

Cordray

Psychology 304P: Field Research Methods  
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Course Overview:

This course covers *principles and practices* associated with conducting research in field settings. It emphasizes a range of research methods (experiments, surveys, observations, interviewing, sampling), highlighting methodological variations that optimize the reliability and validity of the evidence that is gathered. We will highlight general ethical issues associated with conducting field research, as well as identifying unique ethical issues and solutions for specific methods. Some knowledge of statistical inference and procedures is necessary.

The material will be organized into 1-3 week Topical Clusters. These Topical Clusters include:

- Principles, Practices & Language of Research
- Experiments (Lab and Field)
- Correlational Studies and Quasi-experiments
- Sampling Strategies
- Survey & Questionnaire Designs
- Observational Methods (structured and informal)
- Interviewing
- Content Analysis
- Unobtrusive Methods (using archives and administrative data)
- Meta-analysis

Requirements:

Text: Crano, W. D., & Brewer, M.B. (2002). *Principles and Methods of Social Research, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The required text will be supplemented with examples, demonstrations, and additional readings. Weekly readings will be posted and made available (as pdf files) through the Vanderbilt's Blackboard system.

There will be an in-class midterm (10.19.05) and a take-home midterm (due 10.21.05).

There will also be an in-class final exam (12.12.05 at 3:00PM).

In addition, there will be 8 graded exercises. These will focus on methodological issues that are pertinent to *your own* area of research (e.g., structured study reviews, operationalizing important constructs, constructing sampling plans, a review of the validity of a specific research instruments). Your work on some of these exercises will be posted on the ExPERT (Experimental Education Research Training Program) web-site as resources for other researchers inside and outside the Vanderbilt community.

Grading:

I will provide you with a numerical score for each graded exercise and exam. In the absence of a better scheme, a score of 97-100 = A+; 93-96= A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89=B+; and so on. I will try to provide specific feedback on each graded exercise and exam. I encourage you to see me if you have questions about any grade that is assigned.