Social Research, Ways of Knowing, and You

LIS 570

what this course is about

what's "research"?

finding out something about the universe, reporting it

ways of knowing

how do you "know" things?

problems with "knowing"

memory is imperfect

perception is imperfect

interpretation

influencing what's going on

language

why this course?

understand nature of research

be able to conduct it

evaluate/be an intelligent consumer

work with it

overview of "scientific method"

idea

- inspiration, replication, from other ideas, theory, literature, contradictory findings, gaps in knowledge, problem, programmatic research, $, war, politics
- leads to *statement of the problem*

literature review (evaluative)

- what else, if anything, has been done
- how relates/differs, suggestions, warnings
- conventions in field
- look for theory, hypotheses, definitions, findings

overview of "scientific method"

formulate questions, hypotheses
- single concise statement of what you're trying to find out
- *research question*
- definitions, variables

design investigation
- choose method, instruments
- population, sample
- analysis method(s)

overview of "scientific method"

investigate
- data collection, carry out investigative techniques

analyze data
- appropriate to data, RQ, method

conclusions
- what did you find?

report findings
- write paper, poster, conference presentation, present to management, feed back into design

overview of "scientific method"

can be problems, difficulties at any stage

iterative

NOT trying to prove anything

nature of scientific inquiry

assumes there is an external reality, which is organized and knowable

goal of understanding

criteria for explanations
- clarify, empiricity, logic, generality, simplicity, publicness

types of social science research

experiments
- take an action, manipulate reality, observe results

surveys/interviews
- ask questions, record answers

field
- direct observation of social phenomena in natural setting

unobtrusive
- content analysis, existing data, historical documents

evaluation
- testing of social (technological) interventions in real life

goals & purposes of research

exploratory
- freedom, curiosity-based
- no hypotheses, no claims
- may use to investigate feasibility of larger study
- small samples, little claims to representativeness/generalizability

descriptive
- accurate, precise description of situations, events, phenomena

explanatory
- why
- associations

goals & purposes of research

predictive
- extrapolate, inference

not mutually exclusive

hierarchical?

paradigms

many, 2 primary (basic?)
- quantitative/positivistic
- qualitative/naturalistic

evaluation research and applied research

determining the effectiveness of systems, services, or policies

informing the planning and design of effective systems, services, or policies

effectiveness – the ability of a system to perform the job it is intended to do and the overall "satisfaction" of the people affected

how are people involved with the system?

a good study should

be rooted in previous work

be parsimonious

be plausible, credible, sensible

be general

generate further research

be falsifiable, verifiable

practicalities

time

scale

support, resources

motivation