SOCIOLOGY 210 RESEARCH METHODS
Spring 2007
Tuesday and Thursday 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Gasson 303

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(I prefer email over voice mail)

Office hours: Tues. and Thurs. 1:30pm-3:00pm
McGuinn 410C, mailbox #54

Course Description
This course will introduce you to basic concepts, methods, and issues involved in both quantitative and qualitative social science research. Although this course will focus heavily on applied methods, we will consider the interplay of theory, epistemology, methodology, and method, exploring the multiplicity of paradigms that shape how we choose to approach and conduct social science research. We will also consider questions concerning the ethics and politics of research and explore the perennial questions that continue to haunt researchers across disciplines. What can be known? How can we know it? How can we conduct socially and ethically responsible research?

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 data.
* Prepare a research proposal on a sociological topic of your choice.

Recommended Texts (available in bookstore and on reserve)


Course Requirements

Class participation (20% of your grade)

Much of the learning will take place in the classroom through participation in class discussions and small group exercises. I am not in the habit of taking attendance; however 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. It is expected that when you are in class you will participate. Over the course of the semester a few very short written assignments on the readings will be assigned and will count towards your class participation grade.

Assignments and due dates (40% of your grade)

You will be asked to complete five assignments in addition to the research proposal (3 graded and 2 ungraded) over the course of the semester. You will receive a handout with more specifics for each assignment well before the due date. The ungraded assignments will eventually become a part of your final research proposal, which will be graded.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment 1 (10%)</th>
<th>Epistemological position paper</th>
<th>Due date: Tues., Jan. 30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 4 (15%)</td>
<td>Survey data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Due date: Tues., Mar. 20</td>
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<td>Assignment 5 (15%)</td>
<td>Interview data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Due date: Thurs., Apr. 12</td>
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UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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<tr>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Due date: Thurs., Feb. 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Due date: Thurs., Feb. 22</td>
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Research Proposal (40% of your grade)  

Due date: Thurs., May 3

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. More specifics on this project are covered in the attached sheet.

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 day 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. In cases where you are required to use published work, you must cite the work. If you plagiarize or cheat in some other form, you will fail the assignment; repeated episodes will result in failure of the course. If there are any questions on proper method of citing, please see me. For more information on Boston College’s academic integrity policy, please visit:  
www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity.
Course Schedule

Tuesday, January 16
Introduction and course overview
Experimenting with research design

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHOD

Thursday, January 18
Positivism and the scientific method
Alternative paradigms

Recommended Readings:
* Neuman, Chapter 4: The Meanings of Methodology
* Hesse-Biber and Leavy: Chapter 1: The Craft of Qualitative Research: a holistic approach

Tuesday, January 23
(cont.)

Required Readings: CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT TO CLASS
(BOTH ON LIBRARY RESERVE)


Thursday, January 25
The role of theory in our work
Literature review

Required Readings: BRING THESE TWO READINGS TO CLASS

* Webct: Quantitative Research Proposal
* Webct: Qualitative Research Proposal

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

II. DESIGNING RESEARCH AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, January 30
(cont). Guest speaker

**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

Recommended Readings:
* Neuman, Chapter 6: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs
* Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 2: The Research Process
Thursday, February 1
Procedural ethics

Recommended Readings:
*Neuman Chapter 5 (pg.129 to end): The Literature Review and Ethical Concerns
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 3: The Ethics of Social Research

Tuesday, February 6
Ethics in Practice

Required Reading:  BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

III. MEASUREMENT AND SAMPLING

Thursday, February 8
Conceptualization and operationalization
Begin survey assignment group work

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

Tuesday, February 13
Sampling

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

Thursday, February 15
Reliability and Validity

Recommended Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 7 (188-198)

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Tuesday, February 20
Scales and indexes
Surveys

Required Reading:
*Neuman, Chapter 10: Survey Research

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

Thursday, February 22
Surveys (cont.) **ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE**

Tuesday, February 27
Quantitative data analysis

Required Reading:  BRING THIS READING TO CLASS
Thursday, March 1
Quantitative data analysis (cont.)

SPRING BREAK MARCH 5-9

Tuesday, March 13
Film: Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U. S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Recommended Readings:
*Neuman, Chapter 11: Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 8: Content Analysis and Unobtrusive Methods

V. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Thursday, March 15
Film discussion and content analysis

Tuesday, March 20
Survey group report
Interviewing

Recommended Readings:
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 4: In-Depth Interview
*Optional: Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 5: Oral History

Thursday, March 22
Interviewing (cont.)

Required Reading: CHOOSE ONE READING AND BRING IT TO CLASS
(ALL ON LIBRARY RESERVE)


Tuesday, March 27
Focus groups
Mixing methods

Recommended Reading:
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 6: Focus Group Interviews
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 9: Mixed Methods Research
Thursday, March 29
Analyzing qualitative data
Grounded theory

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Recommended Reading:
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 10: Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data

Tuesday, April 3
Data Analysis (cont.)

EASTER BREAK APRIL 5-9

Tuesday, April 10
In the field

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS
*Anderson, Elijah. (1996). Jelly’s place. In In the Field: readings on the field research experience, edited by Carolyn D. Smith and William Kornblum. LIBRARY RESERVE

Recommended Readings:
*Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Chapter 7: Ethnography

Thursday, April 12
**ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE
Interview reflections and proposal status
Review for final paper

Tuesday, April 17
(cont.)

Thursday, April 19
Interpretation

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Tuesday, April 24
Representation

Required Reading: BRING THIS READING TO CLASS

Thursday, April 26
TBD

Tuesday, May 1
TBD

Thursday, May 3
**FINAL PAPER DUE
DOWNLOAD INSTRUCTIONS FOR COURSE RESERVES

*Start by going to the home page for the BC libraries.
*Then select “Course Reserve Catalog”
*Then you will be asked to login. Do so.
*Then under "Search by:" select "Instructor Name"
*Then under "Browse For" type in Piatelli, Deborah and click “Search”
*Once you find the item, go to the column at the extreme right of your screen and select "View Full Text of Article".
*When you do this you will get an open pdf file of the item. You can read the item or you can print the item. You will also find a copy of the item as a pdf file on your desk top.

APA AND ASA STYLE GUIDES

APA

Publication manual of the American Psychological Association
O’Neill Reference BF76.7.P83 2001

Online: www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/writer_resources/citation_styles/apa/apa.htm

ASA

American Sociological Association Style Guide
O’Neill Reference HM73.A54 1997

Online: www.asanet.org/page.ww?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts