This course will guide clergy professionals in developing the capacity to utilize information and research skills in the practice of pastoral ministry, including congregational studies, systems analysis, program evaluation, structured organizational experiments, surveys, focus group research, participant observer methods and community assessments. Students will gain an understanding of the principles of the research process, ethical concerns in research, and the elements of research design as applied to the practical issues of leading a congregation, planting a church or directing a faith-based organization. As principles and methods are learned they will be applied to the students individual context through the review of relevant action-research materials, reflection and discussion.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Understand the terminology and key principles of the research process as it is applied in the practice of ministry.

2. Locate and interpret published research findings, form a research question, and gather and analyze relevant information.

3. Describe a research design appropriate to a particular problem or issue in ministry.

4. Use a range of research methods, including probability sample surveys, program evaluations, focus group research, key informant interviews, congregational studies, systems analysis, structured social experiments, participant observer techniques, and community assessments.
5. Identify the ethical issues related to particular research projects and know how to seek the necessary counsel and assistance.

6. Manage the implementation of a research project within a defined time frame.

7. Analyze and interpret raw data.

8. Present research findings in the narrative and graphic forms that best convey them to the users of the information.

Outline of Topics

I. How information supports mission and ministry
   A. What information is needed to do pastoral ministry?
   B. How pastors get needed information—research design
   C. Ethical issues in research

II. Analytical tools
   A. Pastoral influence—power analysis
   B. Congregational typologies
   C. Demographics and what they mean for ministry
   D. Psychographics
   E. Generational dynamics

III. Finding what is already known about a topic—literature search
   A. Online information sources
   B. Print information sources
   C. Evaluating the reliability of information
   D. Statistical significance and sampling

IV. Quantitative research methods
   A. Interviewing
   B. Program evaluations
   C. Surveys

V. Qualitative research methods
   A. Focus groups
   B. The participant-observer approach—ethnographic studies

VI. Experimental methods
   A. Action-research
   B. Structured social/organizational experiments
   C. Experimental ministries
VII. Turning data collection into useable information
   A. Tools for analysis and interpretation of data
   B. Describing and displaying research findings
   C. Presenting information to decision-making groups

Course Requirements

1. Reading—The following five required textbooks are to be read. The first two are to be read before the intensive and all five books must be completed before you begin to write the required papers. In addition, the handouts distributed in class and at least another 500 pages from the supplementary reading list are to be completed. Because this is scheduled as an intensive, the reading is crucial to achieving the learning objectives for the course and to many of the future classes you will take in the Doctor of Ministry program.


   B. Adventist Congregations Today by Monte Sahlin (2003, Center for Creative Ministry, Lincoln)


   E. Understanding Your Community by Monte Sahlin (2005, Center for Creative Ministry, Lincoln)

[You can obtain the two books by Monte Sahlin from AdventSource, the North American Division distribution center, at www.adventsource.org or (800) 328-0525. You can order the other three books from any of the major online booksellers—Amazon, Powell’s or Barnes & Noble.]

2. Participation in the Intensive—Since this is presented on a short, intensive schedule, faithful attendance and participation will have an impact on your overall grade. By the time a student gets to graduate study, it is assumed that s/he possesses the maturity to recognize the importance of class attendance. No attendance record will be taken. However, because of the intensive schedule and seminar format of the course, students are expected to be present and take an active part in all discussions of the readings and materials presented. Participation in the discussions will make up 20% of the final grade. Being present “in spirit” will not count toward participation.

3. Interview Field Notes—Two (2) interviews are to be conducted and verbatim field notes submitted. The student will keyboard a verbatim report within 24 hours after each interview. An introductory paragraph must include the purpose of the inquiry and who was interviewed. (Fictional names can be used to protect confidentiality.) The interviews are to be related to
gathering information relative to an actual ministry situation. There is no minimum or maximum page requirement; the paper should be sufficiently long to demonstrate the fact finding skills of the student.

4. **Research Management Plan**—Select one particular research method and write a plan for the implementation of this method in response to a simple ministry situation that you currently face. This paper should be two to five pages, outlining specific steps necessary for you to implement data collection and analysis. It must include a budget and time allocation. The assignment does **not** require actual implementation of the plan.

5. **Major Paper**—Write a 20 to 40-page paper describing the congregation or ministry in which you serve and its context—including basic statistics such as typical attendance and total participation, community context, demographics, growth/decline trends, involvement of volunteers, financial giving, regular activities and programs, etc.—as well as a situation analysis of your ministry, its goals and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation or ministry organization, and the opportunities and threats in the community or relevant ministry context.

*Writing assignments are to be typewritten according to the American Psychological Association (APA) Style Book and may be submitted in hard copy or electronic form. Electronic submissions must be in one of the following three programs: MS Word, Word Perfect or PDF (Adobe Acrobat). Since this is a graduate course, correct spelling, proper grammar, non-sexist and non-racist language are basic requirements. Electronic submission of papers is preferred!*

**Grading:**

The final course grade will be based on the following:

- Attendance and participation in class meetings 20% of grade
- Field notes on two interviews 20% of grade
- Major paper 50% of grade
- Research implementation plan 10% of grade

**Course time parameters and calculations:**

The general rule for the Doctor of Ministry program is that 80 clock hours are to be spent in study for each semester credit. Since this class is two hours, the total time that should be spent in study is 160 hours. No more than 30 hours will be spent in the intensive, so at least another 130 hours should be spent in reading, doing the assignments, etc.
Supplementary Bibliography


Irene Isabel Blea, Researching Chicano Communities: Social-Historical, Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Space (1995, Praeger, Westport CT)


Jean Bystedt, Siri Lynn and Deborah Potts, Moderating to the Max: A full-tilt guide to creative, insightful focus groups and depth interviews (2003, Paramount Market Publishing, Ithaca NY)


V. Bailey Gillespie, Michael J. Donahue, Ed Boyatt and Barry Gane, *Valuegenesis Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations* (2004, Hancock Center, Riverside)


Carole Kayrooz and Chris Trevitt, *Research in Organizations and Communities: Tales from the real world* (2005, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, Australia)

Eva Keller, *The Road to Clarity: Seventh-day Adventism in Madagascar* (2005, Palgrave Macmillan, New York City)


David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (2008, Zondervan, Grand Rapids)


Paul Richardson and Carmen Rusu, *Public Perceptions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America* (2003, Center for Creative Ministry, Lincoln NE)


John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (2006, SCM Press, London)


Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (1999, University of Illinois Press, Urbana)


