Chapter 4: Developing a Questionnaire, in *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Methods*

**Assignment 2 (submitted by 9 a.m.):** Submit the first draft of the questionnaire

Week 3-1: Human Subject Committee, Quantification of Data, and Introduction to Measures of Association  
Babbie, Chapter 14 Quantifying Data

**Second In-Class Presentation:** Present a final draft of survey questionnaire, explaining why questions in the questionnaire were included, what questions are designed to measure, and how they be analyzed in relation to the hypotheses posed (15 min). Everyone will be invited to comments and critique everyone's questionnaire so that final questionnaire be completed by the end of class session.

Week 3-2: Probability Sampling and Hypothesis Testing  
Babbie, Chapter 17 Social Statistics, 413-443  
Healey, Chapter 8: Statistical Tests of Hypotheses: One Sample

Recommended:

- Healey, Chapter 9: Hypothesis: Two Samples

**Non-graded Assignment: Please begin to ask potential respondents to fill out the questionnaires. Each student is responsible for the collection of at least 30 completed questionnaires. The total of 30 completed questionnaires is due on following Monday 9 a.m.**

Week 4-1: Data Processing: Editing, Coding, Data Entry, and Preparation for Analysis  
Babbie Chapter 14, Quantifying Data, 362-374

**Assignment 3 (submitted by 9 a.m.):** Submit at least 30 completed survey questionnaires

Week 4-2: Application of Cross-Classified Data Analysis: SPSS/PSPP and Measures of Association  
Healey, Chapter 11: Chi-Square & Chapter 13: Measures of Association: Ordinal Variables

Recommended:

- \* Healey, Chapter 12: Measures of Association: SPSS/PSPP and Nominal Variables

Week 5-1: Measures of Association: SPSS/PSPP and Interval and Ratio Variables  
Babbie, Chapter 16 The Elaboration Model, 395-412 (continued)

Recommended:

- \* Healey, Chapter 14: Measures of Association: Interval-Ration Variables

**Assignment 4 (submitted by 9 a.m.):** Submit a statistical data set containing all survey responses

Week 5-2: Student Presentation

**Third In-Class Presentation:** Summarize the result of statistical analysis of their data, what findings mean in light of the original questions posed, and whether or not research hypotheses are supported (20 min).

**Final Paper (double-spaced 10 page paper due on Friday of the Fifth Week)**