

Syllabus
GSEM730 Field Research for Ministry
Summer 2012

Instructors:

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Credits: 2

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This course will meet in an intensive May 20-22, 2012, on the campus of Andrews University. *A Webinar session will be scheduled with the class toward the end of August to complete the requirements for the class.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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 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 student's individual context through the review of relevant action-research materials, reflection and discussion.

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, and gather and analyze relevant information.
3. Use a range of research methods, including key informant interviews, congregational studies, focus group research, participant observer techniques, action research, community assessments, program evaluations and simple surveys to collect descriptive statistics from local churches and similar groups.
4. Analyze and interpret raw data, especially from qualitative research.

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

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend and participate fully in the intensive and the Webinar session.
2. Complete all reading assignments, including key handouts.
3. Write a paper (using available sources of information) which describes your congregation or ministry organization and its community context to be incorporated into Chapter 1 of the Doctor of Ministry Project Document.

ATTENDANCE:

By the time a student gets to a terminal degree program, it is assumed that s/he possesses the maturity to recognize the importance of class attendance. Students are expected to be present and take an active part in all discussions. Participation in the intensive and the Webinar will make up 25% of the final grade. Being present “in spirit” will not count toward participation.

INTENSIVE & WEBINAR SCHEDULE:

Sunday, May 20, 8 a.m. — Intro to Practical Learning and Use of Information in Ministry
Sunday, May 20, 1:30 p.m. — Critical Thinking Tools: Frameworks for Analyzing Congregations
Monday, May 21, 8 a.m. — Information Sources: How to Read and Evaluate Research Reports
Monday, May 21, 1:30 p.m. — Qualitative Methods: Participant-Observer, Interviewing, Focus Groups
Tuesday, May 22, 8 a.m. — Action-Research and Organizational Experiments
Tuesday, May 22, 1:30 p.m. — Analyzing & Interpreting Data: Simple Surveys

Near August 20, 2012 (to be negotiated the last day of the intensive) — Date for Webinar Session & Deadline for Required Reading and Paper

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Reading Assignments—The required textbooks and handouts are to be read, starting even before the intensive and completed no later than the Webinar session. 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. Students will turn in a statement affirming that all the reading has been done. Turn this assignment in by uploading it to Moodle.

2. Research Paper—Use available sources of information to write a 15-page paper describing the congregation or ministry organization in which you serve—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 an analysis of the congregation and community as a context for your Doctor of Ministry Project. This paper may be submitted separately or as a part of Chapter 1 of the Doctor of Ministry Project Document. A detailed outline of what is expected in the paper will be distributed and explained during the intensive.

This paper is to be written according to the latest edition of Andrews Standards for Written Work and the American Psychological Association (APA) Style Manual, and submitted via Moodle in MS Word. Since this is a graduate course, correct spelling, proper grammar, non-sexist and non-racist language usage are basic requirements.

All assignments will be turned in via Moodle (go to <https://aumoodle.andrews.edu/login/index.php> and log in using your AU username and password)

Assignments are **not** accepted via email or hard copy.

DEADLINES:

Near August 20, 2012 (to be negotiated the final day of the intensive) — Complete the reading for the course (Assignment 1) and the paper for the course (Assignment 2).

GRADING:

The final course grade will be based on the following:

Attendance at the intensive and the Webinar	25% of grade
Reading, including key handouts	25% of grade
Research paper	50% of grade

Letter grade scale:

A (96-100%)	B (85-89%)	C (75-78%)
A- (93-95%)	B- (82-84%)	C- (72-74%)
B+ (90-92%)	C+ (79-81%)	

Penalty for late assignments:

- By assignment due date: (possible A grade)
- Late up to 30 days: (no more than A- grade)
- Late 31 to 60 days: (no more than B+ grade)
- Late 61 to 90 days: (no more than B grade)

Late 91 days or more: **DN** (deferred and **not completable**). No assignments are accepted more than 90 days after the due date. A grade of DN means that you cannot pass the class, and must drop out of your cohort. You would then have to start the program over with a new cohort, from the beginning. **No exceptions are made or excuses accepted.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a serious offense. Disciplinary measures may include dismissal from the program.