



unit guide

SOCIAL RESEARCH SKILLS, PART I

Social and Policy Studies Undergraduate
Programme

2010/2011 Semester 1

become what you want to be

Course Title:	SOCIAL RESEARCH SKILLS, PART I
Unit Code:	PSO-2-237
Unit Level:	2
Credit Value:	1
Student Study Hours:	150
Class Contact Hours:	40
Private Study Hours:	110
Pre-requisites:	Researching Social Life (Level 1)
Unit Co-ordinator:	Matthew Bond
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SHORT DESCRIPTION

The social sciences are centrally a problem-solving endeavour: asking and answering question to better understand social life. Research methods are the tools we use to search for solutions and deepen our understanding of social processes. In this course, we will explore methods for collecting and analysing quantitative data. The unit has three main goals:

- 1) To develop your understanding of the nature of social science explanations, especially quantitative explanations;
- 2) To develop your understanding of how quantitative data are generated; and
- 3) To develop your quantitative data analysis skills.

The unit will also specify key features of quantitative research design, emphasizing issues of validity, reliability, comprehensiveness and coherence. It will provide you with hands-on experience of using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), computer software specifically designed to analyse quantitative data.

AIMS

- To provide students with the necessary skills to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the use quantitative research methods;
- To offer students the relevant skills to identify diverse research strategies and methods and illustrate their use in gaining sociological knowledge;
- To develop students' ability to generate and critically interpret elementary quantitative data; and

- To encourage students to use statistical software packages to analyse quantitative data.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the unit, you should be able:

- To apply appropriate techniques to the collection and analysis of quantitative data;
- To provide an understanding of the relationship between measurement, theory construction and testing;
- To outline the principal methods of data collection, their applications and limitations;
- Use SPSS to analyse data;
- To demonstrate greater proficiency in IT skills (word processing and data analysis skills); and
- To have the ability to critically employ quantitative data in oral and written communication.

TEACHING & LEARNING

The unit comprises 12 weekly sessions of three hour. These sessions are a combination of lecturers, seminars, workshops and computer lab activities. **Lectures** provide an overview of the topic, introducing some of the conceptual and theoretical issues involved. **Seminars** are student-led, structured by discussion about aspects of the topic. **Workshops** are short sessions aimed at developing practical skills, especially to help you carry out your assignments. **Computer lab** sessions involve the hands-on use of SPSS software to analyse quantitative data.

The course is divided into two parts. Part One, sessions 1-6, will introduce you to the basic elements of quantitative research design and data collection techniques. This section will also include instruction on writing for the social sciences. In Part Two, sessions 7-12, you will access and analyse quantitative data, learning how to conduct univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses.

This can be very a challenging course. In order for you to learn as much as possible, it is important that you do three things:

- 1) **Attend every session.** If you don't attend each part of every session, you're guaranteed to miss something important.
- 2) **Arrive prepared** by doing the required reading *before* we meet.
- 3) **Ask lots of questions!** I'm here to help, but only if you identify your problems.

SUPPORT MATERIALS

Reading lists will usually consist of references to both printed and electronic sources. You should first consult the library catalogue, which is also available off-campus via our web site lis@ (<http://www.lisa.lsbu.ac.uk>).

Learning and Information Services (LIS) have created this web site as your starting point for information searching. Use it to go to specific subject pages which you will find within the subject portals. Within each you will find the relevant databases, journals, (printed and electronic), selected free web sites and details of support for the teaching of information literacy.

Lis@ is freely available on the internet, but access to the subscription databases and full text journal articles is restricted to LSBU campuses and members of the University elsewhere who apply for off-campus access.

Details of this service are on LIS **Help Sheet 3 Off-Campus (Remote) Access** on lis@.

For help with using books, journals and electronic materials and any subject enquiries, use the Information Support Centre (ISC) Help Desk on Level 1 East in the Perry Library (ext.6615) or the main desks in the Health Libraries. For the reference and statistics collections in print in the Perry Library go to Level 2 E. Staff will guide you to the most appropriate sources.

You can also use our **Information Quest** package to learn how to search for materials for assignments.

ASSESSMENT

This unit is assessed by two pieces of work:

- 1) **Assignment 1** is a literature review based on a research question you will develop using data we will work on in the second part of the course. The literature review should be 1,500 words in length. We will discuss Assignment 1 in detail during Sessions 3 and 4. This assignment will comprise 40 % of your final marks. The **DEADLINE** for submitting Assignment 1 is **Thursday 11th November**.
- 2) Assignment 2 is data analysis. This takes the form of a series of questions you must answer by carrying out an appropriate analytical procedure using SPSS and writing a short report of your findings, illustrated by graphs and charts. Together these reports should be no more than a total of 1,500 words. This assignment will be discussed in Sessions 7 and 9. What is required of you will become clear during the computer lab sessions. This assignment will comprise 60% of your final marks. This **DEADLINE** for submitting Assignment 2 is **Friday 7th January 2011**.

Further guidelines on assessment criteria and referencing are given below.

MARKING CRITERIA

Assessment Objectives

All coursework essays and examination scripts are assessed in relation to the individual learning outcomes for the unit. Requirements in relation to the level of conceptual analysis and acquired skills will be in accordance with general expectations for Level Two work.

At all levels, five areas of assessment can be recognized:

- 1) Knowledge of the topic: ideas; concepts; and institutions;
- 2) Analysis of issues and an awareness of different viewpoints;
- 3) Evaluation of competing explanations or theories applied to a problem;
- 4) Ability to identify relevant sources of evidence, both empirical and theoretical, and to use these to produce an informative referencing system; and
- 5) Skill in the presentation of an answer with accuracy, clarity and coherence.

With these objectives in mind, the following model marking scheme should apply:

First	80%+	Same as the range 70-79% but adds a deeper understanding and evaluation of the issues and can “impose oneself on the subject”.
First	70-79%	Excellent knowledge of the topic, with high level analysis of a balanced nature. Strong on critical evaluation, clarity, coherence. All assessment objectives covered.
2:i	60-69%	Very good knowledge of basic ideas, concepts and institutions with good analysis of issues and evaluation; good uses of sources and references; meets objectives 1,2,4,5, weaker on 3.
2:ii	50-59%	Exhibits good knowledge of the topic; can distinguish different approaches or viewpoints, and some ability of evaluation is present, but may to some extent lack clarity and coherence; reasonable attempt at referencing; very good on objective 1, weaker on 2-5.
Third	40-49%	Demonstrates limited basic knowledge of the topic, but essentially descriptive; displays an attempt at evaluation of material, but low on clarity and coherence; limited achievement of objectives 1,2,3,4,; low on objective 5.
Fail	35-39%	Exhibits some knowledge of topic, but essentially descriptive; cannot identify alternative viewpoints; objective 1 is present but 2-5 poorly met.
Fail	30-35%	Some knowledge of topic and examples, but objectives 2-5 not met.
Fail	0-30%	Badly misunderstands the question; contains factual errors; none of basic objectives are achieved.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words or ideas of others and passing them off as your own. In many cases plagiarism takes the form of copying from books and articles without full and accurate acknowledgement of sources. This can happen unintentionally when you use notes taken from a book/journal article and put them directly into your essay without properly attributing the source. Whether intentional or not, plagiarism is not acceptable in any circumstances. It is regarded as a form of cheating and there are strict University regulations to deal with it if it is discovered. You will find a discussion of the University regulations & procedures governing plagiarism in your Course Guide. You must read these carefully.

It is vital when taking notes to:

- Note the FULL reference of the book/article at the top of the first page of notes.
- Keep a precise note of the page numbers of any quoted material (for example in the margins of your notes)
- Use precise double quote marks at the beginning and end of any quotes in your notes and check that any quotes/material used in your essay is accurately and carefully attributed.

REFERENCING & BIBLIOGRAPHY

All essays must be fully and accurately referenced and must include, at the end, a bibliography of material consulted in the preparation of the essay. There are two well known systems of referencing which can be used for academic work. They are the Harvard System and the Notes system.

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The Harvard System

This takes the form of giving details of the author and date of publication in square brackets after the relevant place in the text, for example [Pugh:1994]. The full reference to this text is then given in the Bibliography. When citing specific arguments or using quotations the page number must also be given in the bracket: e.g. [Thompson: 1963, p.66]

NOTE: When using sources which themselves quote or paraphrase other pieces of work always cite the source that you have consulted, e.g. Bentham believed.... [Garland:1985, p.77] The source in the bracket should be listed in the Bibliography.

Perry Library has a very detailed Help Sheet on the operation of the Harvard system. You should obtain a copy from the Library and read it carefully.

When constructing the Bibliography works should be listed by authors' surnames in alphabetical order. When you have used two more works by the same author these should be listed by chronological order of publication. Where there are two or more works by one author in the same

year they should be distinguished in the text and the bibliography by a letter [a, b, c...] thus [Tilly: 1977a] [Tilly: 1977b].

Titles of books and journals should always be underlined and the date of publication given. For your purposes it is not necessary to give place of publication OR publisher.

Books should be cited in the following manner:

K. Layborne, Britain on the Breadline, (1990)

J. Stevenson and C. Cook, The Slump, (1977)

Articles in readers [i.e. edited collections] are cited as follows:-

G. Fennell, "The Second World War and the Welfare State in Britain: Sociological Interpretations of Historical Development," in L. Jamison and H. Corr, State, Private Life, and Political Change, (1990)

Articles in journals should be cited giving volume and issue number as well as date, for example: J. Tomlinson, "Planning: Debate and Policy in the 1940s," Twentieth Century British History, V, 3(2), 1992

The Notes System

With this system references are cited in the text by means of consecutive numerals and the sources given either at the bottom of the relevant page [Footnotes] OR gathered together in numerical order at the end of the text [Endnotes]. The footnote/end note usually gives full text citation the first time a particular source is used. Subsequent citations of the same source can be abbreviated. The text references are gathered together at the end of the essay for the bibliography, set out in the manner described above. Many word processing programmes now have easily operated systems for creating and editing footnotes/endnotes.

You may use either of these referencing systems. **The important point is to be consistent and not to mix them.**

OUTLINE OF WEEKLY SESSIONS

Week	Date	Topic
1	27 Sep	Lecture: Introduction to quantitative social research What is it? How does it differ from other research? Outline of basic concepts and processes. Seminar: Introduction to the unit
2	4 Oct	Lecture: Thinking quantitatively and developing a research question First stages in carrying out a quantitative research project. Developing a research question. Computer lab: Developing a quantitative research question
3	11 Oct	Lecture: Experimental design Causality. Random assignment. Experimental design and its alternatives

		Seminar: Using the logic of experimental design to investigate social scientific questions.
4	18 Oct	Lecture: Developing indicators Measurement – moving from an abstract idea to a concrete measurement. Creating variables. Operationalising research. Workshop: Assignment 1 continued Computer lab: <i>Demonstration</i> – accessing databases
5	25 Oct	Lecture: Social surveys I: sampling Why are social surveys important? What is sampling? Pros and cons of competing approaches Seminar: Sampling
6	1 November	Lecture: Social surveys II: questionnaires & interviewing Survey methods – postal, telephone, face-to-face. Designing a questionnaire. Interviewing techniques. Seminar: Questionnaire design- how to avoid problems
7	8 November	Lecture: Introduction to data analysis In the second half of this unit we work with quantitative data. Lectures provide an overview and explanation of the techniques you'll use in your computer lab sessions Computer lab: SPSS – inputting, cleaning and saving data
8	15 November	Lecture: Univariate analysis Describing your data. Measures of central tendency and dispersion. Preliminary analysis and interpretation Computer lab: <i>Demonstration</i> – descriptive statistics, using graphs and charts to explore your data
9	22 November	Lecture: Univariate analysis continued and bivariate analysis Inference, confidence intervals Computer lab: <i>Exercise</i> – generating descriptive statistics, graphs and charts
10	29 November	Lecture: Bivariate analysis continued Analysing the relationship between two variables. Measures of association. Parametric and non-parametric variables Computer lab: <i>Exercise</i> – correlation, statistical significance
11	6 December	Lecture: Bivariate analysis and Multivariate analysis Overview of analytic techniques to assess relationships between three or more variables Computer lab: <i>Exercise- regression</i>
12	13 December	Course wrap-up – the unit reviewed and revisited Computer lab: <i>SPSS clinic</i> – bring your queries, questions and problems along

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CORE TEXTS

As we will be using these texts throughout the course, you may find it useful to purchase copies of your own.

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| Bryman, A | <i>Social Research Methods</i> (Oxford, 2002) |
| Blair, J & R Czaja | <i>Designing Surveys</i> , 2 nd Edition (Sage, 2005) |
| Creswell, J W | <i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches</i> (Sage, 2002) |
| Gilbert, N (ed.) | <i>Researching Social Life</i> (Sage, 2001) |
| Robson, C | <i>Real World Research</i> (Blackwell, 2002) |
| Pallant, Julie | SPSS survival manual, 3 rd edition (Open University Press, 2007) |

LECTURE AND SEMINAR TOPICS AND READINGS

Readings from the course texts are always listed first

Week 1: Introduction to quantitative social research

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapters 1 & 2)
Creswell, J W	<i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches</i> (Chapter 1)
Gilbert, N (ed.)	<i>Researching Social Life</i> (Chapters 1 & 2)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i> (Chapter 1)

Week 2: Thinking quantitatively

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 3)
Creswell, J W	<i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches</i> (Chapter 8, Especially pp. 108-12)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i> (Chapters 4 & 5)
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Allan, G & Skinner, C	<i>Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences</i> (Falmer, 1999)
Bulmer, M	<i>Sociological Research Methods: An Introduction</i> (Macmillan, 1996)

Week 3: Experimental design

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 2)
Creswell, J W	<i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches</i>
Gilbert, N (ed.)	<i>Researching Social Life</i>
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i>

- Becker, H *Tricks of the Trade* (Chicago, 1998)
- Becker, H *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article* (Chicago, 1986)
- Booth, W C,
J M Williams
& G G Colomb *The Craft of Research* (Chicago, 1995)

Week 4: Developing indicators

- Bryman, A *Social Research Methods* (Chapter 3, Especially pp.65-75)
- Gilbert, N (ed.) *Researching Social Life* (Chapter 14)
- Robson, C *Real World Research* (Chapter 10)
- Babbie, E *The Practice of Social Research* (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions).
- Bulmer, M *Sociological Research Methods: An Introduction* (Macmillan, 1986)
- Burgess, R (Ed) *Key Variables in Social Investigation* (Introduction and chapters 5 & 12)
- Judd, C M, et al. *Research Methods in Social Relations* (HJB, 1991)
- May, T *Social Research: Issues, Methods, and Process* (Open University Press, 1993)

Week 5: Social surveys 1: sampling

- Blair, J & R Czaja *Designing Surveys*
- Bryman, A *Social Research Methods* (Chapter 4)
- Gilbert, N (ed.) *Researching Social Life* (Chapter 5)
- Frankel, M R & Frankle, L R “Fifty Years of Survey Sampling in the United States.” Public Opinion Quarterly Vol. 51, No. 2(Supplement), 1987, pp S127-38.

Gilbert, N	<i>Sampling of Populations: Methods and Applications</i> (Sage, 1993 & 2001)
Marsh, C	<i>The Survey Method: The Contribution of Surveys to Sociological Explanation</i> (Allen & Unwin, 1982).
Sudman, S	<i>Applied Sampling</i> (Academic Press, 1976)
Yates, F	<i>Sampling Methods for Censuses and Surveys</i> (Griffin, 1981)

Week 6: Social surveys II: questionnaires and interviewing

Blair, J & R Czaja	<i>Designing Surveys</i>
Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapters 6 & 7)
Gilbert, N (ed.)	<i>Researching Social Life</i> (Chapters 6 & 7)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i> (Chapter 8)
American Statistical Assn	“What is a Survey”, available online at http://amstat.org/sections
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Beed, T W & Stimson, R J	<i>Survey Interviewing: Theory and Techniques</i> . (Allen & Unwin, 1987)
Fowler, F J	<i>Survey Research Methods</i> , 2 nd Edition. (Sage, 1993)(Chapters 5 & 6)
Hakim, C	<i>Research Design: Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research</i> (Allen & Unwin, 1987).
Marsh, C	<i>The Survey Method: The Contribution of Surveys to Sociological Explanation</i> (Allen & Unwin, 1982)
Sudman, S & Bradburn, N M	<i>Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design</i> . (Josey Bass, 1982)

Week 7: Introduction to data analysis

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 12)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i> (Chapter 13)

Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Fielding, J & Gilbert, N	<i>Understanding Social Statistics</i> (Sage, 2000) Chapter 2
Healey, J F, E R Babbie &	<i>Exploring social issues: Using SPSS for Windows</i> (Pine Forge Press, 1997)
Miller, R, et al.	<i>SPSS for Social Scientists</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)

Week 8: Univariate analysis

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 11)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i> (Chapter 13)
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Fielding, J & Gilbert, N	<i>Understanding Social Statistics</i> (Sage, 2000) Chapter 3
Healy, J F	<i>Statistics: A Tool for Social Research</i> (Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005) (Chapter 2-4)
Healey, J F, Babbie, E R & Haley, F	<i>Exploring social issues: Using SPSS for Windows</i> (Pine Forge Press, 1997)
Miller, R, et al.	<i>SPSS for Social Scientists</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)

Week 9: Univariate analysis continued and bivariate analysis

Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 11)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i>
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Fielding, J & Gilbert, N	<i>Understanding Social Statistics</i> (Sage, 2000)
Healey, J F, Babbie, ER & Halley, F	<i>Exploring social issues: Using SPSS for Windows</i> (Pine Forge Press, 1997)
Miller, R, et al.	<i>SPSS for Social Scientists</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)

Week 10:	Bivariate analysis continued
Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 11)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i>
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Fielding, J & Gilbert, N	<i>Understanding Social Statistics</i> (Sage, 2000) Chapter 9
Healey, J F, Babbie, ER Halley, F	<i>Exploring social issues: Using SPSS for Windows</i> (Pine Forge & Press, 1997)
Miller, R, et al.	<i>SPSS for Social Scientists</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)
Week 11:	Bivariate analysis continued and
Multivariate analysis	
Bryman, A	<i>Social Research Methods</i> (Chapter 11)
Robson, C	<i>Real World Research</i>
Babbie, E	<i>The Practice of Social Research</i> (Wadsworth, Multiple Editions)
Fielding, J & Gilbert, N	<i>Understanding Social Statistics</i> (Sage, 2000)
Healey, J F, Babbie ER Halley, F	<i>Exploring social issues: Using SPSS for Windows</i> (Pine Forge & Press, 1997)
Miller, R, et al.	<i>SPSS for Social Scientists</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)
Computer lab	<i>Demonstration</i> – analysis of variance
Week 12:	Course wrap-up
Computer lab	<i>SPSS clinic</i> – bring your queries, questions and problems along