

**PRINCIPLES OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH (E10.2132.001)**

Time: Tuesdays 4:55-6:35 p.m.	Location: 145 Fourth Ave, Rm. 210
Professor: Cynthia Miller Idriss	Office: 246 Greene #309W
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Phone: 992-9374	Class Email:

**Course Description**

This course introduces advanced methods of sociological research, including the study of the relationship between theory and research, the logic of social research, and a variety of methods on social science research. Specifically, we will cover topics such as

- Theoretical “paradigms” and their relationship to research
- Issues of objectivity, subjectivity, validity, and bias
- Methods of social research across qualitative, quantitative, and historical-comparative approaches, such as survey and experimental research, ethnography, interview and survey research, archival research methods, discourse and content analysis, and participatory action research.

The course will enable participants to understand and address the challenges involved in developing research questions, design, and analysis; to understand how to construct arguments and decide upon appropriate data and evidence; and to gain an overview of the range of methodological techniques available for empirical research studies.

**Course Requirements**

Class members must:

- Come to class prepared to discuss readings and participate in class. More than one absence will affect your final grade (25%).
- Lead or co-lead one class discussion, providing a very brief analysis of the readings and questions for discussion (15%).
- Complete **3** four-page papers based on weekly readings and addressing one or more issues raised in those readings (10% each; due September 23; October 21; and November 11). Your paper *must* include the readings assigned in the week in which the paper is written, although you also may choose to integrate readings from any week into your paper. Papers are due in class, at the beginning of class. No late papers will be accepted.
- Complete a 15-page research proposal based on a research topic of your choice (30%). The proposal should include a theoretical rationale for the project, a review of relevant literature, and a detailed research design, including discussion of data to be collected and the method(s) to be used for data collection and data analysis. If it is relevant for the research design and method you have chosen, the proposal must also include (as an attachment) an example of a research instrument you would plan to use during data collection for the research project as well as a list of potential sources of funding. An outline for the proposal will be due midway through the semester.

**Required Readings:**

Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 1995. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Creswell, John. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Waquant, Lois. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The University of Chicago Press.

Dunier, Mitchell. 2001. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Durkheim, Emile. 1997. *Suicide*. New York: Free Press.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: Third Edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Phillips, D.C. and Nicholas C. Burbules. 2000. *Postpositivism and Educational Research*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All books are available at the New York University Bookstore. In addition, a **COURSEPACK** is available at Unique Copy Center, 252 Greene Street. Please refer to the weekly reading list for the assigned readings. Unless indicated otherwise on the syllabus, all readings are available in the books or in the coursepack.

**Weekly Topic & Reading List**

\* denotes coursepack reading

**Sept. 2:        Introductions**

**Theory and Methodological Issues in Social Research**

**Sept. 9:        Theoretical Paradigms and Social Research**

Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

\*Albert Hirschman. "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding." In Rabinow and Sullivan, *Interpretive Social Science: A second look*.

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Schwandt, Thomas. Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry, pp. 292-331 in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

**Sept. 16: Objectivity and Subjectivity(ties) in Social Research**

Phillips and Burbules, pp. 1-64

\*Rosenau, "Into the Fray: Crisis, Continuity, and Diversity"

\*Wallerstein et al, "Debates within the Social Sciences, 1945 to the present"

Creswell, Chapters 1 and 2

**Sept. 23: Methodological Concerns and Issues:**

Bourdieu and Wacquant, pp. 1-127

\*Durkheim, Rules of Sociological Method (selections)

Phillips and Burbules, Chp. 4 "Can, and Should, Educational Inquiry be Scientific?"

**Sept. 30: The Logic of Sociological Research Part I—from Theory to Research**

Creswell, Chapters 4-8

Booth, pp. 35-108

**Oct. 7: The Practice of Research: Research Design, Arguments, and Ethical Issues**

Booth, pp. 109-182

Creswell, Chapter 3

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Christians, Clifford. G. *Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research*, pp. 208-243 in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

**\*\*\*\*RESEARCH PROPOSAL OUTLINES DUE IN CLASS TODAY\*\*\*\***

Outlines may be brief (1 page) but should include a list of potential sources, including at least one relevant article from ASR (American Sociological Review) or AJS (American Journal of Sociology).

## Methodological Approaches, Frameworks, and Techniques

### Oct. 14: Classical Approaches

Durkheim, *Suicide*

### Oct. 21: Ethnography, Case Studies, and Semi- or Unstructured Interviews

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, Chapter 1: Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research, pp. 1-46 in Denzin and Lincoln (eds). 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, Chapter 10

**Research Exemplar I:** Mitchell Dunier, *Sidewalk*

**Research Exemplar II:** \*Amanda Lewis, "There is No 'Race' in the Schoolyard"

### Oct. 28: Survey Research and Structured Interviews

Creswell, Chapter 9

**Research Exemplar III:** \*David T. Burkam, Douglas D. Ready, Valerie E. Lee and Laura F. LoGerfo "Social Class Differences in Summer Learning Between Kindergarten and First Grade: Model Specification and Estimation"

### Nov. 4: Archival and Historical Research

\*Philip Abrams: "Introduction: Sociology as History"

**Research Exemplar IV:** **ON RESERVE in BOBST:** George Steinmetz. "The Devil's Handwriting": Precolonial Discourse, Ethnographic Acuity, and Cross-Identification in German Colonialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2003, pp. 41-95.

### Nov. 11: Experimental Research and Causal Modeling

\*Herbert Asher, *Causal Modeling, second edition* (selections)

\*Jeffrey Haydu, "Making Use of the Past: Time Periods as Cases to Compare and as Sequences of Problem Solving"

**Research Exemplar V:** \*Linda Molm et al, "Risk and Trust in Social Exchange: An Experimental Test of a Classical Proposition"

**Nov. 18: Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis**

\*Gee, James Paul and Judith L. Green. "Discourse Analysis, Learning, and Social Practice: A Methodological Study."

**Research Exemplar VI:** \*Wendy Griswold, "The Fabrication of Meaning"

**Nov. 25: Community-Based/Action Research/Research Interventions**

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin, Reconstructing the Relationships between Universities and Society Through Action Research, pp. 131-166 in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Kemmis and McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research" pp. 336-396 in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. 2003. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry: Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

**Research Exemplar VII:** Kenneth Reardon, "Down on the River." *Planning*, Sept 2000, V. 66, Issue 9, p. 20.

**Research Exemplar VIII:** Barnes and Miller "Data Analysis by Walking Around" and Barnes, Miller, and Dennis, "Face to Face"

**Dec. 2: Data Analysis and Interpretation and  
The Logic of Sociological Research Part II—from Research to Theory**

Specific topic(s) and readings for data analysis section to be selected by class.

Booth, pp. 183-324

**ON RESERVE in BOBST:** Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong. "For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities" pp. 167-207 in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 2003. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

**\*\*\*FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE BY DECEMBER 12 AT NOON IN MY FACULTY MAILBOX\*\*\***