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 andGrading 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), May 21-25.

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 survey research project, which will focus on exploring the behavior/attitudes of East Lansing residents with respect to protecting the environment. First, the study/survey will collect data to determine what personal actions residents are currently taking to reduce their impact on the environment (e.g., participating in curbside recycling, recycling toxic wastes, composting yard wastes, replacing incandescent with fluorescent lights, installing solar panels, installing low water use toilets, replacing gas lawn mowers with electric lawn mowers, purchasing a hybrid/electric car). Second, the study/survey will solicit residents' assessment of the City's environment-related policies/initiatives (e.g., wetland preservation, curbside...
recycling) and their opinions about how these programs could be strengthened. Third, several communities in the U.S. have implemented environmentally-friendly initiatives (e.g., providing subsidies to encourage residents to replace gas-powered lawnmowers with electric lawn mowers, replacing their gas-powered vehicles with hybrid/electric vehicles, are collecting household items discarded by college students at the end of the spring semester, storing them over the summer, and selling them to student in the fall).

To carry out the study, class members will be organized into research teams (4-5 persons per team). Each team will conduct a rapid appraisal, prepare a research proposal, and design/pretest a questionnaire designed to collect data needed to analyze the three themes noted above. The questionnaire will also collect data about residents’ demographic/socioeconomic characteristics (independent variables) that may explain differences in respondents’ responses (dependent variables) with respect to the above noted behaviors/attitudes. After implementing a sampling procedure (random sample East Lansing residents), each student will interview 15 respondents and enter these data collected into SPSS/PC. Then, each team will analyze the aggregated data set, prepare a research note, and present their analysis to the class. Guidelines for each activity 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%
   - Total: 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 will be 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 report.

III. Reference Resources
A. Texts (These texts are available at the Student Book Store on Grand River Avenue).

   Required


4. *SPSS Base 15.0 User’s Guide*. (Basic handbook for using SPSS; describes statistical procedures and how to interpret analytical results)
Recommended


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.

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

3. Course Secretary, Pat Neuman, 219 Agriculture Hall, Tel: 2-0848