

**Field Survey Research Methods**  
**In**  
**International Development**  
(33.634.001)  
Spring Semester 2006

Class Time- Thursday 5.30 to 8.00 p.m.

Instructor: Professor Vidyamali Samarasinghe

Office: 204 A Hurst Building

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2 pm

Thursday 3-5 pm

Friday 1-2 pm

And by appointment. A sign up sheet is posted outside my office.

### **Required Textbooks**

1. Stephen Devereux and John Hoddinott (Ed). **Fieldwork in Developing Countries**. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner. 1993.
2. Regina Scheyvens and Donovan Storey. **Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide**. London: Sage. 2003.
3. **Reading Packet**.

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to give students a basic training in designing a field-based research project in International development. This course is on qualitative research. It is structured to combine the theoretical aspects of International Development studies with the practical aspects of testing their validity and applicability with data generated from the field. Research is a process of conceptualizing, designing, conducting and writing up what is learned. This course will help students to understand and use this process in the context of her/his individual research interests. Qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in both data gathering and analysis. Numbers are important in generating as well as analyzing field-based data. It should be noted that this is not a course in statistical methods. No class time will be devoted to computer based statistical analysis. However, students will be encouraged to make use of statistical packages in coding and in analyzing data.

The aim of this course is to enable students to design a questionnaire based field research project that they could implement in a Developing Country.

The learning process within the course could be categorized into four mutually supportive components. These are:

1. Class discussions based on assigned readings.
2. Class assignments that would include review of research papers based on fieldwork, literature review, and questionnaire construction.

3. Group interaction. The class will be divided into several groups at the beginning of the semester. Students will be working within their groups throughout the semester. However, each student is individually responsible for all assignments that are submitted for grading.
4. Individual research projects. In consultation with the instructor students should identify a research problem for which a field-based survey is appropriate. The student will then undertake a comprehensive literature survey, construct a questionnaire, undertake a pilot survey (guidelines as to how to do this within a resource group will be given), refine the final questionnaire and suggest appropriate methods of analysis of data.

## **Course Expectations, Assignments and Grading**

### **Participation**

As a graduate level course you are expected to share the responsibility for contributing to the learning experience within the classroom. You are required to attend all classes, do all the required readings and participate actively in class discussions. This class will be conducted in a seminar style, incorporating a flexible combination of lecture and discussion. Hence, it is very important that you come to class fully prepared to raise and respond to questions.

### **Assignments and Grading**

1. Review of methodology in selected research papers. A handout will be given.

**15% of final grade**

**Due date- February 18, 2006.**

2. Literature Review

This is the first segment of your final field survey research document. In consultation with your instructor you should have by now identified your research problem. An essential prerequisite for a preparation of a good literature review is a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.

**25% of the final grade.**

**Due date- March 16, 2006.**

3. Field survey questionnaire

This should include the questionnaire for the pilot survey, notes on group interaction and the revised questionnaire.

**20% of the final grade**

**Due date- April 6, 2006.**

4. Final research design.

This should include problem identification, a comprehensive literature survey with a bibliography, final questionnaire, sampling methods used and strategies of data collection, a draft budget estimate with a time frame for field work, and methods of analysis you plan to use.

**30% of the final grade**

**Due Date- April 28 (Friday), 2006**

## 5. Class participation

### **10% of the final grade**

\*\*\*\*\* All written assignments should be word processed in double space. All assignments should be handed in on time. **No electronic submissions will be accepted.** Late submissions will be graded down one point from the deserved numerical grade for every day late (From example from 84% to 83%), unless you have a reasonably valid excuse that has been conveyed to and accepted by the instructor. Please make an extra copy of a written assignment before you hand it in.

Students should be familiar with the American University academic integrity code. Assignments containing plagiarized material will be given a failing grade.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### **Session 1. January 19**

Introduction to the course

Fieldwork and the International Development Discourse

Methodology, method, techniques and epistemology.

### **Session 2. January 26**

#### **Field based research as a method of inquiry in International Development.**

##### Readings

Devereux and Hoddinott (Text)

Chapter 1- "The Context of Field Work"

Chapter 12- "Thinking About the Ethics of Field Work".

Ratnesh Pathak- "Commercial Ventures and Tour Bus Scholarship in Banaras", Sagar: *South Asia Graduate Research Journal*. Fall 1996. Vol.3. No. 2. Pp. 34-50 (Course packet)

"Introduction". Pages 1-17 and Chapter 8, "Ethical Issues" in Scheyvens and Storey (Text).

### **Session 3. February 2**

#### **Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.**

##### **Biases in field surveys and how to minimize their effects**

Scheyvens and Storey. (Text)

Chapters 3 and 4.

Devereux and Hoddinott (Text)

Chapter 9- "Talking to Traders"

Chapter 10- "Fieldwork in Familiar Settings: The Role of Politics at the National, Community and Household Levels."

Richa Nagar- "Exploring Methodological Borderlands through Oral Narratives". Chapter 11 in John Paul Jones 111, Heidi Nast and Susan M. Roberts (eds.), *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, Representation*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. 1997. (Course Packet)

## **Session 4. February 9**

### **Understanding Sampling**

#### Readings

Darrel Huff- "The sample with a built in Bias." Chapter 1 in *How to Lie with Statistics*. W.W. Norton and Company. 1954. (Course packet)

"Four Practical Sample Designs." Gary T. Henry, *Practical Sampling*. Sage. 1990. (Course packet).

## **Session 5 . February 16**

### **Sampling practices in field research in developing countries.**

Devereux and Hoddinott (Text)

Chapter 2- "Issues in Data Collection."

Chapter 4- "Random Sampling and Repeat Surveys in South India."

Chapter 5- "Field Work Under Time Constraints."

Students should now be ready to identify a research problem. A one-page description should be handed in to the instructor

## **Session 6. February 23**

### **Reconstructing a field survey. The importance of a literature survey.**

What are the research questions posed? How comprehensive and focused is the literature survey?

What are the field methods used in gathering the data?

We will use a set of journal articles based on field survey exercises to understand the processes of fieldwork adopted by researchers.

Group presentation in class

The reading packet will carry a list of journal articles based on field surveys

## **Session 7. March 2**

### **Guest Lecture: Professor Christine Chin. Fieldwork in Malaysia on Overseas Housemaids.**

Data gathering.

#### Readings

Schevyens and Storey (Text)

Chapter 9. "Working with Marginalized, vulnerable and privileged groups."

Devereux and Hoddinott (Text)

Chapter 3- "Observers are Worried: Learning the Language and Counting the People in North East Ghana. "

## **Session 8: March 9**

Different methods of data gathering in field surveys

### Readings

Chapter 6- “Qualitative Research: Collecting Life Stories.”

Chapter 8- “Sensitive Information: Collecting Data on Livestock and Informal Credit.”

Chapter 11- “Facts or Fiction? Fieldwork Relationships and the Nature of Data.”

Chapter 13- “Contrasts in Village –Level Fieldwork: Kenya and India.”

## **March 16: Spring Break**

## **Session 9: March 23: NO Class ( ISA Conference)**

**\*\*\*\* Students should make use of the class time to do work on their questionnaire**

## **Session 10: March 30**

Participatory Rapid Appraisal. (PRA).

Use and “abuse” of PRA and RRA.

### Readings

“Participation-Concepts and Methods” Britha Mikkelsen, *Methods for Development Work and Research*. Sage 1995. (Course packet)

“Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Challenges, Potentials and Paradigms. Robert Chambers. *World Development*. Vol. 22, No. 10. (Course packet)

“Authority, Gender and Knowledge: Theoretical Reflections on the Participatory Rural Appraisal” David Mosse. *Development and Change*. Vol. 25. 1994. (Course packet)

Focus Groups.

**Students should be ready to do their pilot survey of the questionnaire within their groups. In order to prepare the other members of ones group to answer the questionnaire in the pilot survey, each student should give the others in the group one or two articles from the literature review in order to familiarize them on the research area. The pilot survey exercise should take the form of a role-play.**

## **Session 11: April 6**

### **Guest Lecture: Dr. Lalith Desilva. V.P. Planmatics.**

#### Readings

“Uses of Focus Groups.” “Group Dynamics and Focus Group Research.”

David W. Stewart and Prem N. Shamdasani. *Focus groups: Theory and Practice*. Sage. 1990. (Course packet).

## **Session 12 : April 13**

### **Issues that arise in the field and evaluating your data**

#### Readings

“Issues that Arise in the Field.” “Analyzing and interpreting data”.

Gretchen B. Rossman and Sharon F. Rallis. *Learning in the Field*. Sage. 1998. (Course Packet)

“Designing and Evaluating Survey Questions.” Fowler. (Course packet)

#### Budgeting and Time frame

Each student at this stage should have a comprehensive literature survey of the research problem. The pilot survey should be completed and questionnaire further refined based on the feedback from the group. Appropriate strategies of data gathering should be discussed within the groups. Group interaction time should be used to draw up a framework for the oral presentation.

## **Session 13/14: April 20 and 29.**

Oral Presentations of individual projects