Course Description: Getting to the policy discussion table is one of the objectives pursued by labor studies scholars and labor advocates. However, some participants have remarked that “you cannot get to the policy discussion table until you have proven that you can crunch the numbers.” At the same time, qualitative methods have become increasingly important in labor studies to delineate the meanings of concepts, and to provide detailed information about the processes underlying labor market outcomes without which our understanding would be incomplete. This course provides students with additional opportunities to engage in policy making discourse and broaden their scholarship by offering an introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods in labor studies.

Learning Goals: The course seeks to develop your skills as a consumer and a producer of qualitative and quantitative research in labor studies, with more emphasis on the consumer aspects. The course requirements are designed with this objective in mind. Upon completion of the course you will be a more informed and critical reader of academic work, news accounts, and policy materials that present statistical and qualitative evidence. You will also learn how to conduct and present your own analyses. Many of the applied readings will focus specifically on issues in feminist economics, such as the status of women in the labor market and to women in developing countries.

Our class meetings will emphasize how alternative methods are used to assemble, describe, and draw inferences from bodies of data. Emphasis is on basic but serviceable methods of analysis of information drawn from survey data, participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. Our coverage of statistical analysis starts simple and gets gradually more involved. We study graphical approaches to the display of data, descriptive statistics for making statements about a body of data, and inferential statistics for generalizing beyond a body of data to some larger population of interest. Because we are covering many topics involving research methods in labor studies, we will not delve into any particular topic in great detail.

Evaluation: Your comfort with and abilities in qualitative and quantitative analysis will improve with timely practice and repetition. For this reason the course requires problem sets. Some problems involve modest amounts of calculation, while others require that you learn how to analyze data using the spreadsheet package Excel. In some problem sets you will be asked to write short summaries and interpretations of findings you have obtained. The problem sets are complemented by a PowerPoint presentation and a final written paper in which you practice the formulation of hypotheses, the description of data and methods, and the presentation of quantitative evidence in tables and graphs.

Grades are determined by two hourly exams (50%), one in-class presentation (20%), and three problem sets/exercises (30%).
**Hourly Exams:** The first exam is scheduled for Tuesday Oct. 15, and the second exam is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 3.

**In-Class Presentation:** In groups of two, you will make a 20-minute presentation. You and your partner will prepare a powerpoint presentation for the class that presents the arguments and evidence from an article on the syllabus.

**Problem Sets:** The problem sets are designed to help you practice collecting data, presenting results, and discussing these results. You will be allowed to work as groups on the problem sets but are expected to turn in your work independently.

**Required Software:** Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, (Microsoft Bundle Student Edition available from Rutgers at substantial discount use either 2007 or 2003), Adobe Acrobat Reader 10 (free download), RADS (Rutgers Antivirus Delivery Service; free from Rutgers Computing Services), and STATA (available at Rutgers computer labs and via apps.rutgers.edu).

**Class Format and Special Events:** The class format is a combination of lecture by the professor, class discussion, student presentations, and in-class small group work. Each class meeting will have a short break.

**Required Books:** The course has one required book that is available at the campus bookstore and online:


**Class Schedule, Topics, and Reading Assignments:** All articles are available electronically on Sakai.

**Week 1:** Defining a Research Question: From Theory to Methodology


**Week 2:** An Introduction to Qualitative Methods


**Week 3:** Importance of a Mixed Methods Approach

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 1, “Speaking of Statistics.”


**Week 4: Navigating Measurement Issues in Published Statistics about Work and Pay**


**Week 5: Using Graphs and Charts to Send Effective Messages**

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 3, “Visual Displays of Data.”


**Week 6: Understanding Statistical Terms in Labor Studies**

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 4, “Describing Data.”


**Week 7: Understanding Statistical Terms in Labor Studies**

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 5, “A Normal World.”


**Week 8: Applying Probability Analysis to Important Topics in Labor Studies**

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 6, “Probability in Statistics.”


**Week 9: Making Quantitative Arguments in Policy Dialogues: Correlation and Causality**

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 7, “Correlation and Causality.”


Week 10: What Data can Labor Economists Use to Prove Their Point? Samples and Populations

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 8, “From Samples to Populations.”


Week 11: Hypothesis Testing in the Examination of Employment and Wage Issues

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 9, “Hypothesis Testing.”


Week 12: Basic Statistical Tests in Labor Research: Why Learn About this Powerful Tool?

Bennett, Briggs, Triola: Chapter 10, “t Tests, Two-Way Tables, and ANOVA.”


Week 13: Get a Seat at the Policy Table: Pointers to Understanding Regression Analysis


Week 14: Joining the Policy Debates: Understanding Hypothesis Testing in Regression Analysis
