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:  


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/ucaihs

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

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.

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

**Class 5: October 1**
Early Sociological Research (Methodological Exemplar I)

**Class 6: October 8**
*Survey Research (Methodological Exemplar II)*

* 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 15**
Fall Break

**Class 8: October 22**
*Interview Research (Methodological Exemplar III)*

**Class 9: October 29**
*No Class.* *Research exercise DUE November 1st.*

**Class 10: November 5**
*Ethnographic Research (Methodological Exemplar IV)*

**Class 11: November 12**
*Experimental Research (Methodological Exemplar V)*

**Class 12: November 19**
*Document Analysis/Archival Research (Methodological Exemplar VI)*

**Class 13: November 26**
*No class – Thanksgiving Holiday*

**Class 14: December 3**
*Portraiture (Methodological Exemplar VII)*
Class 15: December 11th  Bring two hard copies of your paper to class. Draft peer review.
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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