Welcome to our Class  I am excited to have you on-board and look forward to our working together to make your learning experience positive and fruitful. I anticipate that all of you are excited and eager to learn the methodological skills necessary to move forward in your sociological career.

Research methods provide basic building blocks that will enable you to engage with understanding and tackling complex social problems. Your journey in this course requires commitment in the acquisition of both theoretical and practical methods skills and applications. The course structure takes on a seminar format where we will meet for 2.5 hours once a week.

The seminar is part lecture format and part student engagement/dialogue around course readings as well as engaging in dialogic working groups for part of the seminar. The course provides you with praxis and hands-on” assignments,” what I term “live research.” During the course of the semester students will be asked to prepare sections of their research proposal and to engage with their peers in the process of proposal writing. I look forward to our journey!

Course Description & Objectives  This course introduces you to basic foundational questions: “What is the nature of reality?” “How do we know we know?” Who can know? We delve into these philosophical aspects of sociological inquiry that will cover a spectrum of methodological perspectives onto knowledge seeking. These perspectives challenge and engage with a positivist paradigm onto social science inquiry that seeks to move beyond the “paradigm wars.”

You will become familiar with a range of methods practices that includes in-depth interviewing, field research, survey research, content analysis and experimental and mixed methods research. Considerable attention will be given to the comparisons among alternative methods, the types of research questions/problems that engage these methods as well as an assessment of the relative strengths and limitations of each method. In connection with each methodology, we deal with issues such as measurement, reliability, validity and sampling. The readings in the course reflect both theoretical/conceptual research issues and first-hand experiential research accounts.

Each student will learn to complete a well-developed research proposal on a topic that is suitable for an M.A. or Ph.D. thesis.
Course Requirements

- Class Attendance & Discussion Leading (10 points)
- Five (5) Reaction Papers (500-700 words) (25 points)
- Two (2) Short Methods Response Papers (30 points):
  - Research Proposal (35 points):
    I have a separate Handout on Preparing and Writing your Research Proposal. This proposal will be written iteratively and will be integrated into our overall course schedule.

Procedures

1. Attendance Policy: Four percent (2%) is deducted from your final grade for each class missed. One unexcused absence is allowed. All other absences are not excused. Students are responsible for the assigned readings, taking part in class discussions, and presenting oral summaries of their research projects.

2. Late Assignment policy and procedures: I will not accept assignments via email. All assignments are handed in at the beginning of class. If your assignment is not handed in during class it will be considered late and the next time you can hand it in is the next class period. To be fair to other students who hand in their work on time, I will deduct one letter grade for each course day your assignment is late. Please back up all your work.

3. Class Readings: The seminar format relies on your informed contributions and therefore it is important that you read all relevant articles BEFORE the class in which they will be discussed. Please bring hard copies of all articles discussed for a given week (consult handout on doing a class discussion). Please keep up with the course readings. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and engage with these readings in seminar discussion and also in research practice.

4. Class Etiquette: No eating in class. You can bring a favorite beverage if you like. All cell phones must be turned off and stashed for the duration of class. Come to class on time.

Required & Recommended Readings

Required Texts:


Recommended Readings:


Course Outline

Part I. Paradigmatic Viewpoints: Epistemology & Social Inquiry. What is knowledge? Who gets to know? How do we know what we know?

MONDAY: JANUARY 14TH. INTRODUCTION
Overview of the Course
Paradigms of Social Inquiry

MONDAY: JANUARY 21ST

(WE WILL NEED TO SCHEDULE CLASS FOR A DIFFERENT DAY/TIME BECAUSE OF HOLIDAY)--
Class will meet Friday, January25th. in McGuinn 415.
DISCUSSION LEADERS: JEREMIAH MORELOCK AND BRIAN WALKER

Introduction & Course Overview:

*Bring A Research Problem/Question to Class: The Scientific Method/Challenges to Traditional Positivism.*

Topic: What are qualitative and quantitative approaches to social inquiry? Examples of each approach will be discussed looking at specific research articles students provide during class as examples of Research Standpoints.

Required Readings: Assigned Readings available on Blackboard for SOC710:

- Hesse-Biber and Leavy. Chapters 1 & 2.
- BEGIN READING Mitch Duneier's. Sidewalk. (First Half).
- What are paradigms?
- How does Duneier challenge the dominant paradigm set up by Durkheim? Be specific.

MONDAY: JANUARY 28TH. Challenges to Traditional Positivism

DISCUSSION LEADER: ELIANA (LILY) CROSINA

Required Readings:


PROPOSAL ASIDE: OBTAIN YOUR IRB CERTIFICATE ON-LINE;
NIH training:
http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php

MONDAY: FEBRUARY 4TH. Emergent Paradigmatic Viewpoints.
DISCUSSION LEADER: MEHMET SULEYMAN CANSOY

Required Readings:


MONDAY: FEBRUARY 11TH.
DISCUSSION LEADERS: ELIZABETH BRENNAN & PAULINA BONGAY

Developing Research Questions & Linking Questions to a Literature
Required readings:

• Becker, Howard. Ch. 2 Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While Doing It. University of Chicago Press.

Relationship between Question and Literature Review:

PROPOSAL ASIDE:

CONTINUE TO FORMULATE YOUR RESEARCH PROBLEM/QUESTION AND BRING TO CLASS NEXT WEEK TO EXCHANGE WITH YOUR RESEARCH GROUP.

OPTIONAL: Recommended Readings for Week 4.

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: Norton. Especially chapters 4-5. Abbott offers the student some useful ways to come up with new ideas and talks about how this is done using examples from innovative social science research ideas. There is also a useful discussion of how ideas are related to the research literature.

RECOMMENDED PROPOSAL RESOURCE:


PROPOSAL ASIDE: PROPOSAL BOOK CAMP IS THIS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH: ANYONE INTERESTED SHOULD SIGN UP FOR THIS EVENT ON THE MONDAY FEBRUARY 11TH. PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO ME NO LATER THAN 5PM ON FEBRUARY 11TH STATING THAT YOU WILL BE COMING. WE WILL BE HOLDING THE BOOT CAMP IN MCGUINN 415.


MONDAY FEBRUARY 18TH. What is Research Design? Causality?

DISCUSSION LEADER: ELIANA (LILY) CROSINA

Required Readings: Research Design & Ethics

Hesse-Biber & Leavy Chapter 3 & 4.

What is Causality?


Be prepared to discuss the following questions in class.

- What is Causality? What are quantitative approaches to causality?
- Qualitative approaches? Why is the experimental approach held out as the best method to unearth causality?
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH.
DISCUSSION LEADER: MEHMET SULEYMAN CANSOY

Role of Measurement & Conceptualization in Qualitative & Quantitative Research Designs.

ASSIGNMENT #1 IS DUE TODAY

Class exercise on measurement will be done today based on the class readings.

Required Readings:


• Neuman. “Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement.” Chapter 7. (Available via Blackboard)


Recommended:

PROPOSAL ASIDE: BEGIN TO FORMULATE YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW. BRING A TWO PAGE LITERATURE REVIEW TO CLASS.

Week 8. SPRING BREAK: MARCH 4-8TH NO CLASS NEXT MONDAY-- PLEASE WORK ON PROPOSAL

Qualitatively-Driven Research Designs

MONDAY, MARCH 11TH OBSERVING: Field methods/Ethnographic Research
DISCUSSION LEADERS: ELIZABETH BRENNEN & WILL ATTWOOD-CHARLES

Assigned Readings:

Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 7
Recommended: Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, chapter 7

Why Ethnography? Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing Field Notes:

Everyone: Ethnographic Research:

MONDAY  March 18th. Issues in Ethnography: Accuracy in Ethnographic Research

DISCUSSION LEADER: WILL ATTWOOD-CHARLES

Response to Duneier: These articles present a critique and additional frameworks of critique with regard to Duneier’s e methods and his analysis and interpretations of life as presented in his book, Sidewalk. These critiques address issues with regard to sampling of research participants as well as how much the author integrates previous literature and theoretical perspectives on this topic. In your assessment of these responses, it is vital that you re-read and analyze Duneier’s Appendix to his book.


INSIDER/OUTSIDER? ISSUES IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH


Issues of Inference from Ethnographic Data (select ONE ARTICLE to read):


OR


MONDAY  MARCH 25TH. ASKING: Intensive Interviewing & Focus Groups

DISCUSSION LEADERS: PAULINA BONGAY & CAITLIN MCCrackEN

ASSIGNMENT #2 IS DUE TODAY

What are the underlying assumptions about interviewing and data collection held by DeVault, Riessman, Morgan and Edwards? What specific insights and ideas are helpful? Problematic? What is not covered that you think is important? Where do these authors diverge in their opinions on the interview process? Converge? Compare and contrast a positivistic perspective on the interview process with a feminist perspective. In what ways are they different? Similar?

Required Readings:

Hesse-Biber, & Leavy. The Practice of Qualitative Research. Chapter on Interviewing


Methods Practice:


MONDAY April 1st. (NOTE WE WILL HAVE CLASS TODAY APRIL 5TH, FRIDAY INSTEAD OF MONDAY

DISCUSSION LEADER: JANE MARGOLIS

ASKING THE COMMUNITY: Action-Oriented Research

Required Readings:


PROPOSAL ASIDE: BRING A TWO PAGE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR RESEARCH DESIGN DATA COLLECTION /SAMPLING ETHICS

MONDAY: APRIL 8th Analysis of Qualitative Data: Grounded Theory & Brief Introduction to other Analytical Styles.

DISCUSSION LEADER: ANJALEE DAVIS

How will you analyze your qualitative data? Manually? Qualitative data analysis software?
What analytical Style: Grounded Theory? Narrative Analysis?
What is involved? Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding?

Practice coding/analyzing data using field notes /interview transcripts

Required Reading:
Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Chapter 10

Charmaz, Kathy. Grounded Theory

Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data

PRE-PREPOSAL ASSIGNMENT#1 IS DUE THIS WEEK

• Recommended: Harry Wolcott, Chapters 1-4.

SOFTWARE WORKSHOP (OPTIONAL): FRIDAY, APRIL 12TH. MCGUINN 415
3 TO 5PM (YOU NEED TO REGISTER BY MONDAY, APRIL 8TH.

Learning HyperResearch & HyperTranscribe. There will be an optional workshop scheduled as an evening class for those students who want to learn more about Analyzing Qualitative Data with Computer-Assisted Software and also to Learn about a Transcription Software, HyperTranscribe. This is not a “hands on workshop,” but you will learn to basic “how to's” in order to proceed to use these software tools for your own data analysis project.

Quantitatively Driven Designs & Mixed Methods Research Designs

We will focus on only two types of research designs using quantitative methods, given the very limited timeframe. If you want more extensive readings on other quantitative methods I will be happy to provide some recommendations.

MONDAY: APRIL 15TH, (PLEASE NOTE: WE WILL NEED TO RE-SCHEDULE CLASS THIS WEEK AS MONDAY, PATRIOT'S DAY IS A HOLIDAY).

DISCUSSION LEADERS: JANE MARGOLIS & CAITLIN MCCrackEN

Making Generalizations: Survey Research

This week we will cover the following ideas: Why Do Surveys? What is generalization with regard to a survey and why is sampling important? Constructing Survey Questions

We will NOT cover analysis of quantitative data as this is covered in several statistics courses.

Required Readings:

MONDAY APRIL 22ND Content Analysis & Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Designs.

DISCUSSION LEADER: JEREMIAH MORELOCK

Please exchange your PRE-proposal with your research partner. Provide your partner with specific constructive written feedback on their proposal thus far.

PRE-PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT#2 IS DUE THIS WEEK.

Why would you want to employ an experimental/quasi-experimental design?
Why do content analysis?

Required Readings:
Hesse-Biber & Leavy. Content Analysis

Practice Articles:
Select ONE of the following articles:
OR

Practice (Experimental Design)
All Read:

Choice:
OR
MONDAY APRIL 29TH. Mixed Methods Research.
DISCUSSION LEADERS: ANJALEE DAVIS & BRIAN WALKER

Abstracts are Due today
(TO BE GIVEN OUT TO CLASS FOR NEXT WEEK’S PRESENTATIONS)
Final Proposals are Due Next Week
(ALONG WITH YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION)


Practice:
Are two methods better than one? Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts?


MONDAY MAY 6th --
Proposal Presentation Celebration~
Each class member will present their proposal abstract and spend between 5 to 8 minutes presenting an overview of their proposal. All abstracts must be submitted on-line (Blackboard) by Friday, May 3rd 5pm.
Please bring a treat to class and I will bring pizza and some type of beverage.
REQUIRED COURSE WORK:

(1) DISCUSSION LEADING: (SELECT TWO CLASS PERIODS).

You are to select TWO SEMINAR dates you would like to be a discussion leader. Discussion leading will consist of TWO students as “team discussion leaders.” Each “Dyad team” will assume responsibility for leading discussions of readings assigned for their chosen seminar week. Dyad members will be responsible for (1) placing the week’s readings in conversation with each other. They will facilitate a discussion that serves to integrate the readings for that week. They are responsible for (a) Drawing up a list or page of questions or points for discussion and email their list of suggested discussion points or questions to Dr. Hesse-Biber for posting on Blackboard no later than 5 p.m. the day before class.

Each student in the class is then responsible for looking over the discussion points before coming to class. In class, dyad discussion leaders will start the seminar off with their general assessment of that week’s readings and then open up the seminar for class discussions. It is expected that dyad discussion leaders will facilitate an in-depth critical discussion of the week’s materials and promote productive dialogue among the seminar group.

(2) REACTION PAPERS:

FIVE Reaction papers (25 points).

You are asked to provide five written reactions to one (1) empirically-driven research article. You can sign up for the specific weeks you would like to write up your reactions to weekly readings. Reactions papers should be between 500 to 600 words. They should cover a specific research method used in an empirical study. Reaction papers should focus on the RESEARCH conducted and might cover some of the following things:

What are the strengths of this article?
How well are the research problem and method/s selection linked?
Where are some missed opportunities in this article? That is were there places in the article where you thought the researchers might have extended their analysis? Drawn out more implications from their findings? And so on-- What specifically?
What in your opinion would have strengthen this article and why? Be specific.
Were there specific errors made? If so: What type of error/s? Explain.
What in your opinion were some crucial things left out by the researchers? Be Specific.
What did you learn from this article specifically that you might apply in your own research praxis? Be specific.

Your Reactions should be posted to Blackboard the Day Before Class-- Sunday at Noon.

Grading. Reactions will be scored as follows:

5 points – Insightful argument and analytical engagement with the reading

4 points- Solid Reaction to the Reading. Demonstrates knowledge of methods praxis.

3 points- Some engagement with method presented. Does not fully integrate/conceptualize argument.

1 to 2 points- Demonstrates a weak engagement to the underlying issues/themes of the article. Weak grasp of methodological issues.

Grade reduction: 1 point is deducted for work turned in after the cutoff time. 2 points for work turned in for each day late.

(3) TWO SHORT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT #1.
Research Inquiry Strategies: Induction vs. Deduction

Read the Following Articles for this Assignment:


Answer the following questions in essay format (no more than 4-5 pages).

How is Bloemraad’s article an example of a deductive sociological approach? In what ways is Becker’s piece in line with an inductive, grounded theory approach? How distinct, and in what ways, are deductive and inductive thinking in their approach to empirical analysis? What is the relationship (if any) between 1) statistical analysis and deductive thinking and 2) qualitative research and inductive thinking? What do you conclude about the relationship between theory and evidence?

ASSIGNMENT #2.
Race and ethnicity are key sociological concepts in sociology, but how we conceptualize race is a difficult task. Can we conceptualize and operationalize the concept of race? Why or why not? Is there a link between data collection and measurement? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different ways this concept is conceptualized and measured in these articles? How can we study race with reifying this concept and making it a biological category of analysis?

For this assignment please read all of the following articles:


**The Research Proposal (35 %)**

Stepwise Assignments toward your proposal:
1. Pre-proposal Assignment #1 (not graded)
2. Pre-proposal Assignment #2 (not graded)
3. Final Proposal (35%)

**PROPOSAL EXPECTATIONS:**

One of the goals of this course is to help students prepare a research proposal (see handout on “Proposal Guidelines” on a topic suitable for an M.A. or Ph.D. thesis. To this end, there will be two intermediate assignments that will lead to the generation of a final proposal. You will be asked to team up with a classmate and give each other feedback on your pre-proposal assignments. While the two pre-proposal assignments will not be graded, you are required to submit them on time.

You will also work in Groups of 4 During the Second Half of the Class Starting At Week 3.

Our class meets only once a week, but I hope that you will also get together with your “research partner(s)” to engage in a collective process of proposal dialogue and writing outside of class. The pre-proposal assignments are set up to enable you to gradually create the building blocks of a complete proposal. You and your partner will give feedback to one another on your pre-proposal assignments.

**Instructions, Tips, & Guidelines for Proposal Assignments (DUE IN STAGES)**

**STEP 1. Pre-Proposal Assignment #1**

How you are guided in the writing of your proposal will depend on whether or not your proposal is from a Qualitative or Quantitative Approach. Different Approaches required somewhat different proposal steps. So… I will provide you with more specific guidelines later, depending on what route you decide to take with regard to your research approach.
The objective of this proposal assignment is for you to explore a possible topic for research, to develop skills in formulating a problem, and to learn to specify a research question. You will be asked to justify your proposed research and conduct a literature review.

Pre-proposal assignment number one requires the following:
- Take the IRB (on-line test) to receive your IRB certificate.
- Obtain an IRB research proposal form on the Boston College Research Website. In addition to handing in your pre-proposal assignment number one, go over what is required for an IRB proposal and bring a print out of this form to class filling out all those parts that are required for this pre-proposal assignment number one and placing this information on the form. Please attach the IRB form filled out up to what you can do -- and hand this in with assignment number one.

Your pre-proposal paper requires that you provide:
- A Research Statement and Research Question (1-2 pages): Briefly describe the problem. Describe the purpose of your research and conclude with a clearly-stated research question.
- Significance (1 page): This section provides the rationale and justification for the research. For example, who cares about the answer? Is present opinion divided? How important is it to have an answer to this question? What are the implications for practice/policy of various possible outcomes of the research?
- Review of Relevant Literature (5-6 pages, double spaced): This review provides background information about your topic—it summarizes what is known about the subject, and critically analyzes prior research on the topic. This review lets the reader know that you understand the problem and provides a context for your proposed research. It also discusses studies that include concepts that you are focusing on.

[Note: IF YOU ARE DOING A QUANTITATIVELY DRIVEN APPROACH YOU WOULD ALSO NEED TO DEFINE YOUR TERMS AND CONCEPTS:
- Conceptualization and Operationalization: Specify key concepts on which your study will focus and how you intend to operationalize them as variables. Discuss the issues of reliability and validity of measurement of key variables.
- Hypotheses: If applicable, state the key hypotheses to be tested, indicating independent and dependent variables.]

- A Complete Bibliography: Use APA style. (Please ask my about my handout on APA style)

STEP 2. Pre-Proposal Assignment #2:
This assignment will ask you to describe the research method/s for your proposed study. You are asked to specify your primary data collection method/s and sampling procedure/s. Additionally, if applicable, you should include a description of the design of your instruments and provide sample questions.
NOTE: This assignment builds on the previous one and you should include your revised work from assignment #1 when you submit assignment #2. Please be sure to incorporate suggested improvements into both your revisions to assignment #1 and your new work in assignment #2.

Therefore, in addition to your revised assignment #1, please submit:

• (2 pages): Describe your research design and data collection method.
• Sample: Specify your sample, how it will be selected, whether it is random, etc.
• Other Methodological Issues (1-2 pages): Indicate any additional concerns you have regarding methodological issues in your study, such as response rate, sampling bias etc.
• Ethical and Political Considerations: Briefly discuss any ethical or political concerns you may have with your proposed research focus and/or procedures. (2 /3 pages).

IF APPLICABLE:
• Instrumentation and Measurement: Provide and discuss sample instruments to be used. For example, for a survey, you would include a questionnaire or interview schedule; for in-depth interviewing, a set of open-ended questions; for content analysis, a coding sheet. Also include instructions to respondents or recorders.

You are required to hand continue to fill in the IRB proposal form with additional information as per assignment number 2. Attach IRB form to your paper.

STEP 3. Final Proposal Assignment:
The final proposal should build on the work you did in the previous two assignments. You should have revised and improved your previous work based on the feedback you have received. Please refer to the Research Proposal guidelines in your “handouts” packet to include all relevant sections. Your final proposal should include an abstract, a budget, etc. (ASK ME FOR THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINE EVALUATION). A completely filled out IRB form is also required and should be attached to your final proposal.