**Students’ Frequently Asked Questions about The Methodology Center’s**

**One-Credit Courses**

**What are The Methodology Center’s One-Credit Courses?**

Every year, The Methodology Center organizes three one-credit courses, taught over the Fall and

Spring semesters. Each course is highly focused on a specialized methodological topic. The courses are aimed at advanced graduate students but are also attended by post-docs, research associates, and faculty. Examples of topics of previous courses are latent class/latent transition analysis, missing data, and time-varying effect modeling.

**What is the purpose of these courses?**

Each course provides an advanced introduction to a specialized methodological topic. Typically these are topics it is good to have some exposure to, but for one reason or another are rarely covered in graduate courses. In many cases the course is a version of a workshop that you would have to pay hundreds of dollars to take outside of PSU.

**Who teaches these courses?**

The faculty who teach these courses are experts in the content area being covered. They are teaching on a VOLUNTARY basis; in other words, they are not being paid to teach the one-credit courses and are teaching over and above their assigned teaching responsibilities. If you take one or more of the courses, please keep this in mind. If you enjoy a course, it would be a nice gesture to say “thank you” to the instructor, either in person or by email, for volunteering their time in this valuable way.

**I want to take one of these courses because there are certain analyses I need to do on my own data. Will I be able to work on my own data as part of the course?**

Although you can expect to gain skills that will help you in your data analyses, it is best not to expect to work on your own data as part of the course. The instructors of these courses have to convey a lot of complex information in a short time. Most of them prefer to use in-class and homework examples that clearly demonstrate a pedagogical point. From an instructor’s point of view, allowing students to use their own data for class-related exercises is risky for a number of reasons. For example, a student’s data may present complexities that go beyond what can be covered in the course; the data may not be suitable for making some important concepts clear; or a particular student’s data analysis challenges can take a disproportionate amount of class time, reducing the time that can be spent on issues of more general interest.

However, this does not mean you cannot get the input you want. You will find that most instructors will be happy to schedule a time to meet with you one-on-one about your data analysis questions, particularly if your course-related performance demonstrates a genuine interest in the material.

**Why are the courses so short? I think a regular three-credit course would be appropriate for some of these topics**.

It is entirely possible that there is enough material on some topics to fill a three-credit course. However, keep in mind that these courses are being taught by the faculty on a VOLUNTARY basis precisely because there is a need that is not being met by any three-credit courses currently on the books and supported by departments. The courses are deliberately kept short so that the burden is not overwhelming to the faculty volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about a topic, most instructors will be happy to furnish you with a list of advanced readings, and will also meet with you to answer questions.

**When do the courses meet?**

Course times vary by instructor. Each course is usually five weeks long, but classes may be held any day of the week. Class time is two and a half hours. Typically, the courses are offered sequentially so that there will be no conflicts for those who wish to enroll in all three courses.

**Are these courses fun?**

They usually are fun for both the instructors and the students. Nobody has to teach them and nobody has to take them, so everyone is involved because they want to be. This does not mean the courses are easy—they aren’t.

**Do I have to sign up for all three courses?**

No, you can sign up for one, two, or all three courses.

**Where do the courses meet?**

The default is for all courses to meet in The Methodology Center Conference Room. However, some instructors may select another room. Check the course announcement posted on The Methodology Center’s web site for details.

**Are eating and drinking allowed in The Methodology Center Conference Room?**

Yes. As long as everyone continues to clean up after themselves, we will continue to allow eating and drinking in the conference room.

**Are the courses offered by The Methodology Center or by a department?**

Each course is offered by a degree-granting department. Each course in a suite may be offered by a different department. The instructor is responsible for arranging for a department and course number.

**Is each course in the suite run independently?**

The courses are run independently in most respects. The instructor is responsible for arranging a course number in his or her own department and determining the syllabus, prerequisites, enrollment limits, and grading criteria. Thus there may be differences in teaching style, grading system, expectations, etc. across the courses.

**Are auditors allowed?**

Whether or not to allow auditors is up to the individual instructor.

**Are the courses intended for graduate students from any particular department?**

No. Instructors are asked to gear instruction broadly to any graduate student in the social/behavioral sciences who is interested in advanced quantitative methods. However, there are usually prerequisites, and they differ from course to course. It is a good idea to check with the instructor.

**Is enrollment limited?**

Yes. Most instructors use enrollment caps to keep the size of the class manageable, usually 15 students. In addition, due to the nature of the material, most impose prerequisites. It is very common for enrollment limits to be reached early, and for many interested students to be turned away. You are encouraged to enroll early. If you cannot get into a course, remember that we offer courses yearly, and it is likely you will have another chance in two or three years.

**When and how will the courses be advertised?**

Courses are announced via The Methodology Center’s Penn State-specific eNews (sent once a semester); you may sign up for our eNews at [methodology.psu.edu/pubs/enews](http://methodology.psu.edu/pubs/enews). Be sure to register with your Penn State email address. You can also check The Methodology Center’s web site for information: [methodology.psu.edu/training/courses](http://methodology.psu.edu/training/courses).

**If I have a question that does not appear in this list of FAQ’s, what should I do?**

If you have a question about a specific course, contact the instructor of that course. If you have a general question, email Bethany Bray (<mailto:bcbray@psu.edu>), Outreach Director of The Methodology

Center.