

**SOC 346: Advanced Research Methods
Spring 2010**

Virginia Adams O'Connell

PPHAC 317

voconne1@moravian.edu

610-625-7756

Class time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:10-2:20 pm

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) 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): Within the first two weeks of class, we will decide what project we will work on during the semester. This may be from a proposal drafted in SOC 246, or another topic that we collectively would like to do.

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%

Final portfolio: 40%

Cell phone, texting, email, web surfing: I expect that students will NOT be using their cell phones, texting, sending emails or web surfing during class time. Students who are caught engaged in any of these activities will immediately lose **one full grade** of their class participation grade (i.e. a B will drop to a C).

There are some circumstances under which I will allow students to take a phone call or surf the web during class.

Phone calls: I know some students occasionally have family, work and/or personal obligations that may need their immediate attention. For example, there may be students who have a sick child at home and need to be reachable during class time in case there is an emergency. If you find yourself in this kind of situation, please contact me before class via email or approach me at the beginning of class. I will expect your phone to be on vibrate, but I will allow you to leave the room to take the call.

Web surfing: Sometimes a class activity might actually involve searching the web for resource materials. In this case, I may ask students with laptops to help search for a piece of data or reference during class. But I will expect that students will be searching for the task assigned and not looking up newly posted videos.

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 about 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. 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.

Blackboard and Email: Moravian College recognizes email as a form of official communication between faculty and students and I will use both Blackboard and email as a communication device. I will occasionally send out a message for you to take a look at an article online, or check a new posting on Blackboard before the next class. And as we work on our projects, I will often need to check in with you between classes. Therefore it is your obligation to regularly check your email account for messages from me. You should check your email accounts at least once a day. Failure to complete an assignment/request because “I did not see your email—I did not check my account,” will not suffice as a legitimate excuse.

Week by week readings/assignments:

Week 1

Read Chapters 13 & 14 in Babbie book.

Week 2

Unit 1: Getting Started with SPSS.
Lessons: 1, 2, 4, and 6

Week 3

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

Unit 3. Working with Data and Unit 4A: lesson 16A
More Basic Statistics and Gathering Data/SPSS Graphing

Week 5

Unit 5: Creating Variables and Computing Descriptive Statistics

Week 6

Unit 6: T-test procedures

Week 7

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

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

Week 9

Review of Statistical Significance.

Week 10

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

Week 11

Continuing Univariate and Multivariate analyses.
Unit 8: Correlation, Regression, and Discriminate Analysis Procedures.

Week 12

Work on class project
Student presentations

Week 13

Work on class project
Student presentations

Week 14

Work on class project
Student presentations