SC210.01: Research Methods
Spring 2010, Campion 236
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli
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McGuinn 519B

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McGuinn 410

Office hours: Mondays 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Office hours: Thursdays 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Office hours: TBD

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. In-class exercises are not graded; however, they offer applied learning and prepare you for your graded assignments. Hence, excessive absences and lateness will be noted as this has an effect on group participation. 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

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Epistemological position paper</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Survey data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Tues., Mar. 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interview data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Tues., Apr. 27</td>
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UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<th>Due date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 11</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 25</td>
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Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade)       Due date: Tues., May 11
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

Tuesday, January 19
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, 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

Tuesday, January 26
(cont.)

Readings: CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT TO CLASS
* 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) LIBRARY RESERVE

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

Readings: CHOOSE ONE PROPOSAL AND BRING IT TO CLASS
* Quantitative Research Proposal, BLACKBOARD
* Qualitative Research Proposal BLACKBOARD
* Neuman, Chapter 2: Planning a Study (p. 25-43)

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, February 2
(cont).

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

Thursday, February 4
Procedural ethics

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

**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**
Tuesday, February 9
Ethics in practice

**Reading:** BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, February 11
Conceptualization and operationalization
Begin survey assignment group work

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

Tuesday, February 16
Sampling

**Reading:**
*Neuman, Chapter 4: Sampling

Thursday, February 18
Reliability and validity

**Reading:**
*Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring Social Life (p. 122-125)

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, February 23
Surveys

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

Thursday, February 25
**Assignment #3 DUE**
(cont.)

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES MARCH 1-MARCH 5

Tuesday, March 9
Quantitative data analysis

**Reading:**
*Neuman, Chapter 9: Making Sense of the Numbers
Thursday, March 11
(cont.)

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

V. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Tuesday, 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

Thursday, March 18
Film discussion and content analysis

Tuesday, March 23
Survey group report

Thursday, March 25
(cont.)

VI. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, March 30
Interviewing

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

EASTER—NO CLASS APRIL 1
Tuesday, April 6
(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

*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. LIBRARY RESERVE

Thursday, April 8
Focus groups
Mixing methods

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

Tuesday, April 13
Interpretation

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Thursday, April 15
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS
Tuesday, April 20
(continued)

Thursday, April 22
In the field

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

CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT 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

Tuesday, April 27
Interview discussion and final proposal status/review

Thursday, April 29
(continued)

Tuesday, May 4
(continued)

Thursday, May 6
Last class

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Tuesday, May 11 @ 5 p.m. my office/mailbox**