# Syllabus

## Z506/Z706 Introduction to Research

### Spring 2014

**Day/Time:** Tuesday, 1pm - 3:45pm  
**Location:** Wells Library (SLIS) Rm. LI001

*Prepared 15 January 2014; updated 8 February 2014*

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### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks and Reading Materials</th>
<th>Assignments and Evaluation</th>
<th>Calendar of Readings</th>
<th>Supplemental Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Session 1  
Jan 15  
Introduction to Research & Assessment: Academic Libraries & Public Libraries  
Guest Lecturers on "What We Need to Know" | Session 2  
Jan 22  
Ethics Core Concepts 1: Research Process & Designs | Session 3  
Jan 29  
Core Concepts 2: Questions, Hypotheses, Concepts | Session 4  
Feb 5  
Core Concepts 3: Causation, Operationalization, Measurement |
| Session 5  
Feb 12  
Core Concepts 4: Sampling, Experiments In-class group | Session 6  
Feb 19  
Core Concepts 5: Developmental Evaluation 1 In-class group | Session 7  
Feb 26  
Core Concepts 6: Developmental Evaluation 2 In-class group |
| Sun, Mar 9 REMINDER: Ass #1.1 due by noon Problem, etc. identified Oncourse submission Drop Box Ass #1.1 folder | Session 8  
Mar 5  
Survey Research 1 Including Focus Groups | Session 9  
Mar 12  
Survey Research 2 | Session 10  
Mar 19  
SPRING BREAK Team collaboration continues |
| Sun, Apr 6 REMINDER: Ass #1.2 due by noon Oncourse submission Drop Box Ass #1.2 folder | Session 11  
Mar 26  
Survey Research 3 | Session 12  
Mar 26  
Survey Research 4 | Session 13  
Apr 2  
Survey Research 5 |
| Sun, Apr 13 REMINDER: Ass #2.1 due by noon Site identified + Oncourse submission Drop Box Ass #2.1 folder | Session 14  
Apr 9  
Field Work 1 | Session 15  
Apr 16  
Field Work 2 | Session 16  
Apr 23  
Field Work 3 |
| Wed, May 7 REMINDER Ass #2.2 due by noon Oncourse submission Drop Box Ass #2.2 folder | | | |

Select any session for readings/due dates
INTRODUCTION (COURSE DESCRIPTION)

The research process, including concepts, design, conduct, and evaluation. Principles and characteristics of approaches and methodologies relevant to research in the field. Examples of data sources and introduction to methods of statistical description and analysis; ethical issues.

Z506/Z706 is an introduction to basic and applied research in library and information science, but assumes no background in research methods or statistics. The course provides a general overview of the ways that information professionals collect information about empirical phenomena. Special emphasis is on how we can develop information that is trustworthy and useful for our theoretical and practical understanding of information use and service delivery. This course also provides a foundation for locating and evaluating scientific, technical, business, and government quantitative and textual information and for applying research in administrative decision making. It is not a statistics course.

Objectives

- Understand the nature of scientific inquiry, the conduct of research, multiple methods of collecting, managing, and analyzing evidence (data), and the relationship between theory, method, and evidence;
- Understand how ethical behavior is essential for the conduct of science;
- Provide a basis for an informed and critical evaluation of the research literature in the field, including how to read a research report and report research results;
- Locate and use information about scientific research and primary and secondary data resources, including data analysis and descriptive statistics;
- Provide the foundation for designing and conducting future research in the field of library and information science and for conducting practical needs assessment and service delivery evaluation.

My personal goals

I hope to spark your interest and encourage you to see information and library science as a research enterprise - as a process of learning about our world. I want you to learn about the elements of research design, so that you will have a good foundation for future learning and you will also be able to apply scientific thinking in your personal and professional life. In that professional life will be formal and informal, one-time and ongoing assessment and evaluation of the services that the information professional provides, of many decisions that have to do with strategic planning, budget development, infrastructure design, etc. The conduct of research begins with being an "information detective." Indeed, all research is, in some sense, about finding and evaluating the quality of information. These are tasks that information professionals are well qualified to carry out. So, I want you to see that a course in research methods has much to do with all the other courses that you will take along the way to obtaining a Masters' degree and the professional career you choose.

Most of us will never become professional researchers, but the ideas and skills that you learn in this course will help you become an informed and skeptical consumer of research and knowledgeable about the basics of asking questions and assessing your environment. I would like you to learn how to read a research report critically - whether it appears in the lay press or professional journals, so that you can know how trustworthy its information is. As an information professional, this is an important skill to have. You will learn firsthand about conducting research and about the limitations and problems of doing research into human behavior and, therefore, the caution that is necessary in drawing broad conclusions on the basis of any one (or more) study(ies).

I want to show you that research is a personal, human activity involving both your brain and your emotions, that combines brilliant insights with spectacular failures and invokes both dramatic visions and inescapable practical limitations. I want to show you that the research activity is critical to our daily lives and our professions. I want
to show you that research does not occur in a vacuum but is a collaborative endeavor. Finally, I want to show you that doing research can be fun, exciting, and rewarding.

TEXTBOOKS AND READING MATERIALS

Textbooks.

Required: There is one textbook from which we'll read selected chapters:


NOTE: I recommend that you buy this earlier edition (the 8th ed.) in paperback through amazon.com marketplace. Do not buy any Kindle e-book edition. Avoid the 9th edition if you can't obtain the 8th edition; according to the reviews, it differs little if at all from the 8th edition. Avoid spending a lot of money on the 10th edition.

Highly Recommended:


NOTE: Michael Quinn Patton has always been one of my favorites. His earlier published works on evaluation have greatly influenced how we think about assessment and evaluation. I will be lecturing from parts of this book, but it is so rich in stories that should be read, that I will cover only a modicum of his discussion.


NOTE: This is an expensive text if bought new. New editions are issued every few years and the price keeps increasing. Earlier editions are available through amazon marketplace at low cost. Although there are some differences, the core is unchanging. I will be drawing from Babbie in a number of my lectures. I have placed several copies (different editions) on reserve for you. Use Babbie to go deeper and more substantively into the various aspects of research methods that we cover in class.

Other Readings.

We will also read journal and other articles and reports and learn how to make table presentations of the data that we collect. Some of the journal articles and all the reports are freely available online, others are available in Wells Library journal databases or e-books (available through your IU network id), and still others are located in Oncourse/Resources folders for the particular session.

Materials for this course are located in the Z506 Oncourse website in the folder /Resources/. For example: session readings are located in the folder /Resources/Session Readings/Required or /Resources/Session Readings/Recommended. I will review the logical structure of the Oncourse work site at our first session. However, it is really important that you yourself make a tour of the site. There are many other folders with job description information, including how to prepare resumes, how to prepare for a job interview, the state of the job market, and more. I collect and archive interesting news articles about current research and scientific exploration.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION
Assignments

There are no formal examinations. Instead, there are three exercises that are designed to apply the various concepts and methods we learn in class. Please note that students are expected to demonstrate that the weekly readings have been integrated in their assignments. Masters students are encouraged to read widely in order to construct the literature reviews that are part of the assignments. This course is the practical application of the reference courses offered by the ILS program.

Assignments are located in the Z506 Oncourse/Assignments folders.

- **Assignment 1:** Survey Research project: 45% (40% for report, 5% for team participation). NOTE: This is a team assignment. Team members must sign a Group Learning Contract. [Masters students: Please note differences between masters and doctoral students in assignment instructions. Masters students can ignore the instructions for doctoral students but may want to follow them if they are considering application to a doctoral program.]
- **Assignment 2:** Field Research project: 40% [Masters students: Please note differences between masters and doctoral students in assignment instructions.]
- **In-class Participation:** 5% 5 newspaper/media articles on scientific activity shared in your group. Takes place in sessions three through seven. Practice in using the media for learning about research activities. Team members must sign a Group Learning Contract. (See instructions in Oncourse Resources/Assignments folder.)
- **IRB Modules:** We devote part of the second session of this course to the ethics of scientific research. Passing the CITI module is required in order to obtain a final grade for this course. This is a useful exercise because the quality of the projects offers opportunities for public presentation and journal submission and because future information professionals will be required to submit their intended research projects to an Institutional Review Board. Use this opportunity to learn the procedures for submission. Please complete the Human Subject Research (Social/Behavioral Researcher) course via the CITI module provided by the Office of Research Administration (http://researchadmin.iu.edu/EO/co_citi.html). Once the course is completed with passing scores (defined as at least 80%), students must save a copy of the Completion Report and submit it via the Oncourse Drop Box. It you have trouble saving, please do a print screen of the report screen. Take care to select the Social/Behavioral modules, rather than the biomedical modules. You must identify yourself as a "Social and Behavioral" scientist in your CITI PROFILE in order to "unlock" the Basic Course. This is NOT the same as the Chair course (the Chair course is for those chairing IRB review committees). (Instructions from Professor Sugimoto).

*Please note that Assignments #1 and #2 have two due dates. Please read the instructions carefully to know what is required for both parts of an assignment.*

*Late homework reduces the final grade for each homework assignment. See the calendar at the beginning of the syllabus for these due dates.*

*In-class participation.* In-class participation is factored into your grade for this class. (Note also that Assignment #1 requires group participation through the Oncourse Forum.)

Each Oncourse Assignment folder includes a grading rubric for each assignment. Be sure to read the grading rubric to know how a grade is determined.

**How To Prepare Your Assignments**
Style of References (Citations). You are required to use the APA form of citation. Copies of the APA style manual (5th edition, 6th edition) are available at the IU Main Library Reference Desk. Please be sure to use the latest version. In addition, resources for the style manual are available on the web. For APA, see: "APA Research Style Crib Sheet" by Russ Dewey, Georgia Southern University. A gentle warning to citations/references in this syllabus: Although I have employed APA to produce the citations in this syllabus and its accompanying supplemental bibliography, do not rely on my citations; this is because APA style has evolved over the last several years (and the syntax of my citations, accordingly) and I may not have updated all the citations. See also the IU Libraries web site for APA citation style.

Assignment Submission. Submission of assignments is through the Oncourse Z506 Drop Box. Please organize your Drop Box with folders for each assignment: Assignment 1.1, Assignment 1.2, Assignment 2.1, and Assignment 2.2 Place all drafts, original submissions, and revisions for each assignment in the appropriate folder. You may submit homework early in anticipation of an absence.

Assignment Submission Document Name: Student Last Name_Assignment #.docx.

Assignment Draft Submission. Please note that drafts of assignments are welcomed. They should arrive in the Oncourse/Drop Box no later than five days before the due date of the assignment so that the instructor can review them in a timely fashion. Please be sure to notify the instructor when the assignment draft is placed in the Drop Box.

Assignment Draft Submission Document Name: Student Last Name_Assignment #-DRAFT.docx.

Rewriting. Students may resubmit Assignment #1.2 one time if the instructor recommends a revision. High quality written communication is a requirement and central goal of this course; it is also what is required in whatever professional career is pursued.

If a homework assignment is returned with a recommendation that you revise and resubmit, please meet with me to discuss the assignment. A revision is welcomed for the first assignment but it must be submitted no later than one week after I have returned it. It will be regraded and the rewrite eligible for full points. The caveat is that if the original assignment were turned in late, your grade will be subject to late assignment penalties based on the date of the original paper submission (see below on late submissions). (Thanks to Professor Joshua Danish, Learning Sciences Institute.)

Assignment Resubmission Document Name: Student Last Name_Assignment #-REVISION.docx.

How Your Assignments Will Be Evaluated

Late Submissions. Late homework is not ordinarily accepted. Documented medical reasons are typically the only exception made to this rule. In fairness to students who turn in assignments on time, all late papers will be penalized by lowering the earned grade by 10 percent for each day that an assignment is late. For example, if an assignment is worth a total of 20 points, your grade on the assignment is 17 points, and you hand in the assignment one day late, then your earned grade is 15 points.

Computer "Glitches" that Prevent Timely Assignment Submission. Students want to ensure that the loss of homework assignment documents does not take place. Work must be backed up, either on a flash drive or in a folder in Oncourse, SLIS server, or elsewhere, so that at least one copy of the work can be recovered. Late or incomplete papers will not be accepted when they are the result of failure to back up work. I ask everyone to create backups of completed or work-in-progress, either on a flash drive, or a server, or in a "working documents" folder in Oncourse (Drop Box).
**Attendance.** You should make every effort to attend class. If you cannot attend class, you must notify the instructor in advance. Attendance will factor into your final grade. Unexcused absences will not be tolerated; numerous absences are frowned upon, and if you foresee yourself missing multiple classes, be sure to see the instructor the first day after class. Make-up work may be negotiated only in cases of documented, excused absences. In-class participation receives 10% of the grade; see the Grading Rubric in the Oncourse Assignment Class Participation folder. A gentle warning: Students who miss more than two sessions typically do poorly in this course.

**Evaluation.** Your written work will be evaluated according to four criteria:

- Clearly written and/or presented work;
- Knowledge of the concepts and methods of research;
- Demonstration of a growing knowledge base over the course of the semester of the facts, concepts, and literature related to research methods;
- Demonstration of a degree of originality in your analyses;

The following definitions of letter grades have been defined and approved by student and faculty members of the SLIS Curriculum Steering Committee (November 11, 1996) to help faculty evaluate academic performance and to assist students by giving them an understanding of the grading standards of the School of Library and Information Science. Letter grades will be assigned according to a 100 point scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100-96</td>
<td>Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials and evinces a high level of originality and/or creativity that far surpasses course expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>90-95</td>
<td>Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course materials and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a superior manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course materials and exceeds course expectations on all tasks as defined in the course syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations, demonstrates understanding of the course materials and is at an acceptable level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>Uses satisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>71-73</td>
<td>Unacceptable work. Course work performed at this level will not count toward the MLS or MIS degree. For the course to count towards the degree, the student must repeat the course with a passing grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>Uses satisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>67-68</td>
<td>Unacceptable work. Course work performed at this level will not count toward the MLS or MIS degree. For the course to count towards the degree, the student must repeat the course with a passing grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>Uses satisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>&lt;65</td>
<td>Failing. Student may continue in program only with permission of the Dean.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Course Help, Ethical Behavior, Other Details, Changes to Syllabus**

**Help with Written Work.** Writing is a very important aspect of the grades for each assignment. Critical thinking must be translated into the written word. IU has a place to go for help. The Campus Writing Program provides help in writing grammatically correct English. Its focus is, however, the undergraduate population. The service is not designed to help you write the type of papers expected in this class. This service is free and has proved useful to students. The IU Writing Center also provides hourly services for which it charges a fee. Private tutoring on an hourly basis from a graduate student who is a skilled writer and has taken this course is also available; let me know if you want more information.
Alternative formats. It is the desire of our university that all students participate fully in its curriculum. To accomplish this, I need your help. If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements for this course, please notify me immediately. All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate your needs. Please see me to make alternative arrangements.

Incompletes. Permission will be granted only under special circumstances, and is available only to students with a medical or family emergency, for which written documentation is required. Decisions about granting incompletes will generally not be made until the last three weeks of the course.

Ethical Behavior. Indiana University and School of Library and Information Science policies on academic dishonesty will be followed. Academic and personal misconduct by students in this class are defined and dealt with according to the procedures in the Code of Student Ethics. There is, however, much more to avoiding plagiarism than just citing a reference. To help you recognize plagiarism, the IU Writing Program has prepared a short guide: Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It. This is one of the few documents that actually provides you with examples of what constitutes plagiarism and strategies for avoiding it. Carefully review this document and use it as a guide as you complete your assignments (in every course).

Here are some tips on how to avoid inadvertent plagiarism from my colleague Ralph Brower (FSU):

- If you take material that is not yours, from any source whatsoever, and copy it into assignments for this class, you must provide a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical reference to the source of the material
- Any material that quotes verbatim from other sources must be enclosed in quotation marks and its source attributed as noted in rule #1 above. See the APA Style Manual for guidance
- Material not taken verbatim from a text but paraphrased must also be attributed as in rule #1

Violations of these rules in any assignment may be subject to a minimum penalty of a grade of zero (0) for the assignment and may result in a grade of "F" for the course. The instructor will clarify any of the expectations that you do not understand.

Changes in the Course Syllabus. The instructor reserves the right to change, omit, or append the Course Syllabus whenever she deems it appropriate to do so.

CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This introduction to research methods course is organized to provide a foundation for the principal methods used in library and information science, specifically, surveys, observation and participant-observation in the field, and focus groups. The course is about work associated with these research methods and assessment that library and information science professionals will do throughout their careers: to ask a research question or describe a situation involving real people who search for information or use computer applications, for example; collect and analyze data; and then describe the results of the investigation in a report that may be widely read by people in the organization where you work or published as a journal article.

The course is designed like a "layer cake." Theoretical concepts of scientific thinking are translated into methods that are then applied. The course sessions are organized as follows: The first series of sessions (one through seven) introduce the foundational concepts of scientific thinking. The second series of sessions (eight through thirteen) introduce the survey method. The third series of sessions (fourteen through sixteen) introduce field methods, focus groups, and other methods. You design a survey in a group and then you conduct field work by yourself.
Please note that although there are required and recommended readings in experimental design methods, this method is not covered in a class assignment. Students are recommended to take statistical courses necessary for conducting experiments. Furthermore, methodologies for collecting and analyzing large data sets relied on in bibliometrics, data mining, and visualization are not covered and students are recommended to take courses that are offered on these topics.

SESSION 1  Introduction to the course.

-- Part 1: What this course is about. Review of syllabus and administration of the course.
-- Part 2: What are some of the outstanding issues that we need to understand in order to improve the "user experience" in our academic and public libraries? What services need to be evaluated?

Guest lecturers: Mary Popp, Research and Discovery Services Librarian, Discovery and Research Services, Herman B Wells Library. Sara Laughlin, Director, and Marilyn Wood, Associate Director, Monroe County Public Library (MCPL). Gary Arave, ILS doctoral student, will describe his School of Education course project to assess an MCPL service (see below his report in "Required Readings"). (Gary was a student in this Z506/Z706 course.)


This is our first foundational session. We are introduced to concepts and defining research questions/problems (Part 1) and what constitutes ethical behavior in science (Part 2). It introduces us to why and how research is carried out and provides examples of the questions that were asked and what was learned. Note that I encourage redundancy in reading; it helps the brain process unfamiliar ideas. We do not spend enough time on ethics, but this is an introductory course, so we must be satisfied with the modicum of readings that we have; for those of you who are interested in ethics, you have available to you a number of excellent readings in the "Recommended Readings" and in the "Supplementary Bibliography." You will be completing the Human Subjects Committee's CITL multiple-choice exam, which will further introduce you to the ethics of scientific research. Be sure that you read the instructions about this exam in the syllabus. You are required to complete this test as part of this course and for Assignment 1.

Nearly every session contains readings as "Examples." These readings introduce you to the literature in academic and public libraries.

NOTE: You are required to complete the CITI Human Subjects multiple choice test for this course. Be sure to reread the instructions in the Assignments section above.

SESSION 3  The Research Process (continued).

This session continues Session 2, discussing project planning and approaches and segueing into identifying research questions, types of research, hypotheses, and concepts. This is a critical session, not to be missed, because it provides the foundation for your assignments. This material is essential for completing Assignments 1 and 2.

SESSION 5   An Introduction to Sampling and Experiments.

Leedy and Ormrod write that "How you identify your sample must depend on what research question(s) you want to answer. If you want to draw inferences about an entire population or body of objects, then you must choose a sample that can be presumed to represent that population or body. Ideally, this sample is chosen through a completely random selection process that reflects appropriate proportions of each subgroup within the overall group of people or objects" (p. 145). There are various strategies available to us that are designed to increase representativeness; however, there are tradeoffs. We won't be examining these in this course, but anyone who plans a research project or an assessment/evaluation, whose results will be valuable for, for example, policy purposes or strategic planning, should plan to (1) be familiar with statistics and (2) consult a practicing, trained statistician for assistance.

The experimental design is considered the "gold standard" for conducting research because its objective is to identify cause-and-effect relationships. We want to understand what causes what. Leedy and Ormrod write that "A researcher can most convincingly identify cause-and-effect relationships by using an experimental design. In such a design, the researcher considers many possible factors that might cause or influence a particular condition or phenomenon. The research then attempts to control for all influential factors except those whose possible effects are the focus of investigation" (p. 217).

SESSION 6   Developmental Evaluation 1.

Today, a cursory review of job descriptions indicates how important research methods and evaluation/assessment have become in the academic and public library environment. Earlier this semester, you heard this from our guest lecturers. This session and the next are designed to introduce you to some foundational concepts for conducting evaluation and assessment. You are encouraged to design Assignments 1 and 2 as forms of assessment and evaluation, just as Gary Arave described to you. I hope you will pursue courses in evaluation and assessment that are offered by other IUB departments; this will strengthen your skills and make you a valued member of the profession.

These two sessions make a radical departure from traditional evaluation and assessment, which we call "formative evaluation" and "summative evaluation." The former establishes the objectives; the latter assesses or makes a judgment about whether the program met its goals and whether it was worthwhile. They are unrealistic and inappropriate, to my mind, for the complex, dynamic world that we live in our organizations, a world filled with uncertainty, instability, and constant change. Get real folks! So, facing reality is what I would like to introduce you to in these two sessions. And it's why I introduce field methods as the second assignment. The studies we read are only a few of the examples of assessments that have been carried out in academic and public libraries.

SESSION 7   Developmental Evaluation 2.

SESSION 8   Survey Research Methodology 1.

This session begins the introduction to survey research, extending over six weeks and including Spring Break. It includes a bit of history of surveys and polling, questionnaire design, modes of data collection, and cognitive interviewing. (Focus groups are taken up in Session 16.) These sessions are designed to provide the foundation for Assignments 1.1 and 1.2; the corpus of literature on survey research is enormous and nearly if not
impossible to keep up with. These sessions expose you only to a few aspects and a bit of the journal and book literature; a good deal of helpful information is available on the web.

Much of the assists in successfully completing this project are not found in Ormrod and Leedy's text. We rely principally on the "greats" of survey research methodologies whose publications can be found in a number of journals; however, Public Opinion Research is where you will find some of the very best of the research on the survey method. You also want to rely on the "Notes and Figures" documents from which I will be lecturing.

Although lectures and readings extend over several weeks, materials in this module should be read as quickly as possible to help you develop your survey questionnaire and conduct your interviews. For other good readings, see the Supplemental Bibliography "survey research" section and key journals like Public Opinion Quarterly. The quality of Assignment 1 depends on your conducting a good literature search on methodology.

Continuing the use of "Examples," I rely on the journals of College & Research Libraries and Public Libraries to illustrate the survey method that is employed by the authors. Read at least two of the articles in the "Examples" section.

* In-Class Group Brainstorming Session for Survey Research project *

SESSION 9  Survey Research Methodology 2. Non-sampling error. Questionnaire design.  Be sure to look at the "Recommended Readings" and "Supplemental Bibliography" for additional interesting and useful articles on survey research.

* In-Class group work for survey research project *

SESSION 10  SPRING BREAK

SESSION 11  Survey Research 3 (Continued). Interviewing.

* In-Class group work for survey research project *

SESSION 12  Survey Research 4. Presentation of Statistics. Creating statistical tables from the data you collected during your survey research project.  Bring your data to class. We will practice making tables with some of the data that teams have collected.

* In-Class group work for survey research project *

SESSION 13  Survey Research 5. Using the Computer for Conducting Surveys.

SESSION 14  Field Work 1 (and Other (Un)structured Methods, aka "Qualitative" Research and Ethnography).  I consider the so-called dichotomy between "quantitative" and "qualitative" research foolish. Anything that is "qualitative" can be converted to "quantitative" or numeric measures. Nonetheless, methods textbook continue to differentiate between numeric and non-numeric (often textual) data. Although I am not sure I agree with
Leedy and Ormrod's first paragraph, I include their introduction in our required readings. Babbie's chapter describes much of what is in Leedy and Ormrod's chapter, but stated somewhat differently with different examples that I find very helpful. Both are very useful for understanding how to observe and interview in an "unstructured" way. These chapters are also useful for understanding some of the concepts of focus groups. Finally, let me concur with Leedy and Ormrod that doing field work, whether called qualitative research or ethnography, is very hard work, requiring acquired skills; I find it more difficult than survey research.

SESSION 15  Field Work 2 (Qualitative Methods)

SESSION 16  Field Work 3 (Qualitative Methods). Other Methods, and Mixed Methods. Focus Groups.

*Prepared January 15, 2014; updated February 8, 2014.*