

**SC 210—Methods of Social Research  
Spring 2012**

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Every day, important decisions are made on the basis of social research. Citizens vote, governments make policy, corporations invest, advertisers design campaigns, parents choose schools for their children—all based on claims about social reality, some of which are better founded than others. This course is designed to give you a sense of the different ways that social researchers (particularly sociologists), find out about society, some hands-on experience with doing social research, and some tools for thinking critically about competing claims about social reality.

### **Readings**

Required:

Ferguson, Ann Arnett. 2000. *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

A series of online articles available through O’Neill online course reserves, [https://library.bc.edu/F/?func=file&local\\_base=U-BCL30\\_CURRENT&file\\_name=login](https://library.bc.edu/F/?func=file&local_base=U-BCL30_CURRENT&file_name=login) or through the Blackboard Vista website.

Recommended:

Adler, Emily Steir and Roger Clark. 2011. *An Invitation to Social Research: How It’s Done*. Fourth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Both books are available for purchase at the BC bookstore and are also on 2-hour reserve at O’Neill Library.

## Grading

	% of Final Grade
In-class pop quizzes and attendance (11 @ 1 point each, out of 13; the two lowest grades get dropped):	11%
Participation in discussion sections:	10%
Homework assignments (8 @ 3 points each out of 9; the lowest grade gets dropped):	24%
Two essay assignments @ 15 points each:	30%
Final exam:	25%
Total:	100%

This course requires a relatively small amount of reading. However, I expect you (1) to complete the required readings by the day they are listed on the syllabus; and (2) attend both lectures and discussion sections. 10 percent of your final grade is based on participation in discussion sections. Another 11 percent is based on a randomly-spaced series of pop quizzes and attendance checks, worth one point each. There will be 13 quizzes or attendance checks over the course of the semester, and your two lowest grades will be dropped. Attendance checks will be conducted at the end of lectures. Pop quizzes, which will cover required readings listed on the syllabus for the lecture in question, will be held *at the beginning of lectures* to ensure that you come to class having completed the readings (and that you come on time). There are *no makeups* for missed pop quizzes: if you miss class the day of a quiz, or if you arrive too late to take it, you will receive a “zero” for that quiz, and that “zero” will be one of your lowest grades that gets dropped. **I will make no exceptions to this rule.**

This course is designed to give you “hands-on” experience with how social science researchers do their work. Therefore, 24 percent of your grade will be based on a series of 3-point homework assignments given over the course of the semester. There will be 9 such assignments over the course of the semester and your lowest grade will get dropped. Homework assignments should be posted to the Blackboard Vista course website, <https://cms.bc.edu/webct/entryPageIns.doweibct>, **by 8 a.m. the day they are due.** Late homework assignments will be penalized ½ point for being posted after 8 a.m., and ½ point per day thereafter. **I will make no exceptions to this rule.** As with the homework assignments, the two essay assignments will be penalized ½ point for being posted after 8 a.m. on the day they are due, and ½ point per day thereafter.

The final exam is cumulative, and will cover *only* material that was covered in class lectures: you will not be tested on material from readings that was not covered in lecture. An alternative final exam day and time may be scheduled if there are students who need to take the exam on a different day and time.

And finally—a note on discussion sections: you need to be registered for a discussion session on either Wednesday or Thursday to be in this class and get a grade for it. You also need to attend the discussion section for which you are registered unless you have special permission from me.

## **Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to comply with the standards for academic integrity outlined in the Boston College Student Guide (<http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html>). Cheating on quizzes or exams will result in a grade of “0” for the test in question. Plagiarized assignments will also receive a grade of “0.” If I suspect either cheating or plagiarism, I am required to contact your academic dean.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**Wednesday, January 18**—Introduction.

**Wednesday, January 18** and **Thursday, January 19**—Discussion sections.

#### **I. Epistemology and Methods**

**Monday, January 23**

Required Reading: Pigliucci, “Science and Politics” (online)

**Wednesday, January 25**

Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch. 1.

**Wednesday, January 25** and **Thursday, January 26**—Discussion sections

**Monday, January 30**

Required readings: Bryant, “Changes in Attitudes toward Gender Roles” and Boyle et al, “Gender at Play” (both available on the course website).

Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch. 2.

**Wednesday, February 1-- Homework #1 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, February 1** and **Thursday, February 2**—Discussion sections. .

#### **II. Designing Research**

**Monday, February 6**

Required readings: <http://web.missouri.edu/~bondesonw/Laud.html> and Babbie, “Laud Humphreys and Research Ethics.”

Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch 3.

**Wednesday, February 8--Homework #2 due by 8 a.m.**

Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch. 4.

**Wednesday, February 8** and **Thursday, February 9**: Discussion sections.

**Monday, February 13**—No reading.

**Wednesday, February 15**—No reading. **Homework #3 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, February 15** and **Thursday, February 16**—Discussion sections.

### **III. Surveys, Measurement, and Sampling**

**Monday, February 20**—No reading. **Homework #4 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, February 22**—Required reading: *CQ Researcher*, “Census Controversy.”  
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapters 5 and 6.

**Wednesday, February 22** and **Thursday, February 23**—Discussion sections.

**Monday, February 27**—No reading. **Essay #1 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, February 29**— Required reading: Martin, “Normalizing Heterosexuality.”  
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapter 9.

**Wednesday, February 29** and **Thursday, March 1**—Discussion sections.

### **\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\***

**Monday, March 12**—Required reading, Wimmer and Lewis, “Beyond and Below Racial Homophily,”

**Wednesday, March 14**—Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 159-78.

**Wednesday, March 14** and **Thursday, March 15**—Discussion sections.

### **IV. Experimental Research**

**Monday, March 19**— **Homework #5 due by 8 a.m.** Required reading: Bushman and Anderson, “Comfortably Numb.” Recommended reading, Adler and Clark, Ch 8.

**Wednesday, March 21**—No reading.

**Wednesday, March 21** and **Thursday, March 22**—Discussion Sections.

### **V. Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

**Monday, March 26**— **Homework #6 due by 8 a.m.**  
Recommended Reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 412-41 and pp. 327-45.

**Wednesday, March 28**— Required Reading: Warren et al., “Driving while Black.”

**Wednesday, March 28 and Thursday, March 29**—Discussion sections.

## **VI. Qualitative Interviews, Observation, and Analysis**

**Monday, April 2**— Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapters 10 and 11. **Homework #7 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, April 4**— Required Ferguson, *Bad Boys*, pp. 1-47.

**Wednesday, April 4 and Thursday, April 5**—\*\*NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS—HOLY WEEK\*\*

**Monday, April 9**—\*\*NO CLASS—HOLY WEEK\*\*

**Wednesday, April 11**--Required reading: Ferguson, pp. 49-99. **Homework #8 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, April 11 and Thursday, April 12**—Discussion sections.

**Monday, April 16**--\*\*NO CLASS—PATRIOT'S DAY\*\*

**Wednesday, April 18**— Required reading: Ferguson, pp. 101-235.

**Wednesday, April 18 and Thursday, April 19**—Discussion sections.

**Friday, April 20**-- Essay #2 due by 8 a.m.

## **VII. Using Existing Qualitative Data and Doing Content Analysis**

**Monday, April 23**—Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 345-48; Chapter 13.

**Wednesday, April 25**—Required reading: Welsh, “On the Perils of Living Dangerously in the Slasher Horror Film.”

**Wednesday, April 25 and Thursday, April 26**—Discussion sections.

## **VIII. Comparative and Historical Analysis**

**Monday, April 30**—Homework #9 due by 8 a.m.

**Wednesday, May 2**— In-class review session. Come prepared to ask questions!

**Wednesday, May 2 and Thursday, May 3**—Discussion sections.

### ONLINE ARTICLES:

Babbie, Earl. 2004. "Laud Humphreys and Research Ethics." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 24(3/4/5).

Boyle et al. 2003. "Gender at Play: Fourth-Grade Girls and Boys on the Playground." D. Ellen Boyle, Nancy L. Marshall and Wendy W. Robeson. *American Behavioral Scientist* 2003; 46; 1326.

Bryant, Alyssa N. 2003. "Changes in Attitudes toward Gender Roles: Predicting Gender-Role Traditionalism among College Students." *Sex Roles* 48(3/4).

Bushman and Anderson. 2009. "Comfortably Numb: Desensitizing Effects of Violent Media on Helping Others." *Psychological Science* 20 (3).

"Census Controversy." 2010. *CQ Researcher* 20(19).

Martin, Karin. 2009. "Normalizing Heterosexuality: Mothers' Assumptions, Talk, and Strategies with Young Children." *American Sociological Review* 74: 190-207.

Pigliucci, Massimo. 2010. "Science and Politics: The Case of Global Warming." Pp. 134-59 in *Nonsense on Stilts: How to Tell Science from Bunk*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Welsh, Andrew. 2010. "On the Perils of Living Dangerously in the Slasher Horror Film: Gender Differences between Sexual Activity and Survival." *Sex Roles* 62: 762-773.

Warren, Patricia, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, William Smith, Matthew Zingraff, and Marcinda Mason. 2006. "Driving while Black: Bias Processes and Racial Disparity in Policy Stops." *Criminology* 44(3): 709-38.

Wimmer, Andreas and Kevin Lewis. 2010. "Beyond and Below Racial Homophily: ERG Models of a Friendship Network Documented on Facebook." *American Journal of Sociology* 116(2): 583-642.