

ACE 398
Research Methods for Consumer Economics and Finance
Fall 2008

Meeting times and places:	Mondays 1 pm to 2:30 pm 313 Mumford Wednesdays 1 pm to 2:30 pm ACES Library Computer Lab Room 023
Instructor:	Prof. Mary Arends-Kuenning
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Telephone:	333-0753
Office Hours:	Mondays 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm Tuesdays 10:00 am to 11:00 am and by appointment
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Introduction

This course is designed as a critical inquiry course and is part of the Ethnography of the University (EUI) initiative at the University of Illinois (<http://www.eui.uiuc.edu/>). In a critical inquiry course, students come up with questions that they want to answer and then learn how to answer them. The Ethnography of the University initiative involves over 70 courses that focus on studying the university as an institution. We are the first ACE course to be part of the initiative.

You will be creating new knowledge about the university, and our goal is that the research that you create will become part of a permanent archive for other students and researchers to use in the future. The archive of student papers is found here:
<https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/755>

There is also a student conference that will occur on either Dec. 2 or 3. This provides an opportunity for you to present your work.

The research questions you define will be focused on the topics of the savings, consumption, and time allocation behavior of University of Illinois students. As a class, you will collect both qualitative and quantitative data to answer your research questions. Qualitative data includes data from in-depth interviews and from focus group discussions. Quantitative data involves data that can be codified and analyzed using statistical methods. We will collect quantitative data through use of an online survey. You will analyze the data and produce research papers.

We will be using Moodle to post assignments and to communicate with each other. You will need to enroll in the ACE 398 Moodle. To do so, go to <https://moodle.atlas.uiuc.edu/> and follow the directions given in “How do I get into my Moodle class?” The enrollment key for ACE 398 is 398.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students in ACE 398 will know how to do the following:

1. Formulate a research question
2. Write survey and interview questions
3. Recruit, select, and conduct focus group discussions
4. Enter and analyze data using the statistical software package Stata
5. Write an original research paper that contributes to the store of knowledge about students at the University of Illinois

Course Requirements

This course will be writing intensive. In addition to the final research paper, there will be reaction papers and other activities.

1. Reaction papers (30 points). These papers will be short reactions (1-2 pages double-spaced) to assigned readings in the textbook and other sources. I will expect you to come to class prepared, having read and written a reaction paper before class. You will also be responding to other students' work in ACE 398. I expect that you will be writing one of these papers per week.
2. Assignments. (20 points) These assignments will be focused on specific skills that you will develop in ACE 398, for example, assignments using Stata.
3. Database work (20 points). These assignments will be intended to build up the course's database. You will be expected to participate in a group that conducts focus groups, for example. Groups will be responsible for conducting the focus groups and then transcribing them and posting them on Moodle so that others can make use of the data for their work. You will also be responsible for writing questions for surveys and focus group discussions.
4. Final research paper (30 points). I am open to this paper being either a group project or an individual project. You may choose your own groups, have me assign you to a group, or write individually. The groups should be chosen based on having similar interests.

Grading scale

97 points and above	A+
93 to 96.5	A
90 to 92.5	A-
87 to 89.5	B+
83 to 86.5	B
80 to 82.5	B-
77 to 79.5	C+
73 to 76.5	C
70 to 72.5	C-
67 to 69.5	D+
63 to 66.5	D
60 to 62.5	D-

Below 60 F
Course Policies

Assignments are due before class starts at 1:00 pm on the due date. Late work (starting from 1:00 pm on the day the assignment is due) will be penalized a grade level for each 24-hour period that it is late, unless there is a medical or family emergency. You will have to let me know the day that the assignment is due about the emergency, and you will have to document the emergency with a note from the emergency dean, McKinley, a doctor or a family member.

I enforce all of the university rules regarding cheating and plagiarism. The Code of Policies and Regulations, Section 33 states, "It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions and from conduct that aids others in such infractions." You are responsible for all the rules and regulations of the University code, and you will be held accountable for any infractions. The University policies regarding academic integrity are found here:
http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/article_1/a1_1-402.html

Required Texts

Acock, Alan. 2008. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Booth, Wayne, Colomb, Gregory, and Williams, Joseph. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. Third Edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Krueger, Richard and Casey, Mary Anne. 2000. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research. Third Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Topics

I. What is research? (Weeks of Sept. 8 and Sept. 15)

An introduction to the EUI initiative (visit from Jason Romero and Hyunhee Kim of EUI)

Ethics and Institutional Review

Defining a research question

II. Focus groups (Approx. 4 weeks, Weeks of Sept. 22 to Oct. 13)

Overview of focus groups (Krueger and Casey, Chap. 1, pp. 3-20)

Planning the focus group study (Krueger and Casey, Chap. 2, pp. 21-38)

Developing a questioning route (Krueger and Casey, Chap. 3, pp. 39-68)

Participants in a focus group (Krueger and Casey, Chap. 4, pp. 69-95)

Moderating skills (Krueger and Casey, Chap. 5, pp. 97-124)

III. Online surveys (Approx 2 weeks, Weeks of Oct. 20 and 27)

IV. Analysis using Stata (Approx. 3 weeks, Weeks of Nov. 3, 10, and 17)

Getting started with Stata (Acock, Chap. 1, pp. 1-17)

Writing programs (Acock, Chap. 4, pp. 65-82)

Data entry (Acock, Chap. 2, pp. 19-40)

Means, medians, tabs, crosstabs and graphing (Acock, Chap. 6, pp. 109-130)

Simple OLS (Acock, Chap. 8, pp. 161-182)

Multiple regression (Acock, Chap. 10, pp. 219-258)