

SOC 346: Advanced Research Methods

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PPHAC 317

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00-10:00 am

Wednesdays: 1:00-2:00 pm

Class time: 8:50 – 11:50 AM (we will have a 10-minute break halfway through the class, and I will hold students to only a 10-minute break!!!)

Room: PPHAC 331

This course is a continuation of SOC 246. In this class, we will learn how to take the foundation from 246 and advance our understanding of how social science research is executed. While we learned the basic frameworks in 246, during the course of this semester, we will actually collect and analyze data using SPSS.

Goals of the course:

By the end of the semester, you should have a foundation in:

- collecting and inputting data into either a spreadsheet program or into a statistical program, specifically Excel and SPSS
- running and interpreting basic summary statistics (descriptive statistics)
- interpretation of raw data
- recognition of appropriate statistical tests to employ based on the type of variable under study
- bivariate and multivariate analysis
- the generation and testing of null and alternative hypotheses
- how to communicate your findings to policy makers, the general public, i.e. a variety of non social-scientists, and to also understand the potential impact of your research (i.e. including ethical considerations)
- to practice presenting your findings both in written form (extending on the writing skills developed in 246) and through oral communication
- identifying the shortcomings of ANY research project (why sociologists value supplementing their work with various methodologies and building on a base of knowledge)!

Books: Babbie, Earl, The Basics of Social Research, 4th edition, Wadsworth Publishing, 2008
Green, Samuel B., and Neil J. Salkind, Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh, 5th
edition, Prentice Hall, 2007.

Class attendance/participation is mandatory. If you are going to miss a class, I expect that you will contact me prior to class to let me know, either by phone or email. Although I understand that people might occasionally miss class due to illness or personal emergencies, patterned absences will result in a lowering of your class attendance/participation grade and I will contact your advisor/the dean's office. Regular attendance will yield a class attendance grade of a 3.0 (B). Participation will increase that grade upwards, and patterned absences will decrease that grade. Basically, everyone will start out with a B.

Cheating/plagiarizing: If any student is caught plagiarizing, you will automatically fail the class. If there are any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please review drafts of your assignments with me. Please also see Moravian College's Academic Honesty policy (on the website and also posted on Blackboard) to review the institution's definitions of cheating and plagiarism.

Assignments:

I expect **assignments to be handed in on time**, on the day that they are due. Late assignments will be docked one full grade for each day that they are late. So an "A-quality" assignment that was due on Tuesday that is handed in on Wednesday will drop to a "B." If handed in on Thursday, the grade will drop to a "C." I know students occasionally run into computer/printer problems, and if you are in this situation, email me as soon as possible. If you are having a printer problem, you can send me your assignment as an attachment so that you can still get full credit for handing the assignment in on time. I do not have much sympathy for students who wait until a few minutes before class begins to print up their assignment and then discover that they are having trouble. So try to make it part of your schedule that you will finish and print up your assignments at least the night before the assignment is due. This way, you will have time to either solve your problem or contact me.

I also expect assignments to follow whatever **formatting and page instructions** given when the assignment is assigned. For example, if I assign an essay question that I suspect will take at least two pages to answer, I expect a full two pages of writing will constitute your response. This is two pages, word processed, double-space, one inch margins, Times New Roman, 12-point font, without additional spaces between your name and date at the top of the page, and

between the title of your essay. Assignments that fall short of the page requirement will automatically lose points.

We will have a number of **in-class activities/quizzes** throughout the semester—this is another reason why regular class attendance is so important. These activities will help to solidify the concepts of the course. There will also be **sporadic short out-of-class activities associated with the class project(s)**. These two kinds of assignments will constitute the short assignment/quizzes grade. I expect people to keep up with the readings for the class, otherwise you will not be able to successfully complete the in-class activities.

Mid-term: There will be an in-class mid-term exam which will consist of short answers/essays. This exam will help me make sure that everyone is up-to-speed on the concepts of the class before we move ahead with the material in the second half of the semester.

Group/Individual Project(s): Some of you prepared executable research studies in SOC 246, while some of you produced “more ambitious studies.” Within the first two weeks of the semester, we need to decide whether or not the class will do individual projects or attempt a group project. I was thinking about executing the “trustworthiness” study that we started to work on last semester, but I will need everyone’s input on this.

If we do group projects, then different pairs of students will work together on analyses of different aspects of the trustworthiness study (for example, take a subset of the variables from the survey and do both bivariate and multivariate analyses). These pairs of students will then present their research to the class. If students decide to do individual projects, then students will be required to present their findings to the class on some aspect of their research.

Final Project: For your final project, you will put together a portfolio of your work for the semester as a collection of your analyses/assignments. As I see how the semester unfolds, I will formulate an outline of the portfolio materials. You will receive a detailed outline of the materials and instructions on how to pull the whole portfolio together, and what additional analyses you will need.

Breakdown of grade:

Class attendance and participation: 20%

Short assignments/quizzes: 20%

Mid-term exam: 20%

Group/individual project/presentation: 20%

Final portfolio: 20%

Professor/Student dialogue: I highly value good communication between us, and I therefore encourage you to contact me at any time in the semester to talk about the class in general or your individual performance. Few things are as frustrating for me than to get to the end of the semester to find out someone struggled with some aspect of the course (for example, understanding the assignments!). If you do not understand some aspect of the course material, or my assignment instructions, then please send me an email, call, or stop by my office hours. Students who had me for SOC 246 will hopefully tell you that I am more than willing to read and respond to drafts of your work, so please take me up on my offer to read work before final due dates. I typically ask for at least one week to turn work around.

Week by week readings/assignments:

Week 1: January 21st

Read Chapters 13 & 14 in Babbie book.

Week 2: January 28th

Unit 1: Getting Started with SPSS.

Lessons: 1, 2, 4, and 6

Week 3: February 4th

Unit 2: Creating and Working with Data Files.

Basic Descriptive Statistics

You will have a short assignment to create and manipulate an Excel file.

Week 4: February 11th

Unit 3. Working with Data and Unit 4A: lesson 16A

More Basic Statistics and Gathering Data/SPSS Graphing

Week 5: February 18th

Unit 5: Creating Variables and Computing Descriptive Statistics

Week 6: February 25th

Unit 6: T-test procedures

Week 7: March 11th

Mid-term exam. There will be an in-class exam this week to make sure that everyone is on board with all of the concepts and computations so far. The exam will be a mixture of data analysis as well as some short answer/essays.

Week 8: March 18th

Unit 10: Lessons 39, 40, 41: Chi-Square

Week 9: March 25th

Review of Statistical Significance.

Week 10: April 1st

Unit 7: Univariate and Multivariate Analysis-of-Variance Techniques.

ANOVA

Week 11: April 8th

Continuing Univariate and Multivariate analyses.

Unit 8: Correlation, Regression, and Discriminate Analysis Procedures.

Week 12: April 15th

Work on class project(s)

Student presentations

Week 13: April 22nd

Work on class project(s)

Student presentations

Week 14: April 29th

Work on class project(s)

Student presentations