

Free Workshops on Research Methods--Fall 1996
Coordinator--Gary Downey methods@vt.edu
Assessment Summary--Reactions from Registrants and Instructors

The seven workshops had a total of 128 registrants, which translated into approximately 90 people. It appears that average attendance for each workshop was roughly 1/2 to 2/3 of its total registration. A total of 21 instructors participated in the workshops.

I received 48 written reactions, including 9 from instructors. I have included the names of respondents when their email messages were signed.

Although representing a subset of participants, the reactions were quite positive overall. Primary benefits included (1) providing direct hands-on training for students in several areas of research; (2) bringing students and instructors together from widely varying locations to discuss commonly-shared problems in research methodology; and (3) building visibility and goodwill for the STS Program and the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. Limitations included (1) dependence of the entire project on the time, interest, and goodwill of participating instructors; (2) unpredictable attendance, given that students had made little or no financial commitment to the process; (3) difficulties in serving diverse audiences; and (4) questions concerning the value of the archives workshop as a whole.

Reaction letters to more than one workshop

1. I think I can say that these workshops have been one of the most useful experiences I've had in the eight years that I've been with Virginia Tech. Part of my gratitude is in the timing of the workshops; after being primarily involved in faculty development and project management, I've recently undertaken an assessment role for some major initiatives in our area. The worlds of social science research and assessment/evaluation have undergone tremendous changes in the last decade, and qualitative methods remain a mystery to many of us who had a purely quantitative background. Likewise, one's knowledge of statistics tends to fade rapidly if not used regularly. Therefore, the scope of the workshops was just what the doctor ordered. The qualitative sessions that I took (Ethnographic Methods and Face to Face Interviewing) did an excellent job of presenting both an overview of the field and a close-up experience with the "how-to-do-it". The quantitative session (Statistics without Numbers) provided a much-needed overview and/or "brush-up" on the applicability of the mainline statistical approaches. I also got a lot out of the sessions at the Center for Survey Research, the workings of which probably would have remained a mystery forever--one of those areas I never seem to have the time to look into.

Again, I can't thank you enough for taking the time to put together a program like this. It is so rare that the tremendous expertise on campus is shared with those outside of one's immediate area. I applaud you and the other instructors for your efforts, and I sincerely hope that the powers that be will provide resources and support so that you can do this again (and again, and again...).

If there is anything I can do to help in your future efforts, please let me know.--C. David Taylor, Ed. D.,
Cyberschool Project

2.. This is a course which has been long overdue. Too many people come into this program with no background in research methods in humanities. I attended at least one session of ALL workshops and I can honestly say I got something out of each of them. Sometimes, what I got out of them was useful in ways other than the targeted purpose of the class.

For example, in the grantwriting workshop, I got many ideas for how to prepare my dissertation proposal for my committee. The first part of the telephone survey class (though I will probably never use the

computer version) was very well planned, and I got ideas on how to do a simple paper survey. This would be a dynamite class for those who need to do large surveys. Too bad so few signed up. The workshop on Interviewing face-to-face was most useful to me because that is probably the method which I will use in my dissertation. I will save lots of time by following the advice of the seasoned veterans who taught the workshop.

The Archival workshop was easily completed in one session and its discussion format was appropriate. The ethnography class was of more general interest. I suppose it's difficult to learn how to "live the life" of someone else while sitting in a classroom. Finally, I think my favorite was the statistics class. This is funny, because I HATE number crunching, but it was a great review of a lot of stuff I had put out of my mind years ago which now I find can still be very useful! Although it seemed to move at lightening speed, the purpose was not to teach stats, but to show us when to use what. By the time we get to it, we will have to learn it again anyway, so speed was not a problem. Handouts were superb.

All the instructors involved appeared very excited about the workshops. I wish I had this course years ago.

Suggestions: It was difficult going to 3 two-to-three hour workshops in one day, especially when some instructors did not give breaks. My Thursdays were exhausting. Assignments were a good idea. Internet classes should, no MUST be scheduled in the morning. The net is too slow in the pm to give a class efficiently. Keep Carol Bailey interested in teaching at all costs. I guess that's all I can think of now. Thanks a lot! --Mary Ellen Jones, Ph.D. student, STS

3. First, let me begin by saying that the STS workshops were a big asset in helping me learn grantwriting strategies, statistics without numbers, online research with electronic databases, and telephone interviewing. The information that I gleamed from each session and the speakers who presented knowledge and ideas were superb. Initially, I knew very little about grantwriting, and I knew few grant resources. Now I feel more knowledgeable, and as a result of participating in the grantwriting workshop, I am able to put together a research proposal for evaluating a support service program for students here at Tech. I am using many of the ideas that I learn in the grantwriting workshop.

The Online Research with Electronic Databases workshop opened for me a new world. Being that I am a doctoral student who plans to write a dissertation, I need to know how to find resourceful information. Having learned of the many databases that I can contact via WWW, I feel that I am well nourished with places to visit. I know now how I can use the WWW as a vehicle to find tremendous databases that are steeped with the kind of information that I need to support my research. Had I not participated in the workshop, I would not know as much as I know now, in reference to finding information..

The speakers for the Statistics Without Numbers workshop presented the materials in a clear, logical, and sequential fashion. It was easy to following along and to understand where the speakers were coming from. The statistics learned will indeed prove helpful.

The Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing workshop was informative; however, I feel that more time should have been spent on learning the survey methodology in addition to the telephone survey. I hope that you offer workshops of this nature in the future.

4. Gary: The archives workshop was a waste of time. It was a series of reminiscences by faculty who had

had good times abroad. We have no graduate students who are in a position to do archival research right now. With the exception of Voula and Moira. And most of the folks there had worked in European archives. Of little help to most of our students. I think it is far more effective to have grad students talk with individual faculty when they are ready to pursue such research. The session I attended was mainly anecdotal.

Research on the Internet. I attended this one. John Stemmer was very good, but I just didn't have the patience for those classes. It seems the internet is clogged up in the afternoon so we could only navigate with great difficulty. I could have walked to the library and looked things up faster. This is no one's fault. The technology is still too primitive for us A-types. I did learn some things--that much of what is available on the internet is commercial b.s. There is some good stuff, however, and John did a fine job of explaining it to us.

General comments: I think that if this is a course for graduate students, it is a waste of time. If it is done as outreach for the university, maybe it is O.K. But then I have never felt one could teach methods really. You learn by doing. I still think that the way one learns to do historical research is by doing it. I still think these methods should be built into the core classes. And the main point is that the master's thesis and the dissertation should demonstrate the student's ability to deal with the varying methodological approaches represented by our constituent interdisciplines. But then I have never thought we should have this course. I was agreeable because so many students wanted it and I thought we should give it a try.

By the way, Gary, I am not negative toward your efforts. I think you did a great job of organizing this. But to tell you the truth I think your time could be better spent teaching a real course. How about postmodern science and technology? The anthropology of sci/tech? Whatever.

Rating: Instructor Downey: A

Instructor Stemmer: A

Archives workshop: Add wine and cheese and call it a party. C- The course as a whole: Do we really need this course?--Ann La Berge, Associate Professor, STS

Workshop #1 Archives: How to Prepare for them and What to Expect (11)

Registrants--none

Instructors

1. The group dealing with Archival Research held its panel discussion on October 8. We had a lively session in which the presenters discussed their experiences with archival work both in the United States as well as in a variety of other countries (France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, United Kingdom).

The most important lesson to be learned that potential users have to be much more prepared than ordinary library users; that preparatory research is essential, as well as prior contact with the archive (sometimes a requirement). Scholars should expect the unexpected: some archives are inviting places to work, some rather forbidding; some archivists are helpful, others rather preserve and protect their documents rather than share them. There may be legal restrictions regarding use, or copying, of archival material which users have to be aware of. Web pages may give prior information about opening hours and conditions of use.

One suggestion made was to establish a roster of faculty members at Virginia Tech (certainly from a number of select departments) who have used specific archives, so that they can be used as a resource for scholars intent on using these facilities in the future.

The panel of presenters felt that one long session was sufficient to share with interested students the relevant information about the use of archives. A second session was scheduled for those wanting to get some practical experience in archival work.--Arnold Schuetz

2. Concerning the Archives Workshop: stay with the multi-session format rather than telescoping it all into one session. Unfortunately, a last minute family emergency caused the hands-on part to be cancelled, so I can't comment on that part.

I'd like to see it offered again.--Eric G. Ackermann, Special Collections/University Libraries

3. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to participate in the STS 5514 Methods workshop on Archival Research as an Instructor. Here is what I thought of my experience in doing this.

As I am sure you are aware, the Archival Research seminar was a single seminar. The other two classes were canceled because it really was not necessary to have them. We all generally agreed that one class session was enough. Personally, I thought that the seminar was important and should be included in any future workshops. But it seems that one class would be enough unless there were a lot more students participating in this particular workshop.

I have less positive opinions concerning the organization of the class. I understood that the nature of this particular workshop would be anecdotal in that each of us would share our experiences in archival research. However, I thought there might have been too many instructors. So quite a bit of the material turned out to be repetitive.

Even more importantly, however, I thought that [the course] could have been more organized. [The coordinator] passed around some information and then it seemed that the experiences of the Instructors

were tossed around for discussion, but not in any particular order and not in a very organized manner. When I was in class, I noticed one of the Instructors had an e-mail . . . with the class schedules and information about when Instructors were supposed to share their experiences, but I never received this e-mail. Furthermore, I noticed that I was scheduled to present my experiences in archival research in the second class. I remember reading somewhere that it was not necessary for all the Instructors to go to all three workshops. Had I known that I was not required to be in the first class, I may not have gone, thereby missing the experience altogether.

So I think it is absolutely necessary to have at least one class in the future on archival research. However, it needs to be . . . more organized in how the material is going to be presented, and who communicates with all the other Instructors who have been invited to participate. Furthermore, there needs to be a limit placed on the number of Instructors. Perhaps you can limit it to just two faculty Instructors, one graduate student Instructor with a family, and one graduate student without a family--
Voula Saridakis, Ph.D. student, STS

4. See also general letter from Ann La Berge

Workshop #2 Anthropological Approaches to Ethnographic Methods (18)

Registrants

1. I attended the 2nd and 3rd sessions of the Ethnographic interviewing workshop. Both sessions were practical, illuminating and profitable for me as a doctoral student about to begin collection of data for my dissertation. Although I have taken the Qual. Research in Edu class and been an active reader of the QUALSR-list for several years, there is still much to learn from a practical standpoint regarding the practice of doing qualitative research. This workshop filled part of that need. Three or four of these together (on different topics) would create the 2nd and 3rd level qual. research courses needed to be added to the curriculum in the College of Education if a high quality of researcher training is to be achieved.

I know that all of you who took your valuable time to teach and coordinate these short courses did so "out of your hide" so to speak and without pay. I also assume that you did so because you were familiar with students such as myself who are asking for more university support for qualitative research. Your dedication and work is very much appreciated and I hope heard by the people who need to do so in order that these workshops can continue and eventually be expanded. I only wish that I had had the time available to attend more of them....there were several which interested me. I think this format is a good way to "whet the appetite" of those folks who might be interested in expanding their research expertise but unable/unwilling to engage in a semester long course to find out about a particular technique.

In short, I had an excellent experience. I hope that they can be expanded or continued. Please use my "testimony" wherever it may be helpful--Kathy Sack, Ph.D. student, Counseling and Student Personnel

2. I enjoyed the two workshops I attended (Face-to-face interview and ethnography). . . . Ethnography: The two sessions I attended were good introductions to ethnography. Jan Nesor's talk on ethics was good. Because I missed two sessions, I cannot give a thorough evaluation. However, I bought the notes for both sessions and plan to do some reading later. In general, I thought that the notebook idea was useful, to get a good sense of the literature and have all your notes organized. I didn't like the cost as much, though, but I guess there's not much we can do about it. --Marjukka Ollilainen, Ph.D. student, Sociology

3. My purpose and perspective on the workshops may be quite atypical, since I am from totally outside the field, and my purpose was non-academic. But for what it's worth:

What I found most helpful, and indeed highly enjoyable, was personal accounts of fieldwork, especially from Anita. I could draw my own analogies and apply a good deal to my experiences in Guatemala. I was encouraged to learn so much about the ethical development of the discipline. It seems as if we are learning something, after all!

Suggestions: incorporate the readings more directly into the sessions; perhaps encourage more class discussion and reactions. But given the few meetings, I think you accomplished a lot. Thank you!--Margaret Hasselman, Assistant Professor, CIS/Humanities

4. The workshop on ethnographic methods was extremely provocative and useful. The team teaching by three anthropologists, with very different research interests, highlighted insightful controversies over the definition and use of ethnographic methods from those immersed in the field. Discussions gave me much to think about and use to critique my own research and framework in science and technology studies.

I only have a couple of suggestions that might enhance the workshop experience. One session with all three anthropologists as a panel would allow dialogue among them and help reveal more pointedly differences in their deeply held convictions over the practice of ethnographic methods. Sessions in which students bring examples of several pages of their written work to share and have critiqued would add to discussion of the practical issues and dilemmas faced in writing ethnography. The administrative details may be onerous, but having fewer competing workshops in one semester and spreading the entire series over two semesters would allow students to take several. Of course, these suggestions may mean adding more sessions, which practically make the workshop a class!

The workshop was a terrific experience. More of them!--Amy Crumpton, Ph.D. student, STS

5. The workshop series on Ethnographic Methods was excellent. My primary interest was learning about the feasibility of applying these methods to some new technology initiatives on campus in which I am involved as an assessor, and I certainly got that information and more. The workshop was a thorough overview of the field, and ranged from the theoretical and abstract to detailed and hands-on. It was exactly what I needed in order to understand both the landscape and the various points of view within this field. For this latter purpose, it was most helpful to hear from several ethnographers on campus. Congratulations to Anita Puckett, Jan Nesper and you for an excellent program.

Again, I can't thank you enough for taking the time to put together a program like this. Having been a developer/instructor for the Faculty Development Initiative workshops (FDI), I fully appreciate the time and effort required to create a package of instructional materials, handle the logistics of classrooms, prepare for the sessions, and so forth. Even more importantly, it is so rare that the tremendous expertise on campus is shared with those outside of one's immediate area. I applaud you and the other instructors for your efforts, and I sincerely hope that the "powers that be" will provide resources and support so that you can do this again (and again, and again...).

If there is anything I can do to help in your future efforts, please let me know. --David Taylor, Ed. D.,
Cyberschool Project

Instructors--none

Workshop #3 Grantwriting Strategies (27)

Registrants

1. I just wanted to thank you for today's session this morning on grant writing. I found it invaluable -- so many things I had never even thought about!! Gary too (Hardcastle) found it very useful and he said to tell you that he would be putting a copy of his grant proposal up on the Web for participants in the workshop to look at and critique--Valerie Hardcastle, Assistant Professor, Philosophy

2. I very much enjoyed the Grantwriting Strategies workshop session this morning. Thanks for allowing me to attend. I am excited that such opportunities are available to the university faculty and staff, and hope that you are able to continue such workshops in the future.

I regret that I will not be able to attend the next two sessions on Grantwriting Strategies, as I will be hosting a group of faculty from Longwood, during the second session, and in San Jose, CA, during the third. I hope to catch up with Gary and/or Valerie Hardcastle for their impressions of the remaining sessions. I am also delighted to have access to the workshops notebook, for future reference. Sharon Pitt, Coordinator, Faculty Development Institute

3. The following letter describes my reactions to and assessment of the Grant Writing Workshop. I attended the first two of the three-session workshop, and was unable to attend the third due to being out of town.

I found both the workshops I attended to be extraordinarily useful and informative. Having just written and sent off an NSF grant a few weeks before, I confess that I was eager to attend the workshop but unsure that I would pick up much that I had not already learned in the process of writing a grant. I was very wrong; in the first session, which was spent describing the process which NSF grant proposals undergo after being sent in, I learned an enormous amount about the nuts and bolts of panel review, the criteria by which proposals are assessed, the factors that make for a successful proposal and why, and the constraints on the NSF, its peer reviewers, and its panel members in funding proposals. I want to emphasize that this was the sort of information that is not readily available in any other way than sitting down with someone who knows such things and having an extended conversation with them about grants. In other words, nothing could replace this workshop. After the first day, my understanding of the grant process, and of the range of strategies for writing a grant, was enormously richer than it had been.

The second session addressed many of the same issues, but featured Doris Zallen and Franz Foltz, as well as Ed Hackett, Program Director for STS at the NSF. Again I took away from this workshop enormously valuable information of the sort I would not have picked up otherwise. Especially useful were the discussions between Franz, Gary, Ed, and Doris over such matters as when and how to contact Program Directors, the ways in which to manage overhead costs (and in many cases recoup monies paid by the granting institution for overhead), and how to package one's proposal for various granting institutions. Of course, the significance of the presence of Ed Hackett can't be underestimated. Ed was forthright about the NSF and the prospects for various grants and kinds of grants, and his comments served to reinforce what we had learned in earlier workshops.

This workshop was valuable not just for the great wealth of detailed information it imparted, but for opening up a context of discussion in CIS about grant writing. I have written or been party to perhaps a half-dozen grant proposals to NSF and NEH, and in many of those cases I felt very much that I was going it alone. With the workshops behind me, though, I feel that there is now a context within which I can ask others for advice on a grant proposal and for general advice about granting institutions.

There are a number of creative directions in which future workshops may proceed. While Gary Downey solicited proposals for review from the participants, it was my impression that this aspect of the workshop didn't work out; perhaps the perceived work-load was too high. I think it is important that participants engage proposals in a hands-on context, so perhaps it would be wise in future workshops to have on hand just one proposal, secured before the workshop, on which participants could comment. A second suggestion is to secure a representative from the NSF and from NEH to speak to the workshop. ED's presence was invaluable; our proximity to DC and the return we offer such institutions in the form of grant proposals ought to make this a feature of any future workshops.

Finally, I would encourage future workshops to incorporate as much personal knowledge as possible in describing the process of grant writing and review. I can't emphasize how interesting and important it was to hear from Gary Downey what it was like to be on a panel review; I will not write another grant without having fixed in my mind the picture he painted of a panel reviewer. Too often this kind of knowledge comes to young researchers by way of informal discussions, or not at all; this sort of workshop fixed that in my case, and future versions ought to do the same for others--Gary Hardcastle, Assistant Professor, Philosophy/CIS

4. I am sorry I could not attend the last workshop. My disstertation committee could ONLY meet that day at that time.

Comments on workshop:

Very informative and helpful in learning grants. My area is Education and Business, so would have liked a little insight to those grants. However, I knew the area the workshop would cover. It was worth my time to attend. The instructor was well prepared and provided pertinent information and handouts. Enjoyed the speakers, learned much from their experience. I missed the computer workshop part, so can not comment on that. Overall the workshop was excellent and I would recommend it to anyone--Brenda Martin, Ph.D. candidate, Agricultural Education & Extension

5. I attended the first two of the three-session workshop, and was unable to attend the third due to being out of town.

I found both the workshops I attended to be extraordinarily useful and informative. Having just written and sent off an NSF grant a few weeks before, I was eager to attend the workshop but unsure that I would pick up much that I had not already learned in the process of writing a grant. I was very wrong; in the first session, which was spent describing the process which NSF grant proposals undergo after being sent in, I learned an enormous amount about the nuts and bolts of panel review, the criteria by which proposals are assessed, the factors that make for a successful proposal and why, and the constraints on the NSF, its peer reviewers, and its panel members in . This was information contained in no NSF publication, nor for that matter any other publication of which I am aware. It is the sort of thing one learns only by talking to people "in the know,"

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6. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend these workshops due to a class scheduling conflict. I would be extremely interested in future workshops dedicated to grant writing skills. Please keep me posted on any new workshops.. Thanks. Monica

7. I find this Grantwriting workshop is very helpful. As an anthropologist, you bring your styles and skills into this workshop. I begin to be aware of myself the following questions -- how to observe what I am doing, and to predict the audience who you write for, although it is only a small step in the process of grantwriting. I think, this is not only the "technical" workshop, but also the workshop of being sensitive --

how can I understand myself and other (social and political) actors involved in the whole process of grants. Ming-Chang Wu, M.S. student, STS

8. I just wanted to write you a short letter and express my appreciation to you for offering the workshop on grant writing. I particularly enjoyed your presentation the first day in which you went over your article, "Grantwriting Strategies" and analyzed a successful proposal. I am sure I will read and re-read this many times in the next few months as I research and write grants.

Doris Zallen was an excellent speaker and quite an "inspiration". Her advice is much appreciated.

Carol Christian's session on using the World Wide Web for Funding Information was wonderful!!!! I really wish that we had about 3 hours for that. I know that I can do this on my own, but she saved me a lot of time weaving my way through all the hoops, bells and whistles to arrive at my destination topic.

I certainly think that a class like this is needed, and I think it should be offered again. Personally, I think that the class will be extremely beneficial to me, and I will probably be calling you for advice. Is that okay?--Rebecca Ross, Director of Educational Outreach, Fralin Biotech Center

9. General Statement: The workshop was invaluable to me. I thought it addressed every aspect of grantwriting there is, and the time was used very efficiently. There was also a continues and timely communication from the director regarding pertinent issues (dates, meeting places, resources needed....etc) that related to the workshop.

The Binder: Even though I missed the first workshop (not enough space) yet the binder that we bought for the workshop summerized and illustrated the grantwiting procedures that Downey discussed in that first meeting as well as those addressed in the following meetings.

It is a permanent resource that can always be used as a refernce and a reminder. It includes a complete proposal by Doris Zallen, current NSF publications listing funding opprtunities, and a V. Tech publication regarding essential procedures for all research involving humans. The Binder is elegantly compiled and clearly refereced, and Downey took the effort to explain what it included even before we bought it. He also referred to it frequently throughout the workshop.

The Workshop: Part II The focus of the second meeting was on the process of assessing granting agencies, identifying the suitable ones and how to approach them. Doris Zallen, a very succesful grantwriter herself, was recruited to head this session and the information was sincere and impressive. She identified the earmarks of a successful proposal e.g. clarity, avoidance of jargon, simple sentences, use of bullets. She also gave an approximate time drain per proposal which really gave me personally an idea of the effort that is needed to produce one. Zallen thus gave us a working practical agenda to use.

The Peer review process was painstakingly described, especially so by Hackett, a visiting grant officer from NSF. The description was educational and gave me an unprecedented view of what happens to my grant proposals. It brought the process home to me and gave me a relaistic view. This newly acquired knowledge brought me to another level of undstanding of the review process. It will make my grant writing more of a document written to a group of real people, that I want to convinve, rather than a paper writtren for an imaginary identity or a "journal" that I have no perception of.

Part III: In this last meetig we were introduced to computer search methods for locating granting agencies, and the different programs and possibilities that we can exploit. Downey was careful that the pace was

reasonable for everyone to follow and asked Christiansen, the presenter, questions that clarified material before it ever became too confusing (as is usually the case in computer assisted tutorials). This was followed by a mock peer review process that Downey headed and through which a group of the attendees reviewed the grants submitted. Downey has encouraged us to submit them in IBM and Mac formats, for the benefit of everyone to read, before they came to the workshop. I had managed to submit one. The comments that were made about my proposal were the most enlightening that I have ever heard.

Examples: -abstract was that of a professional paper not a proposal. I did not know the difference before. -avoid mandacity such as: "There is..." -if a collaborator or supervisor is mentioned, it is imperative to clearly express their contribution to the project.

Gary Downey: Gary is a dynamic, vigorous and compassionate group leader. He cares to do his work well and cares that the message he undertook to deliver gets conveyed in the best way. He listens, and answers every question asked. He is professional yet manages to convey a humane spirit towards everyone. He is thorough, direct, succinct, clear, efficient and leads effectively and firmly. The workshop format is a very good one and it would be successful with any group of qualified people. However, the success of the workshop will be guaranteed if Gary Downey is the director.

Raga M. Bakhit, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Nutrition, Foods & Exercise

10. I very much appreciate the opportunity to participate in the workshop on Grant Writing, and encourage you to offer the course in the future. As a soon-to-be Ph.D., I realize how vital it is to understand and succeed in the world of research funding. Your program was great as an introduction to that world.

I suggest that a modification of the format would be to offer separate sections for individuals who are in very different disciplines. For instance, science and engineering proposals and funding sources are probably different than those for the social sciences (although increasingly, interdisciplinary RFP's are becoming common).

Good luck with the effort, and thanks.--Rick Diz, Environmental Engineering Division, Dept. of Civil Engineering

11. I attended the grantwriting workshop only. Yes, my general reaction is that it worked very well. I attended all three sessions. I did sign up for four of the workshops because they sounded great, but the realities of my schedule permitted me to attend the one I was most interested in. Even so, I found it hard to make time to go the three meetings. But, when I was there, I was very glad I went. In each session I learned a great deal. I was not familiar with the specifics of the review process, especially panel reviews. Knowing what happens during panel review meetings will help me to write grants that, I believe, will be more successful. It was great having a program officer come to the workshop. That was a component I didn't think would be part of the workshop. The session using the internet to find grant sources was excellent. I am afraid I do not pay much attention to the instructor during computer classes as I tend to go off and do my own thing. However, I was pointed in some excellent directions.

The ring binder I bought was expensive and I wasn't going to buy it, but I did, and I am glad I did. It is great to have it as a reference. Perhaps it doesn't have to be in such an elaborate ring binder with section dividers. I have never bought a course packet that was in this format. It was very organized, but probably

unnecessary.

The room the workshop was held in was rather small for some of the sessions, especially the first one--Lori Weeks, Ph.D. student, Family and Child Development

12. comments on grantwriting: very helpful for practical knowledge. Focused primarily on academic grants though. Although much information could be applied to other types of grants, still need discussion about some practical, "field type" grants such as Urban Gardens grants for developing youth potential. Also outlined VT resources for helping students apply for grants (good).--Edward Davis, Ph.D. student, Urban Planning

13. I thought the workshop was generally an excellent idea whose implementation could potentially be improved. Perhaps this is my own difficulty, and not the fault of the organizers, but I found the process a little intimidating--there seemed to be a few people who did the vast majority of the participating, and they all seemed pre-acquainted (was this an illusion? how did they learn each other's names so quickly?) and knowledgeable about grant-writing. These folks (applaudably) seemed to be well along on grant applications before the workshop began, and while it was interesting reading and hearing about them, I felt in over my head a little. I just sat and listened, but sometimes felt like that meant I wasn't participating like I should have been (e.g., not contributing a proposal to the panel). Essentially, I think you need more workshops like this, but perhaps tailored more specifically to different levels of experience, readiness, etc.--I needed Grant Writing for Beginners (or, How to Turn Your Research Ideas Into Grant Applications), whereas your workshop seemed more like Grant Writing for People Who Already Have a Grant Written. This all sounds rather negative, and I don't intend it that way--I learned lots of interesting things, overall it was good experience, and the notebook alone may well come in handy when I am a little farther along in my professional development. Additionally, please do not take my critique as a personal indictment--you have an engaging, personable presentation style and seemed dedicated and well-prepared. Thank you for taking the time to do workshops like these--I wish you continued success with your program. -- Kirsten Bradbury, M.S. student, Clinical Psychology

Instructors

1. I found the grant writing workshop to be a far more rewarding experience than I thought it would be. I think that those individuals who attended all the sessions left with lots of useful information concerning the grant writing process. I know my confidence level for getting a grant has increased.

I especially like the flexibility that a workshop structure provides to students. I think it is a very useful and novel way to teach many topics.

I also think that the workshop format is a very useful tool for providing interdisciplinary information. I can imagine a CIS methods course built around this idea which allows students to pick and choose a number of workshops to build the methods toolbox that they desire. I can see this type of course foster interactions between all the various groups within CIS. Each group uses a different -- though overlapping -- set of tools for their research. The workshops also provide a vehicle for hands-on experience with the various methods/tools that individuals may not get in a regular classroom. I think you get the idea...

Also a workshop format would work well for a CIS-wide introduction to interdisciplinary studies course. This course might run something like: week 1: overview of Interdisciplinary Studies
weeks 2 - 8: 1 day to 1 week overview of each of the CIS groups (HST, Womens Studies, Religious

Studies,...) weeks 9-14: a series of indepth workshops provided by each group within CIS (maybe 2-3 workshops per group)- Students would be required to take 5 or more workshops. giving them more indepth study of 2-4 of the different groups. week 15: synthesis week (maybe there should be more here)

This is all off the top of my head but I think you can see how a workshop format will again provide flexibility that would benefit students.

Finally, I think this idea would very easily translate into a distance learning via computer and video feed course. Unlike many traditional course a workshop format would easily translate into a very interesting set of webpages that could be used along with discussion groups and email.--Franz Foltz, Assistant Professor, STS

2. Thank you for inviting me to participate as a guest lecturer for your social science methods seminar (STS 5514). I was delighted to describe my experiences interviewing policy professionals in Washington. The students seemed quite interested in my remarks and the discussion demonstrated their appreciation for many of the subtle features of interviewing.

This seminar is an extremely valuable graduate course. Informed reflection on research methods should be a crucial part of any dissertation research. Exposure to a variety of social science research methods allows students to expand the quality of their dissertation research by including additional scholarly techniques. I would recommend this course to any social science graduate students, but especially those near their dissertation proposal.

Beyond the educational value for the students, preparing a lecture on research methods allowed me to reflect on my own interviewing strategies. Careful consideration of the variety of interviews I conduct helped me to recognize some important cultural differences between research scientists and policy-makers. As the result of this preparation, I have initiated a research paper intended for submission to a journal on social science research methods.

Finally, as you know, I am splitting my professional time between positions at George Washington University and Virginia Tech. Lecturing for this course brought me to Blacksburg for a couple of extra days that week. Beyond the immediate benefit from this course, the extra time that week allowed for more leisurely discussions with my valued Blacksburg colleagues.
--Steven C. Weiss

Workshop #4 Online Research: Finding Research with Electronic Databases (20)

Registrants

1. I participated in the on-line search workshop. It is fast to get some information but it seems knotty in getting what you really want, there are quite a lot of junk materials. Even if you get something helpful, most of them appear too brief. Seems the traditional way of searching books or periodicals is more reliable. Of course, sometimes you may get some very new information than you get in the library. It is helpful to learn some searching skills and sources--Sigang HU, M.S. student, STS

2. Hi, and thanks for asking. I thought my workshop was very valuable. And I have but one suggestion: offer more of them but try to have, for example, all the participants in the humanities working together with the databases that would be more useful to them. I think my instructor (John) did a commendable job. Also, I appreciate your interest in keeping us up to speed with the technology. Thank you again. Justo Ulloa, Professor, Foreign Languages

3. Unfortunately, because of travel and conflicts, I was able to participate in only one of the sessions. It was, however, quite useful and I urge you to offer similar ones in the future.--Tom Howard, Associate Professor, History

4. My name is Yan Lai and I am in on-line research seminar. First, I need to thank you for your effort in these workshops. On-line research workshop let me know more about databases and how these databases would help in my research field. It is really very useful. In addition, the instructor Mr. Stemmer is very knowledgeable and nice. I am a kind of slow at computer stuff but he is always very patient. Also, I have a suggestion here, time period for these workshops is a kind of limited. If we have one more optional class to meet the instructor, I think we could do a better job. For example, we could come up with our specific research questions, and try to use these databases to find what we want under the direction of our instructors.

I hope these workshops will be offered again, so that I could have opportunities to attend other workshops, such as interview, phone survey and so on. --Yan Lai, MBA student

5. It occurs to me that a separate letter should be sent to evaluate one of the workshops I attended. This is the Research Methods Online. John Stemmer made this class special. He covered a lot of ground, mainly introducing what was out there, not instructing us on how to use each individual one in great detail. But he always offered his services privately to anyone who wanted more instruction. This is in keeping with "John as I have come to know him", not just in the context of this one course. My only worry is that John is so dedicated to serving his patrons that he may burn out early in his career!

Anyway, I thought he deserved special mention. I really learned a lot and I *DO* intend to take him up on his offer to call whenever I have more questions.--Mary Ellen Jones, Ph.D. student, STS

6. The computer/internet research resources course taught by John Stemmer was good, on the whole. I found the first two sessions more useful than the third, since they were more general. (I was out of town for the fourth session.) I do think that announcing a course on research methods in the "humanities and social sciences" was a bit too broad. As the course went on, John focused more on methods in science studies (which I assume was the goal in the first place). But the word "humanities" was something of a mis-nomer.

In future sessions, I'd recommend that this course NOT meet at the 3:30-5 time slot, since that is the absolute worst time for using the internet, and much time was wasted by not being able to access the desired data base or bibliography. Perhaps an evening course would work out better. I would definitely recommend the course be continued, but I would announce it as being primarily for grad students in Science Studies.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate.--Steve Baehr, Professor, Foreign Languages

Instructors-none

Workshop #5 Interviewing Face to Face (27)

Registrants

1. comments on face to face interview: sorry, I was only able to make one class (second). From this class, I was impressed by the presentation of one researcher experiences with policymakers and the outline of the different types of journalism/academic reporting. New to me. Helpful to understand the material each produces better. The computer recording of interviews was not helpful to me. Crowded situation. In addition, I understand computer programs well enough that I what was presented was not very new or hard to figure out on my own. Edward Davis, Ph.D. student, Urban Planning

2. I did enjoy the workshop. I'm sorry I had to leave early, but the short while I was there was very informative. The research I am doing is along slightly different lines, in engineering. But I can most apply the conducting interview topics to my job as advisor to about 40 midshipmen (sophomores), so I thank you for the session--Kai Torkelson, Navy ROTC instructor

3. I must say, these seminars have been some of the most helpful and beneficial experiences I have gained since attending Virginia Tech. For the first time, since the beginning of my doctoral experience, I have obtained hands on knowledge for conducting research. This seminar was not theoretically based, as many classes are. It taught me to conduct interviews. This is what I really needed. I wish this series of seminars could be provided every semester.

Dr. Gary Downing utilized various teaching methods (hands on, guest speakers, written examples) to conduct the seminars. All the teaching methods and materials have proven to be most valuable. He is very knowledgeable of the subject matter and chose others who were knowledgeable as well, to facilitate his teaching efforts. In addition, Dr. Downing took personal time to help answer questions I had outside of the seminars.

This has been an extremely positive and helpful experience.

4. I enjoyed the two workshops I attended (Face-to-face interview and ethnography). Face-to-face interview: Discussions about specific techniques for building rapport, and the nitty-gritty stuff about the interview situation (Steve Weiss's "what to wear" "how to formulate the opening question," etc. were also useful). I especially learned a lot from Elizabeth Creamer who liberally talked about her mistakes. It's good to know that we don't have to be perfect interviewers. Her concrete examples of what not to do were useful--Marjukka Ollilainen, Ph.D. student, Sociology

5. Sorry it took me so long to respond. You will be glad to hear that I successfully defended the proposal for my dissertation project on Nov. 15. I will be doing participant observation and semi-structured, tape-recorded, face-to-face interviews with about 30-40 participants. Some participants may be interviewed more than once.

The face-to-face interview workshops were relevant and interesting to me, given my research project. There are several points I will highlight, first that were helpful and out to be expanded, and then some points that I felt were missing and ought to be added:

- a. The main advantage for me was meeting experienced interviewers and hearing/learning how they approached their specific topics via interviews.
- b. Gary's explanation the first meeting of how to peel off the layers from what the interviewee is saying

was instructive.

- c. The "Tell me about your mother..." problem in asking was also helpful to figure out how to ask for specific information.
- d. The discussion re: transcribing with Dr. Creamer was most helpful.

Next time:

- a. It would be more helpful if we had more exposure to concrete interviews that instructors had done, and a discussion about how they were structured and set up.
- b. We could initiate some sort of mentoring relationship with particular instructors who could help each participant in the areas that they most needed it.
- c. We needed more unstructured discussion time in the workshops. They were kind of packed with info, without sufficient time to explore or ask questions. There was a sense of being rushed/short of time. This was especially evident when we tried Ethno.
- d. We could establish a network of researchers on this campus who are using particular methods, like face-to-face interviews etc, establish a listserv or a mailing list, and so stay in touch with each other in the future.
- e. More about software programs would have been good, especially more emphasis on coding strategies.
- f. Some sort of refreshments, a coffee break would have been good.

Hope this helps. Thanks for putting it together--Nandini Assar, Ph.D. student, Sociology

6. I consider my experience in the Interviewing Workshop to have been incredibly useful. The folder was a good idea (not too expensive and full of valuable resources). I particularly enjoyed hearing about the different experiences interviewing from Steve Weiss and Elizabeth Creamer. I would recommend consideration of the following for future workshops. I realize there are immense time constraints, but it would be nice if the workshops were longer, i.e., we met for one or two more sessions. Also, I think it would be a good experience if the participants broke off into pairs or small groups and practiced interviewing. Perhaps simple topics could be constructed which would guide the "practice" interview. Overall it was a wonderful experience, and I would like to thank everyone (particularly you) for all the time and effort the workshops required. --Maureen McArthur, M.S. students, STS

Instructors--none

Workshop #6 Statistics without Numbers: A Metatheoretical Approach to Number Crunching (18)

Registrants

1. I wanted to let you know that even though I didn't have much time to take full advantage of all of the offerings from STS-5514, it has the potential to be one of the most valuable courses that an STS student could take.

Specifically, I was able to attend several of the Stat. seminars--I found them informative, incredibly practical, funny (and so, attention holding), and immediately applicable to my dissertation research.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend many of the "topics" in which I had interest, and this leads me to the following suggestion: of the sessions I attended, the handouts were very valuable. After a session has been completed, why not post the handout material, or even a "boiled-down" version of the lecture material to a course net page, subdivided by topic? This would allow those who were not able to physically attend a session to catch up. This course page could be made inaccessible after the particular semester was finished--only to be re-opened the next time the course is offered, with material again posted after each session is completed. I'm part of a team teaching in the Cyberschool this semester, and it is fairly easy to set up such a page and to successively make certain material available as the semester goes along. There can even be a password generally given to all students enrolled to limit access to the page, if deemed necessary.

I hope it is offered again--I know the first time something this complex is offered, it is a logistic nightmare--but THIS is a course that holds tremendous practical potential for the students.

ps. I wish EVERY class at Tech could be like the 1st Stat class--clear, basic, funny--and above all, VERY helpful! --Sue Hagedorn, Ph.D. student, STS

2. comments on stats without numbers

VERY mislabeled. Almost required a previous stat class. After first class (blew over the head of most, almost me since I had a stat course last semester.) I stopped going.

[see comments on grant writing]

Overall, the program is valuable. Flexible. Can be cutting edge/seminar like exchange of information. The long time between sessions not helpful. The messages and notices confusing for the person involved in more than one workshop since I never knew which class notices were for. Although attendance is problem, i am not sure how to handle. Don't make for credit. Maybe charge a fee, but return it to those people who attend all sessions of a workshop??

--Edward Davis, Ph.D. student, Urban Planning

3. I attended the workshop on statistics without numbers. In general, I was very pleased with the workshop and I feel that I got a lot out of it. My previous experiences with stats classes have been focused on plugging numbers into formulas, which left me with some good math skills but a lot of confusion about what analyses to use when, how to read statistical output, etc. This workshop cleared up a lot of that confusion for me. It was basic enough to provide me with a good review, and applied enough that I feel a lot more comfortable with the analyses involved. I was particularly pleased that the instructors had handouts for all of the participants. Carol Bailey's handout was especially useful as she

covered a lot of the basics, included examples of statistical output, and suggestions for how to write-up the results of various analyses in a manuscript.

My only suggestions for future workshops would be to follow a similar format, and perhaps to offer another series of workshops that continues where this one left off and goes over more complex topics such as path analysis, etc. Perhaps a more detailed description of the workshop that includes what will be covered during each session would be useful, since some people may need review in certain areas but not others and may be more likely to attend a single workshop rather than commit to a series. I will look forward to taking more workshops in the future, if they are offered, and will certainly recommend them to other students and faculty in my department. Thanks for putting these workshops together - I feel that we could certainly use more of this kind of informal review and instruction at this university. --Katie Ingman, Ph.D. student, Psychology

4. I think the course is suitable for participants who already have spent some substantial time doing statistics; in other words, those who have taken two or three graduate courses in research methods. For such persons, this course is an avenue through which they could ask for clarifications on uncertainties that they have, after they supposedly had a glimpse of the "big picture" from the previous formal courses that they have taken. Questions that might not have arose during their previous coursetaking but has only appear after that, can be asked during this series of courses. As such, it is like a forum whereby issues on research methods could be discussed. The difference is that, now, participants are well informed questioners, wherelse in the past, they do not know enough to ask.

Another positive aspect is that the instructors forewarn participants not to repeat common mistakes that student researchers make such as the way they present the correlation matrix, and reporting of variable names in the discussion part rather than their meaningful description (eg.SATFAM rather than Family Satisfaction). Therefore participants are given good advise.

I applaud the move by all intructors involved in conducting this course and hope it will be continued in the future.

5. I thought that the program went well. Unfortuately, I was unable to attend all the sessions that I had planned to, but it was do to personal scheduling problems rather than the course set-up.

As a working attendee, I prefer the evening sessions, but realize that the bulk of the student participants may think otherwise.

I'd like to see it offered again.--Eric G. Ackermann, Special Collections/University Libraries

6. I found the class that Bill Snizek taught the first Monday night excellent. Even though I have had four stat courses here at VT, the overview and bigger picture is often neglected in favor of techniques. Bill asked some questions that made me think hard about how I planned on "crunching" some of my dissertation numbers. I only attended this class---teaching three courses this semester (long story--two new preps), I just ran out of energy. Next semester will be better. I would attend another round of this method course if it is offered.--Bob D'Intino, Ph.D. student, Management Department

Instructors

1. From my perspective the module worked great. I'd be more than happy to do it again. I'd change some of my material, obviously, but it would take minimal time commitment on my part to repeat it--so

ask me again if you think my session was worth it.

I have been pondering over the mix of students in my session. I designed my modules for beginners. For example, I gave them a print out and talked them through it line by line. A couple of people in there were way beyond this level. I was thinking that maybe you should restrict the statistics to only beginners. Then I decided that the "advanced" students were useful contributors to this module and helped me. My final view is that the statistics modules should be clearly advertized as for beginners, the basics, and if the advanced students show up they will know in advance and can act as co-facilitators. I think that was how it was done this year, so I don't suggest any changed.

I think it was a MARVELOUS idea. I know the time commitment on your part was HUGE. I'm really impressed that you pulled this off and so many students were able to benefit. GREAT JOB!!!!!!!!!--
Carol A. Bailey, Director, University Writing Program

Workshop #7 Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (7)**Registrants**

1. See general comments from Mary Ellen Jones

Instructors

1. yes! everything went fine. we only had four people show, but they made up for the small numbers in their enthusiasm. I have seen two of them in the phonebank recently and they took that responsibility to heart and made a point of letting me know how much they learned and enjoyed the experience. i'd love to see us do more of this, so keep me posted on future efforts and we'll try to build on this initial effort. -- Deborah Collins, Acting Director, Center for Survey Research

2. We had a number of individuals who did not show up for our section (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). However, the individuals who did come were quite responsive. They seemed pleased with what they learned. Upon completion of the workshops I asked for feedback from the participants. Each stated that the workshops were more informative than expected and that they were glad that they came. I believe that future workshops would be beneficial. If they were advertised six months in advance this would allow students to adjust their scheduling accordingly. In retrospect, we should have scheduled our workshops on weeknights as opposed to weekends. It was mentioned by one of the participants that this would have fostered more participation. If asked to participate in the workshops again, we would schedule our workshops more carefully. I felt that the workshops provided an opportunity for the community to become more aware of the services we provide at the CSR and for the participants to learn more about handling their own projects. Overall, it was a positive experience, I only wish we would have had more participants.--Susan Willis, Projects Manager, Center for Survey Research; M.S. student, Sociology