Woods College of Advancing Studies | Boston College

CO/SC21201 RESEARCH METHODS
Credits: 4 | Spring 2013
Nielsen

Instructor: Dr. Anna L. Nielsen, MLS, PhD
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Class Sessions: Tuesday Evenings 7:00 – 9:30 pm
Location: O’Neill 246
Office Hours: TBA

Boston College Mission Statement
Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation’s finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description
This introductory course in research methodology examines issues underlying research from a theoretical and practical point of view. It explores the basic concepts and problems encountered in designing and conducting research and develops the practice of critically thinking about resources located in the research process. Focus is on the tenets of sound research practice to enable students to make reasonable judgments about research read and undertaken.

Course Objectives (CO)
• Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classification, models, trends)
• Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories
• Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
• Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems
• Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking my own questions and seeking answers

Learning Strategies
We will engage in a variety of teaching/learning methods to cover the course material, including but not limited to: lecture, readings, small and large group discussions, independent and group projects, observation, technology experimentation, and written and oral presentations.

Philosophy on Learning Environments
“The call to men and women for others.”

Communication
As your instructor, I will do my best to clearly communicate all course requirements and material in a timely manner. This will include this syllabus, announcements during live class sessions, postings on the Blackboard class page, and email announcements. All email announcements will include the heading “CO/SC21201.” In addition to attending class, you are expected to check the Blackboard class page and your email daily, and contribute to online discussions.

With the changing uses of technology in our lives, norms around communication appear to shift as well. I expect that we will communicate with each other in a respectful and professional manner. For example, I expect that emails have some form of greeting (such as "Dear Dr. Nielsen" and conclude with some closure and name (such as "Sincerely, Jane" or "Best, Joe.") In addition to this being good practice for professional development, sometimes my email program filters out improperly addressed emails as spam. As well, emails should be written using proper grammar and punctuation.

If you have not heard back from me within 48 hours of your email, please feel free to drop me a reminder. Be aware that I am offline on Sundays.


ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING
Your grade will be based on the following:
1. Class Attendance and Participation – 20%
2. Research Method Exercises – 25%
3. Reference Information Retrieval Exercises – 25%
4. Final Project and Final Presentation – 30%

Class Attendance and Participation – 20%
Attendance of ALL class sessions is mandatory. Your participation grade will be based on active attendance (involvement in class discussion and activities, clear evidence of having read and engaged with the class readings) and Discussion Forum postings. Pay attention to quality – merely speaking and/or fulfilling word requirements will not be enough to earn
full participation marks. **Two or more absences automatically result in a failing grade.** Good participants will:

- be consistent in their participation;
- contribute substantively;
- demonstrate an understanding, familiarity, and thoughtful engagement with the assigned weekly readings and during class discussion and in written weekly exercises.

**Research: Research Method (RM) Exercises – 25%**

There are five RM Exercises. All five will be begun in class and finished on your own time.

**Reference: Source Exercises – 25%**

There are nine RIR Exercises. To receive credit, you must use Boston College Library resources. Your search process for each question must be explained clearly enough for a classmate to follow. Any process and/or answer that involves Google and/or Wikipedia will earn a failing grade.

**Final Project and Final Presentation – 30%**

The final project and final presentation are due the last day of class.

1. Your written final project topic proposals are due, and must be approved by the instructor, **March 26.**
2. Your final paper must be 15 pages long, not including references. You must follow proper formatting. There are no exceptions. Improperly formatted papers will be returned unread and will earn a failing grade.

**UNIVERSITY and COURSE POLICIES**

**WCAS Grading System**

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (0.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67) and C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known, the Student Learning and Support Center in the O’Neill Library Computer Center will issue a new one. The SLSC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

**Written Work**

Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA or MLA format per the decision of the instructor. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html](http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html).
Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student's work.

Please refer to and comply with the Boston College Academic Integrity standards and policy and procedures: http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html

Disability Statement
Classroom accommodations will be provided for qualified students with documented disabilities. Students are invited to contact the Connors Family Learning Center office about accommodations for this course. Telephone appointments are available to students as needed. Appointments can be made by calling, 617-552-8903. You may also make an appointment in person. For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. Arriving late and leaving early will result in being marked absent. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student's obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

Deadlines
All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

WEEKLY LECTURE and ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
** Note: additional readings and weekly activities may be announced. **
Week One: January 15 – Introduction to Course: Research Methods and Reference

**In-Class Activity: Exploring O’Neill Library**
- Introduction to the catalog, databases, e-journals, and digital collections
- Start RefWorks accounts

Week of January 22 – NO CLASS – CONFERENCE

Week Two: January 29 – Directories; The Art of the Survey

**Source Exercise Due: #1 RefWorks**
- Set up a RefWorks account for yourself and complete the RefWorks Tutorial available through the library portal [http://www.refworks-cos.com/refworks/tutorials/basic.html](http://www.refworks-cos.com/refworks/tutorials/basic.html)

**In-Class Activity**
- RM #1 Survey Monkey
- RM #2 Survey Worksheet

Week Three: February 5 – Almanacs, Yearbooks, and Handbooks; Participant Observation

**Source Exercise Due: #2 Directories**

**In-Class Activity**
- RM #3 Participant Observation

Week of February 12 – NO CLASS – EVENING COLLEGE

Week Four: February 19 – Bibliographies and Library Catalogs

**Source Exercise Due: #3 Almanacs, Yearbooks, and Handbooks**

**In-Class Activity**
- Research Title, Subject, and Keyword Searches

Week Five: February 26 – Encyclopedias; Interviewing

**Source Exercise Due: #4 Bibliographies and Library Catalogs**

**In-Class Activity**
- RM #4 Interviewing

Week of March 5 – NO CLASS – EVENING COLLEGE

Week Six: March 12 – Dictionaries; Experimental Research

**Source Exercise Due: #5 Encyclopedias**

**In-Class Activity**
- RM #5 Experiment Worksheet

Week Seven: March 19 – Writing Results, Writing a Research Paper

**Source Exercise Due: #6 Dictionaries**

**In-Class Activity**
- Writing a Hypothesis and The Five Paragraph Paper

Week Eight: March 26 – Biographical Sources; Ethics

**Assignments Due:**
- **Final Project Proposal**

**In-Class Activity**
• Ethics Case Studies and Debate

**Week Nine: April 2 – Geographical Sources; Grant Writing**

*Readings Due*
• Grant writing packet

*Source Exercise Due*: #7 Biographical Sources

*In-Class Activity*
• Group grant writing

**Week Ten: April 9 – Government Documents and Statistics; I: Research Analysis, Quantitative and Qualitative**

*Source Exercise Due*: #8 Geographic Sources

*In-Class Activity*
• Case Studies – #1 Fracking, #2 Education; #3 Housing

**Week of April 16 – NO CLASS – EVENING COLLEGE**

**Week Eleven: April 23 – Business and Management; II: Research Analysis, Quantitative and Qualitative**

*Source Exercise Due*: #9 Government Documents

*In-Class Activity*
• Corporate Facts, Journal and Article Search and Analysis

**Week Twelve: April 30 – Subject Area Research: Overview**

*In-Class Activity*
• Sample research projects

**Week Thirteen: May 7 – LAST CLASS**

*Assignments Due: **FINAL PROJECT and FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION DUE ***

*In-Class Activity*
• Final Project Presentations

A final note: Welcome to class!