

SOC/SW 352/552 Research Methods (Section 2)
Fall 2019

Instructor: M. David Chunyu, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology
Lecture: Tu Th, 3:30PM – 4:45PM, Collins Classroom Center (CCC) 330 (or a computer lab, which is to be used for the “Quantitative Data Analysis” units, and its location and time of use will be announced in advance.)
My Office: CCC 460
Office Hours: Tu Th, 1:00PM – 1:50PM; Fr, 1:00PM – 2:50PM; or by appointment
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Course Overview

This course provides a general introduction to the methodology in the social sciences. In this course students will acquire knowledge and skills as more informed and critical readers of social science research; at the same time, students will also gain hands-on experience and develop the skills necessary to initiate, design, and administer their own social science research projects that address specific and testable questions.

Even for those who never do social science professionally, this course teaches universally useful skills: asking good questions, avoiding logical fallacies, finding relevant literature, and careful marshalling of evidence. These are powerful tools for anyone who is curious about any aspect of the social world.

The major topics of this course include: the logic of scientific inquiry, problem formulation, variables, operationalization and measurement, reliability and validity, sampling, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and the ethics of social research.

This course is work-intensive. Students will be required to complete a series of assignments and research tasks in and outside the classroom. Part of this course is designed to complement the lectures by letting students gain hands-on experience using a computer and statistical software. Students will learn how to use SPSS Statistics, a widely used statistical software for social scientists. We will be mainly using SPSS to analyze data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and the American Community Survey (ACS). In addition, students may also use data from the 2017 Portage County Local Indicators For Excellence (LIFE) survey for their own research projects. The time and location of the SPSS learning sessions will be announced in advance.

For Sociology majors, this course fulfills the “Capstone Experience” requirement.

For Social Work majors, this course also provides them with an opportunity to engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice, which is one of the Social Work core competencies.

Social Work Competency

All aspects of this course help students work toward the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competency of “**practice-informed research and research-informed practice**” for accredited social work programs:

➤ *Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.*

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use practice and theory to inform social science inquiry and research;
2. Define the basic steps in social science research;
3. Describe and compare various research techniques used in the social sciences;
4. Evaluate and critique published research literature on the basis of methodological merits;
5. Initiate, design, and administer research projects of their own;
6. Analyze and interpret social science data;
7. Use the library more effectively;
8. Think and communicate more logically and coherently;
9. Recognize the ethical issues involved in social research and practice ethical research standards;
10. Inform and evaluate social work practice based on social science research.

Course Prerequisites:

Students must have taken SOC 350 (Sociological Theory) and SOC 351 (Social Statistics), or be concurrently enrolled in such a class, or with the permission of the instructor.

Textbook

The following book is required and has been ordered at the university bookstore:

Earl R. Babbie. 2016. *The Practice of Social Research*. 14th Edition. Cengage Learning.

Additional Course Materials

Certain course materials (the instructor's lecture slides, datasets and related documentation, video tutorials on using computer software, etc.) will be made available for download from Canvas.

The instructor will also hand out various types of materials (announcements, review exercises, assignments, supplemental reading, etc.) and show many video clips in class (these videos provide important illustrative information related to the lectures and they are different and separate from the video tutorials on using computer software). These in-class handouts and video clips will ***NOT*** be posted in Canvas. The extra hard copies of the in-class handouts, if available, can still be picked up from the wall basket outside the instructor's office CCC 460. But the video clips that are played in class will ***NOT*** be shared with students after class. Since these video clips can be very relevant to the exams and they are played only once in class, it is essential that students attend class fully and take good notes of the video in order to be prepared for the exams [also see the "Exams (40 Points)" section below].

Grading

A student's final course grade is based entirely on the "TOTAL POINTS" s/he has earned over the semester. The "TOTAL POINTS" are simply the total crude points a student has accumulated from assignments, presentations, research project, exams, and class participation, plus optional bonus points if applicable (also see the "Grading Scale" section below about the calculation of a student's "TOTAL POINTS").

A student's max total points consist of the following:

➤ Exams	40 Points	
❖ <i>Midterm exam</i>		<i>20 points</i>
❖ <i>Final exam</i>		<i>20 points</i>
➤ Research Project	35 Points	
❖ <i>Research paper drafts</i>		<i>9 points</i>
❖ <i>Research project presentation and discussion</i>		<i>6 points</i>
❖ <i>Complete research paper</i>		<i>20 points</i>

➤ <i>Miscellaneous Assignments</i>	<i>15 Points</i>
❖ <i>News report and response</i>	<i>5 points</i>
❖ <i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	<i>8 points</i>
❖ <i>Human subjects protections training</i>	<i>2 points</i>
➤ <i>Class Participation</i>	<i>10 Points</i>

Max Total = 100 Points

Exams (40 Points)

There will be two exams: one midterm exam and one final exam. Both exams will be closed-book, in-class exams, but students will be allowed to use a full-length letter-sized two-sided note sheet during the exams. The exams will be a combination of true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. Each exam covers about one half of the course material and so they are not cumulative. The exam questions will be based on lectures, reading, review exercises, lab activities, assignments, and video clips played in class. Each exam counts as 20 points.

To help students prepare for the exams, at the end of each chapter/section the instructor will hand out the hard copies of the pertinent review exercises in class (also see “Additional Course Materials” above about the in-class handouts). These review exercises are designed to help students digest and reinforce the class learning. Also importantly, these review exercises are very closely tied to the exams, so students are highly recommended to make good use of these review exercises when preparing for the exams.

However, students should be aware that these review exercises do not cover the video clips played in class, which are also very relevant to the exams. Because the video clips are typically played only once in class and they are not shared with students after class, it is essential that students attend class fully and take good notes of the video in order to be prepared for the exams (also see “Additional Course Materials” above about the in-class video clips).

The final exam will be given on ***Thursday, December 19 at 8:00AM – 10:00AM, in CCC 330.***

Take careful note of the exam schedules, especially the date and time of the final exam, because the final exam schedule is usually not the same as the regular class meeting schedule. ***NEITHER EARLIER NOR MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE OFFERED EXCEPT IN DOCUMENTED CONFLICTS OR EMERGENCIES.*** [See “Class Participation (10 Points)” below for more information about what qualifies as proper documentation.]

Research Project (35 Points)

The culminating experience in this course is a student research project on a topic of her/his own choice. This way you will put your learning from this course into practice. The final product of the student research project is a research paper, which can be either a research proposal or a research report, depending upon the student’s preference.

- If you choose to write a research *PROPOSAL*, you will *NOT* actually conduct the research; instead, you should specify a detailed *PLAN* on how you would carry out the research.

OR

- If you choose to do a research *REPORT*, you will actually carry out the research by analyzing a *REAL* dataset and then writing up the results of your analysis.

Detailed instructions about how to write the research paper will be handed out separately in class.

Students are encouraged to join teams to work on the research project. Each team shall consist of up to four (4) members. The research paper will be the collective responsibility of the work team. Although each of you should work all elements of the paper, the team will submit one single copy of the completed work. All members of the team will therefore receive the same grade. However, in case there is a significant work imbalance within a team, the instructor may give the team members different grades based on the instructor's own assessment and/or the team members' peer evaluation. You may elect not to participate in a work team if you prefer to work alone. However, once you have made the decision to work alone or to join a team, you can't change your mind. If you choose to work alone, you must still accomplish the same objectives as a team does.

The research project work consists of the following three components:

- (1) Research paper drafts = 9 points
- (2) Research project presentation and discussion = 6 points
- (3) Complete research paper = 20 points

(1) Research Paper Drafts

Before students submit their complete research paper, they shall write several drafts of portions of this paper. This allows the instructor to monitor students' progress in their research projects, and more importantly, to offer constructive feedback to students before they submit the entire complete paper. Just like the complete research paper, these research paper drafts will be the collective responsibility of the work team if a student chooses to join one. Students will write three paper drafts over the course of the semester. ***Altogether these three research paper drafts are worth 9 points.*** For each draft, just like the complete research paper, each team will submit one single copy and all members of the team will receive the same grade unless extenuating circumstances occur. These paper drafts shall be submitted to Canvas as WORD documents so that the instructor can insert comments and edits directly into students' files. As a result, ***PDF files are NOT acceptable.***

(2) Research Project Presentation and Discussion

By the end of the semester students will showcase their research projects through in-class presentations. In addition, they will also be required to serve as discussants in class to provide oral feedback to research

projects presented by another student/work team. Just like the written working drafts and the complete research paper, both the research project presentation and the discussion will be the collective responsibility of the work team if a student chooses to join one, and so all members of the team will receive the same “presentation” and “discussion” grades unless extenuating circumstances occur. Detailed instructions about the research project presentation and discussion will be handed out separately in class.

The “presentation” part is worth 4 points and the “discussion” part is worth 2 points.

(3) Complete Research Paper

This is the final product of the student research project. It shall be a more complete and much improved version compared to students’ earlier drafts based on the instructor’s feedback and peer discussion. The complete research paper shall be submitted as a WORD document (PDF NOT acceptable) to Canvas. ***The complete research paper is due on December 13 (Friday). The complete research paper itself is worth 20 points.***

For students who need writing support at any point in the writing process, they can seek help from the Writing Lab in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC). The Writing Lab is located in the basement of the library—Albertson Hall (ALB) 018. Students can drop in ALB 018 or call (715) 346-3568 for an appointment.

Miscellaneous Assignments (15 Points)

Throughout the semester students will complete a series of assignments in and outside the classroom:

- (1) News report and response = 5 points;
- (2) Quantitative data analysis = 8 points;
- (3) Human subjects protections training = 2 points.

(1) News Report and Response

Each student is also required to do a news report. This assignment is designed to train students to appreciate the application of social research methods in the mass media reporting of scientific studies and discoveries that can be relevant to our everyday life. This assignment consists of three components: (i) oral presentation in class; (ii) a short written report submitted to Canvas; and (iii) oral response to another student’s news report. This assignment is entirely individual work and completely separate from students’ research projects, and therefore will be evaluated individually. Detailed instructions on the news report assignment will be handed out separately in class. ***These news-report related assignments count as 5 points.***

(2) Quantitative Data Analysis

Another type of assignments is quantitative data analysis, a.k.a. secondary analysis. Quantitative data analysis typically involves using a computer and statistical software to process and analyze social science data. We will be mainly using SPSS to analyze data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and the American Community Survey (ACS). The GSS and ACS datasets will be made available for download from the “Content” area of Canvas. Students can use any computer in the DUC and Albertson Hall

(library) PC labs to work on the computing assignments (you may have to install SPSS on some of these lab computers yourself if the program hasn't been installed there already, but that is fairly easy to do). These quantitative data analysis assignments are also entirely individual work and completely separate from students' research projects, and therefore will all be evaluated individually. These quantitative data analysis assignments shall be submitted *in hard copy, NOT as electronic files. Altogether they are worth 8 points.*

(3) Human Subjects Protections Training

Finally, students are required to complete the UWSP human subjects protections training through an online program by Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and receive a CITI certificate. The CITI certificate will be valid for 3 years.

To begin the certification with CITI, students shall go to the CITI program website at <https://www.citiprogram.org/index.cfm?pageID=154>. Students shall register an account on that website and select University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as the organization affiliation (it would be better to use "University of Wisconsin" as the search keywords to trigger a drop-down menu and then select from there). When completing their registration, for "Role in Research" students shall select "Student Researcher – Undergraduate/Graduate" from the drop-down menu; when selecting curriculum, students shall choose "Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers" under "Human Subjects Research" as their learner group.

The Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers (SBE) Basic Course requires the learner to satisfactorily complete all the required modules **and** a certain number of elective modules along with the associated quizzes. Upon satisfactory completion of the entire SBE Basic Course, students will receive a course Completion Report as a PDF document in their account. The Completion Report, which is like a transcript (**not** the Completion Certificate) is a two-part transcript of the learner's course work and includes all quiz scores. *Students shall download that course Completion Report (again, the transcript, **not** the Completion Certificate) in PDF and submit that PDF report to Canvas by October 8 (Tuesday). This assignment is entirely individual work and is worth 2 points. Late completion is not acceptable and equals zero point.*

Class Participation (10 Points)

Please be aware that this class has a very stringent attendance/participation policy. Your class participation will be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

As a member of a classroom community, you are expected to come to class, stay the entire class period, and participate fully in each class. Thus, class attendance is mandatory and the instructor will check attendance periodically, by different means (e.g., calling students' names aloud, sign-in sheet, silent observation, etc.), and at various points in time (e.g., the beginning of a class period, the middle, the end, etc.). As a result, a student can be recorded as "absent" if s/he comes in late and misses the instructor's attendance check at the beginning of a class period. The consequence can be the same if a student leaves class early or steps out of the classroom in the middle of a class period. Every "absent" record can

potentially have a negative impact on the student's grade.

Students are allowed three (3) unexcused absences over the course of the semester, no questions asked. ***Each additional unexcused absence will result in a three (3)-point deduction*** from the student's total grade. For example, if a student has totally five (5) unexcused "absences" then s/he will be penalized for her/his 4th and 5th "absences" and so lose 6 points; that means in the end that student can only earn 4 points for class participation. If a student has totally eight (8) "absences" then s/he will be penalized for her/his 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th "absences" and so lose 15 points; that means not only will the student earn no point at all for class participation, but s/he will also receive ADDITIONAL PENALTY and so further jeopardize her/his total course grade. See below for some illustrations. ***There is no limit on how many points a student can lose due to "absences"***.

<u>No. of Unexcused Absences</u>	<u>Class Participation Grade</u>
0 ~ 3	10 points (= 10 points minus 0 point; full credit earned)
4	7 points (= 10 points minus 3 points)
5	4 points (= 10 points minus 6 points)
6	1 point (= 10 points minus 9 points)
7	-2 points (= 10 points minus 12 points)
8	-5 points (= 10 points minus 15 points)
9	-8 points (= 10 points minus 18 points)
10	-11 points (= 10 points minus 21 points)

Students' absences will only be excused for ***documented*** reasons. Students' absences will not be excused ***unless the instructor receives the proper documentation in hard copy or as an electronic file so that the instructor can keep it in his record.*** Proper documentation can be a doctor/coach/supervisor/adviser's note/memo, a court order/subpoena, wedding invitation, obituary/visitation/funeral notice, event itinerary, etc. Therefore, a simple self-narration of an emergency or a special occasion (e.g., sickness, car failure, misfortune, family/work emergency, celebration/festivity, vacation, etc.), whether in oral or written forms, whether given weeks in advance or in the last minute, cannot be accepted as proper documentation, and a student's absence in that case will **NOT** be excused. ***AGAIN, A SELF-NARRATION DOES NOT COUNT AS DOCUMENTATION.***

The quality of a student's class participation will also factor into her/his "Class Participation" score ***Students with repeated disruptive behavior/causing repeated distractions will receive a low grade for the "Class Participation" evaluation or will even receive no grade at all*** (also see the "Classroom Etiquette" section below). In addition, students shall participate actively in the in-class activities, remain attentive to other people's presentations and talks, and be ready to offer feedback. Failure to be present for your own or other students' presentations will result in a loss of grade points [also see the preceding sections "Research Project (35 Points)" → "(2) Research Project Presentation and Discussion" and "Miscellaneous Assignments (15 points)" → "(1) News Report and Response"].

Once again, this class has a very strict attendance/participation policy, which students are required to comply with.

Bonus Points (Optional)

There might be opportunities for students to earn extra credits/bonus points.

Grading Scale

Again, a student's final course grade is based entirely on the "TOTAL POINTS" s/he has accumulated over the semester. Thus, for calculating a student's "TOTAL POINTS", summation is the only mathematical operation used; that is, the instructor will simply add up all the points a student has earned from assignments, presentations, paper, exams, and class participation, plus optional bonus points if applicable. No percentage, proportion, division, or any "out of (a base number)" concept is involved in the "TOTAL POINTS" calculation.

A student's total points will then be converted into her/his final course grade according to the following scale:

A	93.00 – 100.00 points	C	73.00 – 76.99 points
A-.....	90.00 – 92.99 points	C-.....	70.00 – 72.99 points
B+.....	87.00 – 89.99 points	D+.....	67.00 – 69.99 points
B.....	83.00 – 86.99 points	D.....	60.00 – 66.99 points
B-.....	80.00 – 82.99 points	F.....	0.00 – 59.99 points
C+.....	77.00 – 79.99 points		

Grade Posting

Students' grade points from assignments, presentations, paper, exams, and class participation, plus optional bonus points if applicable, will be posted in Canvas → "Grades" area as soon as they become available. A distinct grade item will also be created in Canvas → "Grades" area to show a student's "TOTAL POINTS" s/he has accumulated over the semester. (**Note:** *The "Total" column in Canvas → "Grades" area will NOT be used.*) It is a student's own responsibility to check Canvas regularly and to be kept informed of her/his own grade status.

Classroom Etiquette

The classroom is a learning environment and an academic community. All members of this community, students and instructor alike, have a special obligation to preserve an atmosphere conducive to the freedom to teach and to learn. What is essential to preserve such freedom is a culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity, and worth of every individual. For that reason, all members of this community are expected to show courtesy, civility, and respect for one another.

Part of that obligation to maintain a positive learning environment is to ensure that the behavior of any

individual does not disrupt the process of teaching and learning. Accordingly, students shall do their best to minimize disruptions that can distract from their own learning and that of their peers. Students are expected to come to class on time and not to leave early except in the case of emergency situations. Please plan your bathroom breaks, food/beverage needs, cell phone calls/texts, work schedules, and other socialization activities around class times to minimize classroom distractions and disruptions. The rule of thumb is that at any moment there should be only one center of attention in the classroom, should it be the instructor, a student, an object, an artifact, or an activity. ***Students with repeated disruptive behavior/causing repeated distractions will receive a low grade for the “Class Participation” evaluation or will even receive no grade at all*** [also see the section “Class Participation (10 Points)” above].

The instructor reserves the right to request a student to leave the classroom or have the security personnel remove the student from the classroom if the student behaves in a way that interferes with the academic or administrative functions of the class.

Diversity and Inclusion

UWSP supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated. These differences include race/ethnicity, gender, class, political view, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital or family status, as well as personality, learning styles, and life experiences. It is these very differences among us that enrich our learning environment and make us strong. We expect that students, faculty, administrators, and staff will respect differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other peoples' perspectives, behaviors, experiences, and worldviews may be different from their own.

Disabilities/Special Needs

UWSP is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities and/or special needs. If you have disabilities/special needs affecting your participation in the course and wish to have special accommodations, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (DATC) on the 6th floor of Albertson Hall (library) as soon as possible. DATC will then coordinate with me in helping you receive the proper accommodations and auxiliary aids. DATC can be reached at 715-346-3365 or datctr@uwsp.edu. You can also find more information here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/datc>.

Use of Technology

Any form of audio or video recording in the classroom is strictly prohibited. If a student has a legitimate need to record the instructor's talk in audio or video, then the student shall obtain the pertinent

accommodation authorization *AND* the instructor's permission beforehand.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is central to the mission of this institution. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and will receive disciplinary sanctions per the UWSP policies. The UWSP policies regarding student academic standards and disciplinary procedures can be found here:

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>. If I observe academic misconduct, or if suspicions of academic dishonesty are reported to me, I will request that the identified parties come to my office to discuss the situation, and then the procedures set out in UWS/UWSP Chapter 14 will be followed.

Emergency Preparedness

It is important you familiarize yourself with the UWSP emergency plan and procedures prior to the occurrence of an emergency. Please go to www.uwsp.edu/rmgt for details on all emergency responses at UWSP.

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COURSE OUTLINE

DATES	TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	READING
	An Introduction to Inquiry and Data Analysis	
09/03	<p><i>Course Introduction</i></p> <p><u>Key Topics:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A demonstration of survey research 2. Scientific and ethical considerations for survey research 3. Course overview 4. News report instructions and assignment <p>*** Human subjects protections training to begin ***</p>	Handouts
09/05	<p><i>Human Inquiry and Science</i></p> <p><u>Key Topics:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Errors in human inquiry 2. Foundations of social science 3. Purposes of social research 4. Social work and research 5. Some dialectics of social research 6. Variables 	Babbie Ch. 1.
09/10 – 09/17	<p><i>Quantitative Data Analysis (Part I)</i></p> <p><u>Key Topics:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Univariate analysis 2. Bivariate analysis 3. General Social Survey (GSS) 4. American Community Survey (ACS) <p>*** Quantitative analysis assignment #1 to be handed out ***</p>	Babbie Ch. 14.
09/19 – 09/24	<p><i>Quantitative Data Analysis (Part II)</i></p> <p><u>Key Topics:</u></p>	Babbie Ch. 15.

1. Simpson's paradox
2. Introduction to multivariate analysis
3. The elaboration model

*** Quantitative analysis assignment #2 to be handed out ***

09/26 – 10/01

The Ethics of Social Research

Babbie Ch. 3.

Key Topics:

1. Ethical principles in social research
2. The Belmont report
3. The Stanford prison experiment
4. The Milgram experiment
5. UWSP human subjects protections training

*** Research paper draft #1 to begin ***

The Structuring of Inquiry

10/03 – 10/08

Research Design

Babbie Ch. 4.

Key Topics:

1. Nomothetic causality
2. Necessary and sufficient causes
3. Units of analysis
4. The time dimension

*** Human subjects protections training assignment due ***

10/10 – 10/15

Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

Babbie Ch. 5.

Key Topics:

1. Progression of measurement
2. Operationalization choices
3. Reliability
4. Validity

*** Research paper draft #2 to begin ***

10/17 – 10/22* *Indexes and Scales* Babbie Ch. 6.

Key Topics:

1. Index construction
2. Scale construction

* 10/17 **TBA**

10/24 ***** Midterm Exam *****

10/29 – 10/31 *The Logic of Sampling* Babbie Ch. 7.

Key Topics:

1. A brief history of sampling
2. Nonprobability sampling
3. Probability theory and sampling error
4. Probability sampling

*** Research paper draft #3 to begin ***

Modes of Observation

11/05 – 11/07 *Experiments* Babbie Ch. 8.

Key Topics:

1. The classical experiment
2. Post-test only control-group design
3. Selecting subjects
4. Validity issues in experimental research
5. Strengths and weaknesses of experimental research

11/12 – 11/19 *Survey Research* Babbie Ch. 9.

Key Topics:

1. Guidelines for asking questions
2. Questionnaire construction

3. Different survey methods
4. Secondary analysis
5. Strengths and weaknesses of survey research

11/21 – 11/26

Qualitative Field Research

Babbie Ch. 10.

Key Topics:

1. Special considerations in qualitative field research
2. Paradigms in qualitative field research
3. Conducting qualitative field research
4. Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative field research

* 11/28

NO CLASS! NO LAB! HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

12/03 – 12/12

Research Project Presentations and Discussions

Final Review

12/13

***** Complete Research Paper Due *** (Friday, Canvas)**

12/19

***** Final Exam *** (Thursday, 8:00AM – 10:00AM, CCC 330)**

*Unforeseen circumstances may necessitate changes in the course requirements and/or schedules.
Any changes will be announced in advance.*
