

Social Research Methods
Sociology 302-01
Rhode Island College, Fall 2020

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

Instructor Information

Dr. Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

marthur@ric.edu (preferred)

Virtual Drop-In Hours: I am usually available for drop-ins Tuesdays 11 AM-12 PM and Thursdays 4:30 PM-5:30 PM at <http://ri-college.zoom.us/my/mmlarthur>, though you will have to wait if I am meeting with someone else, and I can stay after our Tuesday live class sessions end if you need to speak to me individually. I'm also available for scheduled meetings via Zoom at other times.

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

This course is a virtual classroom course. You will need to have reliable Internet access on a computer or tablet. You will also need to check your email regularly and be available during scheduled meeting times. Live Zoom meetings will take place on Tuesdays beginning at 4 pm, so please plan to be ready on your device with Internet access on Tuesdays at 4 pm, and don't plan to join class while driving or in other circumstances where you will not be able to fully engage. We will not generally meet as a class on Thursdays, but try to keep the time available for small-group meetings, extra-help sessions, or make-up classes.

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.

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 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.**

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 four 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. These will be due on Tuesdays at noon. More details are available in Blackboard. **Up to 15 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. *Zoom sessions* will occur every week; students will earn points for participating in Zoom sessions, including asking and answering questions, responding to polls, and completing group assignments. Students who do not attend Zoom sessions will be unable to make up the missed participation opportunities, but will be given the option of completing group assignments on their own. **Up to 20 points.**
- d. *Video quizzes* involving questions embedded within assigned course videos. **Up to 15 points.**

READING & VIEWING: You are expected to complete *all* assigned course readings and watch *all* assigned course videos prior to the date for which they are assigned.

Note: federal guidelines (<http://ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>) expect students to complete three hours of work (including both in-class and out-of-class time) for every credit hour earned.

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.

Part I: Research Development and Design

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
September 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Course Syllabus <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Introduction” & “Linking Methods with Theory”	<input type="checkbox"/> September 1 Zoom session, intro to social research methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to social research methods video <input type="checkbox"/> Theory and research video/quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Key terms video/quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Causation video/quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Getting to Know You Survey (due Thursday by 6 pm) <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure you can access Blackboard & course texts
September 8 <i>Note: 9/14 is the drop deadline</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 1-30, 81-85 <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Beginning a Research Project” & “Reading & Understanding Social Research” <input type="checkbox"/> Jack, “(No) Harm in Asking,” <i>Sociology of Education</i> 1-19 <input type="checkbox"/> “How to Read” handout <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard	<input type="checkbox"/> September 8 Zoom session, choosing a topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Using sources video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Introductory blog post (due Tuesday by noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Literature review prep/article assignment, including proposing topic ideas (due Thursday by 6 pm, no extensions) <input type="checkbox"/> CITI human subjects training (due Monday September 14 by 10 am, accepted late)
September 15	<input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Research Ethics” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 150-52, 160-62 <input type="checkbox"/> Katchadorian, “Operation Delirium,” <i>New Yorker</i> 46-64 <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 31-80	<input type="checkbox"/> September 15 Zoom session, research ethics <input type="checkbox"/> Zoom September 17 for library help	<input type="checkbox"/> Objectivity video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Library tutorial (due <u>Wednesday</u> by 6 pm— note unusual deadline)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ethics blog post (due Tuesday by noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Send me an email as described in Blackboard <input type="checkbox"/> Select your topic (due Monday September 21 by 10 am) <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule your small-group meeting for next week (instructions will be emailed)

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
September 22	<input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Research Design,” “Defining & Measuring Concepts,” and “Sampling” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 85-133 <input type="checkbox"/> Quick Reference Guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Small-group Zoom meeting, as scheduled	<input type="checkbox"/> Measurement video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Variables video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Study Design video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Sampling video with quiz, parts I and II <input type="checkbox"/> Research quality video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> No blog post this week! <input type="checkbox"/> Find articles for your literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Begin your literature review chart <input type="checkbox"/> Plagiarism tutorial (due Thursday by 6 pm, accepted late)
September 29	<input type="checkbox"/> Why are Citations Important in Research Writing?, <i>Medium</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Graff, “How to Write an Argument,” <i>Clueless in Academe</i> 275-77 <input type="checkbox"/> RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide <input type="checkbox"/> Articles for your literature review	<input type="checkbox"/> September 29 Zoom, measurement, sampling, and study design	<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a survey research project video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Blog Post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Review Chart (due Thursday at 6 pm, accepted late) <input type="checkbox"/> Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Quiz (due Monday 10/5 by 10 am, no extensions)
October 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Survey Research” and “Analyzing Others’ Data” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 174-82 <input type="checkbox"/> Spalter-Roth <i>et al.</i> , “Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?” ASA	<input type="checkbox"/> October 6 Zoom, surveys	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy implications video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Using existing data video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Review Draft (due Monday 10/12 by 10 am—late assignments may not be able to participate in peer review)

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
October 13	<input type="checkbox"/> Explore the 2020 Census website <input type="checkbox"/> Schmidt, “Postsecondary Enrollment Before, During, and Since the Great Recession,” Census Bureau <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 116-23, 211-14 <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Interviews” and “Focus Groups”	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature review consultations, no required class Zoom	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Interview questions video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> How interviews work video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing data blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Literature review peer review (due Thursday at 6 pm) <input type="checkbox"/> Survey assignment (due Thursday at 6 pm, no extensions) <input type="checkbox"/> Final literature review due Monday 10/19 at 10 am, accepted late
October 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Healey-Etten, “Interviewing Tips,” <i>Teaching Sociology</i> (162-4) <input type="checkbox"/> Edin, “What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?” <i>Social Problems</i> 47 (112-133) <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Field Research” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 123-25, 157-60	<input type="checkbox"/> October 20 Zoom, interviews	<input type="checkbox"/> Observational methods video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Doing observational research video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Either “Gang Leader for a Day” or “Sexual Citizens” video	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Review class survey results <input type="checkbox"/> Midterm quiz (due Monday, October 26 by 10 am; late quizzes may seek a make-up opportunity)
October 27	<input type="checkbox"/> Desmond, “Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor,” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 117:5 (1295-1335) <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 214-35 <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Unobtrusive Research”	<input type="checkbox"/> October 27 Zoom, observation & ethnography	<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary methods video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Content analysis video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Observation & ethnography blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Visual sociology assignment (due Thursday at 6 pm, accepted late) <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews assignment (due Monday, November 2 by 10 am, accepted late)
November 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Romney & Johnson, “The Ball Game is for the Boys,” <i>Communication & Sport</i> , 1-19 <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Experiments” <input type="checkbox"/> McMillen, “Rat Park” Comic	No Zoom this week—Election Day!	<input type="checkbox"/> Experiments video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Experimental design video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of experiments video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Vote, if you are eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary methods blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Observation assignment (due Monday, November 9 by 10 am)

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
November 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Pager, Bonikowski, and Wester, “Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market,” <i>American Sociological Review</i> 74:5 (777-99) <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Research Methods in the Real World” <input type="checkbox"/> Zevallos, “Sociology for What, Who, Where and How? Situating Applied Sociology in Action,” <i>The Other Sociologist</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> November 10 Zoom, experiments	<input type="checkbox"/> Applied research video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation research video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Action research video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Experiments blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary methods assignment (due Monday, November 16 by 10 am, accepted late)
November 17	<input type="checkbox"/> Park & Wang, 133-49	<input type="checkbox"/> November 17 Zoom, applied research	<input type="checkbox"/> Multimethod research video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Comparing methods video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Register for Spring classes, including Soc 404 <input type="checkbox"/> Complete revisions of literature review (no later than Monday, November 23) <input type="checkbox"/> Applied research blog post (due Tuesday at noon)
November 24	<input type="checkbox"/> Creswell, “The Selection of a Research Approach,” from <i>Research Design</i> , pp. 3-23	<input type="checkbox"/> November 24 Zoom, comparing methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing the research proposal video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature review revisions blog post (due Tuesday at noon)
December 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Frankham, “Mental Illness Affects Police Shootings,” <i>Contexts</i> Spring 2019 70-72 <input type="checkbox"/> Cargan, “The Research Proposal,” <i>Doing Social Research</i> (43-53) <input type="checkbox"/> Sample research proposal papers	<input type="checkbox"/> December 1 Zoom, research proposals	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing an abstract video	<input type="checkbox"/> Proposal prep & comparing methods blog post (due Tuesday at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> Write an abstract of the Frankham article (due Thursday, December 3 by 6 pm, no extensions) <input type="checkbox"/> Submit paper outline (due Monday, December 7 by 10 am—late assignments may not be able to participate in peer review)

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
December 8	No reading assigned	<input type="checkbox"/> December 8 Zoom, course conclusion <input type="checkbox"/> December 10 optional paper consultations	<input type="checkbox"/> Course conclusion video	<input type="checkbox"/> Final blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Paper outline peer review (due Thursday, December 10 by 6 pm)
December 15	No reading assigned	Paper consultations & review sessions available by appointment	No videos assigned	<input type="checkbox"/> Final paper due (due Tuesday, December 22 at noon) <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

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 live Zoom sessions. These will not be recorded to protect other students' privacy. We will often complete graded activities during the Zoom sessions, but you will have the opportunity to make these up individually. If you consistently miss sessions, however, you may find it difficult to excel in this course.

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). If you submit your blog post late, you will only be eligible for credit for any questions we did not discuss in class.

Course Technology

Students are expected to check their RIC email addresses and Blackboard frequently. Given that this course will take place online, you should expect to check your email and Blackboard multiple times per week. 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. You will also need to have access to the Internet and to a device that can manage Blackboard, office applications, and Zoom in order to be successful this semester.

There is a policy outlining expectations for student behavior and engagement in Zoom sessions posted in Blackboard. Be sure to read and abide by this policy.

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

- 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: <http://www.ric.edu/writingcenter/>
- Seek support to develop your academic & study skills at **OASIS**: <http://www.ric.edu/oasis/>
- Visit the **Counseling Center** to obtain support with anxiety, depression, or other distress you may be experiencing. Services are free & confidential: <http://www.ric.edu/counselingctr/>
- It's never too early (or too late) to work on your career plans, improve your resume, practice interviews, or think about graduate school. Visit the **Career Development Center**: <http://www.ric.edu/careerdevelopment/>
- **Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or other basic needs is urged to contact the Learning for Life (<http://www.ric.edu/learningforlife>) and/or the Dean of Students' Office (<http://www.ric.edu/studentlife/Pages/need-assistance.aspx>). If you are comfortable doing so, please let me know what is going on in case there are other ways I can provide access to resources.**

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet learning outcomes of the Sociology and Justice Studies programs (see <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/Pages/Program-Goals.aspx> 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 <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/Pages/Writing-in-the-Disciplines.aspx>.