AEC 874: FIELD DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

I. Introduction

A. Course Description
This course focuses on “best practices” for conducting survey research in developing countries. The phrase "field data collection & analysis" reflects the course's broad concern with the principles and problems related to designing (including proposal writing), planning, and implementing surveys; data analysis; and reporting research results. While the course focuses on primary data collection, attention is also given to rapid appraisal data collection strategies, and approaches for evaluating the reliability of existing survey and secondary data.

The principles emphasized are equally applicable to micro-level research designed to investigate issues related to production, marketing, consumption behavior, non-farm activities, small-scale rural industries, rural population dynamics, natural resource management, human nutrition, and other aspects of the rural and urban economy. Furthermore, the topics covered in the course apply equally to the design of surveys to inform socioeconomic issues of interest to policy makers and social scientists in both developed and developing countries.

B. Course Objectives
Policymakers require reliable and valid micro-level socioeconomic data to design appropriate policies to promote rural development and to monitor the impact of agricultural policies and programs on farm families. Increasingly, social scientists are being called upon to identify, collect, and analyze data needed to inform rural policy decision making.

The primary objective of this course is to enhance the skills of graduate students who intend to carry out primary data-based thesis/dissertation research and will likely be responsible for managing survey research projects as a part of their post-graduate professional responsibilities.

II. Conduct of the Course and Grading Procedures

A. Conduct
1. Class meetings will follow the lecture/discussion mode. Since many of you have significant field experience, you are encouraged to contribute your personal experiences to class discussion. Prior to each class, students will be assigned articles to comment on during class.

2. Faculty and graduate students from the Department of Agricultural Economics and survey research practitioners will be invited to share their experiences in implementing survey-based research.

3. Class attendance will be taken into consideration when assigning your class participation grade.

4. Students are expected to participate in daily (3 hours) SPSS training sessions, which will be held in the Agricultural Economics Microcomputer Laboratory (403 Ag Hall), June 1-5.

B. Research Project
The course will follow the sequence of activities required to plan and execute a survey research project. To provide students an opportunity to apply the principles covered in class, the class will design and implement a client-oriented survey research project, as described below.

During the first week of class, we will discuss the class survey research project, which will focus on exploring various consumer food-related trends. The objective of the study will be to collect data to assess East Lansing residents’ a) knowledge of, b) opinions about, c) preferences for, d) purchasing behavior, and ways to encourage consumers utilize organic food, local food (localvore), community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers’ markets, and fair trade products.
To carry out the study, class members will be organized into research teams (4-5 persons per team). First, each team will conduct a rapid appraisal and prepare a research proposal for the study. Second, each team will draft and pretest a questionnaire designed to collect data needed to analyze the consumer trends noted above; and collect information about the demographic/socioeconomic characteristics (independent variables) of the respondents which may explain differences in the respondents’ knowledge, opinions, preferences, and purchasing behavior (dependent variables). Third, the class will implement a sampling procedure to select a random sample of East Lansing residents to be surveyed. Fourth, each class member will interview 20 respondents and enter these data into SPSS. Finally, each team will analyze the aggregated data set, prepare a research note, and present their analysis to the class. Detailed guidelines will be provided prior to beginning each activity.

C. Word Processing
All group assignments must be typed using Word.

D. Grade Weights Summarized - 3 credits
1. Examinations
   Mid-term 25%
   Final 25%

2. Team Research Reports
   Proposal 15%
   Questionnaire Design 15%
   Research Note 20%
   100%

Each team's research reports (i.e., Proposal, Questionnaire Design, and Research Note) will receive a single grade. When submitting each assignment, all team members are required to assess the contribution of each team member, using a standardized scoring form. These scores will be used to assign each team member an "individual participation" grade for each of the three research reports.

III. Reference Resources
A. Texts The texts with a * are available at the Student Book Store on Grand River Avenue.

Required
1. Casley, D.J. 1987. Data Collection in Developing Countries, Oxford University Press, New York. This text provides an excellent text covering problems faced and strategies for implementing survey research in developing countries. Out of print, copies in Cook Hall


3. *Salant, Patricia and Don A. Dilman. 1994. How To Conduct Your Own Survey. John Wiley & Sons. This text provides an excellent discussion of survey research, especially for conducting mail surveys in the U.S.

Recommended
4. SPSS Base 17.0 User’s Guide. This is a basic handbook for using SPSS; describes statistical procedures and how to interpret analytical results. A copy is available on the ARE server, 403 Agriculture Hall.


These texts cover similar material, but vary in terms of the depth in which they address specific topics. Copies of chapters assigned from the recommended texts are available in Cook Hall.

**Additional Text**

**B. Assigned Readings**
Copies of assigned readings (excluding required texts) are available in Cook Hall.

**C. Optional References**
Available from the instructor.

**D. Lecture Outlines**
Prior to each class, lecture notes will be posted on the course www page:
http://www.msu.edu/course/aec/874/

**IV. Course Personnel**
1. Rick Bernsten
   211 F Agricultural Hall, Tel: 5-3449 (office); 648-4378 (cell); E-mail: bernsten@msu.edu
   Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00 or by appointment

2. Margaret Beaver (SPSS instructor); E-mail: beaverm@msu.edu