

SOCIOLOGY 21001 RESEARCH METHODS
Spring 2006
Tues & Thurs 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Devlin 112

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Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-4:00 p.m.
McGuinn 410C, mailbox #54

Course Description

This course will introduce you to basic concepts, methods, and issues involved in both quantitative and qualitative social science research. Although this course will focus heavily on applied methods, we will consider the interplay of theory, epistemology, methodology, and method, exploring the multiplicity of paradigms that shape how we approach and conduct social science research. We will also consider questions concerning the ethics and politics of research and explore the perennial questions that continue to haunt researchers across disciplines. What can be known? How can we know it? How do we conduct socially and ethically responsible research?

Course Objectives

- *Discover your epistemological position and gain an understanding of how you will approach and conduct research as a social scientist.
- *Develop an understanding of the various methodological tools available to sociological researchers and to be able to decide what methods are appropriate for particular research questions.
- *Acquire research skills by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.
- *Prepare a research proposal on a sociological topic of your choice.

Required Texts (available in bookstore and on reserve)

*Hesse-Biber, Sharlene and Patricia Leavy. (2006) *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*Neuman, Lawrence W. (2006) *Social Research Methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sixth edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Course Requirements

Class participation and in-class exercises

Much of the learning will take place in the classroom through participation in class discussions and small group exercises. Please make an effort to come to class on time and participate. In-class exercises are not graded; however, they offer applied learning and prepare you for your graded assignments.

Assignments and due dates (60% of your grade)

You will be asked to complete five assignments (3 graded and 2 ungraded) over the course of the semester. You will receive a handout with more specifics for each assignment well before the due date. The ungraded assignments will eventually become a part of your final research proposal, which will be graded.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1 (10%)	Epistemological position paper	Due date:	Tues., Jan. 31
Assignment 4 (25%)	Survey data collection and analysis	Due date:	Thurs., Mar. 23
Assignment 5 (25%)	Interview data collection and analysis	Due date:	Tues., Apr. 11

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 2	Problem Statement	Due date:	Thurs., Feb. 9
Assignment 3	Literature Review	Due date:	Tues., Feb. 21

Research Proposal (40% of your grade)

You will be asked to prepare a research proposal on a sociological topic of your choice. The final report should be between 12-15 pages in length, double spaced. More specifics on this project are covered in the attached sheet.

Due date: Thurs., May 4

Late work will be reduced by one letter grade for each class period the assignment is late. If you have extenuating circumstances, you must come see me to negotiate a new deadline BEFORE the due date.

A note on academic integrity

In regards to this course, there will be many times when we will work in groups. Sharing of information and ideas are encouraged. However, when working on individual assignments, it is expected that you do your own work. In cases where you are required to use published work, you must put the text in quotes and cite the original material's source. If you paraphrase someone's words, you do not need the quotes, but still must cite the work. If you plagiarize or cheat in some other form, you will fail the assignment; repeated episodes will result in

failure of the course. If there are any questions on proper method of citing, please see me. For more information on Boston College's academic integrity policy, please visit: www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, January 17

Introduction and course overview
Review of the syllabus and assignments
What is social research?

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 1: Science and Research

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, January 19

Positivism and the scientific method
Alternative paradigms

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 4: The Meanings of Methodology

*Hesse-Biber and Leavy: Chapter 1: The Craft of Qualitative Research: a holistic approach

Tuesday, January 24

A feminist approach to research

Readings:

*Ramazanoglu, Caroline and Janet Holland. (2002) Chapter 8: "Choices and decisions: doing a feminist research project" *Feminist Methodology: challenges and choices*. LIBRARY RESERVE

Thursday, January 26

The role of theory in our work
Literature review

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 5 (through pg. 128): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns

*Optional: Schutt, Russell K. (2004) Appendix C: "How to read a research article." *Investigating the Social World: the process and practice of research*, 4th edition. LIBRARY RESERVE

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, January 31

The research process
Developing research questions
Designing a research proposal

****ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE****

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs

*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 2: The Research Process

Thursday, February 2

Procedural ethics

Readings:

*Neuman Chapter 5 (pg.129 to end): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns

*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 3: The Ethics of Social Research

Tuesday, February 7

Ethics in Practice

Readings:

Humphreys, Laud. (1976) "Tearoom Trade: impersonal sex in public places." *The Research Experience*, edited by Patricia Golden. LIBRARY RESERVE

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, February 9

Conceptualization and operationalization

****ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE****

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 7 (through pg. 198): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

Tuesday, February 14

Sampling

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 8: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling

Thursday, February 16

Reliability and Validity

Alternative measures

Readings:

*Krefting, Laura. (1999) Appendix C: "Rigor in Qualitative Research: The Assessment of Trustworthiness." *Cases in Qualitative Research*, edited by Andrea K. Milinki. LIBRARY RESERVE

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, February 21

Scales and indexes

Surveys

****ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE****

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 7 (pg. 198 on): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

*Neuman, Chapter 10: Survey Research

Thursday, February 23

Surveys (cont.)

Readings:

*No new readings

Tuesday, February 28

Quantitative data analysis

Readings:

- *Neuman, Chapter 11: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis
- *Neuman, Chapter 12 (skim): Analysis of Quantitative Data

Thursday, March 2

Quantitative data analysis (cont.)

Readings:

- *Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 8: Content Analysis and Unobtrusive Methods

SPRING BREAK: March 6 to March 10

V. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, March 14

Interviewing

Readings:

- *Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 4: In-Depth Interview
- *Optional: Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 5: Oral History

Thursday, March 16

Interviewing (cont)

Reading: CHOOSE ONE READING. ALL ON LIBRARY RESERVE

- *Beoku-Betts, J. (1994) "When Black is not Enough: Doing Field Research among Gullah Women." *NWSA Journal*, V6:3.
- *Dunbar, Christopher J., Dalia Rodriguez, Laurence Parker. (2000) "Race, Subjectivity, and the Interview Process." *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, edited by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein.
- *Edwards, Rosalind. (1990) "Connecting Methods and Epistemology: A White Woman Interviewing Black Women." *Women's Studies International Forum*. V13:5
- *Riessman, Catherine. (1987) "When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women." *Gender & Society*, V1:2.

Tuesday, March 21

Focus groups

Reading:

- *Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 6: Focus Group Interviews

Thursday, March 23

Analyzing qualitative data
Hyperresearch

**** ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE****

Readings:

- *Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 10: Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data

Tuesday, March 28

Grounded theory

Readings:

*No new readings

Thursday, March 30

In the field

Readings:

*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 7: Ethnography

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- *Anderson, Elijah. (1996) "Jelly's Place." *In the Field: readings on the field research experience*, edited by Carolyn D. Smith and William Kornblum.
- *Gallagher, Charles A. (2000) "White Like Me? Methods, meaning, and manipulation in the field of white studies." *Racing Research, Researching Race. methodological dilemmas in critical race studies*, edited by France Winddance Twine and Jonathan W. Warren. LIBRARY RESERVE
- *Zinn, Maxine Baca. (2001) "Insider Field Research in Minority Communities." *Contemporary Field Research: perspectives and formulations*, 2nd edition, edited by Robert M. Emerson. LIBRARY RESERVE

Tuesday, April 4

In the field (cont.)

Readings:

*No new readings

Thursday, April 6

Interpretation issues

Readings:

*DeVault, Marjorie. (1990) "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint." *Social Problems*, V37. LIBRARY RESERVE

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- *Borland, Katherine. (1991) "That's Not What I Said: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research." *Women's Words: the Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited Daphne Patai and Sherna B. Gluck.. LIBRARY RESERVE
- *Dodson, Lisa and Leah Schmalzbauer (2005) "Poor mothers and habits of hiding: participatory methods in poverty research." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. V67. LIBRARY RESERVE

Tuesday, April 11

Representation

**** ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE****

Readings:

- *Ellis, Carolyn. (1995) "Emotional and Ethical Quagmires in Returning to the Field." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. V24. LIBRARY RESERVE
- *Fine, Michelle, Lois Weis, Susan Weseen, Loonmun Wong. (2000) "For Whom: Qualitative Research, Representation, and Social Responsibilities." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. LIBRARY RESERVE

EASTER BREAK April 13 to April 17

Tuesday, April 18

Review proposal format

Readings:

*No new readings

VI. ELECTRONIC METHODS

Thursday, April 20

What are electronic methods?

Advantages and issues

Readings:

*Mann, Chris and Stewart, Fiona. (2000) Chapter 3: “An Ethical Framework.” *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: a handbook for researching online.* LIBRARY RESERVE

Tuesday, April 25

In practice

Readings:

*Mann, Chris and Fiona Stewart. (2000) Chapter 7: “Power Issues in Internet Research.” *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: a handbook for researching online.* LIBRARY RESERVE

VII: OTHER RESEARCH METHODS

Thursday, April 27

Readings:

TBD

Tuesday, May 2

Readings:

TBD

Thursday, May 4 LAST CLASS

****FINAL PAPER DUE****

DOWNLOAD INSTRUCTIONS FOR COURSE RESERVES

*Start by going to the home page for the BC libraries.

*Then select "Course Reserve Catalog"

*Then you will be asked to login. Do so.

*Then under "Search by:" select "Instructor Name"

*Then under "Browse For" type in Piatelli, Deborah and click "Search"

*Once you find the item, go to the column at the extreme right of your screen and select "View Full Text of Article".

*When you do this you will get an open pdf file of the item. You can read the item or you can print the item. You will also find a copy of the item as a pdf file on your desk top.

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Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: Research Methods
Subject:
Author: Deborah A. Piatelli
Keywords:
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