SC210.02: Research Methods  
Fall 2013  
Campion 235  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli  
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McGuinn 425  
Office hours: Tues. and Thurs. 4:30-6:00 p.m.

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.

Recommended Text (available in bookstore and on reserve)

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. Hence, excessive absences and lateness will be noted as this has an effect on group participation. In-class exercises are
not graded; however, they offer applied learning and prepare you for your graded assignments. 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 copies 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. These assignments will be distributed in class before the due date and a copy can also be found on Blackboard. The ungraded assignments will eventually become a part of your final research proposal, which will be graded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment 1 (10%)</th>
<th>Epistemological position paper</th>
<th>Due date: Thurs., Sep. 19</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4 (15%)</td>
<td>Survey data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Due date: Tues., Oct. 29</td>
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<td>Assignment 5 (20%)</td>
<td>Interview data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Due date: Tues., Nov. 19</td>
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UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS
Assignment 2 Research Question Due date: Thurs., Sep., 26
Assignment 3 Literature Review Due date: Thurs., Oct. 10

Final Paper: Research Proposal (40% of your grade) Due date: Tues., Dec 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. This assignment will be distributed in class before the due date and a copy can also be found 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.
Course Schedule

Tuesday, September 3
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, September 5
Paradigms of inquiry

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 4: The Meanings of Methodology

Tuesday, September 10
(cont.)

Required Reading:  CHOOSE ONE READING. DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

*MacPhail, Catherine and Catherine Campbell. (2001). I think condoms are good but, aai, I hate those things: Condom use among adolescents and young people in a Southern African township. *Social Science & Medicine, V52, 1613-1627. (An inductive, qualitative design) LIBRARY RESERVE

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Thursday, September 12
The role of theory in our work
The literature review

Required Reading:  CHOOSE ONE PROPOSAL. DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT
*Quantitative Research Proposal BLACKBOARD

*Qualitative Research Proposal BLACKBOARD

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 5 (through pg. 128): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns

*For additional information/examples on writing a literature review, see:
Tuesday, September 17
(cont).

*Recommended Reading:*
*Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs*

Thursday, September 19

Procedural ethics

*Recommended Reading:*
*Neuman, Chapter 5 (pg.129 to end): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns*

*Neuman, Appendix A: American Sociological Association Code of Ethics*

Tuesday, September 24

Ethics in practice

*Required Reading: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT*

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, September 26

Conceptualization and operationalization
Begin survey assignment group work

*Recommended Reading:*
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (through pg. 188): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement*

Tuesday, October 1

Sampling

*Recommended Reading:*
*Neuman, Chapter 8: Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling*

Thursday, October 3

Reliability and validity

*Recommended Reading:*
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (188-198): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement*
IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, October 8
Surveys

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (pg. 198 on): Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

*Neuman, Chapter 10: Survey Research

Thursday, October 10
**ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE**
Surveys (cont).

Tuesday, October 15
Quantitative data analysis

V. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Thursday, October 17
Interviewing

Recommended Reading:

Tuesday, October 22
(cont.)

Required Reading: CHOOSE ONE READING AND DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT


*Ochieng, Bertha. (2010). ‘You know what I mean:’ The ethical and methodological dilemmas and challenges for black researchers interviewing black families. Qualitative Health Research, V20, 2, 1725-1735. LIBRARY RESERVE

Thursday, October 24
Focus groups
Mixing methods

*Recommended Reading:

Tuesday, October 29
Survey group report

** ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE**

Thursday, October 31
Interpretation

*Required Reading: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

Tuesday, November 5
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

*Required Reading: DO SHORT ASSIGNMENT

*Recommended Reading:

Thursday, November 7
(cont.)
Tuesday, November 12
Fieldwork and community-based research

Required Reading: 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

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 13: Field research

Thursday, November 14
(cont.)

VII. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Tuesday, November 19
Film in class: Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U. S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 11: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis

Thursday, November 21
Film discussion and content analysis
(cont.)

Tuesday and Thursday, November 26/28
No class

Tuesday, December 3
Final paper review

Thursday, December 5
LAST CLASS

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON: Tues., December 10 @ 5 p.m.**

EVERYONE SHOULD TURN IN A HARD COPY OF THE PAPER AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT/S TO MY OFFICE OR MAILBOX BY 5PM. PLEASE EMAIL ME THIS PAPER ONLY IF YOU WANT COMMENTS. PLEASE (1) SPELL CHECK/PROOFREAD YOUR PAPER, (2) INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS, AND (3) DO NOT FORGET TO CITE PROPERLY IN YOUR PAPER AND IN YOUR BIBLIOGRAPHY.