

G&ES 220: General Methods of Fieldwork – Fall 2018

32-220-01: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday, Advanced Sci and Tech Hall 309

Prof. Stentor Danielson

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Office hours: Official office hours are Monday and Wednesday 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m, and Thursday 2:00-4:00 p.m. My door is generally always open when I am in the office, and I welcome students anytime I'm in.

About this class

Fieldwork is central to the disciplines of geography and environmental studies. All of our knowledge of human societies and their physical environment comes from researchers who are willing to go out and record data from the “real world.” In this class, you will be introduced to some of the most common techniques for gathering data in the social science branch of the discipline.

Outcomes

By the end of this course, a successful student will be able to:

- Identify research questions and formulate their own research questions
- Draft a research proposal that specifies effective methods for answering the student’s main questions
- Understand the ethical issues in geographical research and navigate the human subjects review process to obtain ethics approval for a study
- Conduct successful research interviews and Q sorts with diverse populations
- Design and administer a questionnaire survey
- Code and analyze data collected through the above methods

This course addresses the following departmental outcomes:

- Each graduate will deliver oral presentations, demonstrating the ability to effectively communicate discipline-specific concepts. (1.1)
- Each graduate will write scholarly papers using acceptable format and organization with proper citations to appropriate literature. (1.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate professionalism and integrity in his/her academic conduct. (1.4)
- Each graduate shall develop the ability to respect and integrate diverse worldviews in problem-solving frameworks (1.5)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to develop valid research questions and hypotheses. (2.1)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply proper techniques for data acquisition and interpretation in a problem-solving context. (2.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to solve open-ended problems using scientific methodology. (2.3)
- Each graduate will develop the ability to make informed, scientifically-based decisions regarding environmental issues. (2.4)
- Each graduate will learn and employ accepted laboratory and field techniques, protocols,

- and safety procedures. (3.1)
- Each graduate will learn to read, construct, and comprehend thematic maps and derive perspective output from a map. (3.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge, concepts and techniques from complementary disciplines to solve problems. (3.3)

And the following university-wide outcomes:

- Communication: Communicate effectively in speech and in writing, using appropriate information sources, presentation formats, and technologies. (1)
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas from multiple perspectives--mathematical, scientific, and humanistic. Apply this information literacy to contemporary challenges. (2)
- Personal Development: Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, as well as a commitment to wellness, and to emotional and spiritual growth. (6)
- Professional Proficiency: Apply knowledge and skills to meet professional competencies within a specific discipline. (8)

Assignments

General assignments policies

All written assignments must be submitted to the class's D2L Dropbox by the beginning of class on the day they're due. Assignments will be docked 10% for each 24 hours or part thereof they are late, unless a documented unforeseeable excuse is provided. Since you have the entire semester's schedule now, please plan your time so as to complete all assignments early, so that you are prepared if something unexpected happens.

In this class you will be graded on three items: Homework Assignments, Class Participation, and the Final Exam.

1. *Homework*

For each week, you will have a homework assignment. Homework assignments will generally involve processing or finishing the current stage of the class's ongoing research. Because completion of homework assignments is necessary for the class to continue moving forward, it is essential that you submit your homework on time. Specific details for each week's homework assignment will be given that week. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you missed.

Homework is due on the Tuesday of each week.

2. *Class participation*

Most classes will involve interactive workshopping of research. Students are expected to have read the day's reading assignment, and to come to class prepared to discuss the topic and participate actively in the day's activity. Your participation grade will be based on the overall quality of your contributions in class.

On the day of the final exam, you will have the opportunity to turn in a writeup of no more than 500 words stating what participation grade you think you deserve for the class, and making a

case for it. You are not guaranteed to get the grade you ask for, but I will take your self-assessment into consideration in making my decision about your grade.

3. *Final exam*

During this class's assigned final exam period, students will be given a research design challenge. Using all of the things you have learned over the semester, you will have to create a plan for fieldwork to answer a geographical question.

Grading

The final grade for this class will consist of:

- 70% Homework
- 15% Participation
- 15% Final exam

Note: You will be required to complete the CITI human subjects training certification. This assignment is worth no points in itself, but failure to complete this assignment will result in failure of the class.

Attendance and Preparation

Research methods in geography are a complex subject, and no manageable set of readings can cover all of the information that I think is important to highlight on each topic. I expect all students to attend every class, because class lectures and discussions will be key to learning the material. You should come prepared to talk about the readings.

I assume that all members of this class are adults who have chosen to take this class because you are interested in learning about research methods in geography. Therefore, behavior that is disruptive to your own learning or that of others will not be tolerated, and you will be asked to leave. Such behavior includes: eating, smoking, sleeping, working on work for other classes or personal business, talking about topics other than research methods in geography, and the use of non-approved electronic devices (iPods, laptops, cell phones, etc. – all cell phones must be *turned off* when you enter the class and remain off until you leave).

Special Needs

Your ability to master the class material should not be hindered by anything other than your own effort. If you have a disability, health issue, outside responsibility, or other concern that may affect your ability to succeed in this class, do not hesitate to contact me or the university's Office of Disability Services (738-4877, 105 University Union), and we will work together to find an accommodation for you.

Slippery Rock University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a

student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person designated in the University protection of minors policy. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: <http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/sexual-misconduct-and-victim-resources>.

I support people of all gender expressions and gender identities and encourage students to use the name and set of pronouns which best reflect who they are. In this spirit, I welcome and expect all students to also use the correct name and pronouns of their classmates. I will do my best to respect and use the language you use to refer to yourself and will encourage other members of our classroom community to do the same. Please inform me if my documentation reflects a name or set of pronouns different from what you use, and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me after class, by email, or during office hours.

Changes

While I do not expect much to change about this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes and will notify students of them in class and/or by email.

Readings

There is no textbook for this class. Reading assignments for each class will be posted online or on the class's E-Reserves page (accessed through the Bailey Library website).

I reserve the right to add graded response papers or quizzes to the class if it becomes apparent from class discussions that a substantial number of students are not doing the reading, or not doing it thoughtfully.

Desire2Learn

I will use the D2L system to collect assignments, to record grades, and to send messages about the class. Students should make sure that they are able to log in to the class's D2L site as well as the electronic reserves for this class on the library website. It is your responsibility to contact ITS or the library if you have a problem. You are also responsible for checking your SRU email account daily, as I will be sending class emails through D2L to those addresses.

Academic Honesty

Cheating (any method for getting the correct answers other than knowing the material yourself) and plagiarism (representing others' work as your own) will not be tolerated, and I will be alert for signs of both. In your assignments, any idea that you take from any person other than yourself must be properly cited, and any words or phrases that you take from others must be clearly marked as quotations. You may discuss ideas with your classmates, or get help proofreading, but all of the writing must be your own. On the first instance of cheating or plagiarism, you will receive a zero for that assignment. On the second instance, you will receive a zero for the course. Review the section in your Student Handbook on Academic Honesty for a more detailed explanation of the university's procedures for handling cheating and plagiarism.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1, August 28 and 30: The nature of research in human geography

Reading: Farrell, H. 2010. Good writing in political science: an undergraduate student's short illustrated primer. http://www.henryfarrell.net/pol_science_essays.pdf

Homework Due: None

Week 2, September 4 and 6: Defining research questions

Reading: Cresswell, J.W. 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 2nd ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA. Chapter 1: A framework for design, pp. 3-26.

Homework Due: Come up with three research topics

Week 3, September 11 and 13: Ethics in human subjects research and the IRB process

Reading: CITI training, <http://www.sru.edu/academics/reviewboard/Pages/onlinetraining.aspx>

Homework Due: Short literature review for our study, and complete CITI training

Week 4, September 18 and 20: Interview techniques I

Reading: Berg, B.L. 2001. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 4th ed. Allyn & Bacon, Needham Heights, MA. Chapter 4: A dramaturgical look at interviewing, pp. 66-110.

Homework Due: Think of three possible human subjects violations and possible solutions.

Week 5, September 25 and 27: Interview techniques II

Reading: Seidman, I.E. 1991. *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press, New York. Chapter 4: Establishing access to, making contact with, and selecting participants, pp. 31-45.

Homework Due: Write up interview questions.

Week 6, October 2 and 4: Participant observation

Reading: Cook, I. 2005. Participant observation. In R. Flowerdew and D. Martin, eds. *Methods in human geography: a guide for students doing a research project*, pp. 127-150. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.

Homework Due: Conduct Interview #1

No class Tuesday October 9 – Fall Break

Week 7, October 11: Interview coding

Reading: Charmaz, K. 2002. Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J.F. Gubrim and J.A. Holstein, *Handbook of interview research: context and method*, pp. 675-694. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Homework Due: Conduct Interview #2

Week 8, October 16 and October 18: Survey sampling

Reading: Dillman, D.A. 2000. Mail and internet surveys: the tailored design method. 2nd ed. John Wiley and Sons, New York. Chapter 5: Reduction of coverage and sampling errors, pp. 194-213.

Homework Due: Code two interviews

Week 9, October 23 and 25: Survey questions

Reading: Fowler, F.J. 1988. *Survey research methods*. Revised ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA. Chapter 5: Designing questions to be good measures, pp. 74-98.

Homework Due: Evaluate three online survey tools

Week 10, October 30 and November 1: Survey design

Reading: Norman, K. n.d. *Online survey design guide*.
http://lap.umd.edu/survey_design/guidelines.html

Homework Due: Draft a set of survey questions

Week 11, November 6 and 8: Q Method

Reading: Webler, T., S. Danielson, and S.P. Tuler. 2007. *Guidance on the use of Q method for evaluation of public involvement programs at contaminated sites*. Social and Environmental Research Institute, Greenfield, MA.
<http://www.seri-us.org/sites/default/files/QMethodGuidanceSuperfund.pdf>

Homework Due: Create the class survey

Week 12, November 13 and 15: Volunteered Geographical Information

Reading: Poorthuis, A. and M. Zook. 2013. "Spaces of Volunteered Geographic Information". In *Ashgate Research Companion on Geographies of Media*, eds. P. Adams, J. Craine and J. Dittmer. Ashgate. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2259845

Homework Due: Do Q Sort #1

Week 13, November 20: Q analysis

Reading: Mattson, D. J., K. L. Byrd, M. B. Rutherford, S. R. Brown, and T. W. Clark. 2006. Finding common ground in large carnivore conservation: mapping contending perspectives. *Environmental Science and Policy* 9 (4):392-405.

Homework Due: Do Q sort #2

No Class Thursday, November 24 for Thanksgiving Break

Week 14, November 27 and 29: Survey analysis

Reading: Rea, L.M. and R.A. Parker. 1992. *Designing and conducting survey research: a comprehensive guide*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco. Chapter 8: Analyzing and presenting univariate survey data. pp. 167-187.

Homework Due: Write up Q results

Week 15, December 4 and 6: Integrating qualitative and quantitative data

Reading: Richards, P. 1986. Risk. In H.S. Becker, *Writing for social scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*, pp. 108-120. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Homework Due: Write up survey results

Tuesday, December 11

Final Exam, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.