Geographic Research Design  
GEOG 701.54, Spring 2010

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Office Hours: By appointment only

Course Description:
The course is designed to expose students to the process of doing geographic research. Basic epistemological and ontological approaches will be reviewed through the use of readings on research methodologies and selected readings from the geography literature. Class discussion will focus on the identification of research problems, construction of hypotheses, and development of research design. The course is designed to have the students learn from the instructor, other faculty, the reading material, and from each other. Three major divisions define the course structure.

- Section 1: Introduction to the process of research and scientific inquiry - questions of epistemology and ontology, research methods in Geography, conceptualization of the research problem.
- Section 2: Research operationalization - introduction to basic methods, choosing a research method, positivist and non-positivist approaches, qualitative and quantitative approaches
- Section 3: Critique and evaluation of research methods - review of current research within Geography, and student presentation of research proposals.

Grading: Your grade will be based on following set of assignments and responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>- census and archival data search</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>- sampling</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>- questionnaire and survey</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>- critique of a classmate’s rough draft</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>- final draft of your proposal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Proposal Presentation</td>
<td>- public presentation of your proposal</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>- in-class discussion and debates (and development of weekly 1-2 page comment papers if needed)</td>
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In addition to the assignments listed above, each student is required to complete Hunter IRB training via the CITI website. There will be no exams in the class; instead, there will be four assignments. Each assignment will focus on a different topic and have associated supplemental readings. The research proposal will include the submission of a single page abstract, research aims, an annotated bibliography, a rough draft, and a final draft. Research topics and paper drafts will be critically reviewed during class discussions. You also will be expected to present your
research proposal before your classmates. The final draft of the proposal is expected to be a polished piece of writing - complete and coherent from beginning to end. You will work on this project throughout the semester. Half-digested treatments will receive poor grades. It is assumed that each of you will work closely with a faculty member(s) in the department who define themselves as an expert on the topic of your proposal.

Class attendance and class participation are a critical part of the semester grade. This means that you must be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for the day. The participation grade will include participation in class discussions, the preparation of weekly comment papers, and discussion leadership. Late assignments will receive a reduction in grade. No grades of "incomplete" will be given except in cases of extreme circumstances.

**Hunter College Statement on Academic Integrity**
Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. Plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating in any portion of the work required for this course will be punished to the full extent allowed according to Hunter College regulations.

**SEMESTER MILESTONE DATES**

2/17 1-2 Page Proposal Abstract
Submit copies for each student in the class and myself. Not graded.

2/17 Proposal Abstract discussed in class

3/3 Assignment 1 Due

3/10 Research Aims/Hypothesis. Not graded

3/17 Assignment 2 Due


3/31 No Class

4/7 Assignment 3 Due


4/21 Edited proposal drafts returned (Assignment 4)
5/5 & 5/12  Proposal presentations
5/19  Proposal final drafts
Required Texts:

Readings will also be taken from (purchase not required):

Only the required book will be available at the Hunter College bookstore. All books are available online. Other readings are available on reserve in the Geography department and via PDF in the scratch drive. The readings are to be read for the week they are listed. Additional readings might be assigned on a weekly basis.

Other Required Readings:
Belmont Report (1979), Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research, Office of the Secretary, DHEW. (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm)


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2/03/2010</td>
<td>Introduction to Inquiry and Research Writing</td>
<td>Babbie 1, 485-491; Montello &amp; Sutton 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 2/10/2010</td>
<td>Ethics and Politics of Research</td>
<td>Babbie 3; Montello &amp; Sutton 14; Winchester; Belmont Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>CITI:</strong> <a href="http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/irb/citi_irb_training.htm">http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/irb/citi_irb_training.htm</a></td>
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<td><strong>HIPAA:</strong> <a href="http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/irb/what_is_hipaa.htm">http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/irb/what_is_hipaa.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 2/17/2010</td>
<td>Theory and Research/Epistemology in Geography</td>
<td>Babbie 2; Montello &amp; Sutton 2,3; Bauer et. al.; Hay; Johnson; Denzin and Lincoln</td>
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<td><strong>Proposal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
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<td>4 2/24/2010</td>
<td>LIBRARY TOUR – Library and Data Research</td>
<td>Babbie pg. 324-337, Appendix A; Montello &amp; Sutton 13</td>
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<td>5 3/03/2010</td>
<td>Research Design - Conceptualization and Operationalization</td>
<td>Babbie 4, 5, Montello &amp; Sutton 7; McKendrick; Philips; Warf; Sui</td>
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<td><strong>Assgmnt 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>6 3/10/2010</td>
<td>Indexes and Sampling</td>
<td>Babbie 6, 7; Montello &amp; Sutton 8; Sin</td>
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<td><strong>Research Aims</strong></td>
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<td>7 3/17/2010</td>
<td>Unobtrusive Research</td>
<td>Babbie 313-323; Montello &amp; Sutton 7; Stewart and Kaminis</td>
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<td><strong>Assgmnt 2</strong></td>
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<td>8 3/24/2010</td>
<td>Creating New Data with Survey Methods.</td>
<td>Babbie 9; Montello &amp; Sutton 6; Clifford and Valentine 6; Fontana and Frey (P)</td>
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<td><strong>Annotated Bib</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/31/2010</td>
<td><strong>No Class – Spring Recess</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 4/7/2010</td>
<td>Really Getting Out There – Field Research</td>
<td>Babbie 10; Clifford and Valentine 9, 11, 14; Guba and Lincoln; Katz; Merrifield; Moss et al.</td>
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<td><strong>Assgmnt 3</strong></td>
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<td>10 4/14/2010</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>Babbie 13; Clifford and Valentine 25, 26, Baxter and Eyles</td>
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<td>Rough Draft</td>
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<td>All Drafts Returned</td>
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<td>12 4/28/2010</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Readings to be assigned</td>
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<td>5/05/2010</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>5/12/2010</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/19/2010</td>
<td>Final Papers Due</td>
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SELECTED REFERENCES FOR
RESEARCH DESIGN IN GEOGRAPHY, GEOG 701.54, SPRING 2010


**SOME SOURCES FOR TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES:**


**General Aims and Objectives of the Course:**

**Aims**
- to provide students with the relevant knowledge and skills to design a rigorous research project,
- to enable students to identify, formulate and pursue appropriate and interesting research questions in geography,
- to introduce students to key methods and tools in geography,
- to provide students with experiences of using field methods,
- to provide students with the relevant knowledge and skills to complete research as necessary for their plan of graduate studies.

**Learning Objectives**

**General objectives**

By the end of the course students will:
- have a basic understanding of the connections between different philosophical approaches and different research designs and know how this connects with the plural nature of the discipline;
- be able to design a rigorous research project and select appropriate research methods;
- be aware of issues of ethics, power relations and safety in the use of research methods;
- have the skills to carry out quantitative measurement, design and implement questionnaires, and other field techniques;
- understand the processes of theory-building which arise from data analysis in qualitative and quantitative settings.

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the course the students will:
- understand how and why philosophy and theory affects research design in geography;
- know the key elements required to design an effective and rigorous research project able to address geographical questions relating to issues such as spatial variation, scale and place;
- know the elements of ‘good practice’ involved in the conduct of surveys and other field techniques;
- know how to undertake appropriate analysis of information generated from questionnaires, interviews and ethnographies;
- understand the different ways of representing geography based on different research methods.

**Intellectual skills**

By the end of the course the students will:
- be able to assess the merits of different research designs through review and critique of the research design of presentations, journal articles;
• be able to decide on the appropriate methods to answer research questions in geography;
• be capable of critically judging and evaluating the use of particular research methods in geography;
• be capable of critically interpreting data and text generated by particular research methods;
• have experience of taking responsibility for their learning as an individual and as a member of a group.

**Discipline specific skills**
By the end of the course the students will:
• have identified the research methods that set geography apart from other sciences and social sciences
• have experience of planning, designing and executing pieces of rigorous research utilising different research methods;
• have selected, critiqued and refined a research problem suitable for their graduate plan of study;
• have initiated a basic literature review using bibliographic research techniques,
• have presented their own research proposal, and provided and received feedback
• have undertaken fieldwork;
• have used questionnaire and other surveys to collect information;
• had experience of the analysis and interpretation of geographical evidence;
• have presented their own research proposal to the class, and provided and received feedback;
• be aware of the moral and ethical issues surrounding the use of different research methods in geography.