COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS

This course prepares you to propose, conduct, and report field research effectively. We will discuss how to select an appropriate study topic, develop methods, and construct a well-written research proposal that places your investigation into the context of previous knowledge. In class we will cover the basics of both human-centered research, including ethical considerations, and research in the natural sciences. During the first portion of the course in Dar es Salaam you will also have the opportunity to learn and practice several data collection techniques, from interviewing skills to collecting quantitative data. Before leaving for Tarangire National Park, you will write and orally present your research proposal and will provide feedback to your peers as they conceptualize and develop their own proposals.

In the final weeks of the course you will be guided to analyze and present your data effectively, to write a strong report in appropriate format, and to present your findings orally in a clear and engaging manner.

While pursuing these goals specific to your Tanzanian research project, I also expect that everyone will improve in some of the larger objectives of your education, such as thinking creatively and critically and writing and communicating orally. Developing and completing a research project will challenge and stimulate you intellectually, and I hope you have a lot of fun and learn a tremendous amount in the process.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required text:


**Possible: ethnographic study

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

We will approach the course goals through lecture, discussion, hands-on activities, peer review, and professor feedback. I include peer review since we learn a great deal about developing interesting research ideas and writing effectively by critically evaluating the work of others.

- Quizzes on class material 5%
- Class activities 5%
- Participation 20%
- Research project 70%
- Draft of proposal 5%
Feedback on others’ proposals 8
Final written proposal 12
Feedback to others in the field 8
Feedback on others’ draft reports 8
Final research report 20
Final oral presentation 9

SCHEDULE

Week 1 What is research? Selecting and focusing your research idea, putting your work into the context of previous work, critically evaluating previous research.

Week 2 Refining your research hypothesis or question. Human subjects and informed consent, research ethics, IRB procedures. Writing: simple, clear sentences.


Week 4 Samples, bias, selecting research subjects and communities. Focus groups, surveys.

Week 5 Collecting strong quantitative data: selecting variables to measure, confounding variables, bias, random and stratified random sampling. Activity: collecting and presenting quantitative data. Draft of research proposal due.

Week 6 Statistics for quantitative data: the need for statistics, central tendency and variability, P values and what they mean, statistical tests that evaluate differences among groups, tests that evaluate relationships between two variables. Computer activity: statistically analyzing data collected last week.

Week 7 Student presentations of research proposals. Final proposal due.

Week 8 Break

Week 9 Field trip: Ecology of Maasai ecosystem-- Arusha, Lake Manyara National Park, Ngorogoro Conservation Area, Serengeti NP

Weeks 10-13 Field work in and around Tarangire National Park. We will meet frequently to share what we have learned and to get feedback from others.

Week 14 Field trip: Human Evolution--Lake Eyasi, Olduvai Gorge, Laetoli

Week 15-17 Pulling your project together: compiling data. Writing: organization, writing results and discussion. Giving effective feedback to others. Effective oral presentations. Individual meetings.

Week 16: Draft of proposal due.

Week 17: Final proposal due.

2 September 2013