

## SC210.02 RESEARCH METHODS

Instructor: Amy Sousa

Office: McGuinn 410B • Hours: MWF 12:30–1pm or by appt

Email: sousaam@bc.edu • Phone: (202) 997–6232

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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The basic goal of social research is to gather evidence in order to answer questions about the nature of relationships among individuals, groups, institutions, and societies. The primary objective of this course is to introduce you to the techniques and applications of social research. Specifically, this course will help you do the following:

- Comprehend and interpret research reports;
- Plan and carry out research projects;
- Assess the strengths and limitations of various research methods; and
- Understand the links between social theory and research methods.

### REQUIRED READING

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Neuman, W. Lawrence. (2009). *Understanding Research*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Berg, Bruce. (2009). Chapter 4: A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 7th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. (**O'Neill Library Reserves**)

DeVault, Marjorie. (1990). "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1), 96–115. (**O'Neill Library Reserves**)

Duneier, Mitchell. (1992). *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jacobs, Lawrence and Robert Shapiro. (2000). *Politicians Don't Pander*. Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Ostrander, Susan A. (1984). *Women of the Upper Class Philadelphia*, PA: Temple University Press.

### RECOMMENDED READING

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Punch, Keith F. (2000). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pyrzczak, F. & Bruce, R. R. (2003). *Writing empirical research reports: A basic guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. 4th ed. Los Angeles: Pyrczak.

Wolcott, Harry. (2008). *Writing Up Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## **ASSIGNMENTS** (hard copies only; NO email)

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**Class Participation (10%):** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and contribute constructively to discussions and activities.

**Presentation of Literature (10%):** Students are expected to locate and submit scholarly articles that employ the following research methods: secondary research/content analysis, ethnography, survey, and interview. Students will submit articles on the dates provided in the syllabus along with written answers (approximately one page) to the following questions:

1. What is the author's problem statement?
2. What research method is employed?
3. Does the author utilize quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods?

Due Dates:

- Article using ethnography as a research method is due on 10/2/09.
- Article using survey as a research method is due on 10/16/09.
- Article using interview as a research method is due on 11/04/09.
- Article using secondary research/content analysis as a method is due on 11/27/09.

**Short Papers (45%):** Students are expected to write three short papers (five pages each) analyzing the use of research methods applied in *Slim's Table*, *Politicians Don't Pander*, and *Women of the Upper Class*. Each paper should:

1. Identify the research method applied in the book.
2. Describe how the author's application of method addressed the stated research problem(s).
3. Assess the strengths and limitations of the author's application of the research method.
4. Discuss the relationship between the author's application of method and theory.

Due Dates:

- Short Paper #1 on *Slim's Table* is due on 10/05/09.
- Short Paper #2 on *Politicians Don't Pander* is due on 10/26/09.
- Short Paper #3 on *Women of the Upper Class* is due on 11/16/09.

**Final Project (35%):** Students are expected to produce an original research proposal, including the following: research problem, complete literature review, analysis of a proposed research method, data collection strategy, theoretical perspective, and discussion of ethical considerations for the proposed project. Students are required to present research proposals to the class for discussion and provide friendly critiques of other students' proposals. Finally, students are expected to complete appropriate training on the conduct of human participant research and present certification of completion. (See the Boston

College Institutional Review Board website for online training programs that fulfill this requirement: [www.bc.edu/research/oric/human.html](http://www.bc.edu/research/oric/human.html))

Due Dates:

- Human Participant Research Training is due on 11/13/09.
- Proposal Rough Draft is due on 11/13/09.
- Proposal Presentations are scheduled on between 11/30 and 12/9/09.
- Final proposals are due on 12/11/09.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit assignments will be considered on an individual basis. Assignments will address areas of weakness or enhance areas of interest. Extra credit assignments will be vigorous tests of knowledge, creativity, and analysis of research methods. If you chose to take on an extra credit assignment, be prepared for a serious time commitment.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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According to Boston College's policies and procedures, academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not limited to the following:

- **Cheating** is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work.
- **Plagiarism** is the act of taking words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person/source, and presenting them as one's own.
- **Misrepresentation** of one's own or another's identity for academic purposes and/or the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities.

Boston College's policy regarding academic integrity may be found on the following website: [www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html). Students are urged to review the plagiarism examples and guidelines and complete the quiz offered by the Political Science Department.

I will seek the maximum penalties allowed by the university's policies for any student suspected of academic dishonesty.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

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| Sept. 9  | <b>Introduction</b>   |
| Sept. 11 | <b>Theory Generation and Epistemology</b><br><u>Assignment:</u> Read Chapter 1 of <i>Understanding Research</i>   |
| Sept. 14 | <b>The Research Process</b><br><u>Assignment:</u> Review Chapter 1 of <i>Understanding Research</i><br>Begin Chapter 2 of <i>Understanding Research</i> |

- Sept. 16      **Secondary Research (*Class will be in O'Neill Library Room 307*)**  
 Sept. 18      Assignment: Read Chapter 2 of *Understanding Research*
- Sept. 21      **Planning a Research Project**  
 Sept. 23      Assignment: Review Chapter 2 of *Understanding Research*  
                     Read Chapter 5 of *Understanding Research*
- Sept. 25      **Ethical Considerations in Human Research**  
Assignment: Read Chapter 3 of *Understanding Research*  
                     Begin online training on human participant research:  
                     [www.bc.edu/research/oric/human.html](http://www.bc.edu/research/oric/human.html)
- Sept. 28      **Observational Study/Ethnography**  
 Sept. 30      Assignment: Read Chapter 10 of *Understanding Research*  
 Oct. 2              **Submit** scholarly article using ethnography as a  
                             method and one page summary (see pg 1 of syllabus  
                             "Presentation of Literature" for details); due **10/2/09**
- Oct. 5         **Discussion of Slim's Table**  
 Oct. 7         Assignment: Read *Slim's Table*  
                     **Submit** Short Paper #1: *Slim's Table* (see pg 1 of  
                     syllabus on "Short Papers" for details); due **10/5/09**
- Oct. 9         **Sampling**  
Assignment: Read Chapter 4
- Oct. 12        **Columbus Day – No Class**
- Oct. 14        **Survey Research**  
 Oct. 16        Assignment: Read Chapters 4 and 6 of *Understanding Research*  
                     **Submit** scholarly article that uses survey as a method  
                     and one page summary (see pg 1 of syllabus  
                     "Presentation of Literature" for details); due **10/16/09**
- Oct. 19        **Quantitative Data Analysis**  
 Oct. 21        Assignment: Read Chapter 9 of *Understanding Research*
- Oct. 23        **Research Proposal Discussion**  
Assignment: Discuss your research problem and literature review
- Oct. 26        **Discussion of *Politicians Don't Pander***  
 Oct. 28        Assignment: Read *Politicians Don't Pander*

**Submit** Short Paper #2: *Politicians Don't Pander* (see pg 1 of syllabus on "Short Papers" for details); due **10/26/09**

- Oct. 30      **Historical Comparative Research**  
Assignment: Read Chapter 11 of *Understanding Research*
- Nov. 2      **In-Depth Interviewing**  
Nov. 4      Assignment: Read Berg, Bruce. (2009). Chapter 4: A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 7th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.  
**Submit** scholarly article using in-depth interviews as a method and one page summary (see pg 1 of syllabus "Presentation of Literature" for details); due **11/4/09**
- Nov. 6      **Objectivity vs. Subjectivity**  
Nov. 9      Assignment: Read article distributed in class: DeVault, Marjorie. (1990). "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1), 96-115.
- Nov. 11      **Veterans' Day - No Class**
- Nov. 13      **Research Proposal Seminar (*Class in O'Neill Library Room 307*)**  
Assignment: Bring rough draft of research proposal for review, specifically literature review and theory sections  
**Submit** certification of completion for online training in human participant research.
- Nov. 16      **Discussion of *Women of the Upper Class***  
Nov. 18      Assignment: Read *Women of the Upper Class*  
**Submit** Short Paper #3: *Women of the Upper Class* (see pg 1 of syllabus on "Short Papers" for details); due **11/16/09**
- Nov. 20      **Qualitative Data Analysis**  
Nov. 23      Assignment: Read and analyze interviews distributed in class
- Nov. 25      **Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class**
- Nov. 27      **Content Analysis**  
Assignment: Review Chapter 11 of *Understanding Research*  
**Submit** scholarly article using content analysis as a method and one page summary (see pg 1 of syllabus "Presentation of Literature" for details); due **11/27/09**

- Nov. 30     **Research Proposal Presentations & Discussion**  
Dec. 2     Assignment: Read Chapter 12 of Understanding Research  
Dec. 4             **Present** and discuss research proposals; help fellow  
Dec. 7             students to work through challenges of proposed  
Dec. 9             projects
- Dec. 11     **Last Day of Class**  
Assignment: Research Proposals are due.