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:


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 or through the Blackboard Vista website.

Recommended:


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

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<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-class pop quizzes and attendance (11 @ 1 point each, out of 13; the two lowest grades get dropped): 11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in discussion sections: 10%</td>
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<td>Homework assignments (8 @ 3 points each out of 9; the lowest grade gets dropped): 24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two essay assignments @ 15 points each: 30%</td>
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<td>Final exam: 25%</td>
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<td>Total: 100%</td>
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This course requires a relatively modest 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/webet/entryPageIns.dowebct](https://cms.bc.edu/webet/entryPageIns.dowebct), 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.

Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Monday, January 14—Introduction.

Wednesday, January 16
Required Reading: Pigliucci, “Science and Politics” (online).

Wednesday, January 16 and Thursday, January 17—Discussion sections.

I. Epistemology and Methods

Monday, January 21--***NO CLASSES, MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY***

Wednesday, January 23
Homework #1 due by 8 a.m.
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch. 1.

Wednesday, January 23 and Thursday, January 24—Discussion sections

Monday, January 28
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, January 30— Homework #2 due by 8 a.m.

Wednesday, January 30 and Thursday, January 31—Discussion sections.

II. Designing Research
Monday, February 4
Required readings: Sieber, “Laud Humphreys and the Tearoom Sex Study” and Babbie, “Laud
Humphreys and Research Ethics.”

Wednesday, February 6—Homework #3 due by 8 a.m.
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch 3.

Wednesday, February 6 and Thursday, February 7: Discussion sections.

Monday, February 11
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Ch. 4.

Wednesday, February 13—No reading.

Wednesday, February 13 and Thursday, February 14—Discussion sections.

III. Surveys, Measurement, and Sampling

Monday, February 18— Required reading: CQ Researcher, “Census Controversy.”
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapters 5 and 6.

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

Wednesday, February 20 and Thursday, February 21—Discussion sections.

Monday, February 25—No reading.

Wednesday, February 27— Required reading: Martin, “Normalizing Heterosexuality.”
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapter 9.

Wednesday, February 27 and Thursday, February 28—Discussion sections.

***SPRING BREAK***

Monday, March 11—No reading.

Tuesday, March 12: Essay #1 due by 8 a.m.

Wednesday, March 13—Required reading: Krause, “Religious Doubt and Psychological Well-
Being.”
Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 159-78.

Wednesday, March 13 and Thursday, March 14—Discussion sections.

IV. Experimental Research
Monday, March 18—Homework #5 due by 8 a.m.

Wednesday, March 20—Required reading: Bushman and Anderson, “Comfortably Numb.” Recommended reading, Adler and Clark, Ch 8.

Wednesday, March 20 and Thursday, March 21—Discussion Sections.

V. Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation

Monday, March 25
Required Reading: Warren et al., “Driving while Black.”
Recommended Reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 412-41 and pp. 327-45.

Wednesday, March 27—Homework #6 due by 8 a.m.

***EASTER BREAK***

VI. Qualitative Interviews, Observation, and Analysis

Wednesday, April 3—Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, Chapters 10 and 11.

Wednesday, April 3 and Thursday, April 4—Discussion Sections.

Monday, April 8—Required reading Ferguson, Bad Boys, pp. 1-47.

Wednesday, April 10—Required reading: Ferguson, pp. 49-99. Homework #7 due by 8 a.m.

Wednesday, April 10 and Thursday, April 11—Discussion sections.

Monday, April 15—**NO CLASS—PATRIOT’S DAY**

Wednesday, April 17—Required reading: Ferguson, pp. 101-235.

Wednesday, April 17 and Thursday, April 18—Discussion sections.

Friday, April 19—Essay #2 due by 8 a.m.

VII. Using Existing Qualitative Data and Doing Content Analysis

Monday, April 22—Required Reading: Clawson, “Cowboys and Schoolteachers.” Recommended reading: Adler and Clark, pp. 345-48; Chapter 13.

Wednesday, April 24—Homework #8, due 8 a.m.

Wednesday, April 24 and Thursday, April 25—Discussion sections.
VIII. Comparative and Historical Analysis

**Monday, April 29**—No homework, no reading.

**Wednesday, May 1**—In-class review session. Come prepared to ask questions! **Homework #9 due by 8 a.m.**

**Wednesday, May 1** and **Thursday, May 2**—Discussion sections.
ONLINE ARTICLES:


