

SYLLABUS

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

African-American Studies Program

AAS 202/SOC202: INTRODUCTORY RESEARCH METHODS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

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Spring 1999
Wednesday 1:30

Week 1: Overview of the Course: Issues in Research

Course objectives. Course Requirements. The nature of social and behavioral research and the kinds of pitfalls encountered in the study of African American (and other minority) populations. "Specification" of a research problem.

Week 2: The Research Process

1. Babbie, Prologue; and Chapter 1
2. Wilkinson and G. King, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in the Use of Race as a Variable."
3. Johnetta E. Cole, "Gender and Sexism: Commonalties and Differences," in Andersen & Hill-Collins, pp. 148 ff.

How research studies begin; concepts, constructs, indicators, operational definitions, and variables; the unit of analysis; relationships between variables. Relationship between power in society and the research question studied; who determines "knowledge"; the social context of research; the "value-free" problem; feminist epistemology; Black feminist epistemology. Is there a Black research epistemology?

Week 3: Theory, Research, Causation, and the Study of Minority Populations

1. Babbie, Chapters 2 and 3
2. H.F. Taylor, "The Equations of Oppression," in Hall.
3. Ladner, *The Death of White Sociology*, selections by Murray; and Jones
4. Selection from "The Bell Curve"

Theory; taxonomy; hypotheses; paradigms; paradigm shifts and research on African Americans; the nature of causality; examples of some of the common dangers in empirical research such as: The non-comparison; ecological inference; assuming correlations proves causation; reification; presumption of unidimensionality; the empirically invalid syllogism; others. Ethics and research.

Week 4: Study Design, Measurement, and Measurement Error

1. Babbie, Chapters 4 and 5; skim Chapters 6 and 7
2. A.R. Jensen, *Bias in Mental Testing*, skim pp. 465-515
3. H.F. Taylor, "Biases in 'Bias in Mental testing'"
4. Browse through H.F. Taylor, *The IQ Game*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3
5. Review *Bell Curve* and Taylor's critique, "Ring the Bell Curve"
6. B.J. Shade, "Is There an Afro-American Cognitive Style," 1992, in Berlew et al.

The nature of empirical measurement; validity, reliability, and sensitivity; index construction; dimensionality; levels of measurement; bias in measurement; issue of bias in the SAT, GRE, LSAT; differential validity and the comparison of two ethnic groups; cross sectional versus longitudinal research; the stages in research.

Week 5: Sampling and Sample Design (May be taken up after Mid-Term)

1. Babbie, Chapter 8
2. H.F. Taylor, "The Network Structure of America's Black Leadership"
3. (Selection to be assigned)

What "representative sample" means; measurement error versus sampling error; population versus sample; response rate; sampling frame; probability samples (random; systematic; stratified; multistage cluster; and combined designs); non-probability sampling (purposive; quota; volunteer; accidental).

Week 6: Midterm Review and Examination

1. Review session
2. Review reading

A review session will be scheduled. The Midterm Examination will be an in-class essay examination.

Week 7: Experimental Designs: Lab, Field, and Evaluation Research [*Portions may be skipped*]

1. Babbie, Chapter 9; skim Chapter 13

Causation and the logic of the experiment; the classical design; randomization versus random sampling; matching, the double-blind experiment; varieties of experimental designs (such as randomized groups; factorial; Solomon; others) the "natural" experiment; internal validity versus external validity. Placebo effect; Hawthorne effect; maturation (practice) effect; regression effect and "floor/ceiling" effects; and other sources of invalidity.

Week 8: Survey Research

1. Babbie, Chapter 10; review Chapter 7 and Appendix B (on the research report)
2. Harrell B. Roberts, *The Inner World of the Black Juvenile Delinquent*
3. E. Sawyer, "Methodological Problems in Studying So-Called 'Deviant' Communities," in Ladner
4. Browse through Robinson and Shaver; and Miller

The nature of survey research; pitfalls and dangers of survey research on minority populations; the case study versus the survey; questionnaire construction; polarity; levels of measurement; closed versus open-ended questions; probes; pretesting and piloting; the process of coding; the mail-back survey; response rate; and response set.

Week 9: Field Observation

1. Babbie, Chapter 11
2. W. Gamson, "Ethnomethodology"
3. E. Anderson, *A Place on the Corner*, Chapters 1-3
4. Skim J. Gwaltney, *Drylongso*, selected pages
5. M.E. Dyson, *Reflecting Black*, pp. 3-15, on Hip-Hop Culture

Participant observation; roles of the observer; direct observation; the case study. Ethnomethodology. "Going native"; snowball sampling; pitfalls in drawing conclusions; strengths and weaknesses of field observation.

Week 10: Unobtrusive Research and Content Analysis

1. Babbie, Chapter 12
2. Skim E.T. Webb, et al., *Unobtrusive Measures*
3. Re-read Gamson on "Ethnomethodology," above
4. Re-read Anderson, *A Place on the Corner*, above
5. H.L. Gates, Jr., *Loose Cannons*, pp. 17-42, on Cannon Formation and the African-American Tradition

Indirect measurement; unobtrusive measurement; the nature of content analysis. Units of analysis, variables, and coding in content analysis. Manifest versus latent content; inter-coder reliability; Hawthorne effect; the nature of secondary analysis. Afrocentric and Eurocentric content.

Week 11: Introduction to Techniques of Data Analysis: Univariate vs. Bivariate; Index Construction

1. Babbie, Selections assigned
2. W.J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race*, Chapters 5 and skim Chapters 1-4
3. C.V. Willie, *Caste and Class Controversy*, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 14
4. H.M. Blalock, "Race Versus Class: Distinguishing Reality from Artifacts"

Univariate versus bivariate analysis; examples; the data matrix; the "case" (record) and the code; 2-variable crosstabs; 3-variable crosstabs; Chi Square; association measures; commentary on crosstabulation; index and scale construction; types of scales; index weighting; unidimensionality versus multidimensionality for Blacks versus the general population.

Week 12: Introduction to Multivariate Analysis (as time permits); Ethics in Research

1. Babbie, selections assigned
2. Re-read Willie, *Caste and Class Controversy*, Chapters 2 and 3
3. Skim H.F. Taylor, "Playing the Dozens with Path Analysis," in R.L. Hall, pages 243 ff.

The "elaboration" model as a multivariate technique; elementary causal inference; comments on regression and multiple regression; comments on path analysis and on factor analysis; a summary compendium of errors in multivariate research; ethical issues in research in general; ethical issues in the study of minority populations.

Reference List

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