

**Research Methods I**  
Rhode Island College, Fall 2010

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Soc 302-01

Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-4:50 PM  
Craig-Lee Hall Room 153



Soc 302-02

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:50 AM  
Craig-Lee Hall Room 253

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Prerequisite: Any 200-level sociology course

*Instructor Information*

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

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401. 456. 8681

Office: Craig Lee Hall room 451

Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 2:30-3:30 pm and immediately after class meetings on Tuesdays, or by appointment

**This course uses the Blackboard course management system.**

*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 be

- 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
- 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*

Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. **2011.** *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Available in the college bookstore & the off-campus bookstore as well as online; costs around \$100 new, but used editions are available. An e-book version is available for \$63.99 and a rental for around \$60 at <http://www.ric.edu/campus-store/Cengagebooks.php>).

Additional reading materials will be made available through Blackboard.

## Requirements

1. **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE.** While regular participation is important in all college courses, it is even more important in a course that meets only once a week, as this one does. Missing one class session of our course is like missing a whole week of another course. You are expected to come on time for every class meeting and let me know as soon as possible (preferably in advance) if you must miss class for a legitimate reason. 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, but that all questions and comments should be made in a spirit of respect for other students and their contributions to the class. (5% of final course grade)
2. **ASSIGNMENTS.** Over the course of the semester, you will complete three types of small assignments. Together, these will account for **50%** of your grade.
  - a. *Online quizzes* administered via Blackboard, as indicated in the class schedule—**15%**.
  - b. *Individual homework assignments*, most of which are indicated in the class schedule. These include the literature review, practice with some of the methods we learn about, a meeting with me to discuss your paper, your presentation, and an in-class midterm quiz—**20%**.
  - c. *In-class group assignments* will occur every week; about half of these will be collected and graded. These are not announced, so you should be in class regularly—**15%**.There is a factor built into the grading to allow you to miss one or two quizzes or in-class assignments without penalty, as these cannot be made up.
3. **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPER.** Towards the end of the semester, 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 a agency/government client. Some of the weekly 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. (25% of final course grade)
4. **FINAL EXAM.** During the final exam period, students will take a cumulative final exam. This exam will be open-book and open-note; questions will take the form of short answer and short essay questions asking you to apply your research methods knowledge to particular situations. Scheduling details of the exam will be forthcoming. (20% of final course grade)
5. **READING.** You are expected to complete all assigned course readings prior to the date for which they are assigned. Remember that normal expectations for a college course are that you should do two to three hours of work outside class for every one hour in class—since you are spending four hours a week in this class, that means you should expect to work on reading, writing assignments, and studying for this class for eight to twelve hours a week outside of class. Reading assignments average approximately 85 pages per week. You may also want to visit the companion site for the textbook, which contains review and study materials; you can access it through Blackboard.

## Course Schedule

All readings and assignments are due at the start of the class date for which they are assigned. In the schedule below, **T** indicates readings in the textbook, **O** indicates readings available online via Blackboard.

Tuesday, August 31

### Introduction to Research Methods

#### PART I: Developing and Conceptualizing Research Ideas

Thursday, September 2

### The Connection Between Theory and Research

▶ “The Uses of Social Research,” (1-18) **T**

▶ “Theory and Research,” (19-38) **T**

**Be sure to read the entire syllabus prior to this class meeting**

▶ Blackboard survey due

Tuesday, September 7

### Research Ethics

▶ “Ethics and Social Research,” (39-70) **T**

▶ CITI human subjects training (<http://www.citiprogram.org>)  
(detailed instructions available on Blackboard)

→ *Email or hand in your passing results of the training prior to the start of class*

Thursday, September 9

### No Class—Rosh Hashanah

▶ Quiz due in Blackboard

Tuesday, September 14

### Choosing a Topic

▶ “Selecting Researchable Topics and Questions,” (71-98) **T**

\*\*\*Last day for dropping this course

Thursday, September 16

### Samples & Study Design

▶ “Sampling,” (99-128) **T**

▶ “Crosssectional, Longitudinal, & Case Study Designs” (157-184) **T**

▶ Quiz due in Blackboard

→ Bring textbook to class today!

Tuesday, September 21

### How to Read—and Use—Prior Research

▶ Damaske, “Brown Suits Need Not Apply,” *Sociological Forum* 24:2, (402-24) **O**

→ *Print out this article and bring it to class with you today.* Be sure you have read it completely.

- Thursday, September 23      **Conducting a Literature Review**  
 Library Instruction Session  
 ▶ RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide  
 (<http://www.ric.edu/sociology/termpaperguide.php>) ○  
 ▶ “Literature Review Example”  
 ([http://www.york.cuny.edu/~washton/student/Org-Behavior/lit\\_rev\\_eg.pdf](http://www.york.cuny.edu/~washton/student/Org-Behavior/lit_rev_eg.pdf)) ○  
 BRING A ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY OF YOUR TOPIC TO CLASS TODAY.  
 → *Today’s class will meet in the library instruction facility on level 3 of Adams Library.*
- Tuesday, September 28      **Individual Meetings**  
 Class is cancelled for today. Please be sure to sign up for a 10-minute meeting with me this week.
- Thursday, September 30      **More on Measurement**  
 ▶ “Measurement,” (129-156) **T**  
 ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today

## PART II: CHOOSING METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

- Tuesday, October 5      **Experiments**  
 ▶ “Experimental Research,” (185-210) **T**  
 → Literature Review & Table Due Today
- Thursday, October 7      ▶ Gerber, “Social Pressure & Voter Turnout.” *APSR* 102 (33-48) ○  
 ▶ Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *AJS* 108 (937-975) ○  
 → *Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class*  
 ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Tuesday, October 12      **No Class—Monday Classes Meet**
- Thursday, October 14      **Surveys and Censuses**  
 ▶ “Questionnaires and Structured Interviews,” (211-250) **T**  
 ▶ Census 2000 Basics, pages 1-8  
<http://www.census.gov/mso/www/c2000basics/00Basics.pdf>
- Tuesday, October 19      ▶ Gross, “How Religious are America’s College & University Professors?” [http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Gross\\_Simmons.pdf](http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Gross_Simmons.pdf)  
 ▶ Brittingham, “We the People of Arab Ancestry in the US,”  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/censr-21.pdf> ○  
 → *Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class*  
 ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Thursday, October 21      **Interviews**  
 ▶ “Qualitative Interviewing,” (251-290) **T**  
 ▶ Healey-Etten, “Interviewing Tips,” *Teaching Sociology* (162-4) ○

- Tuesday, October 26
- ▶ Edin, “What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?” *Social Problems* 47: (112-133) **O**
  - Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
  - ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Thursday, October 28
- Observation and Ethnography**
- ▶ “Observational Techniques,” (291-326) **T**
  - ▶ Survey assignment due today
- Tuesday, November 2
- ▶ Duneier, “A Statement on Method,” *Sidewalk* (333-358) **O**
  - ▶ Mears, “Not Just a Paper Doll,” *JCE* 34 (317-343) **O**
  - Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
  - ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Thursday, November 4
- Comparative-Historical Methods**
- ▶ “Using Available Data,” (327-356) **T**
  - ▶ Berg, “Unobtrusive Measures in Research,” *Qualitative Research Methods* (189-209) **O**
  - ▶ Interview assignment due in class today
- \*\*\*Withdrawal deadline
- Tuesday, November 9
- ▶ Shon and Roberts, “An Archival Exploration of Homicide,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 54 (43-60) **O**
  - Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
  - ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Wednesday, November 10
- Content Analysis & Visual Sociology**
- ▶ “Content Analysis,” (357-380) **T**
- RIC is **closed** on 11/11 for Veteran’s Day—that day’s class is rescheduled for 11/10*
- Tuesday, November 16
- ▶ Oware, “A ‘Man’s Woman’? Contradictory Messages in the Songs of Female Rappers, 1992-2000.” *J of Black Studies* 39:5 (786-802) **O**
  - Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
  - ▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today: it will ask you which method you are planning to use in your research proposal paper
  - ▶ Observation assignment due in class today
- Thursday, November 18
- Comparing Methods & Multi-Method Research**
- ▶ “Comparing Methods” and “Multiple Methods” (467-472) **T**
  - ▶ Read three case studies of interest from <http://www.orgnet.com/cases.html> **O**
  - ▶ Comparing methods chart due in class today

PART III: THE USES OF RESEARCH

- Tuesday, November 23      **Applied Social Research**  
▶ “Applied Social Research,” (381-410) **T**  
→ Bring your textbook to today’s class  
▶ Quiz due in Blackboard today
- Thursday, November 25      **No Class—Thanksgiving**
- Tuesday, November 30      **Writing About Research and Proposing Research**  
▶ “Writing the Research Report,” (473-476) **T**  
▶ “Check List for Preparing a Research Proposal,” (477-478) **T**  
▶ “The Research Proposal” Cargan, *Doing Social Research* (43-53) **O**
- Thursday, December 2      **Individual Meetings about Papers**
- Tuesday, December 7      **Research Proposals Due In Class Today**  
→ Five-minute informal presentations on proposals in class
- Thursday, December 9      **Course Conclusion and Exam Review**

**Final Exam Schedule 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/integrity>. 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/termpaperguide.php>.
- Turning in research reports that are fabricates 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 another student on an assignment, or seeking assistance with the content of your work from professionals, parents, or peers, without prior permission. (The exception to this policy is proofreading.)
- Copying off of another student or off of materials you have brought without permission during an exam. This includes text messaging and use of the internet during exams.
- 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. If you know in advance that you will be absent for a legitimate reason, please let me know via email so that you can be excused. If something unavoidable comes up, it is your responsibility to let me know as soon as possible afterwards. Regardless, 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, you should try to let me know in advance, and you should always 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 if you are not present.

All assignments are due in class at the start of class. While I understand that you may occasionally experience printer problems, these are not an excuse for late work. It is my preference that all work be turned in on paper, but in unavoidable situations you may email me your work. If you must email me your work, it must be sent at least 15 minutes prior to the start of class (you may not skip class to finish your work) in \*.rtf, \*.doc, \*.docx, \*.pdf, or \*.html format (try “Save As” to select one of these formats). I will write back to you letting you know that I received and could open your work. If I do not receive it or cannot open it, it does not count as having been submitted, so I encourage you to try your best to get me a paper copy. If unavoidable circumstances require you to seek an extension on your work, I am generally open to providing one. However, you will need to request the extension via email at least 24 hours prior to the due date unless the extension is due to a major emergency (health crisis, death in the family, etc.) – so plan ahead.

### *Course Technology*

Students are expected to check their RIC email addresses frequently, at a minimum twice a week before each class meeting. If you primarily use another email account, I would suggest you arrange for your RIC email to be forwarded, as I do use email to disseminate important information about the course. Students are also responsible for being able to access Blackboard site for this course, as course documents and information will be made available there. 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/>.

### *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/>