

Research Methods I
Rhode Island College, Fall 2013

SOC 302-01

Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-5:50 PM
Craig-Lee Hall Room 053



SOC 302-02

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:50 AM
Craig-Lee Hall Room 205

Prerequisite: Any 200-level sociology course

Instructor Information

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

marthur@ric.edu (preferred)

401. 456. 8681

Office: Craig Lee Hall room 451

Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays, or immediately after class 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 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

Sarantakos, Sotirios. 2013. *Social Research*, 4th edition. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillian. ISBN: 978-0-230-29532-2. List price: \$45.

An online workbook is available to help you study and review concepts. It contains online quizzes, study questions, and supplemental exercises, and I encourage you to use it frequently during the course: <http://www.palgrave.com/sociology/sarantakos4e/workbook/index.html>.

Edwards, Mark. 2012. *Writing in Sociology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4129-1424-6. List price: \$24.

Additional reading materials will be made available via Blackboard; students are encouraged to validate their RIC IDs at the library as soon as possible.

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 short posts approximately once per week during the semester in which you reflect on the research process and discuss assigned course readings. More details are available in Blackboard—**25 points.**
 - 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, your presentation, and an in-class midterm quiz—**20 points.**
 - c. *In-class group assignments* will occur 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:** 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 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:** During the final exam period, students will complete an open-book short-answer final exam requiring the application of research methods knowledge to particular situations. A portion of the exam will be take-home and a portion will be completed during the scheduled exam time block in class. **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. 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 less than 80 pages per week.

Course Schedule

All readings are due at the start of the class date for which they are assigned. In the schedule below, **O** indicates readings available online via Blackboard. Unless otherwise noted in the schedule below, all assignments must be submitted by 9:45 AM on the due date.

Tuesday, September 3 **Introduction to Research Methods**

Thursday, September 5 **No class meeting—Rosh Hashanah**

- ▶ Sarantakos, 3-13, 27-87
- ▶ Read entire syllabus and explore Blackboard
- ▶ Complete Blackboard survey

PART I: Developing and Conceptualizing Research Ideas

Tuesday, September 10 **Theory and Research**

- ▶ Sarantakos, 119-136
- ▶ “Statistical Fallacies, Paradoxes, and Threats to Validity,” pp. 35-50 from Klass, *Just Plain Data Analysis* **O**
- ▶ Theory blog post due

Thursday, September 12

Research Ethics

- ▶ Sarantakos, 13-25
 - ▶ Katchadorian, “Operation Delirium,” *New Yorker* 46-64 **O**
 - ▶ CITI human subjects training (<http://www.citiprogram.org>) (detailed instructions available on Blackboard) due 9:45 AM
- ***Note: Monday the 16th is the deadline for dropping this class without a W appearing on your transcript.

Tuesday, September 17

Choosing a Topic

- ▶ Sarantakos, 136-153, 161-165
- ▶ Edwards, 7-18

Thursday, September 19

Reading and Using Prior Research

- ▶ Edwards, 19-30
- ▶ Graff, “How to Write an Argument,” *Clueless in Academe* 275-77
- ▶ Mears, “Not Just a Paper Doll,” *JCE* 34 (317-343) **O**
- Bring *written answers* to “How to Read” questions to class!!!!
- ▶ Choosing a Topic blog post due

Tuesday, September 24

Sampling

- ▶ Sarantakos, 166-187

Thursday, September 26

Locating Prior Research

Today's class will meet in the classroom on the main floor of Adams Library

- ▶ Edwards, 31-40
 - ▶ RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide (<http://www.ric.edu/sociology/termpaperguide.php>) ○
 - ▶ Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard ○
- BRING A ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY OF YOUR TOPIC TO CLASS TODAY.
- ▶ Lit review prep blog post due by 9 am on Monday, September 30

Tuesday, October 1

No Class—mandatory small-group meetings

- ▶ Edwards, 47-54, 115-120 (*Be sure to read **before** your meeting with me*)
- ▶ Bring articles & literature review chart with you to your meeting!

Thursday, October 3

Measurement and Study Design

- ▶ Sarantakos, 87-115, 153-161, 203-206
- ▶ Study design, measurement, & sampling blog post due Friday, 9 am
- ▶ Literature review chart due Friday, 9 am

PART II: CHOOSING METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Tuesday, October 8

Surveys & Censuses I

- ▶ Sarantakos, 249-276
- ▶ Census 2010, <http://www.census.gov/2010census/about/> (explore the links, don't just read the main page) ○

Thursday, October 10

Surveys & Censuses II

- ▶ Spalter-Roth *et al.*, "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?" ASA http://www.asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach_Beyond5_Social_Capital.pdf ○
 - ▶ Werner, "The Older Population: 2010." <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf> ○
- Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
- ▶ Surveys Blog Post due
 - ▶ **Bring a printed copy of your literature review draft to class.**
- Literature Review due 10 am on Monday, October 14.

Tuesday, October 15

Interviews I

- ▶ Sarantakos, 206-211, 277-302
- ▶ Healey-Etten, "Interviewing Tips," *Teaching Sociology* (162-4) ○

Thursday, October 17

Interviews II

- ▶ Edin, "What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" *Social Problems* 47 (112-133) ○
- Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
- ▶ Interviews Blog Post due

- Tuesday, October 22 **Observation and Ethnography I**
▶ Sarantakos, 212-248
▶ Survey assignment due today
- Thursday, October 24 **Observation and Ethnography II**
▶ Moskos, “The Departed,” *Cop in the Hood* pp. 1-18 ○
▶ Damaske, “Brown Suits Need Not Apply,” *Sociological Forum* 24:2, (402-24) ○
→ Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
▶ Ethnography/Doing a Survey Blog Post due
***Note: there will be an in-class midterm quiz today.
- Tuesday, October 29 **Comparative-Historical Methods I**
▶ Sarantakos, 303-314
Arthur, “The Neglected Virtues of Comparative-Historical
▶ Methods,” Zake & Decesare, *New Directions in Sociology* 172-92 ○
▶ Interview assignment due today
- Thursday, October 31 **Comparative-Historical Methods II**
▶ Shon and Roberts, “An Archival Exploration of Homicide,”
International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 54
(43-60) ○
→ Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
▶ Comparative-Historical/Doing an Interview Blog Post Due
***Note: Friday, November 1st is the withdrawal deadline.
- Tuesday, November 5 **Content Analysis and Visual Sociology I**
▶ Sarantakos, 313-324
▶ Observation assignment due today
- Thursday, November 7 **Content Analysis and Visual Sociology II**
▶ Oware, “A ‘Man’s Woman’? Contradictory Messages in the Songs
of Female Rappers, 1992-2000.” *J of Black Studies* 39:5 (786-802) ○
→ Use the reading handout to study this article and bring your work to class
▶ Content Analysis/Doing Observation Blog Post due
- Tuesday, November 12 **No class—Monday classes meet**
▶ Literature Review Revisions blog post due by noon
- Thursday, November 14 **Experiments I**
▶ Sarantakos, 192-203

- Tuesday, November 19 **Experiments II**
- ▶ 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 this article and bring your work to class
 - ▶ Experiments Blog Post due
- PART III: THE USES OF RESEARCH
- Thursday, November 21 **Applied Research**
- ▶ Sarantakos, 344-361
 - ▶ Zevallos, “A Brief Introduction on Applied Sociology” ○
- Tuesday, November 26 **Comparing Methods and Multi-Method Research**
- ▶ Creswell, “The Selection of a Research Approach,” from *Research Design*, pp. 3-23 ○
 - ▶ Carolan, “The Social Network Perspective and Educational Research,” from *Social Network Analysis and Education*, pp. 3-17 ○
 - ▶ Comparing methods chart due in class today
 - ▶ Applied Research/Choosing Methods Blog Post due 9 am Nov. 27
- Thursday, November 28 **No class—Thanksgiving**
- Tuesday, December 3 **Writing About and Proposing Research**
- ▶ Sarantakos, 441-466
 - ▶ Edwards, 43-46, 55-59, 129-141
 - ▶ Cargan, “The Research Proposal,” *Doing Social Research* (43-53) ○
- Thursday, December 5 **No class—Small-group paper meetings**
- ▶ Read sample proposal papers
 - ▶ Final blog post due by 9 am on December 6
- Tuesday, December 10 **Paper Presentations**
- ▶ Remember to bring your paper outline to class
- Thursday, December 12 **Course Conclusion and Exam Review**
- ▶ Research proposals due by 10 am on Friday, December 13

Final Exam Scheduling TBA; Week of December 16th

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 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. (You are still strongly encouraged to complete ALL blog posts, 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/>.

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/>

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- ☑ To sensitize students to national differences in criminal justice systems.
- ☑ To introduce students to comparative perspectives on justice systems.
- ☑ To orient students toward a systematic perspective of the criminal justice system.
- ☑ To develop a citizenry educated in the problems of crime and in the administration of justice.
- ☑ To develop understanding of the causes of crime and societal responses to it.
- ☑ To advance knowledge about the design, evolution, operation, and maintenance of justice system.
- ☑ To provide an up-to-date understanding of law, human behavior, and social institutions.
- ☑ An ability to apply sociological perspectives to interpersonal and intergroup relations
- ☑ Develop an awareness of the multiple factors leading to similarities and differences across human populations, along with substantive knowledge of relevant data.
- ☑ Students will understand the legal and ethical framework of management.

¹ See <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/degreeList.php> and <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/programJSTD.php>.