

**SOCIOLOGY 210 RESEARCH METHODS**  
**Spring 2007**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 12:00-1:15 p.m.**  
**Gasson 303**

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Office hours: Tues. and Thurs. 1:30pm-3:00pm  
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 choose to 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 can 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 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.

### **Recommended 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 (20% of your grade)

Much of the learning will take place in the classroom through participation in class discussions and small group exercises. I am not in the habit of taking attendance; however excessive absences and lateness will be noted as this has an effect on group participation. In-class exercises are not graded; however, they offer applied learning and prepare you for your graded assignments. It is expected that when you are in class you will participate. Over the course of the semester a few very short written assignments on the readings will be assigned and will count towards your class participation grade.

### Assignments and due dates (40% of your grade)

You will be asked to complete five assignments in addition to the research proposal (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	<b>Due date:</b>	<b>Tues., Jan. 30</b>
Assignment 4 (15%)	Survey data collection and analysis	<b>Due date:</b>	<b>Tues., Mar. 20</b>
Assignment 5 (15%)	Interview data collection and analysis	<b>Due date:</b>	<b>Thurs., Apr. 12</b>

#### UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 2	Research Question	<b>Due date:</b>	<b>Thurs., Feb. 8</b>
Assignment 3	Literature Review	<b>Due date:</b>	<b>Thurs., Feb. 22</b>

### Research Proposal (40% of your grade)

**Due date: Thurs., May 3**

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.

Late work. If you have extenuating circumstances, you must come see me BEFORE the due date to discuss a possible extension; otherwise you will lose 5 points each day the assignment is late.

### 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 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](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity).

## Course Schedule

### **Tuesday, January 16**

Introduction and course overview  
Experimenting with research design

## **I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD**

### **Thursday, January 18**

Positivism and the scientific method  
Alternative paradigms

#### Recommended Readings:

\*Neuman, Chapter 4: The Meanings of Methodology

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

### **Tuesday, January 23**

(cont.)

Required Readings: CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT TO CLASS  
(BOTH ON LIBRARY RESERVE)

\*Fawole, I.O., Asuzu, M.C., Oduntan, S.O., Brieger, W.R. (1999). A school-based AIDS education programme for secondary school students in Nigeria: a review of effectiveness. *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice*. V14:5. (A deductive, quantitative design)

\*MacPhail, Catherine and Campbell, Catherine. (2001). I think condoms are good but, aai, I hate those things: condom use among adolescents and young people in a Southern African township. *Social Science & Medicine*. V52. (An inductive, qualitative design)

### **Thursday, January 25**

The role of theory in our work  
Literature review

Required Readings: BRING THESE TWO READINGS TO CLASS

\*Webct: Quantitative Research Proposal

\*Webct: Qualitative Research Proposal

#### Recommended Readings:

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

\*Schutt, Russell K. (2004). Appendix C: How to read a research article. In *Investigating the Social World: the process and practice of research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. LIBRARY RESERVE

## **II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Tuesday, January 30**

(cont). Guest speaker

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

#### Recommended Readings:

\*Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs

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

**Thursday, February 1**

Procedural ethics

Recommended 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 6**

Ethics in Practice

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Humphreys, Laud. (1976). Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places. In *The Research Experience*, edited by Patricia Golden. LIBRARY RESERVE

**III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING**

**Thursday, February 8**

Conceptualization and operationalization  
Begin survey assignment group work

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

Recommended Reading:

\*Neuman, Chapter 7 (through pg. 188): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

**Tuesday, February 13**

Sampling

Recommended Reading:

\*Neuman, Chapter 8: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling

**Thursday, February 15**

Reliability and Validity

Recommended Reading:

\*Neuman, Chapter 7 (188-198)

**IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

**Tuesday, February 20**

Scales and indexes  
Surveys

Required Reading:

\*Neuman, Chapter 10: Survey Research

Recommended Reading:

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

**Thursday, February 22**

Surveys (cont.)

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

**Tuesday, February 27**

Quantitative data analysis

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

\*McPherson, Miller, Brashears, Matthew E., and Smith-Lovin, Lynn. (2006). Social isolation in America: Changes in core discussion networks over two decades. *American Sociological Review*, 71, 353-375. LIBRARY RESERVE

**Thursday, March 1**

Quantitative data analysis (cont.)

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 5-9**

**Tuesday, March 13**

Film: Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U. S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Recommended Readings:

\*Neuman, Chapter 11: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis

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

**V. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

**Thursday, March 15**

Film discussion and content analysis

**Tuesday, March 20**

Survey group report

Interviewing

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

Recommended Readings:

\*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 4: In-Depth Interview

\*Optional: Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 5: Oral History

**Thursday, March 22**

Interviewing (cont.)

Required Reading: CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT TO CLASS  
(ALL ON LIBRARY RESERVE)

\*Beoku-Betts, J. (1994) "When Black is not enough: Doing field research among Gullah women." *NWSA Journal*, V6:3.

\*Gallagher, Charles A. (2000). White like me? Methods, meaning, and manipulation in the field of white studies. In *Racing Research, Researching Race. methodological dilemmas in critical race studies*, edited by France Winddance Twine and Jonathan W. Warren.

\*Dunbar, Christopher J., Dalia Rodriguez, Laurence Parker. (2000). Race, subjectivity, and the interview process. In *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

**Tuesday, March 27**

Focus groups

Mixing methods

Recommended Reading:

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

\*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 9: Mixed Methods Research

**Thursday, March 29**

Analyzing qualitative data  
Grounded theory

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

\*Schmalzbauer, Leah. (2005). Transamerican dreamers: the relationship of Honduran transmigrants to the ideology of the American dream and consumer society. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*. V49. LIBRARY RESERVE

Recommended Reading:

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

**Tuesday, April 3**

Data Analysis (cont.)

**EASTER BREAK APRIL 5-9**

**Tuesday, April 10**

In the field

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

\*Anderson, Elijah. (1996). Jelly's place. In *In the Field: readings on the field research experience*, edited by Carolyn D. Smith and William Kornblum. LIBRARY RESERVE

Recommended Readings:

\*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 7: Ethnography

**Thursday, April 12**

Interview reflections and proposal status  
Review for final paper

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

**Tuesday, April 17**

(cont.)

**Thursday, April 19**

Interpretation

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

\*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 24**

Representation

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

\*Ellis, Carolyn. (1995). Emotional and ethical quagmires in returning to the field. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. V24. LIBRARY RESERVE

**Thursday, April 26**

TBD

**Tuesday, May 1**

TBD

**Thursday, May 3**

**\*\*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.

## **APA AND ASA STYLE GUIDES**

### APA

Publication manual of the American Psychological Association  
O’Neill Reference BF76.7.P83 2001

Online: [www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/workshop/writer\\_resources/citation\\_styles/apa/apa.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/workshop/writer_resources/citation_styles/apa/apa.htm)

### ASA

American Sociological Association Style Guide  
O’Neill Reference HM73.A54 1997

Online: [www.asanet.org/page.wv?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts](http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts)