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.

Textbooks & Readings (Required)
Articles, research studies, chapters, videos all available through Boston College University Libraries

Textbooks & Readings (Recommended)
Articles, research studies, chapters, videos all available through Boston College University Libraries

Canvas
Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) at Boston College, designed to help faculty and students share ideas, collaborate on assignments, discuss course readings and materials, submit assignments, and much more - all online. As a Boston College student, you should familiarize yourself with this important tool. For more information and training resources for using Canvas, click here.
In the case of any technical difficulties or concerns, please contact canvas@bc.edu or 617-552-HELP (4357) for immediate assistance.
NOTE: Canvas requires particular computer specifications and wifi access. It is important that you plan accordingly, particularly for courses that have online components.
Course Objectives
1. Students will demonstrate knowledge, skill and/or competency, across cultural settings and will learn the impact of culture, gender, and age in Research Methods for the Social Sciences as demonstrated by written and oral discussion, reflection pieces, quizzes, papers, and exams.
2. Students will demonstrate ethical knowledge, skill and/or competency, pertaining to Research Methods for the Social Sciences as demonstrated by written and oral discussion, reflection pieces, quizzes, papers, and exams.
3. Students will understand the relationship between different fields of social scientific inquiry and will be able to address research problems using an interdisciplinary approach.
4. Students will be able to design research projects that respect the ethical boundaries involved in the study of human beings.
5. Students will be able to communicate effectively, orally and in writing.
6. Students will have the capacity to engage in meaningful, constructive exchanges with others.

Grading
Grading will rely on a combination of written and oral discussion, written reflection pieces, quizzes, papers, and exams.

Class Attendance and Participation – 20%
Discussion (Reflection Pieces and Discussion Responses, 8 at 5% each) – 40%
Quizzes (2 at 5% each) - 10%
Final Exam – 30%

The undergraduate grading system for Woods College is as follows:

A (4.00), A- (3.67)
B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67)
C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)
D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67)
F (.00)

All students can access final grades through Agora after the grading deadline each semester. Students who complete course evaluations can access grades earlier, as they are posted.

Deadlines and Late Work
Deadlines are firm. If there is a conflict, personal or professional, communication must be made with the instructor and alternate arrangements will be made.

Course Assignments
It is expected that you will spend 8 hours per week on out-of-class assignments and exercises. These are listed below. Please note that some weeks will require more time and some weeks less time but the average is approximately 8 hours per week over the semester.

Course Schedule
WEEKLY LECTURE and ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
* Note: additional readings, weekly activities, and case studies will be announced throughout the semester. *

Week One: January 16 - F2F– The Nature and Process of Social Research
• Approaches to knowledge
• Basic assumption of science
• What is meant by social research?
• Why do social research?
• The context of social research methods
• Elements of the process of social research
  o Literature review
  o Concepts and theories
  o Research questions
  o Sampling cases
  o Data collection
  o Data analysis
  o Writing
• Boston College University Libraries

Week Two: January 23 - ONLINE – Conceptual Foundation, Process, and Problems of Social Science Research

Readings Due

Videos Due
• Watch the BC Libraries Core Skills Videos [http://libguides.bc.edu/core-skills-videos](http://libguides.bc.edu/core-skills-videos) These skills will help you (a) find the reading assignments throughout the semester and (b) do the required research for your final research paper.

Assignments
• **Reflection Piece #1:** Pick a topic (research question) of interest. Find three articles in Boston College Libraries [http://library.bc.edu/](http://library.bc.edu/) about your topic. Write at least 375 words about each article, discussing what kind of research was performed and the quality; consider the implication of each article for your topic, and how each article expanded thinking about your topic. Format: Your Name, Research Topic, Full Citation of Article #1, Reflection of Article #1, etc. Be sure to include a summary of each article, the main points made, the research methodology used, your analysis of the quality of the research, and further questions stimulated by the article.

Week Three: January 30 - F2F – Elements of Research & Ethics in Social Science Research I

Class Activities
• Research design
• Criteria
• Designs
• Planning research, formulating questions
• Ethical principles
• The difficulties of ethical decision making

Case Studies
• Nuremberg War Crime Trials
• Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis
• Milgram Obedience Study [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCVlI-_4GZQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCVlI-_4GZQ) (9:53 minutes)
• Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gb4Q20z0T1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gb4Q20z0T1Q) (29:00 minutes)

Week Four: February 6 - ONLINE – Ethics in Social Science Research II

Readings Due
• Boston College Office for Research Protections [http://www.bc.edu/research/office-for-research-protections.html] - look especially at Policies and Procedures
• The Belmont Report [http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html] and look through the rest of the US Depart of Health & Human Services Office for Human Research Protections
• Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA) [http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/]
• ASA Code of Ethics [http://www.asanet.org/membership/code-ethics]

Readings Recommended

• Stanford Prison Experiment [http://www.prisonexp.org/]

Videos Due

• The Milgram Experiment 1962 full documentary [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek4pWJ0_XNo] (44:26 Minutes)

Assignments

• **Reflection Piece #2:** Watch the full Milgram Experiment documentary and the Beyond Milgram video. Read the required readings. Then, write at least 1000 words addressing the following two questions, remembering to address issues of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice; achieving valid results; and informed consent, deception, and debriefing.
  1. Should social scientists be permitted to conduct replications of Milgram’s obedience experiments? Zimbardo’s Prison Stimulation? Can you justify such research as permissible within the current ASA ethical standards? If not, do you believe that these standards should be altered to permit Milgram-type research?
  2. Why do you think unethical research occurs? Is it inherent in science? Does it reflect “human nature”? What do you think makes ethical research more or less likely?

**Week Five: February 3 - F2F - Research Design and Causation**

**Readings Recommended**
- Ferguson, Kristin M., Kimberly Bender, Sanna J. Johnson, Elaine M. Maccio, and David Pollio. 2012. “Employment Status and Income Generation Among Homeless Young Adults: Results From a Five-City, Mixed Methods Study.” *Youth & Society* 44:385-407.


**Readings Due**

- Read and watch materials relating to the Centre for Longitudinal Studies 1970 British Cohort Study [http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=795&sitesectiontitle=Welcome+to+the+1970+British+Cohort+Study](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=795&sitesectiontitle=Welcome+to+the+1970+British+Cohort+Study) including, but not excluded to:
  - History
  - About the Sample
  - Data record for the BCS70 Birth survey (1970) [https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/Catalogue/?sn=2666&type=Data%20catalogue](https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/Catalogue/?sn=2666&type=Data%20catalogue)
  - Data record for the BCS70 Age 42 survey (2012-13) [https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=7473](https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=7473)

- Read and watch materials relating to the Centre for Longitudinal Studies Millennium Cohort Study [http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=851&sitesectiontitle=Welcome+to+the+Millennium+Cohort+Study](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=851&sitesectiontitle=Welcome+to+the+Millennium+Cohort+Study) including but not excluded to:
  - History
  - About the Sample
  - MCS Ethical Review and Consent


**Week Six: February 20 - ONLINE – Sampling & Survey Research**

**Class Activities**

**Readings Due**

- Read through the Boston College Libraries Data/Statistics/GIS Portal: Getting Started with Data/Statistics/GIS Research [http://libguides.bc.edu/dataportal](http://libguides.bc.edu/dataportal)

- Read through the Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) of the University of Illinois [http://www.srl.uic.edu/](http://www.srl.uic.edu/)


**Assignments**

- **Reflection Piece #3:** Read and watch all the assigned readings and videos from week five and week six. Write at least 1000 words addressing the following two questions.
  - Choose one of the major studies from the Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Talk about the research methods used, what types of questions the researchers asked, what kind of information they are looking at to answer those questions, and what can be gained for society by their research.
Construct an idiographic causal explanation for a recent historical or personal event. For example, what was the sequence of events that led to the outcome of the presidential election? The Super Bowl win?

**Quiz #1:** Answer the provided eight questions about research design and causation as completely as you can. You will have three hours to take the quiz once you begin. It is due February 27 by 11:59 pm, the evening before our next face-to-face meeting.

**Week Seven: February 27 - F2F – Quantitative Data Analysis**

**Class Activities**
- Introducing statistics – the role of statistics in the research process & the process of preparing data for statistical analysis

**Readings**
- Read through the General Social Survey [https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/](https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/) (you will have to create an account; it is free)
- Read the General Social Survey: Chronicling Changes in American Society (pdf provided on class page)

**Readings Recommended**

**Week Eight: March 6 – NO CLASS – SPRING VACATION**

**Week Nine: March 13 - F2F – The Nature of Qualitative Research**

**Class Activities**
- Introduction
- Concepts
- Reliability and validity
- Approaches
- Methods

**Readings**
- Look through the collections in the University of Delaware’s Disaster Research Center [http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/35](http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/35)

**Readings Recommended**
**Film**


**Assignments**

- **Reflection Piece #4:** This reflection piece is a combination of Quantitative Data Analysis and Qualitative Research. As such, you will have two questions to think and write about. You must write at least 350 words on question “a” and 700 words on questions “b.”
  a. Search the Internet for a social science example of statistics. Using the key terms provided, describe the set of statistics you have identified. Which set of social phenomena does this set of statistics describe? What relationship, if any, do the statistics identify?
  b. Keeping the concepts of observation and progressive focusing in mind, continue the observation and writing exercise we began in class:
    i. Write down an interaction you observed today or yesterday with as much detail as possible. Something that happened to someone that you remember.
    ii. Write down three different perspectives/interpretations of the interaction you shared with the class.

**Week Ten: March 20 - F2F – Sampling & Ethnography and Participant Observation I**

**Class Activities**

- Levels of sampling
- Purposive sampling
- Introduction to ethnography and participant Observation
- Access
- Roles
- Field Notes
- Changing nature of ethnography

**Readings**

- Look through the Data & Society site [https://datasociety.net/](https://datasociety.net/). Scroll through the databites and listen to at least two talks of interest to you [https://datasociety.net/databites/](https://datasociety.net/databites/)

**Assignment**

- **Reflection Piece #5:** Write 1000 words about three of the concepts learned from class and from *Key Concepts in Ethnography*, creating an imaginary research project. For example, how might you talk about using grounded theory to support a visual ethnographic study of the uses of children in advertising, or ideas of masculinity?

**Week Eleven: March 27 - ONLINE – Ethnography and Participant Observation II & Interviewing**

**Class Activities**

- Ethnography and participant observation
- Interviewing in a qualitative interview

**Readings Due**

- Listen to the interview with Matthew Desmond, author of *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City:* [https://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2016-03-07/matthew-desmond-evicted](https://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2016-03-07/matthew-desmond-evicted)


• Read “... Barely Getting By in Boston...” by Katie Johnson in the February 23 2017 Boston Globe Magazine.

**Readings Recommended**

• Read “Forced Out” (Matthew Desmond, The New Yorker, February 8, 2016): [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out)

**Assignment**

• **Reflection Piece #6:** Write 500 words on Desmond’s study, and include data you tracked from the Pew Report and ProPublica Report, and whatever articles you found with relevant information. Be sure to address three points: What do you think of the research methods Desmond used? Do you think his study is useful in terms of changing policy, how or how not? What would you do next, if you were studying eviction and housing?

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**Week Twelve: April 3 - ONLINE – Evaluation and Policy Research**

**Readings**


• *User’s manual for the New Jersey income-maintenance experiment: Data, study design, and experimental procedures.* (1975). Madison, Wis.: Institute for Research on Poverty Data Center, University of Wisconsin. – Don’t read all of it – just browse through and get a sense of the content and process of the document.

• Look through the Campbell Collaboration Project: [https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/](https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/) Start by picking Massachusetts and getting Quick Facts – then choose a population and/or interest and explore.

**Readings Recommended**


• Look at the EPIC Conference page [https://2017.epicpeople.org/](https://2017.epicpeople.org/)


**Recommended Text Books**


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**Week Thirteen: April 10 - ONLINE – Secondary Analysis & Content**

**Class Activities**
Readings
• Focus groups
• Language in qualitative research
• Documents as sources of data

Readings
• TBA; relevant to current events

Readings Recommended
• TBA; relevant to current events

Assignment Due
• Reflection Piece #7: 500 words. Begin to investigate a debate in the popular news. What sorts of research are being used to support it? Analyze the data.

Week Fourteen: April 17 – NO CLASS – WCAS SENIOR DINNER

Week Fifteen: April 24 – F2F – Data Processing and Analysis
Class Activities
• Introduction to computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
Readings Recommended
• Look through the ICPSR (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research) site, especially the Data Management & Collection section and the Find Data section.
  https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/

Week Sixteen: May 1 - ONLINE – Mixed Methods Research; Writing, Summarizing, and Reporting Social Research
Class Activities
• Breaking down the quantitative/qualitative divide
• Mixed methods research: combining qualitative and quantitative research
• Writing social research
Readings
Assignment Due
• Reflection Piece #8: 500 words. What have you learned? Pick a research question important to do. What design would you choose? How would you structure a research project around your question?

Week Seventeen: May 8 – F2F - FINAL EXAM DAY

Written Work
Woods College students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed and submitted in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA or CLA style per your instructor’s requirements. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. For writing support, please contact the Connors Family Learning Center.

Attendance
Attending class is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. When circumstances prevent a student from attending class, the student is responsible for contacting the instructor before the class meets. Students who miss class are still expected to complete all assignments and
meet all deadlines. Many instructors grade for participation; if you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Makeup work may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. Attendance credit is part of your final grade. If you must miss class, communication with the instructor is required.

Consistent with BC's commitment to creating a learning environment that is respectful of persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing their academic status. Students are responsible for reviewing course syllabi as soon as possible, and for communicating with the instructor promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. Students are responsible for completing all class requirements for days missed due to conflicts with religious holidays.

**Accommodation and Accessibility**

Boston College is committed to providing accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities. Specific documentation from the appropriate office is required for students seeking accommodation in Woods College courses. Advanced notice and formal registration with the appropriate office is required to facilitate this process. There are two separate offices at BC that coordinate services for students with disabilities:

- **The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC)** coordinates services for students with LD and ADHD.
- **The Disabilities Services Office (DSO)** coordinates services for all other disabilities.

Find out more about BC's commitment to accessibility at [www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility](http://www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility).

**Scholarship and Academic Integrity**

Students in Woods College courses must produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to cite references is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on exams or assignments, or submitting the same material or substantially similar material 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 see the [Boston College policy on academic integrity](http://www.bc.edu/sites/academic-integrity) for more information.