

Spring 08
Sociology 735: Research at the Margins
Tuesday 3-5:20
Room 340 McGuinn
Professor Lisa Dodson
408 McGuinn Hall
617-552-6864
Lisa.dodson@bc.edu

This is a graduate-level course about conducting research into the lives and knowledge of low-income people, immigrants, people of color and all others who experience social marginality. Framed by a contemporary discussion about *social justice research*, the course will cover: research design, choosing methods, doing field research, analytic approaches to qualitative and mixed-method data, composing results and considering the overall contribution of your work. We will also be discussing collaborative research and interpretive approaches that focus on making meaning with people “under study.”

The class is a working seminar that uses a collaborative learning approach and most classes will be based on discussions of the readings and their application to your projects. You should come to class with written questions, critiques and elaborations that we will share and discuss; they will guide our classes. We will also do some labs together in class. These are flexible and I hope to use your projects for most in-class work. We will have two or three speakers who are currently engaged in researching socioeconomic inequality.

One goal of the course is real progress in your field-based, graduate-level research and your projects (pre-doctoral pilot studies, dissertation or thesis proposals/research, or other field-based study) will be central throughout the term. You will be doing an oral presentation on your projects during the last 2 weeks of class.

Note: I encourage you to seek out additional articles that are specifically relevant to your research. We can discuss including them in our readings.

Text

1. John Van Maanen (1988) *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago (buy used online)

2. We will choose an additional text based on the projects you are doing.

All students cross-registered from other universities will get a pin number and should get in touch with BC student services to get access to BC course reserves. If you have a problem please get in touch with Margie Fiels margie.fiels@bc.edu Head Librarian.

January 15th

First part of the class:

- Introductions and overview of the class
- Review syllabus & assignments and answer questions
- Talk about possible additional readings

Hand out & discuss discussing critiquing colleagues work.

Second part: Initial descriptions of your research projects

We will use most of the class time to begin descriptions of your term research projects. Several of you (depending on the class size, maybe all of you) will *briefly* describe your research – wherever you are in that process -- focusing on the main theme of your inquiry or what you hope you will learn and contribute through your study. *This is your chance to be inarticulate and confused!* Actually you will have more chances. But this opening exercise is your chance to describe your research, raise dilemmas and express how you hope this class will move you along. This week (and if needed next week) each of you will have about 10 minutes for this opening exercise.

NOTE: Please attach to email and send copies of all (draft or other version) interview guides, focus group instruments, surveys and questionnaires of any kind that you are using in your research project.

January 22nd Social Justice Research

1. Continue descriptions of research projects, as needed.
2. Discuss readings

Charmaz (2005) *Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: Applications for Advancing Social Justice Studies* Chapter 20 in Denzin and Lincoln.

Dodson and Schmalzbauer (2005) “Poor Mothers and Habits of Hiding: Participatory Research methods in Poverty Research” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67

Lab One – Pass out for next week.

January 29th: Formulating a research question and developing a study design

- **Any brief updates on research projects?**
Your discussion questions from the readings with a focus on developing/articulating a research question.
- Discussion of lab one

Readings

Neuman, Chapters 6 Quantitative Methods and Chapter 14 Qualitative Methods

Babbie 1989: Excerpts from textbooks on conventional descriptions of formulating a research question or the conceptualization of a study. **Handout**

Note: For detail on conventional focus groups see *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice* by D. Stewart and P. Shamdasani (1990) Sage Publications

February 26th Ethnography and Observations

Discussion of readings

Preissle and Grant (2004) “Fieldwork Traditions: Ethnography and Participant Observations in deMarrais and Lapan **Handout**

Tedlock “The Observation of Participation and the Emergence of Public Ethnography” Chapter 18 in Denzin and Lincoln.

March 4th Spring Break

March 11th Healthcare Access Research ***Guest Speaker***

Dr. Maria DeJesus

Research Fellow, Harvard School of Public Health and Dana Farber Cancer Institute
Center for Community-Based Research

TOPIC: "Health as a Peace Process": Promoting Health of Low Income Cape Verdean Immigrant Women in a Context of Structural and Community Violence” Dr DeJesus will focus on the importance of relationship with community health workers, who serve as cultural mediators in with the dominant U.S. health care system, especially for low income immigrant women who have very limited English and who are not familiar with the norms and expectations of the U.S. health care system.

Readings:

Frank, A. 2006. “At the Margins of Health: Qualitative Methods and Practice. *Qualitative Sociology*

Other

March 18th Participatory and Action Research

Discussion of readings

Peter Park. “Knowledge and Participatory Research” Chapter 7, Pages 81-90 in Reason, Peter and Hilary Bradbury (2001) Handbook of Action Research

John Heron and Peter Reason “The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people” Chapter 16, Pages 179-188 *ibid*

Dodson, Piatelli and Schmalzbauer, 2007 “Researching Inequalities Through Collaborative Interpretations” *Qualitative Inquiry* 13:4 821-843

March 25th

Update on projects

Fuller (2004) “Toward an Emancipatory Methodology for Peace Research”
Pages 91-102 in Carroll Critical Strategies for Social Research

Lab on coding data

April 1st Research in Public Schools

Professor *Wendy Luttrell*, Nancy Pforzheimer Aronson Associate Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education will lead the first half of the class.

Luttrell paper

April 8th Analytical strategies

Discussion of readings

Ryan and Bernard (2000) “Data Management and Analysis Methods”
Pages 769-802 in Denzin and Lincoln

DeVault and McCoy (2004) “Institutional Ethnography”
Pages 191-205 in Carroll Critical Strategies for Social Research

Recommended for those new to qualitative analysis:

Atkinson, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies. Sage Publications

Last half hour will be reserved for meeting individually.

April 15th

Reading

Van Maanen (1988) Tales of the field: On writing ethnography. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Discussion of readings

Last half hour will be reserved for meeting individually.

April 22nd and April 29th: Final project presentations and discussions