

SC210.01: Research Methods
Fall 2009, O'Neill 211
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli
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Office hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 3:00-5:00 p.m.
McGuinn 519B

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)

*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. (You can use any edition; the text has not changed much.)

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:	Thurs., Sep. 24
Assignment 4 (15%)	Survey data collection and analysis	Due date:	Tues., Nov. 3
Assignment 5 (20%)	Interview data collection and analysis	Due date:	Tues., Dec. 1

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 2	Research Question	Due date:	Thurs., Oct. 1
Assignment 3	Literature Review	Due date:	Thurs., Oct. 15

Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade) **Due date: Tues., Dec 15**

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](http://www.bc.edu/integrity).

Course Schedule

Tuesday, September 8

Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, September 10

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, September 15

(cont.)

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*, 675-683. (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*, 1613-1627. (An inductive, qualitative design)

Thursday, September 17

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 5 (through pg. 128): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, September 22

(cont).

Readings:

*Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs

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

Thursday, September 24

Procedural ethics

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

Readings:

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

*Neuman, Appendix A: American Sociological Association Code of Ethics

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

Tuesday, September 29

Ethics in practice

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

*Humphreys, Laud. (1976). Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places. In *The Research Experience* (pp. 85-114), edited by Patricia Golden. LIBRARY RESERVE

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, October 1

Conceptualization and operationalization

Begin survey assignment group work

****ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**

Reading:

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

Tuesday, October 6

Sampling

Reading:

*Neuman, Chapter 8: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling

Thursday, October 8

Reliability and validity

Reading:

*Neuman, Chapter 7 (188-198): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, October 13

Surveys

Reading:

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

*Neuman, Chapter 10: Survey Research

Thursday, October 15

(cont.)

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

Tuesday, October 20

Quantitative data analysis

Thursday, October 22

(cont.)

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

V. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Tuesday, October 27

Film in class: 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, October 29

Film discussion and content analysis

Tuesday, November 3

Survey group report

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

VI. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Thursday, November 5

Interviewing

Readings:

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

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

Tuesday, November 10

(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)

*Beoku-Betts, J. (1994). When Black is not enough: Doing field research among Gullah women. *NWSA Journal*, V6, 3, 413-433.

*Dunbar, Christopher J., Dalia Rodriguez, Laurence Parker. (2000). Race, subjectivity, and the interview process. In *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (pp. 279-296), 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, 477-490.

*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* (pp. 67-92), edited by France Winddance Twine and Jonathan W. Warren.

Thursday, November 12

Focus groups

Mixing methods

Reading:

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

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

Tuesday, November 17

Interpretation

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, 949-959. LIBRARY RESERVE

Thursday, November 19

Analyzing qualitative data

Grounded theory

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, 3-31. LIBRARY RESERVE

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

Tuesday, November 24
(cont.)

HAPPY THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Tuesday, December 1
Interview discussion

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

Thursday, December 3
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

Tuesday, December 8
Final paper review and proposal status

Thursday, December 10
LAST CLASS

****FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Tues., December 15 @ 5 p.m. my office/mailbox****