Principles of Empirical Research (RESCH-GE.2132)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sociology of Education Program

Fall 2015 | Thursdays 2:00-3:40pm | Waverly Building 431 |
Professor: Catherine Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Ph.D.
Office: 726 Broadway, 5th Floor | Office Hours: By appointment | cmk225@nyu.edu |

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is focused on understanding social science research methods. The course provides the following: 1) an introduction to the relationship between theory and research; 2) a broad introduction to research logics in social sciences; 3) raise critical awareness about methodological choices and issues when conducting research; and 4) exemplars of various methodological approaches. The course encourages students to become knowledgeable consumers of empirical educational research that is theoretically informed.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Requirements:

(1) Discussion Leader (20 Points): Each student will be assigned to lead a class discussion on one of the required texts. Most students will be paired, and it is expected that partners will meet outside of class to plan the discussion. Anticipate a 30-minute discussion. A 2-3-page memo is also required. The memo should include a brief summary of the reading and five discussion questions for the class to consider. The memo should be posted to NYU CLASSES the Tuesday before class, by 5pm.

The focus of the presentation should be centered upon, but not limited to, the following themes:

- A critical discussion of the methods used in the study (e.g. refer to methodological appendix)
- Highlight the primary research questions and synthesize the study’s main findings (e.g. How was data employed? Analyzed?)
- Identify the study’s methodological strengths and weaknesses
- Clearly articulate the theoretical perspective used by the author(s) and how this perspective informed the methods and findings

(2) Weekly Journal (30 Points): Students will write a reflection for every class reading(s). The journal entries should be 1-2 pages. These should NOT be a summary of the material; they should contain your “thinking,” ideas, opinions, and reactions to the articles. This may take on a variety of forms: you may compare readings to each other and/or other related material; you may hypothesize about ways in which the work could have been improved; you may think about ways to expand on the work, or extend it to incorporate new ideas; you may argue against the work, questioning its assumptions; or you may consider how it relates to your personal life. These are merely suggestions. The main point being--the reflections should be critical and thoughtful. These are due to me before class starts.

(3) Research Paper (40 Points): The final paper will require students to write a research paper on an issue related to sociology of education. This paper must utilize
at least 10 different research articles from at least five different academic journals and/or books. The paper can use materials discussed in class where appropriate. Topics should be chosen in consultation with the professor early in the semester. **The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages, not including references, and should be in APA style.** ([https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01)).

The paper is a **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**.

The paper should have the following elements:

- research question(s)
- compelling framing of the research topic
- a literature review
- appropriate methods identified to examine the research question
- sample data or a short summary on how the research will be conducted
- conclusion

(4) **ATTENDANCE/CLASS PARTICIPATION (10 points)**: Attendance, punctuality, and participation are expected. Absences or otherwise limited participation will impact the final course grade (i.e., except when other arrangements need to be made, such as a prolonged illness, in which case, documentation is required). If there are any issues regarding attendance or assignment completion, I require written notification 3 days prior to class. The only exception to the rule is if it is an emergency.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

*Assignments.* Papers should be typed, double-spaced, stapled once in the top left-hand corner. Please make a copy of all written work before submitting. Assignments not turned in by the due date listed on the course schedule will be considered late. It is the responsibility of the student to turn in assignments on time. A 1/3-grade deduction will be administered per day late-- including the weekend. (B+ to B; If 1-day late). This is true for the class presentation, reflections and final paper.

**GRADING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional—Exceeds expectations in all dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent—Meets expectations in all dimensions and exceeds expectations in some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Solid—Meets expectations in all dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Needs Improvement—Below expectations in some dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Needs Significant Improvement—Below expectations in many dimensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Insufficient—Significantly below expectations in some or all dimensions</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE

09.3  Introductions. Course Overview. Presentation Schedule.

Logic and Argumentation in Research


  All Available on NYU CLASSES

Objectivity, Positivism, and Epistemological Others


  Available on NYU CLASSES

From Theory to Research


Available on NYU CLASSES

**METHODOLOGICAL EXEMPLARS: CLASS PRESENTATIONS START**

**Early Sociological Research (Methodological Exemplar I)**

10.8 TURN IN PARAGRAPH ON PROPOSED TOPIC AND RESEARCH METHODS


**Survey Research (Methodological Exemplar II)**


**Interview Research (Methodological Exemplar III)**


**Ethnographic Research (Methodological Exemplar IV)**


**Experimental Research (Methodological Exemplar V)**


**Document Analysis/Archival Research (Methodological Exemplar VI)**


11.26 No Class (Thanksgiving)

**Mixed Methods (Methodological Exemplar VII)**

12.10 Research Paper Presentations (Last Class)

12.17 Research Paper Due (submit via email)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Academic Honesty** Any deliberate borrowing of the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others without clear and specific acknowledgment of the source is intellectual theft and is called plagiarism. It is not plagiarism to borrow the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others if the source is clearly and specifically acknowledged. Students who consult such critical material and wish to include some of the insights, terms or statements encountered must provide full citations in an appropriate form.

**Access and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities** Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 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. Please see: [http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html](http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html).