SYLLABUS

The aim of this course is to teach the fundamentals of research design and the techniques of data collection used in sociological research. By the end of the course, students should be able to: 1) design and execute their own research projects and 2) understand, analyze and critique empirical studies in the sociological literature.

With attention to the debates over social science methodologies, the course takes a practical, “hands-on” approach to research methods. As a class, we will construct a study for the Emory Office of Campus Life. Through in-class exercises and assignments, we will collect and analyze the data and produce a report for Emory Office if Campus Life. Students in the course will also be required to design and implement their own study. Regular assignments throughout the semester will assist you in following the steps of the research process for their own research so that you can produce an empirical paper at the end of the semester. You will also be required to become certified in human subjects research at Emory by taking the on-line CITI course.

Required texts:

Lofland, Lofland and Snow. *Analyzing Social Settings, 4th Edition*. Please note that textbooks will not be available at the Emory bookstore after the middle of September.

Articles on electronic reserve through EUCLID.

Chapters in the graduate lounge. Some readings could not be placed on electronic reserve, so hard copies are available in the graduate lounge. This includes the chapters in LeBlanc’s book, *Pretty in Punk*, and the booklet, *The Ideas of Sampling* by Alan Stuart will be available in the lounge. Please make a photocopy and return the booklet.

*Recommended*: Schostak, John. 2006. *Interviewing and Representation in Qualitative Research*. 

Irene Browne  
Sociology 501  
Research Methods and Models: Design  
Fall 2010
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments, guidelines and other course documents are available on Blackboard. You should check Blackboard daily for announcements regarding any changes in the syllabus. The syllabus may change, depending on unforeseen issues that arise, particularly during data collection.

Grading will be based on the following:

IRB Certification (prerequisite for passing course)
All students are required to take the online CITI exam and become certified in human subjects research by Dec. 1, 2010. Here are the steps:
2. At the bottom of the screen, click onto “CITI Training Programs” under Quick Links.
3. Click onto “Log on to CITI.” This will take you to the online CITI training site.
4. Register on the CITI site.
5. Take the Social Science course.
6. Note that you can take each quiz multiple times if you do not pass.
7. When you have passed the course (all of the Social Science modules), print your CITI certification document and give a copy to me.

Note that if you intend to use the data that you collect this semester for a publication or as part of a larger research project, then you must receive approval for the study from the IRB by submitting an IRB protocol. To fulfill the requirements for Soc501, you only need to complete the CITI certification – not a full IRB protocol.

Leading Class Discussion (10 pts.) You are required to lead discussion period on the readings in one class. (Students will sign-up for their discussion date during the first week of class). Your discussion questions should focus on how the readings illuminate the methodological topic for your assigned day (including the topic in brackets under the readings). You must post at least 5 discussion questions on Blackboard at least 72 hours (3 days) prior to the day that you will be leading the discussion. Note that on many days, we will devote some class time to the assignments and class survey, so the discussion may occupy only part of class time (30-60 minutes).

Assignments (50 pts.)
The assignments will take you through the steps to conduct an empirical research project. Assignments 1.1 – 1.7 are based on the study of Emory undergraduates that we will conduct as a class. Assignments 2.1 – 2.5 are identical to the first set of assignments except that they are based on your own research topic (that is, with the exception of the difference in topic, assignment 2.1 is the same as assignment 1.1; assignment 2.2 is the same as assignment 1.2, etc.). You own project should be relatively small in scope, with just 1-2 dependent variables and 3-5 independent variables. Your study can be based upon quantitative or qualitative research. After completing the assignments, you should have collected pilot data on your own project and be able to report your results.
Final empirical paper (40 pts.)
Your paper should incorporate and build upon the work that you conducted for your assignments. You will need to expand the literature review from Assignment 2.2, describe your methods and write-up your results. Make sure to provide detailed information on your method, your sampling design and your response rate. You should include a table with the descriptive information for your sample. You can conduct your study and write your paper on a topic related to another class, but you cannot write one paper to satisfy requirements for two classes.

In-class time to discuss student projects:
I encourage students to use some of the class time to discuss their individual research projects. Receiving feedback from your peers can be particularly helpful in working through a conceptual or methodological issue. You can use one of the days specifically designated for student projects, or you can request class time on a day when we have readings assigned. Please take advantage of this class to advance your own research project and develop your research skills.

Bring your laptop to class. During many of the class sessions, you will need your laptop. If possible, please just bring your laptop to class each day. If you do not own a laptop, then I will see if you can borrow one from the Sociology office.
PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE

8/30 (M)  Introduction to the Course
Overview: research for Campus Life.
Assignment 1.1 distributed

9/1 (W)  Research Questions and Resources

Booth, Wayne. The Craft of Research. Chap. 3. “From Topics to Questions.”

[Steps in the research process. Finding a topic and developing a question. Including competing theories (Bobo). Drawing on personal experience (Tannenbaum)].

Guest presenter, Rob O’Reilly.

9/6 (M)  LABOR DAY

9/8 (W)  Feminist Methods and Issues of “Objectivity”
Assignment 1.1 due
Assignment 1.2 distributed
Assignment 2.1 distributed

LeBlanc, Lauraine. Chap. 2 in The Flowers in Your Dustbin: Women in The North American Punk Subculture of the 1990s. (This is a dissertation available electronically through EUCLID. Just search on the title.)


Tannenbaum, Deborah. Introduction and Chapter 1 in SLUT! Growing Up Female with a Bad Reputation.

[What are “feminist methods?” What is “objectivity?”]
Theory and Research: How Do They Relate?


[What is the research question? What are the concepts in the research question? How are they defined? What is the dependent variable? What is the independent variable?]

Selecting a Research Method


[What types of questions can we answer with each research method? What types of data can we gather? The importance of variation.]

Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Assignment 1.2 due
Assignment 1.3 distributed


[Operationalizing concepts: techniques and critiques; pitfalls of secondary data analysis.]
9/22 (W)  **Validity and Reliability**  
**Assignment 2.1 due**


9/27 (M)  **Assignment 1.3 due**

9/29 (W)  **Sampling Theory and Statistical Thinking**

10/4 (M)  

10/6 (W)  


10/11 (M)  *** FALL BREAK ***

10/13 (W)  **Survey Research**  
**Assignment 1.4 distributed**  
**Assignment 2.2 due**


[What is survey error? How can we reduce error? How to format a survey? How to administer a survey? How to ask questions?]


(Review Pager and Quillian article)

[How to maximize survey response rates. How to evaluate survey results.]

10/20 (W) **Experimental Design**


10/25 (M) **Qualitative Research Design: Fieldwork**  

*Assignment 1.5/2.5 distributed*


11/1 (M) **Ethical Issues**  

*Assignment 2.3 due*


11/8 (M) **Survey Data Analysis**

11/10 (W) Survey data analysis, cont.

11/15 (M) **Qualitative Data Analysis**  
**Assignment 2.4 due**

Glasser, Carol L., Belinda Robnett, and Cynthia Feliciano. 2009. Internet Daters' Body Type Preferences: Race-Ethnic and Gender Differences. Sex Roles, April 14th, Published Online

[In-class exercise on online dating]

11/17 (W) Dating exercise, cont.  
**Assignment 1.6 due**

11/22 (M) Student projects

11/24(W) No class (Thanksgiving)

11/29 (M) Student projects

12/1 (W) **Focus Groups**  
**Assignment 1.5/2.5 due**

12/6 (M) SUMMARY

12/16 (W) Paper due (5 p.m.)