

Social Research Methods
Sociology 302W-01
Gaige 303 ♦ Tu/Th 4:00-5:50 PM
Rhode Island College, Fall 2022

Prerequisite: Any 200-level sociology course; math general education requirement

Instructor Information

Dr. Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

marthur@ric.edu (preferred)

Drop-In Hours: Tuesdays 2:15-3:15 pm; Thursdays immediately after class

You can also book an in-person, Zoom, or phone appointment at <https://calendly.com/mmlarthur> or let me know if you need an alternate time

Phone: 401.456.8681—be sure to leave a callback number & note when is a good time to reach you

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to social research methods, with a primary focus on conceptualizing research studies and collecting data. Students will be introduced to the relationship between theory and research, ethical and practical issues in conducting research, conceptualization and measurement, sampling, and various data collection techniques. Data analysis will not be a primary focus of this course, as that topic is covered in Social Data Analysis (Soc 404).

By the end of this course, students will have:

- Developed a proposal for their own research project;
- Advanced their ability to write about research and evaluate the research of others;
- Gained skills in surveying, interviewing, observation, and other data analysis techniques; and
- Become better prepared for future coursework involving research methods, such as Social Data Analysis, Senior Seminar, and Independent Study, and for jobs and careers requiring research tasks.

Materials

Wang, Gabe T. and Keumjae Park. 2016. *Student Research and Report Writing*. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1-118-96391-3. List price \$34.95. Available on e-reserves for **free** electronic use.

Saylor Academy. 2012. *Principles of Sociological Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. E-text at: https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/index.html

Additional reading materials will be made available via Blackboard.

You must have reliable Internet access to succeed in this course, as readings & assignments require the use of Blackboard.

*****TO PROTECT THE HEALTH & SAFETY OF ALL OF US, MASKS ARE REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES WHEN IN CLASS, GROUP MEETINGS, OR MY OFFICE. PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING COVID SYMPTOMS OR HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO COVID.*****

THIS SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Course Requirements

This course incorporates a variety of ways for you to demonstrate your engagement, learning, and competency regarding the course material. You will have some flexibility in choosing how and where to deploy your efforts; if you were to successfully complete all possible course assignments, you could earn 110+ points (the cutoff for an A grade is roughly 95 points). Because there are so many opportunities to earn points, most assignments cannot be made up or turned in late. If you experience an unusual or extraordinary circumstance, such as hospitalization, that requires an alternative plan for completing your work, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss this.

Assignments in this course include two large assignments and variety of smaller assignments and activities. The two large assignments are a research proposal paper and a final exam. The **research proposal paper** will be due at the end of the semester and will allow you to explore a topic of interest to you across the span of the entire semester and propose a research project drawing on that topic taking the form of either a student research project or an applied project for an agency, government, or business. Some of the course assignments will help you prepare for this paper, which will be approximately 8-12 pages in length depending on the particular project you propose. More detailed assignment guidelines will be handed out as the semester progresses, and many of the smaller assignments during the semester will help you to prepare for this paper. **25 points.**

The final exam, which will be open-book and open-note, will require you to respond to questions about an assigned empirical research article and questions about a hypothetical research project. It will be conducted via Blackboard during the final exam period, but must be completed individually. **20 points.**

There are three categories of smaller assignments and activities.

- a. A *research blog* in Blackboard, requiring posts approximately weekly during the course in which you reflect on the research process and discuss assigned course readings. More details are available in Blackboard. **Up to 20 points.**
- b. *Individual assignments* as indicated in the class schedule. These include a literature review assignment, practice using the methods we discuss, and certification in research ethics, among others. **Up to 20 points.**
- c. *In-class group assignments* will occur nearly every week; many of these will be collected and graded. These are not announced, so you should be in class regularly. **Up to 15 points.**

Finally, *class participation* (**up to 10 points**) is an important part of this course. Please come to class ready to learn and on time, unless you feel ill or have an emergency situation. Part of your attendance is the expectation that you will participate in class sessions by contributing something to our discussions. If you have significant problems speaking in class, I strongly urge you to come speak to me privately as soon as possible to develop alternative participation mechanisms (such as private meetings or e-mail discussions) so that you can meet this requirement. Remember that there are few stupid questions and that all questions and comments should be made in a spirit of respect for other students and their contributions to the class

Blackboard contains optional lecture videos. Please watch the appropriate video if you must miss class, and you are welcome to view them for review. Note the videos contain quizzes; except in the case of specific online class sessions, these quizzes do not count towards your grade.

Note: federal guidelines expect students to complete three hours of work (including both in-class and out-of-class time) for every credit hour earned.

Course Schedule

Note on deadlines: to help you organize your life, nearly all assignments will be due **Thursdays at 10 am**. There are a few exceptions indicated on the syllabus. Due dates are also available in Blackboard. I understand that life is complicated and will provide flexibility on deadlines when needed, with the following exceptions:

- Quizzes and in-class assignments for which I will provide an answer key will not be accepted after I have released the answer key.
- Research blogs submitted after the beginning of the class session in which we discuss the relevant material will not be accepted for credit.
- When peer review is used, late papers will be accepted but will be ineligible for peer review participation or credit.

Note that late work will likely face an extended grading delay as I will prioritize grading on-time work. If you would like to request an extension, use the link in Blackboard to do so.

READINGS are due in advance of the specific class session for which they are listed. Note that you will need to complete assigned readings PRIOR to completing written assignments and quizzes.

Tuesday, August 30: Introduction to Research Methods

- Read: syllabus thoroughly
- Be sure you have or can otherwise access course texts & Blackboard

Part I: Research Development and Design

Thursday, September 1: Theory & Research

- Read: Saylor, "Introduction" & "Linking Methods with Theory"
- Read: Wang & Park, 1-14
- Complete: Introductory Blog Post (accepted through the weekend)
- Getting to Know You Survey **Due Friday, September 2 at noon**

Tuesday, September 6: Choosing a Topic

- Read: Wang & Park, 15-30 & 81-94
- Read: Saylor, "Beginning a Research Project"

Thursday, September 8: Ethics

- Read: Saylor, "Research Ethics"
 - Read: Katchadorian, "Operation Delirium," *New Yorker* 46-64
 - Write: Ethics & Topics Blog Post
 - Complete: CITI Human Subjects Tutorial (accepted through the weekend)
- ***Note: September 12 is the deadline to drop this course without a W

Tuesday, September 13: Reading & Using Prior Research

- Read: Saylor, "Reading & Understanding Social Research"
- Read: Jack, "(No) Harm in Asking," *Sociology of Education* 1-19
- Complete: "How to Read a Sociological Journal Article" handout questions about the Jack article
- Bring: answers to the "How to Read" questions **to class today**

Thursday, September 15: Library Instruction

- Complete: library tutorial prior to today's class
- Read: Wang & Park, 31-57
- Review: OWL on ASA style in-text and bibliographic references
- Sign up for a small group meeting slot
- No blog post this week!

Tuesday, September 20: Small Group Meetings

- Read: Wang & Park, 58-81
- Read: Graff, "How to Write an Argument," *Clueless in Academe* 275-77
- Read: Sample literature reviews posted in Blackboard
- Find sources for your literature review
- Bring:** the articles you have found so far & a copy of the literature review chart (blank is ok, but be sure to look at it before your meeting) to your small-group meeting

Thursday, September 22: Measurement, Operationalization, & Variables

- Read: Saylor, "Research Design" & "Defining & Measuring Concepts"
- Read: articles for your literature review
- Complete: Plagiarism tutorial (accepted through the weekend)
- Write: Literature Review Prep Blog Post

*Tuesday, September 27: **Online Class** on Sampling and Measurement (no class meeting today)*

- Read: Saylor, "Research Design," and "Sampling"
- Read: Wang & Park, 105-16
- Watch: Video on Study Design (with quiz)
- Watch: Video on Sampling, Parts I **and** II (with quizzes)
- Watch: Video on Research Quality (with quiz)
- Complete: literature review chart (due by the end of class time today)

Thursday, September 29: Review of Sampling, Measurement, and Study Design

- Read: Quick Reference Guide
- Read: "Why are Citations Important in Research Writing?"
(<https://medium.com/@write4research/why-are-citations-important-in-research-writing-97fb6d854b47>)
- Write: Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Blog Post
- Work on literature review draft, **due for peer review Monday, October 3 at 10 am**

*Tuesday, October 4: **Online Class** on Interviews (no class meeting today)*

- Read: Saylor, "Interviews" and "Focus Groups"
- Read: Wang & Park, 116-26 & 211-14
- Complete: Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Quiz (due by the end of class time today)
- Watch: Video on Interviews (with quiz)
- Watch: Video on How Interviews Work (with quiz)
- Watch: Video on Interview Questions (with quiz)

Thursday, October 6: Interviews II

- Read: Edin, "What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" *Social Problems* 47 (112-133)
- Read: Healey-Etten, "Interviewing Tips," *Teaching Sociology* (162-4)
- Complete: peer review of literature review (due by class time today)
- Write: Interviews Blog Post

Tuesday, October 11: Surveys I

- Read: Saylor, "Survey Research"
- Wang & Park, 174-82
- Complete: literature review for submission **due October 11 at 10 am**

Thursday, October 13: Surveys II

- Read: Spalter-Roth *et al.*, "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?" ASA
- Write: Surveys Blog Post

Tuesday, October 18: Observation & Ethnography I

- Read: Saylor, "Field Research"
- Read: Wang & Park, 123-25 (review), 157-62

Thursday, October 20: Observation & Ethnography II

- Read: Desmond, "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor," *American Journal of Sociology* 117:5 (1295-1335)
- Write: Observation & Ethnography Blog Post
- Complete: Interview assignment (accepted through the weekend)
- Come prepared with notes for the open-book midterm quiz in class today

Tuesday, October 25: Experiments I

- Read: Saylor, "Experiments"

Thursday, October 27: Experiments II

- Read: Pager, Bonikowski, and Wester, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 74:5 (777-99)
- Read: McMillen, "Rat Park" Comic
- Write: Experiments Blog Post
- Complete: Survey assignment

Tuesday, November 1: Documentary Research I

- Read: Saylor, "Unobtrusive Research"

Thursday, November 3: Documentary Research II

- Read: Romney & Johnson, "The Ball Game is for the Boys," *Communication & Sport*, 1-19
- Write: Documentary Research Blog Post
- Complete: Observation Assignment (accepted late through the weekend)
NOTE: November 4 is the deadline to withdraw from this course for academic reasons (nonacademic withdrawals remain possible until the end of the semester)

Tuesday, November 8: Election Day (no class meeting)

- If you are eligible, be sure to vote today!

Thursday, November 10: Using Existing Data

- Read: Schmidt, "Postsecondary Enrollment Before, During, and Since the Great Recession," Census Bureau
- Explore: The 2020 Census website
- Write: Existing Data Blog Post
- Complete: twitter assignment (if not completed in class)

Tuesday, November 15: Applied Research

- Read: Saylor, "Research Methods in the Real World"
- Read: Zevallos, "Sociology for What, Who, Where and How? Situating Applied Sociology in Action," *The Other Sociologist*
- If you need Soc 404 for your major, be sure to register ASAP!
- Complete your literature review revisions

Thursday, November 17: Comparing Methods and Multimethod Research

- Read: Creswell, "The Selection of a Research Approach," *Research Design*, pp. 3-23
- Complete: Comparing Methods Chart
- Bring: Comparing Methods Chart to class **today**
- Write: Applied Research & Lit Review Revisions Blog Post

Tuesday, November 22: Writing About and Proposing Research

- Read: Wang & Park, 133-49
- Read; Cargan, "The Research Proposal," *Doing Social Research* (43-53)
- Read: Sample research proposal papers
- Write: proposed research method(s) for proposal paper (due by class time today)

Thursday, November 24: Thanksgiving (no class meeting)

- Get some rest, if you can!

Tuesday, November 29: Peer Review Session

- Read: Frankham, "Mental Illness Affects Police Shootings," *Contexts* Sp. 2019 70-72
- Bring: the Frankham article, with your notes, to class **today**
- Complete: Paper Outline Template
- Bring: 3 copies of the Paper Outline Template to class **today**

Thursday, December 1: Make-Up Day/Review

- Write: Final Blog Post

Tuesday, December 6: Course Conclusion & Exam Review

- Bring questions for the exam review

Thursday, December 8: Research Proposal Consultation Meetings

- Work on research proposal papers
- Get notes organized for the final exam

Research Proposal Due Date & Final Exam Arrangements TBA

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

All students enrolling in this course are expected to abide by the Rhode Island College guidelines on academic honesty. More information about academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism, as well as RIC policies, can be found at <http://ric.libguides.com/proethics>. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarizing written work, including copying some or all of your work from a book, a website, or another student's paper. Think about how you would feel if someone passed off your hard work as their own.
- Using sources without proper attribution. Remember that all claims in a paper that did not spring fully formed from your own head need attribution, regardless of whether or not they are paraphrased, and all direct quotes should appear in quotation marks. If you are unsure how to document sources, please see me or check the links in Blackboard.
- Turning in research reports that are fabricated or which do not accurately represent the research activities in which you engaged.
- Turning in work completed for other classes without prior permission.
- Working together with other students or seeking help from professionals or peers on assignments which prohibit such activities.
- Destroying course materials or otherwise preventing other students from achieving fully in this course.

Cheating successfully is often harder than you think, and you might as well just put your effort into doing the assignment legitimately. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and include receiving a 0 on the assignment for the first minor offense, receiving an F for the class for a repeated offense, and report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at RIC for all offenses. If you feel the urge to engage in academic dishonesty, stop and think about what you are doing, and then come see me so we can work out a plan together to ensure your success in the course.

Extensions, Absences, and Attendance

Please make every effort to attend all scheduled class sessions. Class sessions will not be recorded and group activities cannot be made up. However, there are videos from a prior semester of this course available on Blackboard to help you catch up on missed material, and we can work out a plan for alternative assignments if you become ill, face quarantine, or otherwise will miss more than a class or two.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due in Blackboard at specific times as indicated in Blackboard; you can request an extension for eligible assignments using the link in Blackboard. Assignments that are not posted directly to a Blackboard application (like blog posts) **must** be saved in *.rtf, *.doc, or *.docx (preferred). Blackboard does log your submissions; you can return to an assignment yourself to see if you have submitted it correctly, and I am happy to show you how to do this so that you will not need to email me to see if I have received your work.

Course Technology

Students are expected to check their RIC email addresses and Blackboard frequently, at least a couple of times per week, and to have sufficient Internet access to complete readings & assignments via Blackboard. If you primarily use another email account, you must forward your RIC email, as I do use email to disseminate important information about the course. If you are not able to access email or Blackboard, you should seek assistance from User Support Services right away (<https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/user-support-services> or 456-8803).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a **disability** that might interfere with your ability to perform at your best in this course, it is your responsibility to come and speak with me as early as possible in the semester so that we can develop a plan together. All reasonable accommodations will be made. Students with disabilities should be sure that they are registered with Disability Services in order to ensure access to the full range of services available at Rhode Island College. Information about these services and about registration is available at <https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/disability-services-center>

Supplemental Services

Everyone, even excellent students, benefits from having another set of eyes on their writing, so visit the **Writing Center** early often to help develop your ideas, organize your writing, and improve your drafts: <https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/writing-center>

- Seek support to develop your academic & study skills at **OASIS**:
<https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/office-academic-support-and-information-services-oasis>
- Visit the **Counseling Center** to obtain support with anxiety, depression, or other distress you may be experiencing. Services are free & confidential: <https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/center-health-and-wellness/counseling-services>
- **Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or other basic needs is urged to contact the Learning for Life (<https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/learning-life>) and/or the Dean of Students' Office (https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RhodeIslandCollege&layout_id=33).**

If you would like more information about the resources available, you can ask me at any time this semester. You do not need to tell me why you are asking to get help for a friend, another student, or yourself.

These services are available and free to all students. Use them!

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet learning outcomes of the Sociology and Justice Studies programs (see <https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/departments-sociology/> & click on your program and then program goals for more details):

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between theory, research design, and interpretation and engage in work developing their research literacy.
2. Students will understand and engage in data collection and analytical processes.
3. Students will be able to communicate, in written and oral form, sociological arguments.
4. Students will be able to exercise their sociological imaginations toward examining our social world as well as its practical uses and applications.

This course is designated as a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) course for the Sociology major. For more information on WID and writing in our field, please visit the WID page at <https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/departments-sociology/>.