

New York City College of Technology  
Social Science Department  
Research Methods for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Prof. Pa Her (Psychology) and Prof. Sean MacDonald (Economics)

SBS 2000 sec. D-946; Tues. 2:30-5:00 PM

Fall 2015, Room M-302

Office: Namm 624; Hours: 1:00 - 2:00 PM Tues. and Thur. and by appointment

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**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** An introduction to the research methodologies utilized in the social and behavioral sciences, beginning with the fundamentals of research design, through data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the final reporting of results. Both quantitative and qualitative designs are examined using software to aid in inquiry and analysis.

**COURSE PREREQUISITE:**

Prerequisite: Any introductory ANTH, ECON, GEOG, GOV, HIS, PSY, SOC, or, any AFR or LTAM 1400 series course, or AFR 1501, 1502, 2402 or 3000, or COMM 2402, or 3401 and MAT 1180 or higher; COMD students will also need the prerequisite of PSY 3407

**RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK and MATERIALS\***

**Required:** All required readings for the course will be provided. These will be posted on Open Lab weekly; You will be required to read the assigned posted articles and post responses to assigned questions and should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings in the following class. **Other:** As part of your semester research project, you will also be required to conduct independent field-based research.

**WEEKLY SEQUENCE OF TOPICS**

**Session 1: Sep 1: Course Introduction and Overview: Prof. Her and Prof. MacDonald**

Course overview; Interdisciplinary course; using Open Lab; blog; field-based research; semester research project and final presentation; Emerging Scholars project; Review course requirements; topic ideas on course Open Lab site; overview of various research methods.

**Discussion:** 1) Review key concepts relating to the understanding of behavior from an Economic and Psychological perspective; Examine list of fundamental economic/psychological concepts and terms and their meanings; exchange ideas about meanings and discuss how these can help create a foundation for student interdisciplinary research in the course.

2) How can these concepts be applied in the context of real world issues?

Some key economic concepts to review in this first session:

- Cost-benefit analysis
- Economic efficiency/allocative efficiency
- Marginal change; marginal utility; marginal benefit
- Equilibrium analysis
- Opportunity cost
- Economic rationality; individuals as rational decision makers seeking to maximize self-interest
- Externalities and market failure
- Scarcity
- Economic growth

Some key psychological concepts to review in this first session:

- Associative Learning and Priming
- Observational learning
- The Social Animal
- Cognitive Systems and Biases
- Basic principles of the scientific method

3. How can an understanding of these interdisciplinary concepts be important to the scholarly research you will conduct in the course and research project? How is your understanding of these key concepts important to your success in the course?

4. **Discussion of possible topics of interest for research project** a) **five minutes of free-writing** on a topic (or topics) most interesting to you, b) **Find your voice as a researcher in your field. “What kind of research do I want to do?”** c) **Identify two or three questions** you might ask of the topic(s) you are considering that could guide your research, and d) **Why you are leaning towards that topic, a list of things** (in the form of bullet points) that you know about the topic right now.

5. **By week 3: Choose one or two top ideas for the research project**; feedback on topic ideas; **final topic choice by week 5**

**Assigned reading for Session 2:** Read the assigned article and comment on posted questions on course Open Lab site no later than Tuesday, 9/1.

Positive Design: An Introduction to Design for Subjective Well-Being, Pieter M. A. Desmet\* and Anna E. Pohlmeier.

**Session 2: 9/8: Research methods and Ethics in the Social Sciences: Prof. Her and Prof. MacDonald**

Discuss article and posts

Discussion of research methods for design; ethics in research - why is this important?

[An Introduction to Research Methodology \(overview\)](#)

dependent and independent variables

**\*\*NO CLASSES TUESDAY 9/15 OR TUESDAY 9/22\*\***

**Reading for Session 3 - Friday 9/25 (follows a Tuesday schedule): Prof MacDonald: Please read one of the readings under Qualitative Research on Open Lab** “Behavioural economics and qualitative research – a marriage made in heaven?” Wendy Gordon, International Journal of Market Research Vol. 53 Issue 2, 2011 The Market Research Society.

Research topic ideas due next session on 9/29

Read article for next class meeting on 9/29 and answer posted questions on Open Lab site; be prepared for in-class discussion. **Short film?**

a) From your reading of the article, how would you define *behavioral economics*?

b) Gordon notes that human decisions are typically less than perfect, “because of the inherent biases built into our brains and bodies” ...and that “This is in direct contrast to classic economic theory of ‘rational man’, who is supposed to make the best possible decision (maximising benefits and minimising costs) to obtain the most advantageous economic outcome”. How would you interpret what she means?

c) Gordon mentions that many disciplines, including those of marketing and communications, employ the principles of behavioral economics. What questions might your field of study examine employing this qualitative research methodology?

**Session 3: 9/25: Prof. MacDonald: Descriptive Methods: Qualitative research.**

**Visual; case study; ethnographic; observational**

**Discussion of questions posted on reading**

**Discuss research project topic ideas: topic ideas due next week.**

**How will you plan to incorporate an interdisciplinary perspective into your research?** (i.e., the perspectives of disciplines other than Economics)? Which disciplinary perspectives do you believe would be most relevant for your topic? Identify two or three questions you might ask of the topic you are considering? Presentation/discussion of Research Questions via OpenLab.

**Assigned reading for Session 4: Prof. Her: Please choose one of the [Experimental](#) studies on OpenLab.**

**Session 4: 9/29: Prof Her, Empirical Methods: Experimental**

**Discussion of questions posted on reading**

**Revise and Refine Research Questions based on Student and Teacher Feedback**

**If you decided to implement an experimental study on your research project, describe your design.**

What is the hypothesis, IV and DV? Who will be in what groups? Are there any ethical considerations? Identify two variables that could influence the outcome of the results.

**Assigned reading for Session 5: Prof. Macdonald**

**Session 5: 10/6: Prof. MacDonald, Survey Design and Correlational Research**

Final topic choice due - Post on Open Lab.

**Session 6: 10/13 Disciplinary Integration Prof. Her and Prof. MacDonald**

article that examines a study from an Economic and a Psychological point of view; show how the study can be understood from an interdisciplinary perspective and employ a variety of research methods

**Thinking about methods-What is my method of analysis?** After hearing the various methods, describe which method you plan to use in your project? How does this method allow you to answer the research question?

Preparing an annotated bibliography; an introduction; research summary; abstract; description of methodology used in your research project.

**Due Session 7:** A four to five- paragraph summary of your research topic and methodology; preliminary annotated bibliography (3 sources): **Include:** Abstract; Introduction; method of research; expected outcomes

**Session 7: 10/20 Research summary and preliminary annotated bibliography due.**

**Prof. Her and Prof. MacDonald**

Data collection: Operationalize variables or constructs; peer review of students' summaries (article)

**Session 8: 10/27: Midterm:** multiple choice; short essay

**Session 9: 11/3**

**Writing up results of research and findings. Interpreting your findings; significance of your findings.**

**Session 10: 11/17**

**Applying your research findings to work in your field of study and to principles and theory.**

**Session 11: 11/24 Putting it all together: Preparing a Poster Presentation of your research project.**

**Session 12: 12/1 TBD**

**Session 13: 12/8 Final Presentations; presentations focus on significance of findings; what was learned? Submit final research summaries (three to four pages) and final annotated bibliographies; Class discussion and questions.**

**Session 14: 12/15: Final presentations; presentations focus on significance of findings; what was learned? Submit final research summaries (three to four pages) and final annotated bibliographies; Class discussion and questions.**

**Week 15: 12/22: FINAL EXAM**

**COURSE INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS:** To develop an understanding of the fundamental concepts of environmental economics. Specifically, course objectives include the following:

<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>ASSESSMENT METHODS</b>
<p><b>1.</b> Students in the course will examine and understand the theoretical approaches underlying research methods in a historical, cultural, and ethical context; an introduction to the various types of research methods</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Classroom discussion of theoretical approaches; to identify factual material; in-class and Open Lab participation in discussion or readings on theoretical approaches.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Describe and understand the importance of ethics in research from historical, political, social and cultural perspectives and to critically analyze risks vs benefits of conducting research.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Classroom discussion surrounding studies on ethics; in-class or on-line group discussion in response to the ethics of studies and conducting research with human subjects; discuss of informed consent form to be included in with project; certification conducting research with human subjects-Institutional Review board.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Examine quantitative and qualitative research designs; understand the differences between the two and develop an understanding of when and how to apply each design technique.</p>	<p><b>3.</b> Class discussion examining current research articles and projects that use quantitative, and/or qualitative, research design; in-class or on-line group discussion and participation activities of the benefits/drawbacks of each.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Examine survey/questionnaire creation using reliability and validity measures including appropriate data collection methods and analysis.</p>	<p><b>4.</b> Classroom discussions of appropriate Likert scale construction, reliability and validity; in-class group discussion.</p>

5. Understand the purpose of correlational methodology and analysis of appropriate use of correlational designs.	5. Classroom discussions about cause and effect vs. correlation between variables.
6. Examine the logic behind the construction and use of experimental designs and quasi-experimental designs.	6. Classroom discussions on experimental and quasi-experimental designs; in-class discussion on assigned reading on experimental design.
7. Understand the proper procedures for preparation, construction and completion of an APA style for annotated bibliography, final in-class presentation and Emerging Scholars poster presentation.	7. Classroom discussions; review of APA style of documentation. Student poster presentations of research projects. *Extra credit will be given for all students who also present their research in the Emerging Scholars Poster Presentation.
8. Understand the concept of causality and how to determine causality utilizing empirical data	8. Students will be able to distinguish between the concepts of causality and correlation among variables. This can be tested through discussion of sample problems.

#### GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

<i><b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b></i>	<i><b>ASSESSMENT METHODS</b></i>
<b>1. Knowledge:</b> To develop an understanding of the key concepts and methods of analysis used in conducting research; to develop analytical and critical thinking capabilities through comparing and contrasting the application of various theories and concepts to the understanding of social problems	<b>1.</b> Discussion of theories and concepts with a focus on developing the ability to distinguish major differences; Students will possess the ability to articulate these ideas and concepts through class and on-line discussions, in written assignments, participation activities, and the group research project proposal
<b>2. Skills:</b> Develop and apply the requisite tools and skills necessary to identify and understand the types of methods best suited for investigating different types of problems and questions.	<b>2.</b> Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic types of research methods and to assess which are best suited for particular research questions. They should also develop the ability to clearly express in writing, on exams and in class discussions, their research design and why it is the most effective method to address their research proposal goals.
<b>3. Integration:</b> Development of student's ability to create research	<b>3.</b> Students will be able to formulate questions

questions that are based upon and build upon a critical appraisal of existing research across disciplines.	that are appropriate to different types of research projects in related disciplines; assessment of this ability will be measured via the final research project, on exams and in class discussions and participation activities focused on this learning outcome.
<b>4. Values, Ethics and Relationships:</b> Develop an understanding of the fundamental concepts of research design and to apply these concepts to an understanding of how the scientific method can be applied to understanding human behavior and social systems; work creatively with others in group problem solving; develop a respect for diverse viewpoints and apply the skills and concepts covered in the course to the analysis of real-world issues and concepts across disciplines.	<b>4.</b> By the end of the course, students will demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method in the context of the term research proposal. This will involve identifying the problem and relevant variables so that the most appropriate method can be applied to the research proposal.

From: Important General Education Learning Goals (6/1/11) DRAFT  
SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENTS and other course requirements\*

Students in this course will be required to complete a final research project involving a in-class end of semester presentation, annotated bibliography and two-page summary. Students will be involved in conducting place-based research as a major component of their project. Students are encouraged to choose based upon their interests or a particular topic in their major course of study. Students may earn extra credit by also participating in the Fall 2015 Poster Presentation (either individually or in teams). There will also be a midterm and final exam, both of which will place an emphasis on a combination multiple choice, short answer and case study format. Students will be expected to be prepared to discuss assigned questions based on the readings and to participate in on-line postings on Open Lab.

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**METHOD OF GRADING – elements and weight of factors determining the students’ grade\***

Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	25 %
Final poster presentation on semester research project	20 %
Participation in class discussions; entries on course blog on Open Lab; attendance	10%
Annotated bibliography; three to four-page summary of research project	15%

**GRADING POLICY:** calculated according to the college grade scale:

Letter Grade	Meaning of Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	Exceptional	100-93
A-	Superior	92.9-90
B+	Very good	89.9-87

B	Good	86.9-83
B-	Above Average	82.9-80
C+	Slightly Above Average	79.9-77
C	Average	76.9-70
D	Poor	69.9-60
F	Failure	59.9-0

\*Scope of Assignments and Method of Grading to be determined at discretion of the instructor.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

## COLLEGE POLICY ON ABSENCE/LATENESS

A student may be absent without penalty for 10% of the number of scheduled class meetings during the semester as follows:

<b>Class Meets</b>	<b>Allowable Absence**</b>
<b>1 time/week</b>	<b>2 classes</b>
2 times/week	3 classes
3 times/week	4 classes

\*\*Each department and program may specify in writing a different attendance policy for courses with laboratory, clinical or field work. If the department does not have a written attendance policy concerning courses with laboratory, clinical or field work, the College policy shall govern.

## Policies:

**\*\*NO TEXTING OR OTHER USE OF CELL PHONES WHILE CLASS IS IN SESSION\*\***

- 1. Final exam:** There will be **no option to make up the final exam.**
- 2. Assigned Posts on Open Lab must be completed in the Assigned time period to receive credit; Chapter readings must be completed prior to the next class.** In-class reviews are important to complete as part of the course. **These are 25% of final grade.**
- 3. Class discussion and participation and posts/discussion on Open Lab constitutes 10 % of final grade**

4. **More than two absences will adversely affect your final grade.** If you must miss a class, please provide prior notification by email or in person. My email address and phone number are listed on the front of syllabus.
5. **Students must arrive on time for class and stay for the entire class; consistent lateness and leaving class early will negatively affect your final grade.**
6. **Texting, emailing and other use of cell phones is prohibited during class time; they must be turned off and put away while class is in session.**
7. **Phones may not be used during exams; calculators are permitted only.**
8. **There will be a 10 minute break halfway through each class.**