

Research Methods I (SOC 302)
Rhode Island College, Fall 2017

Soc 302-01		Soc 302-02
TuTh 4:00-5:50 PM	⌘	TuTh 10:00-11:50 AM
Gaige 301		Gaige 301

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

Instructor Information

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

marthur@ric.edu (preferred)

401. 433. 9633

Office: Gaige Hall Room 350

Drop-In Availability: Tuesday and Thursday 2-3 pm, right after class (usually), or by appointment

This course uses the Blackboard course management system. You will need to have reliable Internet access on computer or tablet, or scheduled time in the campus computer labs, in order to successfully complete this course. You will also need to check your email regularly.

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 Research Methods II.

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 Research Methods II, Senior Seminar, and Independent Study, and for jobs and careers requiring research tasks.

Materials

Ruane, Janet M. 2016. *Introducing Social Research Methods*. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1-118-87424-0.

List price \$49.95. Ebook access available via Adams Library at:

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ric-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4187341>

Wang, Gabe T. and Keumjae Park. 2016. *Student Research and Report Writing*. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN:

978-1-118-96391-3. List price \$34.95. Ebook access available via Adams Library at:

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ric-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4205820>

Additional reading materials will be made available via Blackboard.

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.

- 1) **PARTICIPATION:** You are expected to come on time for every class meeting. If you must miss class, you are still responsible for the material we covered. 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. Participation will be assessed, in part, using a rubric available in Blackboard. **10 points.**
- 2) **ASSIGNMENTS:** Three types of small assignments are required during the course:
 - 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—**20 points.** ****Note blog posts are not always due the same day each week!****
 - b. *Individual assignments*, most of which are indicated in the class schedule. These include the literature review, practice using the methods we discuss, an individual meeting with me, peer review activities, and in-class quizzes—**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—**15 points.**
- 3) **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPER:** At the end of the course, you will turn in a research proposal paper. This paper will allow you to explore a topic of interest to you across the span of the entire semester and propose a project drawing on that topic taking the form of either an Honors/Independent Study project or an applied project for an agency/government client. 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.**
- 4) **FINAL EXAM:** Arrangements TBA, but it will be open-book and open-note. **20 points.**
Note: the final and paper are NOT optional; students who do not complete them on time will receive an incomplete in the course until they make arrangements to do so.
- 5) **READING:** You are expected to complete all assigned course readings prior to the date for which they are assigned.

Note: federal guidelines (<https://ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>) expect students to complete two hours of work out of class for every one hour of in-class time.

Course Schedule

All readings should be completed by the time class begins on that date, unless otherwise noted. All assignments have specific due dates and times listed.

Tuesday, August 29: Introduction to Research Methods

- ✓ Read: syllabus thoroughly
- ☐ Be sure to get course books or make arrangements to complete readings with reserve copies

Part I: Research Development and Design

Thursday, August 31: Theory & Research

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 1-43
- ☐ Read: “Statistical Fallacies, Paradoxes, and Threats to Validity,” pp. 35-50 from Klass, *Just Plain Data Analysis*
- ☐ Complete: Blackboard survey due by 9:30 am on Friday, September 1
- ☐ Complete: Theory blog post due by 9:30 am on Friday, September 1

Tuesday, September 5: Choosing a Topic

- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 1-30, 81-85
- ☐ Read: Ruane, 68-78

Thursday, September 7: Research Ethics

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 46-66
 - ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 150-52, 160-62
 - ☐ Read: Katchadorian, “Operation Delirium,” *New Yorker* 46-64
 - ☐ Complete: Ethics blog post (due by 9:30 am today)
 - ☐ Complete: CITI human subjects training (<http://www.citiprogram.org>). Detailed instructions available on Blackboard (due by 9:30 am Friday, September 8).
- Note: Monday, September 11 is the deadline to drop this class*

Tuesday, September 12: Reading and Using Prior Research

- ☐ Read: Mears, “Not Just a Paper Doll,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34 (317-43)
- ☐ Complete: “How to Read” handout (not due separately, but you must complete it in order to do the in-class exercise)
- ☐ Read: Graff, “How to Write an Argument,” *Clueless in Academe* 275-77
- ☐ Complete: Choosing a Topic blog post (due by 9:30 am **Today**)

Thursday, September 14: Library Instruction Session

- ☐ Read: RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide (<http://www.ric.edu/sociology/pages/term-paper-guide.aspx>)
- ☐ Read: Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 31-80
- ☐ Bring: “Thinking Tool” document with sections 1, 2, and 3 completed for *your* paper topic

Tuesday, September 19: Class cancelled

- ☐ Mandatory out-of-class small-group meetings this week: come prepared with printed or electronic copies of your research articles and your partially-complete literature review chart.
- ☐ Read: Ruane, 232-54, 273-76
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 85-104
- ☐ Complete: Plagiarism Tutorial by 6 pm today (detailed instructions available on Blackboard)
<http://www.lycoming.edu/library/instruction/tutorials/plagiarismGame.aspx>

*Thursday, September 21: **Online** class on Sampling, Measurement, and Study Design*

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 78-115
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 105-116
- ☐ View: sampling video
- ☐ View: measurement video
- ☐ View: study design video
- ☐ Complete: sampling, measurement, and study design quiz (due 9:30 am Monday, Sept. 25th)
- ☐ Complete: Lit Review Prep blog post (due 9:30 am Monday, Sept. 25th)

Tuesday, September 26: More on Measurement & Study Design

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 118-38
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 126-28

Thursday, September 28: More on Sampling

- ☐ Complete: Measurement, Sampling, and Study Design blog post (due by 9:30 am today)
- ☐ Complete: Literature Review Chart (due by 9:30 am today; will be accepted late through Monday morning with a grade deduction)
- ☐ Read: “Why are Citations Important in Research Writing?”
(<https://medium.com/@write4research/why-are-citations-important-in-research-writing-97fb6d854b47>)

Part II: Methods of Data Collection

Tuesday, October 3: Surveys I

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 163- 188, 265-73
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 174-82

Thursday, October 5: Surveys II

- ☐ Bring: a printed draft of your literature review suitable for peer review
- ☐ Read: Spalter-Roth *et al.*, “Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?” ASA
http://www.asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach_Beyond5_Social_Capital.pdf
- ☐ Complete: Surveys blog post (due 9:30 am today)

Tuesday, October 10: No Class Meeting—work day

- ☐ Complete: Literature Review (due 9:30 am Wednesday, October 11)

Thursday, October 12: Using Existing Data

- ☐ Read: Census 2010, <http://www.census.gov/2010census/about/> (don't just read the main page, spend at least 20 minutes exploring the site)
- ☐ Read: Werner, "The Older Population: 2010."
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>
- ☐ Read: Policy Implications Handout
- ☐ Complete: Review blog post (due 9:30 am Thursday, October 12)
- ☐ Complete: Survey assignment (Excel file due by 9:30 am, **Monday**, October 16)

Tuesday, October 17: Interviews I

- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 116-23, 211-14
- ☐ Read: Ruane, 189-208
- ☐ Bring: 5 completed surveys to class

Thursday, October 19: Interviews II

- ☐ Read: Healey-Etten, "Interviewing Tips," *Teaching Sociology* (162-4)
- ☐ Read: Edin, "What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" *Social Problems* 47 (112-133)
- ☐ Complete: Interviews blog post (due 9:30 am today)

Tuesday, October 24: Observation & Ethnography I

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 210-30
- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 123-25, 157-60

Thursday, October 26: Observation & Ethnography II

- ☐ Read: Desmond, "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor," *American Journal of Sociology* 117:5 (1295-1335)
- ☐ Complete: Observation & Ethnography Blog Post (due by 9:30 am today)
- ☐ **In class today: midterm quiz**

Tuesday, October 31: Experiments I

- ☐ Read: Ruane, 140-61
- ☐ Bring: two completed interviews & consent forms to class

Thursday, November 2: Experiments II

- ☐ Read: Pager, Bonikowski, and Wester, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 74:5 (777-99)
- ☐ Complete: Experimental Research Blog Post (due by 9:30 am today)

Note: Friday, November 5th is the deadline for withdrawing from this course

Tuesday, November 7: Documentary Methods I

- ☐ Read: Wang & Park, 214-35
- ☐ Read: Arthur, "The Neglected Virtues of Comparative-Historical Methods," Zake & Decesare, *New Directions in Sociology* 172-92
- ☐ Complete: Observation assignment (due by 9:30 am today)

Thursday, November 9: Documentary Methods II

- ☐ Read: Archival Document Packet (*bring paper or electronic copy to class*)
- ☐ Skim: *Janus* yearbook
- ☐ Bring: notes in response to questions on page 1 of Archival Document Packet

Tuesday, November 14: Documentary Methods III

- ☐ Read: Carlson and Cobb, "From Play to Peril," *Social Science Quarterly* 98:2 (397-412)
- ☐ Complete: Documentary methods blog post (due by 9:30 am **today**)
- ☐ Complete: literature review revisions this week

Thursday, November 16: Applied Research

- ☐ Read: "Research Methods in the Real World," 358-75
- ☐ Read: Zevallos, "Sociology for What, Who, Where and How? Situating Applied Sociology in Action," <https://othersociologist.com/2012/11/02/sociology-for-what/>
- ☐ Complete: Literature Review Revisions blog post (due at 9:30 am **Monday**, November 20)

Part III: Pulling it All Together

Tuesday, November 21: Comparing Methods and Multi-Method Research

- ☐ Read: Creswell, "The Selection of a Research Approach," from *Research Design*, pp. 3-23
- ☐ Bring: Completed "Comparing Methods" chart
- ☐ Complete: Applied Research and Comparing Methods Blog Post (due by 9:30 am **Monday**, November 27)

Thursday, November 24: Thanksgiving

- ☐ No class

Tuesday, November 28: Writing About and Proposing Research

- ☐ Read: Park & Wang, 133-49
- ☐ Read: Ruane, 284-88
- ☐ Read: Cargan, "The Research Proposal," *Doing Social Research* (43-53)
- ☐ Read: sample research proposal papers

Thursday, November 30: Catch-Up Day/Peer Review

- ☐ Bring: two completed copies of the Paper Presentation Template to class
- ☐ Complete: Final Blog Post (due 9:30 am **Monday**, December 4)

Tuesday, December 5: Small-Group Paper Meetings

- ☐ Come see me during designated hours to discuss your paper. Bring whatever you have been working on.

Thursday, December 7: Exam Review and Course Conclusion

- ☐ Read: article for final exam (TBA; will be posted in Blackboard in the final exam folder)
- ☐ In class: exam review
- ☐ Complete: final research proposal paper, due 9:30 am **Monday**, December 11

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 reference the RIC Sociology Term Paper Guide at <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/pages/term-paper-guide.aspx>.
- 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.

You should be aware that I have caught many students who have engaged in academic dishonesty. 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

You are expected to attend class regularly, but I am aware that emergencies do come up and that this class is not the only priority in your life. It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate (I do not provide notes to students) and to meet with me to clarify what you have missed. If you must be late to a class or if you must leave early, be sure not to disturb other students with your comings and goings. Be aware that repeated absences, even if excused, may imperil your ability to do well in the course, and that you cannot earn participation points (or points for in-class assignments, which cannot be made up) if you are not present.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due in Blackboard at specific times as indicated 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. If unavoidable circumstances require you to seek an extension on your work, I am generally open to providing one **if** you request the extension via email at least 24 hours prior to the due date (unless the extension is due to a major emergency such as a health crisis or death in the family). Blog posts

will not be accepted late, but you are still strongly encouraged to think about all of the blog post questions, as many involve crucial stages in planning for your final paper.

Course Technology

Students are expected to check their RIC email addresses and Blackboard frequently, at a minimum twice a week before each class meeting. 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. Students are also responsible for being able to access Blackboard. If you are not able to access email or Blackboard, you should seek assistance from User Support Services (<http://www.ric.edu/uss/> or x8886) right away so that you do not fall behind in the course.

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 <http://www.ric.edu/disabilityservices/>

If you wish to record lectures in this course, you *must* complete the Recording Contract available in Blackboard. Otherwise, recording is not permitted.

Supplemental Services

Writing center: <http://www.ric.edu/writingcenter/>

Academic and Study Skills: <http://www.ric.edu/oasis/>

Counseling Center: <http://www.ric.edu/counselingctr/>

Career Development Center: <http://www.ric.edu/careerdevelopment/>

***Your tuition pays for these resources. **Use them!**

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet learning outcomes of the Sociology and Justice Studies programs¹:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between theory, research design, and interpretation and engage in work developing their research literacy.
- Students will understand and engage in qualitative and quantitative data collection and analytical processes.
- Students will be able to communicate, in written and oral form, sociological arguments.

¹See <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/Pages/Sociology-Program.aspx> and <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/Pages/Justice-Studies-Program.aspx>.