SC210.02: Research Methods
Spring 2009, Carney 009
Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli
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Office hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 p.m.
and Tuesdays by appointment 2:00-4:00 p.m.

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 (15% 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 (45% 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
- Assignment 1 (10%) Epistemological position paper Due date: Wed., Feb. 4
- Assignment 4 (15%) Survey data collection and analysis Due date: Mon., Mar. 23
- Assignment 5 (20%) Interview data collection and analysis Due date: Mon., Apr. 27

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS
- Assignment 2 Research Question Due date: Wed., Feb. 11
- Assignment 3 Literature Review Due date: Wed., Feb. 25

Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade) Due date: Wed., 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 Blackboard Vista. All assignments are also available on Blackboard Vista.

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 or any other matter, please see me. For more information on Boston College’s academic integrity policy, please visit: http://www.bc.edu/integrity.
Course Schedule

Wednesday, January 14
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

MLK—NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 19

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Wednesday, January 21
Paradigms of inquiry

Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 1: Why do Research?
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 1: The Craft of Qualitative Research: A Holistic Approach

Monday, January 26
(cont.)

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

*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, 1613-1627. (An inductive, qualitative design)

Wednesday, January 28
The role of theory in our work
Literature review

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

*Quantitative Research Proposal
*Qualitative Research Proposal
*Neuman, Chapter 2: Planning a Study (p. 25-43)
II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Monday, February 2
(cont).
Guest Speaker

*Readings:
* Neuman, Chapter 2: Planning a Study (p. 44-56)
* Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 2: The Research Process

Wednesday, February 4
**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**
Procedural ethics

*Readings:
* Neuman, Chapter 3: Becoming an Ethical Researcher
* Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 3: The Ethics of Social Research

Monday, February 9
Ethics in practice

*Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

 III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Wednesday, February 11
**ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**
Conceptualization and operationalization
Begin survey assignment group work

*Reading:
* Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring Social Life (p. 113-121)

Monday, February 16
Sampling

*Reading:
* Neuman, Chapter 4: Sampling

Wednesday, February 18
Reliability and validity

*Reading:
* Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring Social Life (p. 122-125)
IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Monday, February 23

Surveys

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring Social Life (p. 126-138)
*Neuman, Chapter 6: Survey Research (p. 143-169)

Wednesday, February 25

**(ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE)**

SPRING BREAK — NO CLASSES MARCH 2-MARCH 6

Monday, March 9

Quantitative data analysis

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 9: Making Sense of the Numbers

Wednesday, March 11

(cont.)

Reading: \*BRING THIS READING TO CLASS\*

V. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Monday, March 16

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

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

Wednesday, March 18

Film discussion and content analysis

Monday, March 23

Survey group report

**(ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE)**

VI. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Wednesday, March 25

Interviewing

Readings:
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 4: In-Depth Interview
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 5: Oral History
Monday, March 30
(cont.)

Reading:
*Andersen, Margaret L. (1997). Studying across difference: Race, class, and gender in qualitative research. In Through the prism of difference: Readings on sex and gender (pp. 70-78), edited by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Michael A. Messner, and Maxine Baca Zinn. LIBRARY RESERVE

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


Wednesday, 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

Monday, April 6
Interpretation

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Wednesday, April 8
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 10: Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data
EASTER—NO CLASSES APRIL 9-13

Wednesday, April 15
(cont.)

MARATHON MONDAY—NO CLASS ON APRIL 20

Wednesday, April 22
In the field

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS
*Anderson, Elijah. (1996). Jelly’s place. In In the field: Readings on the field research experience (pp. 1-20), edited by Carolyn D. Smith and William Kornblum. LIBRARY RESERVE
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 7: Ethnography

Monday, April 27
**ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE**
Final paper review and proposal status

Wednesday, April 29
Last class

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Wed., May 6 @ 5 p.m. my office/mailbox**