Syllabus

This is a graduate-level course about conducting research into the lives and knowledge of people who experience socioeconomic marginality. Over the term we will use student research projects to discuss the development of a research question, study design, methodology, field research approach, analyzing information gathered, and composing results. We will talk about the public role of social research and consider the potential contribution of your work as well as ethical issues that emerge when doing research at the margins. We will also be critiquing various journal articles and consider their approach, design, methods, and claims and how you – as a referee – would discuss the paper.

The course 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. We may do labs together in class based on your research projects and instruments or others, id needed. I am hoping to have one or two graduate student speakers who are engaged in relevant research come to the class to informally discuss their work, in process.

One goal of the course is that each of you progress in your field-based, graduate-level research (pre-doctoral pilot studies, dissertation or thesis proposals/research, or other field-based study). You will be doing an oral presentation on your work during the last 2 weeks of class. All students are expected to attend all presentations!

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 Battaglia Margie.battaglia@bc.edu Librarian.

Course Readings

*The Help* by Kathryn Stockett (order on Amazon about $13)
Other readings are available on Boston College library course reserve or I have supplied hyperlinks to electronic version (or both).
January 20th
- Introductions and overview of the class
- Review syllabus, assignments, discuss The Help reading, class calendar (note: no class April 7th) and talk about what your goals are for this term.
- Requests for research instruments for discussion in class
- Article critiques: Select two of the six assigned and hand in on the day we discuss them.

Overview of issues in course (PP)

January 27th
Design – what is the inquiry about?

Description of research projects
Come to class prepared to describe your research project focusing on:
1. The overall research question;
2. The design that you are developing or have developed to investigate your question;
3. Your main concern about the study, at this time.
Each student will describe his/her study in process or planned and class will discuss. We will take about 20 minutes for each student and continue next week (I anticipate covering three student research projects over the first 3 weeks of class). Everyone should take notes as we listen to each student’s description. We will be discussing the progress of your studies throughout the term and peer input is expected.

Readings
2. Neuman. Quantitative Research Design
3. Read about 100 pages of The Help

In the second half of the class we will hear three student research project descriptions and discussions.

Note: Please send survey instruments that you have developed/are developing or have used to whole class roster so we may use them in class next week.

February 3rd
Review of standard methods

Using Surveys
We will discuss the use of surveys – strengths and limitations – for the first half of the class.

Readings
1. Hutchinson. “Survey Research”
2. Next 100 pages or so, *The Help*

In the second half of the class we will continue student research project descriptions and discussions. We will also start talking about *The Help*; come to class with your reactions, ideas, and let’s talk about how non-researchers might read the book.

**Note:** Please send interview questionnaires or interview guides that you have developed/are developing to whole class roster so we may use them in class next week.

**February 10**

**Interviews**

**Readings**

1. Neuman. Pages 316-329 “Qualitative Research Design”


3. Corbin and Morse. “The Unstructured Interactive Interview: Issues of Reciprocity and Risks when Dealing with Sensitive Topics” *Qualitative Inquiry* June 2003 9 (3)

*Break into groups and discuss student interview guides*


**Note:** Please send focus group questionnaires or guides that you have developed or have used so we may use them in class next week.

**February 17**

**Focus groups**

**Readings**

1. Klieber. “Focus Groups: More than a Method of Qualitative Inquiry”


3. Tolich. *Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants* *Qualitative Sociology*. 27(1):101-106

*Break into groups and discuss focus group guides*

**February 24**

**Observations/ethnography**

**Readings**
1. Tedlock. “The Observation of Participation and the Emergence of Public Ethnography”

2. DeVault and McCoy. “Institutional Ethnography”

   (Article critique)

March 3rd
Mixed methods

1. Denzin. “Moments, Mixed Methods, and Paradigm Dialogs”  
   July 2010 Qualitative Inquiry 16

   Health-Related Research.”  
   Qualitative Inquiry, 16

3. Arditti, Burton and Neeves-Botelho. Maternal Distress and Parenting in the Context of 
   Cumulative Disadvantage (pages 142–164)  
   Family Process, Vol. 49 (Article critique)

March 10th  
No Class – Spring Break

March 17th
“Neutrality” and “bias” in social research

1. Frank. “At the Margins of Health: Qualitative Methods and Practice. Qualitative Sociology 
   29 (pgs 241-251)


3. Loukas, Prelow, Suizzo, and Allua. “Mothering and Peer Associations Mediate 
   Cumulative Risk Effects for Latino Youth” Journal of Marriage and Family Volume 70, 
   Issue 1, pages 76–85, February 2008  
   (Article critique)

March 24th
Ethics matters and managing data
1. Luttrell. “Good Enough Methods for Life Story Analysis”


3. Finish The Help

   (Article critique)
March 31st
Participative research


2. Park. “Knowledge and Participatory Research”

http://soe.sagepub.com/content/80/4/285 (Article critique)

April 7th No Class

April 14th
Conducting research in a context of socioeconomic inequality

Speaker in class: Katie Bright, a graduate student in sociology, will come to class to informally talk about her experiences researching adolescent homelessness in the US and domestic human trafficking.


2. Fine and Weis. “Writing the ‘Wrongs’ of Fieldwork”


April 21st No Class – Easter Weekend

April 28th
Student presentations

May 5th
Student presentations

Assignments

1. Students will be expected to come to class with developed questions and comments. 2. You will submit two (4-6 page) critiques of the six articles that have been assigned for Article critiques. Those are due on the day that we discuss the article. 3. You will do a (35 minute) presentation at the end of the term based on your research (we’ll discuss in class).