SC210.02: Research Methods  
Spring 2011, Fulton 425  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00-1:15p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli  
millerdp@bc.edu  
McGuinn 425  

Office hours: Tuesdays 4:30-6:00pm  
Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm

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 Text (available in bookstore and on reserve)

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. 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, short informal written assignments on the readings will be assigned and will count towards your class participation grade. These assignments will be distributed in class before the due date and a copy can also be found on Blackboard.

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. More specifics on each assignment can be found on the respective assignment sheet on Blackboard. 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>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Epistemological position paper</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Survey data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Thurs., Mar. 24</td>
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<td>Assignment 5</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Interview data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Tues., Apr. 19</td>
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UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Draft literature review</td>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 24</td>
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Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade) 
Due date: Tues., May 10
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 paper are covered in the assignment sheet available on Blackboard.
**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, January 18
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, January 20
Paradigms of inquiry

Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 1: Why do research?

Tuesday, January 25
(cont.)

Readings: CHOOSE ONE READING. DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT


Thursday, January 27
The role of theory in our work
The literature review

Readings: CHOOSE ONE RESEARCH PROPOSAL. DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

*Neuman, Chapter 2: Planning a study (p. 25-43)
*Quantitative Research Proposal BLACKBOARD
*Qualitative Research Proposal BLACKBOARD

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, February 1
(cont.)

Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 2: Planning a study (p. 44-56)
Thursday, February 3
Procedural ethics

Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 3: Becoming an ethical researcher

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

Tuesday, February 8
Ethics in practice

Readings: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, February 10
Conceptualization and operationalization
Begin survey assignment group work

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring social life (p. 113-121)

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

Tuesday, February 15
Sampling

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 4: Sampling

Thursday, February 17
Reliability and validity

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring social life (p. 122-125)

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, February 22
Surveys

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 5: Measuring social life (p. 126-138)
*Neuman, Chapter 6: Survey research (p. 143-169)

Thursday, February 24
(cont.)

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE
Tuesday, March 1
Quantitative data analysis

Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 9: Making sense of the numbers

Thursday, March 3
(cont.)

Readings: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES MARCH 7-MARCH 11

V. UNOBTRUSIVE RESEARCH

Tuesday, March 15
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

Thursday, March 17
Film discussion and content analysis

Tuesday, March 22
Survey group report and discussion

VI. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Thursday, March 24
Interviewing

** ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE**

Readings:
Tuesday, March 29
(cont.)

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

**CHOOSE ONE READING AND DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT**


Thursday, March 31
Focus groups
Mixing methods

**Reading:**

Tuesday, April 5
Interpretation

**Reading: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT**
Thursday, April 7
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

Reading: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

Tuesday, April 12
(cont.)

Thursday, April 14
Field work and community-based research

Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 13: Field research

CHOOSE ONE READING AND DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

*McIntyre, Alice. (2000). Constructing meaning about violence, school and community: Participatory action research with urban youth. The Urban Review. V32, 2, 123-154. LIBRARY RESERVE

Tuesday, April 19
(cont.)

**ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE**

EASTER—NO CLASS APRIL 21

Tuesday, April 26
Interview discussion and final proposal status/review

Thursday, April 28
(cont.)

Tuesday, May 3
(cont.)
Thursday, May 5
Last class

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Tuesday, May 10 @ 5 p.m. my office/mailbox**