

CS 562: Research Methods in Contemporary Jewry

HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service

Spring 2007

Thursdays, 1:20-3:40pm

Instructor: Sarah Bunin Benor

Course Description:

This class is designed to expose students to qualitative and quantitative approaches to social science research. Students are expected to become critical consumers of research on contemporary American Jews and to obtain the skills and experience necessary to conduct such research. This class is an opportunity for students to begin research for their masters thesis or project. Because this class is driven by discussion, it is crucial that students complete all reading assignments and participate actively in class.

Required Texts:

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sales, Amy L. and Leonard Saxe. 2004. *“How Goodly Are Thy Tents”: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press and the AVI CHAI Foundation.

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course reader, available through **University Readers**: <http://www.universityreaders.com/>

Assignments:

1. 1-page proposal of research topic.
- 2-5. Four small exercises in various research methods (participant observation, interview, survey design, data analysis), preferably related to the student's potential project/thesis topic.
6. Final paper: Proposal of the student's project or thesis with details of methodology and preliminary bibliography for literature review (total suggested length: 8-10 pages)

Note: Some assignments are due on non-class days. Please note them in your calendars.

Grading:

Class participation: 25%:

- Quantity (is the participation frequent enough?)
- Quality (do the comments show understanding of and engagement with the material?)
- Evidence of preparation (having done the reading)
- Overall contribution to the class (not overbearing, not distracted, contributes positively to the class vibe)

Assignments 1-5: 50% (10% each)

Assignment 6 (proposal): 25%

Contact Info:

Best way to reach me: e-mail: sbenor@huc.edu.

Office #8 in the basement. Office phone: 213-765-2124.

Office hours: by appointment Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday (don't be shy!).

Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Jan. 11

Introduction to the class: Types of research topics; types of methods; SJCS theses/projects.

Jan. 18

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 13-23.

Prell, Riv-Ellen. 2000. "Developmental Judaism: Challenging the Study of American Jewish Identity in the Social Sciences." *Contemporary Jewry* 21. 33-53.

Tuesday, Jan. 23: Assignment #1 due via e-mail: 1-page proposal of your research topic.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

Participant Observation

Jan. 25

Weissler, Chava. 2001. "Worship in the Havura Movement." In *The Life of Judaism*. Harvey E. Goldberg, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 79-91.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1-16.

Feb. 1

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1987. "'Life Not Death in Venice': Its Second Life." In *Judaism Viewed from Within and From Without: Anthropological Studies*. Harvey E. Goldberg, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press. 143-169.

Prell, Riv-Ellen. 1987. "Sacred Categories and Social Relations: The Visibility and Invisibility of Gender in an American Jewish Community." In *Judaism Viewed from Within and From Without: Anthropological Studies*. Harvey E. Goldberg, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press. 171-193.

Interviews

Feb. 8

Modan, Gabriella. 2001. "White, Whole Wheat, Rye: Jews and Ethnic Categorization in Washington, D.C." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 11/1. 116-130.

Goldschmidt, Henry. 2006. "The Voices of Jacob on the Streets of Brooklyn: Black and Jewish Israelites in and around Crown Heights." *American Ethnologist* 33/3. 378-396.

Tuesday, Feb 13: Assignment #2 due: Fieldnotes from mini-observation.

Also, set up interview ASAP between Feb. 22 and March 9.

Feb. 15

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. 73-89, 111-118. To be distributed in class.
Schnoor, Randall. 2006. "Being Gay and Jewish: Negotiating Intersecting Identities." *Sociology of Religion* 67/1. 43-60.

Tues, Feb 20: Assignment #3a due: Interview guide.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Surveys

Feb. 22

Kadushin, Charles, Benjamin T. Phillips, and Leonard Saxe. 2005. "National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: A Guide for the Perplexed." *Contemporary Jewry* 25. 1-32. Not in reader. Please download it at <http://assj.cmjs.org/journals/25/Kadushin.pdf>.
Mayer, Egon, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar. 2001. "American Jewish Identity Survey." Reissued in 2003 by the Center for Cultural Judaism. 8-16. Not in reader. Please download it at: <http://www.culturaljudaism.org/pdf/ajisbook.pdf>.

Mar. 1

Scheuren, Fritz. 2004. "What Is a Survey?" National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. 27-50, 63-68. Not in reader. Please download it at: <http://client.norc.org/whatisasurvey/download.htm>
Chertok, Fern, Leonard Saxe, and Rebecca Silvera-Sasson. 2005. "Exploring the Impact of the Wexner Heritage Program on the Development of Leadership Capital in the Jewish Community." The Wexner Foundation. (1-6). To be distributed in class.

Data analysis and statistics

Mar. 8

readings TBA

Tuesday, Mar. 13: Assignment #3b due: Interview summary.

Mar. 15 (no class – USC spring break)

Time to work on your assignments.

Tuesday, Mar. 20: Assignment #4 due: Questionnaire.

MIXED METHODS

Mar. 22

Sales, Amy L. and Leonard Saxe. 2004. *“How Goodly Are Thy Tents”*: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences. Hanover: Brandeis University Press and the AVI CHAI Foundation. 18-19, 43-53, 97-138.

Tuesday, Mar. 27: Assignment #5 due: Data analysis exercise.

Mar. 29

A SJCS masters thesis or project of your choice (on reserve in the library).

Apr. 5: no class (Passover break)

Apr. 12

Brook, Vincent. 2003. *Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the “Jewish” Sitcom*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1-10, 118-147.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Apr. 19

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 27-47.

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Skim this book.

WRITING

Apr. 26

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 73-118.

May 3

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 45-62.

Tuesday, May 8: Assignment #6 (8-10-page proposal) due via e-mail.

Guide for Assignments

1. 1-page proposal of research topic (expecting that your topic may change significantly during and/or after the course):
 - a. Working title
 - b. Discussion of topic, research questions
 - c. Why you chose this topic (briefly)
 - d. Ideas for methods you might use, how you plan to complete assignments 2-5 using this topic. If your topic is strictly qualitative or quantitative, choose a related topic for the other assignments.

2. Fieldnotes from mini-observation at your research site. This is expected to be at least 2 pages, but you may find that you can't stop writing – that's good. Writing need not be polished here, but please type it and make it comprehensible. Components (not necessarily in this order):
 - a. Description of physical surroundings
 - b. Description of characters
 - c. Discussion of interactions
 - d. Other details relevant to your research topic
 - e. Analysis, incl. what you learned from your observation about your research topic, how this observation helped you answer your research questions

3. Interview
 - a. Interview guide: brief statement of who you plan to interview, your goals for the interview and how they relate to your research questions, your hypotheses, and some questions you might use.
 - b. Interview summary: what you learned from the interview about your project and about interviewing as a research method (at least 2 pages)

4. Questionnaire:
 - a. Research population: describe who they are, # of people
 - b. Sampling strategy: will you distribute the survey to your entire research population? If not, how will you determine who is in your sample (i.e., who is invited to complete the survey)?
 - c. Acceptable response rate: What percentage of the invited sample will be sufficient for your purposes? How will you make sure that various populations (social variables) are represented? If you don't get the sample you need, how will you change your plan?
 - d. Questionnaire
 - e. Hypotheses about responses/correlations. Every question should be mentioned at least once here. If it's not, it probably doesn't need to be in the survey.

You are not expected to administer this survey in this class. If you do use it for your thesis/project, feel free to use the HUC account of Survey Monkey.

5. Data analysis exercise: Test a hypothesis about North American Jews using a data file from the North American Jewish Databank (<http://www.jewishdatabank.org/>). Use a statistical software package to analyze the data and test the results for statistical

significance (SPSS is available on the library's back wall computer). Some ideas for hypotheses you might test:

- a. Jews who affiliate with the Reform movement are more likely to have liberal political views than Jews who affiliate with the Conservative movement (NJPS data file)
 - b. A higher percentage of Jews donate to Federation in small cities than in large cities (data files from two community studies, e.g., Los Angeles and Phoenix or Chicago and Milwaukee)
 - c. Jews under 35 are less likely than Jews over 35 to say they feel a strong attachment to Israel (NJPS data file)
 - d. The most important factors in Jews' adult Jewish affiliation are whether they attended Jewish Day School and participated in an Israel trip (NJPS data file)
6. Final paper: an 8-10 page **proposal** of your masters thesis or project (or a similar research project). Components:
- a. Introduction: statement of research questions, why this topic is important, why you chose it.
 - b. Literature review: discussion of the previous literature on this subject, including at least 8 relevant articles, books, or chapters (websites do not count as part of these 8 but are allowed as primary sources), how your research fits in and fills gaps in the literature. The lit review might be incorporated into the introduction (it should not be a list of books with a paragraph about each).
 - c. Proposed methods: how you plan to research this topic, goals of each method you plan to use, how they relate to your research questions.
 - d. Expected results: based on pilot studies you did in this class and prior knowledge, literature.
 - e. Practical applications: what you and the field of Jewish Communal Service might be able to do with the results.
 - f. Timeline: for conducting your study, reviewing the relevant literature, analyzing data, and writing up your findings (should fit within the SJCS project/thesis timeline).
 - g. Funding: whether you need money to finance the study, how you might get it.
 - h. Outline: brief outline of what you expect your final project/thesis to look like.
 - i. Access and ethical issues: how you plan to gain access to the community, ethical issues you expect may arise and how you plan to deal with them.
 - j. Bibliography: choose a format for citations (e.g., Turabian 1996), and list all bibliographic references at the end of your paper (using any accepted format, such as the reading lists above).

How the proposals will be evaluated:

1. good idea for a research project
2. clear articulation of your research questions
3. appropriate proposed use of method(s), good sense of how the method(s) will help you attain your research goals
4. good, concise literature review well integrated into your proposal
5. clear and concise writing