

Researching New York City

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overview

This serves as a foundation methods course for students in the Masters of Arts in Urban Affairs program. It is designed to offer students a range of research and data collection methods, and serves as a vehicle to critically undertake **urban** and **social research**. Timely writings by practitioners, along with theoretical frameworks and critiques from scholars in adjacent fields of study that have shaped the urban discourse will be examined. Through discussions, readings and out of class assignments, both in groups and individually, students will employ **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods to 1) prepare a community profile, 2) identify a problem within a community and 3) develop a research proposal, focusing on Woodside, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and Corona— neighborhoods that are connected and bifurcated by Roosevelt Avenue.



learning objectives

- + Become familiar with methods employed in urban research, with an emphasis on demographic analysis, observations and interviews.
- + Learn to identify planning and policy problems and how to draft appropriate research proposals to address such concerns.
- + Familiarize students with local urban issues, including dimensions of planning and policy.
- + Build students' research, oral, presentation and written skills.
- + Critically evaluate a set of readings through class discussion and written work.

format, attendance & participation

Classes will be a combination of lectures (including by guests), discussions, presentations and site visits. Students assume responsibility for their own learning by preparing for class, completing required readings, participating in class discussions and completing assignments on time. Attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than three classes will be required to drop the course or receive an F letter grade. Three late arrivals equals one absence. All students will lead discussions by presenting readings, as assigned.

required materials

- + notebook for field notes.
- + voice recorder for interviews (phones now work well).
- + digital camera (phone may also suffice).

schedule

Please be advised that **two Monday classes** (*September 18 & 25*) will be held on **Saturday** (*September 16 & 23*) instead, which is reserved for our field visits, where we will spend time touring each neighborhood. Attendance of these sessions is mandatory. If your schedule does not allow you to attend these, or if you cannot commit to group work, this may not be the research course for you.

assignments

Reading and Class Discussions

It is crucial to the quality of class that you stay current with the readings. To facilitate this, each student is responsible for coming to class prepared to discuss **ONE IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY** and **ONE QUESTION** that you find puzzling from the readings for each session (*except for when we are in the field on September 16 & 23*).

The following questions may help guide you with your preparation:

- + What surprised you in this reading and why?
- + To what extent do you agree/disagree with the author's main point and why?
- + What are the most important take-aways?
- + How do the readings compare (similarities vs. differences)?

Method Exercises

The purpose of these assignments is to enhance your understanding of various data collection processes by applying such methods in your assigned community. These assignments are to be completed individually.

+ Exercise Number One:

Imagine that you are to conduct a tour of your assigned community. Using the internet, research your assigned community and prepare a two page (**1.5 spacing**) fact sheet that gives visitors some highlights of the neighborhood's history, its community districts (business improvement districts, historic districts, etc.) and identify **three or four** important sites that people should visit. You must cite your resources using either APA, MLA, or Chicago (*make sure to note which style you use*).

- *Note:* A physical copy is **DUE** on the day of the site visit:
(Woodside & Jackson Heights- **September 16**)
(Elmhurst & Corona- **September 23**)

+ Exercise Number Two:

Using your community as your field site, conduct a sensory assessment of the neighborhood. Take notes of the types of buildings (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.), their architectural styles (if any), whether or not they are abandoned, infrastructure, public spaces, use of public spaces (including sidewalks), by whom, as well as their conditions. What sounds do you hear, smells do you detect and what types of foods could be eaten? Ultimately, how is the neighborhood laid out and who appears to be using it? Make sure to take notes in your field notebook and document your findings with pictures. Write a three to four page detailed description (**1.5 spacing**) of your neighborhood and **be prepared to present it in class**.

- *Note:* At this point, the description does not need to be comprehensive of the entire neighborhood, but it should attempt to highlight the overall feel. (**Due October 16**)

+ Exercise Number Three:

Develop a set of open-ended questions concerning an issue/problem/concern in your neighborhood. Conduct **one** 15-30 minute recorded interview with someone in the community that may have some insight regarding the problem. **Transcribe the interview**. Conduct **another 15-30 minute interview** with a different person, but instead of recording it, **write down** their responses.

- *Note:* Bring the transcription from the **first interview** and the handwritten notes from the **second interview** to class. (**Due October 30**)

+ Exercise Number Four:

Using your community as the field site, draft a two to three page (**1.5 spacing**) historical overview of the neighborhood using newspapers, books and photographs.

- *Note:* Included photographs must be in an appendix following the 2-3 page written description. (**Due November 6**)

+ Exercise Number Five:

Using your community as your field site, pick a **three block commercial** stretch and map the sidewalk activities on both sides of the street. This should be **repeated twice**, once in the early hours of the day, and a second time in the afternoon/evening (do not forget to document the time). While you are free to document whatever you wish, things to look for include: loiters, street food vendors, illicit activities, beggars, merchandise vendors, trash, proselytizers, food trucks, scooters, bikes, furniture, etc.

- *Note:* These should be hand drawn or mapped using digital software. Make sure to distinguish different activities with varying shapes and colors. (**Due November 13**)

+ Exercise Number Six:

Using Coredata.nyc create a **2 to 3 page fact sheet** that highlights your community. This will be completed by choosing **2 variables** in each category. The categories include *subsidized housing, demographics, housing market and conditions, land use and development, neighborhood services and conditions, and renters*. You can view the data by clicking on *Table View* once the desired variables are chosen. (**Due November 27**)

Group Project and Presentation

Students will work in one of four groups: 1) Woodside Group, 2) Jackson Heights Group, 3) Elmhurst Group and 4) the Corona Group. Each group is expected to produce a community profile that explains and describes the following:

- + A historical overview (limited to the last 100 years) describing how and when the community first began.
- + How the community has changed demographically, economically as well as through its infrastructure.
- + Based on interviews, what does the community mean to its residents?

- + The identification of one urban or social problem the community is currently facing (*this needs my approval by November 6*).
- + A proposal outlining the methods that should be used to collect data to find ways to mitigate the problem.

The written component of this group project should be approximately **20 to 30 double-spaced typed written pages**. At the end of the semester, students will additionally offer a PowerPoint presentation of their research findings/proposal.

DUE DATE: This must be submitted via email on **December 18th by Midnight**.

**Written assignments must be submitted to me on the instructed due date. In special circumstances, such as an illness or family emergency, students may discuss an alternative submission deadline by contacting the instructor before the deadline. If an emergency situation prevents you from completing an assignment on time, please make every effort to notify me as early as possible. Late submissions without adequate advance explanation may result in no grade or a reduced grade.

grading

Students work will be evaluated based on the following formula:

Attendance and class discussion	15 percent	150 points	A+	975-1,000 points
Weekly assignments	35 percent	350	A	925-974
Group presentation	10 percent	100	A-	900-924
Group project report	40 percent	400	B+	875-899
Total	100%	1000 points	B	825-874
			B-	800-824
			C+	775-799
			C	700-774
			F	0-699

university policies

University policies and procedures will be followed to address issues related to accommodation for disabilities, religious observations, dealing with discriminatory conduct, sexual harassment and other related matters. In general, if you need special accommodation to meet any of the requirements of this course, please see me.

Queens 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 the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Queens College Academic Integrity Procedures.

readings

The readings can be found in PDF form on blackboard or the links below.

overview of course schedule

Date	Session	Topics
August 28	1	Course overview & introductions
September 11	2	Problem statements & ethics
September 16	3	<u>Site visit- Woodside & Jackson Heights (Saturday 12:00pm-3:00pm)</u> *Exercise Number One due
September 23	4	<u>Site visit- Elmhurst & Corona (Saturday 12:00pm-3:00pm)</u> *Exercise Number One due
October 2	5	Observation, multisensory ethnography, and community description
October 16	6	Interview methods *Exercise Number Two due
October 30	7	Archival methods (guest lecturer) *Exercise Number Three due
November 6	8	Community mapping *Exercise Number Four and Problem Statement due
November 13	9	U.S. census data *Exercise Number Five due
November 20	10	New York City data
November 27	11	In-class group work *Exercise Number Six due
December 4	12	Student presentations
December 11	13	Student presentations
December 18	14	NO CLASS; *Group project report due

course schedule

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION (August 28)

SESSION 2: PROBLEM STATEMENTS & ETHICS (September 11)

Readings

Booth, Wayne; Colomb, Gregory; Williams, Joseph: *The Craft of Research (third edition)*. Chapter 1: Thinking in Print and Chapter 4: From Questions to a Problem.

Ocejo, Richard: *Ethnography and the City-Readings on Doing Urban Fieldwork*. Section II: Doing the Right Thing.

Shea, Christopher: *Don't Talk to the Humans-The Crackdown on Social Science Research*.

SESSION 3: SITE VISIT- WOODSIDE & JACKSON HEIGHTS (September 16)

Readings

Tonnelat, Stephane; Kornblum, William: *International Express, New Yorkers on the 7 Train*. Chapter 4: The 74th Street/Roosevelt Avenue Station-Universalism, Differentiation, and Discrimination.

Zukin, Sharon; Kasinitz, Philip, and Chen, Xiangming: *Global Cities, Local Streets-Everyday Diversity From New York to Shanghai*. Chapter 1: Spaces of Everyday Diversity-The Patchwork Ecosystem of Local Shopping Streets.

Hosokawa, Fumiko: *Building Trust- Doing Research to Understand Ethnic Communities*. Chapter 5: Ethnic Groups and Communities.

SESSION 4: SITE VISIT- ELMHURST & CORONA (September 23)

Ricourt, Milagros; Danta, Ruby: *Hispanas de Queens-Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood*. Chapter 3: Stores Workplaces, and Public Space.

Alba, Richard; Foner, Nancy: *Strangers No More- Immigration and the Challenges of Integration in North America and Western Europe*. Chapter 2: Who are the Immigrants?- The Genesis of the New Diversity.

Vertovec, Stephen: *Super-Diversity and its Implications* (2007).

SESSION 5: OBSERVATION, MULTISENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY & COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION (October 2)

Marshall, Catherine; Rossman, Gretchen: *Designing Qualitative Research (5th Ed.)* Chapter 6: Primary Data Collection Methods-Observations.

Elliot, Denielle; Culhane, Dara: *A Different Kind of Ethnography-Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*. Chapter 3: Sensing.

Dunier, Mitchell: *Sidewalk* (1999). Chapter 1: Introduction.

Leighton Chase, John; Crawford, Margaret; and Kaliski, John: *Everyday Urbanism. The Painted Sign Pictures of Latino Los Angeles* (1999).

SESSION 6: INTERVIEW METHODS (October 16)

Hosokawa, Fumiko: *Building Trust- Doing Research to Understand Ethnic Communities*. Chapter 2: *Basic Guidelines to Doing Fieldwork*.

Marshall, Catherine; Rossman, Gretchen: *Designing Qualitative Research (5th Ed.)* Chapter 6: Primary Data Collection Methods-In-Depth Interviewing & Coding Data.

Bernard, Russell: *Social Research Methods*. Chapter 6: Interviewing- Unstructured and Semi-structured.

SESSION 7: ARCHIVAL METHODS (October 30)

https://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives#_V08-7le_H8s (Peruse all of the Table of Contents)

http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/mohr/classes/soc4/summer_08/pages/Resources/Readings/Ventresca%20&%20Mohr.pdf

SESSION 8: COMMUNITY MAPPING (November 6)

Hall, Suzanne: *City, Street and Citizen-The Measure of the Ordinary*. Chapter 2: The Boundaries of Belonging.

Maie Kim, Annette: *Sidewalk City- Remapping Public Space in Ho Chi Minh City*. Chapter 4: Mapping the Unmapped.

Goldsberry, Kirk: *The Importance of Spatial Thinking* (2013).

Rosenberg, Matt: *The Cholera and the Map that Stopped It: John Snow's Map of London* (2010).

SESSION 9: U.S. CENSUS DATA (November 13)

<http://www.ndcompass.org/health/GFMCHC/Revised%20Data%20Collection%20Tools%203-1-12.pdf>

SESSION 10: NEW YORK CITY DATA (November 20)

<http://furmancenter.org/coredata/userguide/about>

<http://furmancenter.org/coredata/userguide/toolbar-navigation>