

FREE WORKSHOPS ON RESEARCH METHODS

METHODS @ VT.EDU

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Graduate Program in Science and Technology Studies, Center for Survey Research, and a collection of generous instructors announce a series of seven pilot workshops on methods in social and humanistic research. Topics include archival research, ethnography, open-ended interviewing, telephone interviewing, quantitative methods, grant writing, and research online.

These workshops are free and open to all, although attendance is limited. The workshops run concurrently over an eight-week period, from the first week of October until Thanksgiving. Each workshop consists of 3-4 class meetings linked by project activities and includes a resource binder, for which participants will have to pay a nominal amount to cover costs. See below for details.

Instructors are donating their time as an addition to regular duties. They share a commitment to helping researchers improve their methodological skills and a belief that such activities might be most attractive in bites smaller than a whole course. The workshops are indeed organized under the auspices of a course, STS 5514 Research Designs and Practices for STS, but only some workshop participants will likely be registered students. All are welcome.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email message to methods@vt.edu describing your interest, or send a note to Gary Downey, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Lane 332, 0237. Please give your name, address, phone #, student/faculty status, if any (e.g., full-time/part-time, year of study, field), workshop name, and a sentence about your interests. You may attend a portion of a workshop if space is available. Please indicate your desire to do so.

Workshop #1 Archives: How to Prepare for Them and What to Expect

Main Instructor: Arnold Schuetz. Other instructors: Eric Ackerman, Dick Burian, Ann Laberge, Moira Rogers, Voula Saridakis. Although depositories of knowledge, archives are substantially less "user friendly" than libraries. Restrictions may apply for their use, and they may be poorly catalogued. Because archival research often requires lengthy, expensive trips, it is important to prepare well. In addition to providing a general introduction and overview, instructors will address other frequently-encountered problems of interpretation and use. Students will help catalogue the papers of the late Robert Marshak, a distinguished physicist active in the Manhattan Project and post-WWII scientists' movement.

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Schultz 109, Tuesdays 2:30-5:00: Oct 8, Oct 15, Nov 12

Workshop #2 Anthropological Approaches to Ethnographic Methods

Main Instructor: Anita Puckett Other instructors: Gary Downey, Jan Nespor

This workshop explores the value of ethnographic methods for research involving human social interaction. Particular emphasis is given to linguistic research methods, including speech pragmatics in data collection and analysis. Instructors will offer guidance on small research projects, exploring how to identify distinct perspectives, make these more visible, and assess the value of such knowledge. Be sure to complete a short selection of readings prior to the workshop.

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Schultz 109, Mondays 1-3:00: Oct 7, Oct 21, Nov 4, Nov 18

Workshop #3 Grantwriting Strategies

Main Instructor: Gary Downey Other instructors: Franz Foltz, Doris Zallen

Writing a grant proposal is like writing an article for the wrong journal--one has to adapt one's argument for a new audience. The sequence one follows in preparing a proposal differs from the sequence of sections in a finished proposal. The methods and procedures section is most important. The finished product should be highly self-referential. Class time will be split between mapping the world of grants and writing and reviewing grant proposals.

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Lane 151, Thursdays 9:30AM-12: Oct 3, Oct 24, Nov 7

Workshop #4 Online Research: Finding Research with Electronic Databases

Main Instructor: John Stemmer

This workshop will present the various types of electronic databases available, the methods for accessing them and the strategies for searching them. It will cover both VT databases and Internet resources and emphasize social science and humanities materials. An optional initial class meeting will provide a basic introduction to the Internet.

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Newman Library computer classroom (see reference desk): Thursdays 3:30-5:00: Oct 10 (intro), Oct 17, Nov 7, Nov 14.

Workshop #5 Interviewing Face to Face

Main Instructors: Gary Downey and Elizabeth Creamer Other Instructor: Dick Burian, Steve Weiss

How do I approach someone for an interview and then prepare for it? How do I manage an interview once I am in there? How do I get inside someone's "referential frame" and avoid being avoided as an outsider? When and how can I take advantage of an outsider status? What are the differences between ethnographic interviewing, scheduled interviewing, oral history, etc.? How do I go about coding data for emerging themes and categories? Is text management software helpful? How do I interpret people's interpretations of themselves and how do I deal with apparent conflicts in my data? What sorts of ethical issues might I expect to confront and how might I deal with them? Students will find answers to these questions by experiencing the steps themselves.

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Lane 151, Thursdays 9:30AM-12: Oct 10, Oct 31, Nov 14

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

Main Instructor: William Snizek Other instructors: Carol Bailey, Michael Hughes

Participants will become familiar with the function and application of various statistical measures in the analysis of social science data. We will explore the appropriateness of different forms of statistical analysis given such things as the nature and size of a sample, the level of measurement, and one's purpose in doing the analysis. No computer or computation is required!

Capacity: 20 Time/location: Schultz 109 Mondays 7-9PM Oct 14, Oct 21, Nov 11

Workshop #7 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing

Main Instructors: Deborah Collins, Susan Willis, Mike Clark

Taught by personnel from the Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research, this workshop provides an introduction to the procedures used in conducting successful telephone surveys. Participants will gain experience with interviewing techniques, confidentiality issues, ethics in survey research, as well as with the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing system. Participants will also gain the opportunity to contribute to an ongoing CSR Project.

Capacity: 18 Time/location: Center for Survey Research Initial training Nov 7- 8, 5:30-8:30PM, plus two additional work sessions.