Course Description

What can be known? How can we know it? How does one’s worldview influence the process of social research? What are the stages and processes of research? What research should be done? This course will introduce you to basic concepts, methods, and issues involved in both quantitative and qualitative social science research. We will consider the interplay of theory, epistemology, methodology, and method, exploring the multiplicity of paradigms that shape how one chooses to approach and conduct social science research. This course will focus your thinking on the broader issues surrounding the production of knowledge, and we will consider the many ethical issues that may arise within the context of the research process.

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 a variety of data.
* Develop a proposal for research on a sociological topic of your choice.

Required Texts (available in bookstore and on reserve)


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. It is expected that when you are in class you will participate. 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. Over the course of the semester, 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 (3 graded and 2 ungraded) in addition to the final paper (a research proposal) 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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Epistemological position paper</td>
<td>Thurs., Jan. 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Survey data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Tues., Mar. 18</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Interview data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Thurs., Apr. 17</td>
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**UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS**

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 7</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 21</td>
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**Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade)**

Due date: Tues., May 6

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 final paper handout also available on WebCT. All assignments are available on WebCT.

**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 class period 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. When using published work, you must cite the work. 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: http://www.bc.edu/integrity.
Course Schedule

Tuesday, January 15
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, January 17
Paradigms of inquiry

Readings:
* Neuman, Chapter 4: The Meanings of Methodology
* Hesse-Biber and Leavy: Chapter 1: The Craft of Qualitative Research: a holistic approach

Tuesday, January 22
(cont.)

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


[January 23 last day to drop/add]

Thursday, January 24
The role of theory in our work
Literature review

Readings: PRINT THE TWO PROPOSALS FROM WEBCT AND BRING THEM TO CLASS

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

Suggested:
II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, January 29  
(cont). 
Guest: David Nnyanzi, Sociology Ph.D. Candidate

Readings: 
*Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs  
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 2: The Research Process

Thursday, January 31  **ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**
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 5  
Ethics in practice

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS  

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, February 7  **ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**
Conceptualization and operationalization  
Begin survey assignment group work 

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

Tuesday, February 12  
Sampling 

Reading: 
*Neuman, Chapter 8: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling

Thursday, February 14  
Reliability and validity 

Reading: 
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (188-198)

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, February 19  
Surveys 

Reading: 
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (pg. 198 on): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement
Thursday, February 21
Surveys (cont.)

**ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE**

Tuesday, February 26
Quantitative data analysis

Thursday, February 28
Quantitative data analysis (cont.)


SPRING BREAK MARCH 3-7

V. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Tuesday, March 11
Film: Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U. S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

*Readings:*
*Neuman, Chapter 11: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis*
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 8: Content Analysis and Unobtrusive Methods*

Thursday, March 13
Film discussion and content analysis

VI. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, March 18
Survey group report

**ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE**

EASTER BREAK MARCH 20-24

Tuesday, March 25
Interviewing

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

Thursday, March 27
Interviewing (cont.)


**Tuesday, April 1**
Focus groups
Mixing methods

*Reading:*
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 6: Focus Group Interviews*
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 9: Mixed Methods Research*

**Thursday, April 3**
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

*Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS*

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

**Tuesday, April 8**
Data Analysis (cont.)

**Thursday, April 10**
In the field

*Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS*

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

**Tuesday, April 15**
Interview reflections and proposal status

**Thursday, April 17** **ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE**
(cont.)

**Tuesday, April 22**
(cont.)
Guest speaker: Katherine LaTores, sociology undergrad major

[April 22 Last day to withdraw]
Thursday, April 24
Interpretation

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Tuesday, April 29
Representation

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Thursday, May 1
Last class

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Tues., May 6th, 5 p.m. my office/mailbox**
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/wworkshop/writer_resources/citation_styles/apa/apa.htm

ASA

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

Online: www.asanet.org/page.ww?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts