

Soc 1050: Research methods for Organizational Studies

Brown University

Spring 2008

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Office and office hours: 407 Maxcy, 1-3pm Wednesdays or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces research methods for organizational studies. You will learn useful techniques and important issues regarding: (1) research design, (2) data collection and analysis and (3) reporting. These three components form the basis of all organizational research.

We will cover both qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, interviews and the focus group method. These methods have different strengths in organizational research, and we need to be familiar with the techniques and issues of these methods to use them appropriately.

For example, survey research is a useful method in organizational research. To analyze survey data, a good knowledge of basic statistical tools is important. Interviews and focus groups are suitable for studying other organizational issues. These methods require you to understand ethnographic techniques during data collection and analysis.

You are expected to attend all class sessions. Attendance is recorded. Moreover, you will complete a number of in-class exercises and assignments, which are designed to give you hands-on experience. Both attendance and in-class assignments will count towards your final grade.

Grading Structure

1. Attendance and participation: 20%
2. Tests: 30%
3. Homework assignments and in-class exercises: 30%
4. Final project and presentation: 20%

More details will be announced during the semester.

Textbooks and readings

1. Required: Paul Brewerton and Lynne Millward, 2001. *Organizational Research Methods: A Guide for Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
2. Optional: Richard Daft, 2006. *Organization Theory and Design*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Pub. 9th Edition.
3. We will also use articles from organizational / sociological journals.

Computers

You will need to use computer software for data assignments. If you have a laptop computer, please bring it to class. It will be particularly useful during the weeks of data collection and analysis. However, a laptop computer is not required to enroll in this class.

Disability and Medical Conditions

If you have a disability or medical condition that requires special accommodation, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Honor Code

All the work you submit for this course must be your own. If you use the work of other researchers or students, you will not receive a grade for this class.

Course Structure

Part I – Research Design

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Formulating research questions & operationalization

Week 3: Major methodological approaches

Week 4: Obtaining access and ethical concerns

Week 5: Sampling

- Test 1 will be scheduled around Week 5 (more details later)

Part II – Data Collection and Analysis

Week 6: Data Collection 1: Survey

Week 7: Data analysis 1: Basic Statistics

Week 8: Data Collection 2: Interviews and Focus Groups

Week 9: Data analysis 2: Basic Ethnographic Coding

Week 10: Additional / Advanced Topics / Software

- Test 2 will be schedule around Week 10 (more details later)

Part III: Reporting

Week 11: Connecting research questions and findings

Week 12: Tables, graphs and other presentation issues

Week 13: Examples of organizational research

Week 14: Presentations

Week 15: Final Project Writing

- Final project is due before final exam week.

Schedule

| Topics | Contents / Major Questions | Notes |
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| Week 1: Introduction | Review Organizational Theories | |
| Week 2: Formulating research questions & Operationalization | How to develop important and feasible organizational research? Literature Review | |
| Week 3: Major methods | What methods can we use to study organizations? | Assignment 1 |
| Week 4: Obtaining access and ethical concerns | How to obtain access? How to safeguard ethical concerns? | |
| Week 5: Sampling | Choosing the right group/individuals to study | Test 1 |
| Week 6: Data Collection 1: Survey | How to collect large-scale data? | |
| Week 7: Data analysis 1: Statistics | How to analyze a large dataset? | Assignment 2 |
| Week 8: Data Collection 2: Interviews and Focus Groups | How to collect data from individuals and smaller groups? | |
| Week 9: Data analysis 2: Coding and Basic Ethnography | How to analyze data from individuals and smaller groups? | Assignment 3 |
| Week 10: Additional / Advanced Topics / Software | How to use computer for data collection and analysis? Some more advanced methods | |
| Week 11: Connecting questions and findings | How to put different things together? | Test 2 |
| Week 12: Tables, graphs and other issues | How to present your findings with appropriate visual aids? | |
| Week 13: Examples of organizational research | What does a research report / journal article look like? | |

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| Week 14: Presentations | Presenting your findings to class | Presentations |
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Final Paper is due before the Final Exam Week.

BM = Paul Brewerton and Lynne Millward, 2001. *Organizational Research Methods: A Guide for Students and Researchers*.

DA = Richard Daft, 2006. *Organization Theory and Design*.

TBA = Additional readings to be assigned.

Readings

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| Part I – Research Design | |
| Week 1: Introduction | BM, Ch 1, Ch 8; DA, Ch 1 |
| Week 2: Operationalization | BM, Ch 2 and 3; DA, Ch 2 |
| Week 3: Major methodological approaches | BM, Ch 6 (pp. 67-68); TBA |
| Week 4: Obtaining access and ethical concerns | BM, Ch 4 and Ch 5 (pp. 61-65) |
| Week 5: Sampling | BM, Ch 7; TBA |
| Part II – Data Collection and Analysis | |
| Week 6: Survey | BM, Ch 6 (pp. 99-108); TBA |
| Week 7: Basic Statistics | BM, Ch 9; Selections from DA, Ch 5, Ch 6, Ch 8 |
| Week 8: Observation, Interviews, Focus Groups | BM, Ch 6 (pp. 69-98); DA, Ch 7; TBA |
| Week 9: Basic Coding and Ethnography | BM, Ch 6 (pp. 69-98); DA, Ch 4, Ch 9, Ch 10 |
| Week 10: Advanced Topics / Software | TBA; DA, Ch 13 |
| Part III: Reporting | |
| Week 11: Research questions and findings | BM, Ch 10; TBA |
| Week 12: Tables, graphs, etc | TBA |

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| Week 13: Examples of organizational research | Selections from DA (especially "integrative cases"); TBA |
| Week 14: Presentations | |
| Week 15: Final Project Writing | |