

RESCH-GE 2132 Principles of Empirical Research
Fall 2012 – Steinhardt / New York University

Professor: Karly Sarita Ford

Email: karly.ford@nyu.edu

Class time:

Tues 2 – 3:40

Office Location:

3rd floor, Kimball Hall

Office Hour: Wednesdays, 9-10am or by appointment

Overview

This graduate-level course provides a broad introduction to the primary research logics in the contemporary social sciences. It enables students to become capable consumers and critics of empirical social-science research across a wide range of methodologies and substantive fields; to conduct competent and useful summaries of existing research in any field; and to appreciate the benefits, limitations and tradeoffs inherent in any research design.

Materials:

Arum, R. and J. Roksa (2010). *Academically Adrift*. Chicago, University Press.

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

Durkheim, E. (1997). *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. New York, Free Press.

Mullen, A. (2010). *Degrees of Inequality*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Pager, Devah. (2007). *MARKED: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Loewen, James. (2007). *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S and Jessica Hoffmann Davis. (2002). *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Requirements and Evaluation

Grades will be based on your thorough completion of weekly readings and assignments, class attendance, and participation. Credit for this work will be allocated in the following proportions:

Participation & attendance: 10%

Presentation & class leadership: 20%

In teams, students will prepare a memo on weekly readings and prepare a 15 minute presentation on the methodological exemplars examined beginning October 1st. The memo should be 2-3 pages and include a brief summary of the reading and suggest five interesting questions generated by the material.

Research exercise: 25%

Individually or in groups, students will conduct an interview, survey or participant-observation “pilot” research project. Due at noon on Nov. 1st (memo defining topic and study design due at noon on Sept 17th).

Final essay: 25%

The final assignment for this class will be a revision and extension of the research exercise. Students will develop a proposal (15-20 pages) for future research that includes a theoretical rationale for the project, a review of relevant literature, and a detailed research design.

Provide the instructor with a self-addressed envelope during the final class period if you would like to receive comments on your final paper.

Homework: 10% points

Complete all homework assignments (2 x 5 % = 10 %).

For homework #2, you'll need to complete the UCAIHS online Human Subjects Tutorial with a score of 90 or above, by Tuesday October 8th. Website: <http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihhs>

Five points per day will be deducted from the grade for late assignments. For example, a grade of 90 would be 80 if the assignment was turned in two days late.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 719 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

- appreciate what it means to do empirical social science
- appreciate the utilities of a variety of data and data-collection techniques
- appreciate that qualitative and quantitative methodologies are coextensive and mutually informative
- be sensitive to the ethical and political issues inherent in social-science research
- be able to critically consume and evaluate published scholarship in a range of fields and methodologies

Weekly Topic and Reading Schedule

Class 1: September 3rd

Introduction to the course

Class 2: September 10th

Logic and Argumentation in Research

Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 1-65.

Class 3: September 17th

Objectivity, Positivism and Epistemological others

Weber, Max. [1904](1949). "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," In *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Max Weber, translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. Pages 49-112.

Berger, Peter & Thomas Luckman. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Pages 5-46.

*Homework #1: One or two paragraph memo due identifying topic and methods for research exercise.

Class 4: September 24th

From Theory to Research

Merton, Robert. "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range," "The Bearing of Sociological Theory

on Empirical Research,” and “The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory,” in *On Theoretical Sociology*. Pages 39-72, 139-172.

Class 5: October 1st

Early Sociological Research (Methodological Exemplar I)

Durkheim, E. (1997). Suicide: A Study in Sociology. New York, Free Press.

Class 6: October 8th

Survey Research (Methodological Exemplar II)

Arum, R. and J. Roksa (2010). Academically Adrift. Chicago, University Press.

* Homework #2: UCAIHS online tutorial must be completed by this class. Submit a hard-copy printout, indicating your score of 90 or above.

Class 7: October 15th

Fall Break

Class 8: October 22nd

Interview Research (Methodological Exemplar III)

Mullen, A. (2010). Degrees of Inequality. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Class 9: October 29th

No Class. *Research exercise DUE November 1st.

Research exercises will be graded on the how well they demonstrate the criteria for a good report outlined on pages 105-268 in Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Class 10: November 5th

Ethnographic Research (Methodological Exemplar IV)

Pascoe, C.J. 2007. Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Class 11: November 12th

Experimental Research (Methodological Exemplar V)

Pager, Devah. 2007. MARKED: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Class 12: November 19th

Document Analysis/Archival Research (Methodological Exemplar VI)

Loewen, James. 2007. Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong. New York: Touchstone.

Class 13: November 26th

No class – Thanksgiving Holiday

Class 14: December 3rd

Portraiture (Methodological Exemplar VII)

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S and Jessica Hoffmann Davis. 2002. The Art and Science of Portraiture. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Class 15: December 11th Bring two hard copies of your paper to class. Draft peer review.

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