

Sociology 350CTWI
Methods of Social Research
Fall 2017

Section 010: MW 3:00 – 4:20 pm OM 28

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Office Hours: M/W 12-1:30pm; T/R 12-1pm; or by appointment

Office Hours and Communications

You may make an appointment with me during or outside of posted office hours to discuss matters related to class or your college experience. You are also welcome to drop by and just chat during posted office hours. Other than office hours, email is the best way to contact me – please include your class number and section in the subject line (e.g., SOC 350-010: question about assignment)! I will generally respond within 24 hours. Class announcements may be made periodically via KU email and/or D2L, so be sure to check those accounts daily.

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is designed to introduce you to the purpose and techniques (“methods”) of social research. Sociologists and other social scientists engage in research in order to answer questions about individuals, groups, institutions, and societies. This course will examine the logics of social research (why do research?) and the process of research design (how is social research done?). The process of research design involves many decisions, which we will explore in this class. These decisions are exciting and challenging because, while there is no one right way (though there are wrong ways), the decisions made are very consequential and may affect what one does (and does not) find. Which technique is used is up to the researcher, but some questions lend themselves to a particular research method or mode of investigation. After completing this course you should have a basic understanding of social research methods and also have practiced some basic research skills. The course is aimed at helping you think critically, whether while pursuing a career in the social sciences or when encountering social research in everyday life (e.g., findings reported in the news). In greater detail, after taking this course you should be able to provide answers to the following questions:

- (1) What is social science research? Why do social science research?
- (2) What are the limitations of science? What questions can (and can't) be answered?
- (3) How does social science research connect theory and empirical data? What are deductive and inductive approaches to theory construction?
- (4) What are the ethical issues in social research? How do social scientists protect participants in their research?
- (5) How do social scientists measure and observe the social world? How do they guard against errors in measurement and observation? Can people be reduced to numbers?
- (6) What is “generalizability” and why does it pose a problem for social scientists? How do social scientists determine where their findings apply?
- (7) What does “causation” mean in social science? How do social scientists identify causal relations (what causes what)?
- (8) What are the steps in designing a social research project? How do social scientists deal with the complexity of social reality through research design?

Course Materials

The readings for this course are generally a recommended supplement to the material covered in class. Reading will benefit you the most if it is completed at the time listed (see Course Schedule below). The recommended textbook for the course is:

Schutt, Russell K. 2015. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 8th Edition. Pine Forge Press.

Copies should be available for purchase or rent through the campus bookstore and online booksellers. Other recent editions (7th, perhaps 6th) should also suffice as a budget option.

Additional reading materials may also be handed out in class or posted under “Content” on the D2L site. Video materials may also be posted under “Content” on the D2L site. I will provide a deadline if these materials are required for the course.

Course Requirements

Class Introduction & Upload Picture	10pts
Attendance	20pts
Methods Assignments	80pts
Writing Assignments (3 at 10pts each)	30pts
Research Proposal Final Paper	<u>60pts</u>
	200pts

A	more than 179pts
B	159-178pts
C	139-158pts
D	119-138pts
F	less than 119pts

Class Introduction & Upload Picture

Go to the “Discussion” tab on D2L then post a short introduction to yourself under “Class Introductions.” Items I’d like you to include are detailed in the topic description. This will help me to get to know you as students and also for students to get acquainted with one another.

Upload a classroom-appropriate portrait of yourself on D2L. You may do so through the D2L profile system or under the “Picture” folder of “Assignments” tab. This will help me to connect names with faces – so make sure I can see your face clearly in the picture. If you don’t have a(n appropriate) picture to post or need help uploading your picture, please come to office hours.

Attendance

Due to the hands-on nature of this course, I will regularly assess attendance for this class. Attendance for 20 or more days will receive full credit. Attendance for fewer than 20 days will result in partial or no credit for attendance, at my discretion.

Methods Assignments

Part of the class will be devoted to “practicing” aspects of some of the social science concepts and methods we will study (such as experiments, questionnaires, interviews, participant observation, and content analysis). Students will write up an analysis of methodological

problems presented in each assignment. Assignments will be a combination of in-class and outside of class time. Details of each assignment will be shared in class and/or posted under the “Content” tab of the D2L site.

Writing Assignments and Research Proposal Final Paper

Over the course of the semester, each student will create a research proposal for a sociological research project. That is, you will go through the process of designing your own research project and write it up in a proposal (you will not conduct the actual research for this course but I do encourage you to consider developing your project as a future independent study, project for another course, or senior project). This will include formulating a basic research question, doing a literature review of previous research, and choosing a method of data collection. Each of the three writing assignments will be directed at completing a first draft of a portion of the final proposal. Students should plan for a total of 15-20 pages of original written work in the final paper. Further details are contained in the Appendix in the latter half of the syllabus.

Option: Conduct a research project in lieu of a proposal. If you are interested in this option you need to meet with me during office hours before Writing Assignment #1 is due.

NOTE: If at any point during the course you find that you are not doing as well as you hoped or expected, you are encouraged to contact me and meet with me immediately; do not wait until the end of the semester.

Course Policies

Absences and Late Work

It is your responsibility to attend and participate in class as well as to ensure course requirements are submitted properly and on time. Do verify any submissions to the D2L system have in fact uploaded properly. Do not wait until the last minute. That said, I understand that during the semester some students may face obstacles to completing course requirements due to such things as personal illness, computer or internet problems, or family/work responsibilities.

If you miss a class session (excused or not), do not ask me for notes or a personal tutorial regarding information covered in class. You should make arrangements with one or more classmates in regard to sharing notes or other information missed because of absences. This makes it a good idea to exchange contact information with fellow students early in the course.

Students may elect to take up to a two-day grace period on any assignment, no questions asked. If at the end of this grace period you are still having trouble completing the assignment, you are required to meet with me to go over your ideas for the assignment and set a schedule for completing the assignment. Students that follow these guidelines will receive full credit. Otherwise, assignments may be accepted for partial credit on a case-by-case basis. **I do not accept unsolicited emailed assignments – late assignments should be submitted to the “Late Box” under “Assignments” on D2L.**

Academic Honesty

You are responsible for familiarity with the Kutztown University Academic Honesty Policy: <http://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/student-conduct/policies-and-procedures/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-faq.htm>

At a minimum, academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade.

Accommodations

If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course (for example, due to disability, physical injury, PTSD, or TBI), please contact the Disability Services Office (215 Stratton) and/or contact me privately so that I can assist you and preserve confidentiality. Please plan to meet with me to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements may affect your ability to fully participate. More information is available at: <http://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/disability-services.htm>

Classroom Behavior

It is my policy to maintain a respectful, safe classroom and it is everyone's responsibility to help maintain such an atmosphere. A respectful, safe classroom ensures a positive learning environment in which everyone can explore class ideas fully. Respectful good practices include, but are not limited to, such things as coming to class on time, turning off cell phone ringers, and using people's preferred names and/or pronouns. (It is also good to practice these kinds of habits since they will be expected behaviors by most professional employers and graduate school supervisors.) Distracting or rude behavior may result in you being asked to leave the classroom. Consistently disruptive behavior will result in you being dropped from the course.

We all have different points of view, different personal values, different life experiences, and different personal preferences that we bring with us to the classroom. Course material may challenge attitudes and assumptions, exposing you to ideas that will require you to think critically, and perhaps differently. You may encounter ideas of which you have never heard or that make you feel uncomfortable. Each student has the right to respectfully disagree with an idea, concept, or opinion that is written or expressed by myself or other learners. While disagreement is expected, hostility is not. A climate of tolerance and basic human respect is essential. Harassment, intimidation, or derogatory comments toward any individual or group will not be tolerated and will result in you being dropped from the course.

Extra Credit

Please share any on-campus or off-campus events that relate to sociology (that covers a lot: topics touching on institutions such as the family, education, politics, and the economy, or social categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, for example, are likely to be relevant to sociology) and I will be happy to announce such activities in class. I rely on students' knowledge of such activities as one source for extra credit opportunities. Any extra credit opportunities will be announced as such in class and the opportunity to earn extra credit will be available to all students. Do not request individual extra credit for this class.

Extreme Weather

If severe weather becomes an issue, you should check the Kutztown University website or hotline (610-683-4649) for information concerning the campus-wide cancellation of classes. I may also post a specific announcement on D2L.

Questions

If you have questions about this course, please check this syllabus or D2L for answers. If you ask me a question that is answered in the syllabus or on D2L, I will refer you to those sources.

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: I reserve the right to modify the schedule as deemed appropriate during the semester. Some things are bound to change due to class needs, how quickly students grasp material, and class dynamics. Any changes will be announced in the course website “News” section.

Unit I: Philosophy of Science

To begin the semester we will explore the different ways human beings form ideas about the world around them, and in particular the basis for a scientific viewpoint of the social world and how scientific knowledge is developed. We will also examine some of the creative tensions and diverse “paradigms” (assumptions or frameworks) that exist within a social scientific approach to knowledge. Additionally, we will cover some of the constraints and pitfalls that social scientists must navigate in order to conduct research that is both ethical and credible.

WEEK 1 (Aug 28 & 30) – Course Introduction

Introductory Reading for Monday

- D2L – Syllabus, “Introduction from your professor”
- D2L – Read Writing Assignment 1 Info

D2L Assignment for Monday

- Post a picture of yourself on D2L
- Post an introduction to yourself under the “Discussion” tab

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 1, “Science, Society, and Social Research” (p.1-26)
- Schutt, Chapter 2, “The Process and Problems of Social Research” (p.27-66)

WEEK 2 (Sept 6) – Ethics, Philosophical Issues, and Social Research

M Sept 4 NO CLASSES – LABOR DAY

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 3, “Research Ethics and Philosophies” (p.67-99)

W Sept 6 LAST DAY TO POST INTRODUCTIONS (by 11PM D2L Submission)

F Sept 8 LAST DAY TO TURN IN WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 (by 11PM D2L Submission)

Unit II: Designing a Research Project

From an introductory footing in scientific thought and standards, we will move on to examine the “nuts and bolts” of designing a social science research project. We will start with a general overview of the process, and then look at some of the specific issues faced by social scientists when moving from abstract concepts to concrete measurements, and from whole populations to study samples. We will focus on how studies can be designed so that findings are maximally reliable (able to be repeated) and valid (accurately show what they are claimed to show), while also probing the limitations researchers face in designing studies.

WEEK 3 (Sept 11 & 13) – Conceptualizing and Measuring

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 4, “Conceptualization and Measurement” (p.100-147)

WEEK 4 (Sept 18 & 20) – Reliability and Validity of Measures

WEEK 5 (Sept 25 & 27) – Probability Sampling and Understanding Calculated Sampling Error

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 5, “Sampling” (p.148-189)

WEEK 6 (Oct 2 & 4) – Non-Probability Sampling

Unit III: Methods of Data Collection

Extending from this basic general knowledge of social science research, we will take a more in-depth and hands-on look at each of four major social science methods for collecting data: experiments, surveys, qualitative interviews and participant observation, and unobtrusive research. We will reconsider issues of theoretical approach, causation, limitations, ethical issues, bias, design decisions, measurement, observation, and generalizability within the context of each method.

WEEK 7 (Oct 10 & 11) – Research Questions and Research Design

M Oct 9 NO CLASSES – FALL BREAK

T Oct 10 MONDAY SCHEDULE

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 6, “Research Design and Causation” (p.190-220)

F Oct 13 WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE @ 11PM (D2L submission)

HALFWAY POINT OF THE SEMESTER

WEEK 8 (Oct 16 & 18) – Experimental Social Research

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 7, “Experiments” (p.221-254)

WEEK 9 (Oct 23 & 25) – Survey and Questionnaire Research

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 8, “Survey Research” (p.255-312)

WEEK 10 (Oct 30 & Nov 1) – Survey and Questionnaire Research

WEEK 11 (Nov 6 & 8) – Qualitative Research: Observation & Participation

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 9, “Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening” (p.313-356)

WEEK 12 (Nov 13 & 15) – Qualitative Research: Interviewing & Focus Groups

F Nov 17 WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE @ 11PM (D2L submission)

WEEK 13 (Nov 20) – Qualitative Research Wrap-Up

W Nov 22 NO CLASSES – THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 14 (Nov 27 & 29) – Content Analysis

M Nov 27 ROUGH DRAFT DUE @ 11PM (D2L Submission)

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 13, “Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis” (p.453-485)

WEEK 15 (Dec 4 & 6) – Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis/Review/Catch Up

Reading

- Schutt, Chapter 10, “Qualitative Data Analysis” (p.357-393)
- Schutt, Chapter 14, “Quantitative Data Analysis” (p.486-539)

F Dec 8 FINAL PAPER DUE (hard copy)

Appendix

Writing Assignments and Final Paper – Steps to a Successful Research Proposal

For this course, a major portion of your assignments will help you practice creating a research proposal for a sociological research project – although you could also use the same steps to plan other forms of scientific research! A research proposal is a document used to organize and plan a project intended to better understand some aspect of the world around us through some form of observation or data collection – to create new knowledge or confirm existing knowledge. In sociology, specifically we are interested in better understanding the social world, such as how individuals interact in groups (e.g., meetings, business or non-profit organizations, or friend and family networks), and how social categories (e.g., class, race, gender, or sexuality) and social institutions (e.g., family, economy, education, government, or religion) shape our thoughts and behaviors. There are two main purposes for these assignments:

- 1) Some of you will go on to have research-focused careers, and many of you will have careers that include at least occasional information gathering projects. Some of you may also be interested in gathering information as part of volunteering, or in support of a hobby, or as part of personal curiosity and interests. This set of assignments will give you some practice developing research-planning skills (and project planning skills more generally).
- 2) Almost everyone in the modern world is under a constant barrage of information, including information that makes claims about how the world works. Having a better understanding of how scientific research is planned and conducted will help develop awareness and insight into when a claim is being made, what kind of claim, and how to judge whether the claim is well supported (such as what questions to ask and where to go to look for more information).

A research proposal is made up of several components, including a statement of the research question, a review of previous studies regarding the topic (aka “literature review” or “lit review”), and a plan for data collection (aka “research protocol”). You will be expected to turn in writing assignments throughout the semester directed towards addressing each of these components in turn: a statement of the research question and rationale (Writing Assignment #1), a lit review (Writing Assignment #2), and a research protocol (Writing Assignment #3). The Rough Draft (and, eventually, Final Paper) will integrate these. More detailed descriptions of expectations for each assignment are provided in subsequent pages.

General Formatting Guidelines for Writing Assignments and Papers:

- **DOC, DOCX, or RTF** format (Works, OpenOffice, Pages, and other word document programs should be able to “Save As” one or all of these formats).
- Do NOT include a cover sheet.
- Margins should be one-inch to one-and-a-quarter inch. (MS Word’s default is 1.25”)
- Double space and use a 10-12 point readable font (Times New Roman is standard).

FINAL NOTE: The time constraints of this course do not generally allow for us to carry out your actual research plans, although I encourage you to consider doing so in a future semester – especially (but not only) if you are considering pursuing a graduate degree! If you are interested in doing research, please contact me outside of class (office hours, email).

Due: No later than Friday, September 8th @ 11PM (D2L Submission)

For Writing Assignment 1 your goals are to state your research question and explain why answering this question is important. Your research question will form the basis for the rest of your research proposal (aka Final Paper) in this class. The main goal of a research question is to orient and focus the work you do in planning a research project. Therefore, while your research question can (and probably will) evolve over the course of the semester, I encourage you not to stray too far from the original question.

The first part of the assignment is to simply state your research question. At first glance, stating a research question may seem like a simple task. However, you need to struggle with and think ahead about what type of project your research question will entail. Attempt to write a research question that is not so broad that a project designed to understand it would take more than a lifetime to complete. At the same time you must guard against writing a research question that is so specific that finding information related to your project will be difficult, or so simple that you can answer it simply by looking up existing statistical information. Writing a research question that falls between these extremes is difficult and takes practice. This assignment is intended to help you practice this skill. The more thought you put into your question now, the easier your project will be down the road.

The second part of the assignment is to explain why finding an answer to your research question is important. While we often want to research a question for personal reasons, the broader public rarely cares about those types of reasons for doing research. You should talk about both personal and more general reasons for interest in the question in this assignment, but keep in mind that for the Final Paper you will need to focus on non-personal reasons as research proposals typically focus on the objective, general benefits of research and trying to persuade others of the importance of your research. Subjective reasons and personal benefits are rarely persuasive. So, think about why or how people in general would benefit from knowing the answer to your research question (which may or may not be related to reasons for your own curiosity) and focus on those reasons in your explanation.

Examples of general inspirations for research questions:

- *A perceived local, regional, national, or even global social problem* (eg, Is this perceived problem actually a problem? How informed are people about this problem? How can people be effectively educated about this problem? Who is affected by this problem? What exactly are the nitty-gritty details of this problem? Where is this problem most commonly encountered? What do people believe are the best solution(s) to this problem? What intervention(s) actually effectively prevent or alleviate this problem?)
- *A public policy or set of public policy options* (eg, How informed are people about this public policy? How can people be effectively educated about this public policy? Who is affected by this public policy? How would different policy options affect people differently? Which public policy option(s) do people prefer? Why do people prefer particular public policy options? What social problems do particular public policies alleviate? What social problems do particular public policies create?)

- *A little known or relatively new social group or social phenomenon* (eg, How much do people know about this group/phenomenon? What are people's attitudes about this group/phenomenon? Who is likely to identify with this group and/or participate in this phenomenon? What do people who belong to this group/participate in this phenomenon say about their experiences? Where and/or how does this group/phenomenon originate? Where is it most likely to be found?)
- *A local organization, such as a non-profit group, agency, business, or student club, that might benefit from some type of sociological data or analysis* (eg, What are people's attitudes about this organization? What are the experiences of the people who work for/with this organization? Who partakes in this organization's services/ products/ activities? Who is likely to benefit from this organization's services/ products/ activities but isn't aware of them (and why)? When are this organization's services or activities most needed and/or utilized? How could this organization increase the effectiveness of its services or activities? How could this organization broaden the appeal of its services or activities?)

Formatting:

Writing Assignment 1 should be about 500 words in length. More or fewer words are ok so long as you meet the expectations of the assignment. Refer to the General Formatting Guidelines on the first page of the Appendix. If you include references, do not include a separate reference sheet but simply list your references at the end of your paper.

What I'm looking for:

I want to see that you have a workable idea that you've thought about and are interested in. I'll try to give any suggestions that come to mind concerning any part of this assignment. I encourage you to ask me questions about the assignment, meet with me during office hours to discuss your ideas, and talk to your fellow students about your ideas. They are probably thinking about the same types of problems as you.

A: Assignment states a clearly worded question, explains personal interest in the question, and thoroughly explains what other groups and institutions would be interested in or benefit from an answer to the question.

B: Assignment states a somewhat clearly worded question, explains personal interest in the question, and explains what other groups and institutions would be interested in or benefit from an answer to the question.

C: Assignment states a somewhat clearly worded question, explains personal interest in the question, and gives some explanation of what other groups and institutions would be interested in or benefit from an answer to the question.

D: Assignment states a question and gives some explanation of interest in the question.

F: Assignment does not state a question and/or gives no explanation of interest in the question.

NOTE: All research questions are subject to approval by the instructor.

Due: No later than Friday, October 13th @ 11PM (D2L submission)

For Writing Assignment 2 your goal is to present a formal review of the literature concerning your research question. The purpose of a literature review is to orient your project in terms of the existing literature. This means you will need to synthesize the information you read in your sources, so you can apply it to your particular research question. You should *not* just summarize the information you read. While based on what you read, the literature review is mostly about your project. You'll be using what you've read to strengthen or support your ideas or to show how your ideas differ from those that came before you.

You need to include at least six journal articles, or three books, or some combination of these where a book counts as two journal articles. ("Book" here means most or all of the text – an individual chapter such as from an edited volume is the equivalent of a journal article.) Journal articles here refer to scholarly or scientifically reliable journals, not popular, journalistic, or trade publications. If you are unsure of the difference, a basic guide is available under "Content" on the D2L site.

Citations/References:

KU Sociology Program Writing Expectations – www.kutztown.edu/academics/colleges-and-departments/liberal-arts-and-sciences/departments/anthropology-and-sociology/sociology-program/writing-expectations.htm

ASA style in more depth – [http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-](http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/299/52814/ASA-4thEd-10.25.10.pdf)

[1.amazonaws.com/docs/299/52814/ASA-4thEd-10.25.10.pdf](http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/299/52814/ASA-4thEd-10.25.10.pdf) (APA also acceptable)

You need to cite your sources within the body of your paper and have "Works Cited" or "References" list at the end.

Formatting:

Refer to the General Formatting Guidelines on the first page of the Appendix. This paper should be about seven 1750 words in length. More or fewer words are ok so long as you meet the expectations of the assignment. However, if you go way over 1750 words, you are probably including information not relevant for your current paper and/or overly reliant on summarizing. If you are well under 1750 words, you have probably not spent enough time explaining how the previous research connects with your idea. Generally literature reviews contain sub-headings (by topics, theories, etc) that can help you organize your thoughts and help your reader follow along. I strongly encourage you to use them given the length of the assignment.

This submission must be electronic. Refer to the formatting guidelines!

What I'm looking for:

I'm looking for a clearly written account of how your current project fits into the existing literature. It is important to keep in mind that your project is the real focus of a literature review. The sources should cement your project, not overwhelm it. I am also looking for a *thematic* literature review. Meaning that it should not be organized "by articles" (a list of articles with summaries of each article) but rather should be "by topics" or "by themes". What

this means is you will want to identify key themes from any particular article and especially shared themes across articles and write about them in a way that relates the themes together. One example of an actual research article's literature review can be found in Appendix C of your textbook, starting on page B-539 and ending on B-544 (where the Data and Methods section begins). "Models of Household Labor," for example, is a section discussing the different theories of how household labor is divided up. "Housework and Marital Status" is a major heading introducing the theme of how household labor is divided depending on the marital status of those involved - some studies address "Never-Married Persons Living in Their Parents' Homes," some "Never-Married Persons Living Independently," others "Cohabitors," and yet others "Married Persons," "Divorced Persons," and "Widowed Persons" - each of these household types is addressed in more depth under a separate subheading. You don't need to have this many headings or go into as much depth as this article does, but hopefully this gives you an idea of what is meant by a "thematic" literature review. You should also encounter additional literature reviews in most articles you would read for the purposes of the lit review, which may give you specific ideas of what topics you might want to cover in your own paper (but don't just copy other people's work/ideas!).

Another example of a brief thematic literature review can be found here:

www.d.umn.edu/~sjanssen/samplelitreview.htm

Here the literature review sections are divided up into:

"Defining Moments" - conceptualizing what a "defining moment" is, in part by referencing how other studies have understood this concept. (Don't use dictionary definitions.)

"Research on College Students" - Discusses what research has been done specifically on college students and why this might be a group worth focusing on (including what is NOT known!).

"Intimate Relationships" - Discusses the theme of how defining moments might affect intimate relationships or people's desire to seek out intimate relationships, in particular - a theme this study wants to focus on apparently.

"Data and Methods" is not part of the lit review – those are part of Assignment #3.

Another in-depth lit review example using "Critical Thinking" is here:

images.pearsonassessments.com/images/tmrs/CriticalThinkingReviewFINAL.pdf

As always, feel free to ask me questions about the paper, and talk to your fellow students.

A: Assignment presents information from the required set of sources, uses scientifically reliable sources, is focused on how these sources can inform the proposed project, and relates this information to the project thematically using appropriate subheadings.

B: Assignment presents information from the required set of sources, uses mostly scientifically reliable sources, is somewhat focused on how these sources can inform the proposed project, and attempts to relate this information to the project thematically.

C: Assignment presents information from the required set of sources, uses mostly scientifically reliable sources, but is mostly focused on the sources rather than the proposed project and/or does not attempt to highlight common themes across sources and/or is summary-heavy.

D: Assignment presents information from less than the required set of sources, and/or uses mostly scientifically unreliable sources, and/or is mostly summary.

F: Assignment has no sources, uses sources entirely unreliable, and/or is entirely summary.

Due: No later than Friday, November 17th @ 11PM (D2L Submission)

Real research protocols are quite detailed and explicit concerning data gathering and analysis. They lay out the exact procedures to be used for generating subjects or respondents, the exact questions to be asked or treatments to be conducted, the types of analyses expected to be done on the data, and all other research procedures (like the number of research assistants you expect to need and for what they will be responsible and a budget for each specific component of the research).

For Writing Assignment 3 (and the Final Paper) I do not expect such a detailed account of your proposed research. What you should do for this paper is choose a data collection method (experiment, surveys, field research, in-depth qualitative interviews, content analysis, etc) and explain why you think it is the best data collection method for your research question.

Then, tell me what would be involved in collecting data using this method. This section will differ greatly depending on which method you are using. Be as specific as possible. Walk me through each step necessary to generate your data. Here you should identify any human subjects' issues you can think of (at least one) and how you will address such concerns in an ethical fashion.

Finally, tell me what impact using this data collection method will have on the type of data you will (and won't) be able to collect. For example, as we will discuss in more detail in class, if you do an experiment in a laboratory classroom you can see how people will behave/react in that setting, but it is less than certain they would still behave/react that way in a different setting. Or as another example, with surveys you can collect information on people's attitudes and beliefs, and what they *report* about their behavior, but you don't generally collect direct behavioral observations. To wrap up this section you should also briefly state whether you would plan to do qualitative or quantitative (or perhaps both) analysis of your data. Qualitative analysis is more descriptive and narrative – for example, quoting something a person says in an interview or telling a story about an event you observed, and then explaining how that quote or event points to some social pattern or phenomenon. Quantitative analysis is more statistical and numerical – for example, presenting percentages of people who gave particular answers to a question, and then explaining how those percentages point to a social pattern or phenomenon. I can help you answer what's possible or appropriate given your method, so if you're not sure, just ask.

After you have finished the written portion of the paper, put together the measurement instrument (that is, the set-up of the experiment, guidelines for field observations, list of interview or questionnaire questions, etc) you intend to use to gather the data. Include this as an appendix at the end of your paper.

Formatting:

Refer to the General Formatting Guidelines on the first page of the Appendix. This paper, *not* including the appendix, should be about 1000 words in length. More or fewer words are ok so long as you meet the expectations of the assignment. That said, in general if you wrote 750 or

fewer words you probably left something out, and you should not need to write more than 1250 words for this paper. (However, again, remember the measurement instrument appendix is not included in this word count because its length will depend entirely on your variable construction and how many variables you intend to collect – it will be at least an additional page and in some cases may be several additional pages!)

This submission must be electronic. Refer to the formatting guidelines!

What I'm looking for:

I'm simply looking to see if you have an understanding of the data collection method you choose to use and if you have an understanding of why it would be a good method for your question as well as its limitations.

I'm also looking to make sure you have reasonable measures for all of your variables.

As always, feel free to ask me questions about the paper, and talk to your fellow students.

A: Assignment identifies ONE best data collection method for your research question, explains why it is the best method (including discussion of strengths and weaknesses compared to other methods), gives specific steps used to collect your observations or data (including how you will gain access to your field and/or choose your sample), thoroughly discusses any human subjects' or other ethical issues related to your method, and presents a detailed appendix of your measurement instrument.

B: Assignment identifies your best data collection method for your research question, explains why it is the best method, gives steps used to collect your observations or data, discusses any human subjects' or other ethical issues related to your method, and presents an appendix of your measurement instrument.

C: Assignment identifies a data collection method for your research question, attempts to explain why it is the best method, gives some steps used to collect your observations or data, discusses at least one ethical issue related to your method, and presents an appendix of your measurement instrument.

D: Assignment is missing one of the following: identified data collection method, attempt to explain why you chose it, explanation of steps, discussion of ethical issues, or appendix of measurement instrument.

F: Assignment is missing more than one of the following: identified data collection method, attempt to explain why you chose it, explanation of steps, discussion of ethical issues, or appendix of measurement instrument.

Due: No later than Monday, November 27th @ 11PM (D2L Submission)

Submitting a rough draft is not required but is highly recommended since it gives you an opportunity to receive formal feedback prior to submission of your final paper. An important point to make here is that the rough draft (and final paper) should not simply be a “copy and paste” of previous assignments.

Begin with your rationale (generally based on Writing Assignment 1). Remember that this sets up why your project is important. In this case, you need to de-personalize it – focus on why a general or specific audience would find your research question compelling. Also, during the course of your literature review, you may have come across some information that will strengthen the argument that your project is important. Now you can integrate that information into your rationale.

Somewhere near the end of your rationale, you should explicitly state your research question (*note that this differs from Writing Assignment 1, where you started with your research question*). In other words, for the research proposal the rationale should build to the statement of your question, so it should come somewhere near the end of the rationale section. Do not just leave your research question as a sentence all alone. Integrate it into a paragraph. Possible titles for this first section might be “Introduction,” “Purpose of the Study,” “Research Question,” or “Statement of the Problem.”

Next you should frame and clarify your study in terms of existing theory and research. Here you should include your literature review (based on Writing Assignment 2). If relevant, explain how you conceptualize your independent and dependent variables. Most importantly, you need to explain what is already understood about your research question and the general topic(s) or area(s) it falls within or is related to, and how this shapes or informs your project. Possible titles for this section (or sections) might be “Background,” “Conceptual Framework,” “Literature Review,” “Theoretical Framework,” or “Theory.”

In the following section, you should detail how you will conduct your study, justify your approach, and outline any weaknesses or limitations. Here you should include your research protocol (based on Writing Assignment 3). If relevant, you should also integrate information about how you will measure your independent and dependent variables. Possible titles for this section (or sections) might be “Data & Methods,” “Research Design”, or “Study Design.”

Finally, don’t forget that, as with any paper, you should not just end abruptly – also include a final “Conclusion” section wrapping up and summarizing the main ideas of your paper/proposal.

Formatting:

Refer to the General Formatting Guidelines on the first page of the Appendix. This paper should be about 2500-5000 words in length not counting your references page and measurement appendix. If it is fewer you probably have not met expectations, and in general I do not recommend you write more than 5000 words (20 pages) although this may be appropriate for some topics or approaches. Since this paper is lengthy, please number your pages.

This submission must be electronic. Refer to the formatting guidelines!

What I'm looking for:

I'm looking for a paper that has fully integrated the previous papers (again, note that simply copying and pasting together previous papers will not be looked upon as full integration) and incorporates feedback from previous papers. The rough draft should read as if it was written as a single paper. The rationale should have me asking your research question right as you tell me what it is. Then I should be wondering what we already know about your question/topic. I should be wondering what variables are important, how they are related to each other, and how they have been conceptualized in the past and how you are conceptualizing them now. You should be telling me each of these things as the question occurs to me. I would then be wondering how you plan to measure the variables. You should lead me through the steps you are planning on taking to generate the observations/ responses you need to gather the data to answer your question and explain why those are the appropriate steps.

As always, feel free to ask me questions, and talk to your fellow students.

Final Paper – Research Proposal

Soc 350 Methods of Social Research

Due: No later than Friday, December 8th (hard copy)

What I'm looking for:

For the final paper I will be looking at the same things as for the rough draft. If you submit a rough draft I will also be looking at whether you integrated any new comments and suggestions from the rough draft.

As always, feel free to ask me questions about the paper, and talk to your fellow students.

A: Assignment reads as if written as a single paper (per guidelines under Rough Draft), has three or more sections that integrate the previous three assignments, and incorporates most feedback from previous assignments (and rough draft, if relevant).

B: Assignment reads as if edited to be read as a single paper (attempting to follow guidelines under Rough Draft), has clear transitions between different sections based on the previous assignments, and incorporates most feedback from previous assignments (and rough draft, if relevant).

C: Assignment reads as if edited to be read as a single paper (attempting to follow guidelines under Rough Draft) and significantly incorporates feedback from previous assignments (and rough draft, if relevant).

D: Assignment reads as having been copied and pasted, but incorporates some feedback from previous assignments (and rough draft, if relevant).

F: Assignment does not incorporate feedback from previous assignments (and rough draft, if relevant).