

Research Methods I
Rhode Island College, Fall 2012

SOC 302-01

Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-4:50 PM
Craig-Lee Hall Room 152



SOC 302-02

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:50 AM
Craig-Lee Hall Room 051

Prerequisite: Any 200-level sociology course

Instructor Information

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

marthur@ric.edu

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

Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. **2011.** *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*, 4th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. ISBN 0-49-581329-X. (List price about \$165 new, but used editions are available and Amazon.com sells the book for about \$110. An e-book version is available for \$75 and a rental for around \$65 at <http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/isbn/9780495813293>). The book is also available on reserve in Adams Library. The 3rd edition is acceptable, but the page numbers for assignments will be different.

OPTIONAL supplementary reading: Walliman, Nicholas. 2010. *Research Methods: The Basics*. Routledge. ISBN 0-41-548994-2.

Additional reading materials will be made available through Blackboard.

Requirements

1. **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE.** You are expected to come on time for every class meeting. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to see me or a classmate to determine what you've missed. 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. A *research blog* in Blackboard, requiring short posts approximately once a week during the semester in which you reflect on the research process and discuss assigned course readings. More details are available in Blackboard—**20%**.
 - 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—**15%**.
 - 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%**.

There is a factor built into the grading to allow you to miss one or two blog posts and in-class group assignments without penalty; assignments generally cannot be made up or submitted late.

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% of final course grade)
4. **FINAL EXAM.** During the final exam period, students will take a cumulative take-home 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. (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. Unless otherwise noted in the schedule below, all assignments must be submitted by 9:45 AM on the due date.

Tuesday, August 28

Introduction to Research Methods

PART I: Developing and Conceptualizing Research Ideas

Thursday, August 30

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 4

Research Ethics

- ▶ “Ethics and Social Research,” (39-70) **T**
- ▶ Scarce, “A Sense of Justice,” Pp. 1-22 from *Contempt of Court* **O**
- ▶ CITI human subjects training (<http://www.citiprogram.org>) (detailed instructions available on Blackboard)

Thursday, September 6

Choosing a Topic

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

Tuesday, September 11

How to Read—and Use—Prior Research

- ▶ Mears, “Not Just a Paper Doll,” *JCE* 34 (317-343) **O**
→ *Print out this article and bring it to class with you today.* Be sure you have read it completely.
- ▶ Choosing a Topic blog post due
- ***Last day for dropping this course

Thursday, September 13

Conducting a Literature Review/Library Instruction Session

- ▶ RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide (<http://www.ric.edu/sociology/termpaperguide.php>) **O**
- ▶ Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard **O**
- 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 18

ONLINE-ONLY CLASS on Sampling & Measurement

- ▶ **WATCH** Blackboard video on Sampling & Measurement
- ▶ “Sampling,” (99-128) **T**
- ▶ “Measurement,” (129-156) **T**
- ▶ Lit Review Prep blog post due by noon on Sept. 19

- Thursday, September 20 **Practice With Sampling & Measurement**
 ▶ Lynch & Haney, “Mapping the Racial Bias of the White Male Capital Juror.” *Law & Society Review* 45 (69-101) **O**
 → Article write-ups due by 9 am for those required to complete them
- Tuesday, September 25 **ONLINE-ONLY CLASS on Study Design**
 ▶ **WATCH Blackboard video on Study Design**
 ▶ “Crosssectional, Longitudinal, & Case Study Designs” (157-184) **T**
 ▶ Study Design & Measurement Blog Due
- Thursday, September 27 **Individual Meetings**
 Class is cancelled for today. Please be sure to sign up for a 10-minute meeting with me this week. You must *bring your literature review chart* with you to the meeting so that we can discuss your progress.
 ▶ Blackboard quiz on measurement, sampling, and study design due by 10 AM on Friday, September 28

PART II: CHOOSING METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

- Tuesday, October 2 **Comparative-Historical Research**
 ▶ “Using Available Data,” (327-356) **T**
 ▶ Arthur, “The Neglected Virtues of Comparative-Historical Methods,” Zake & Decesare, *New Directions in Sociology* 172-92 **O**
- Thursday, October 4 ▶ 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
 ▶ Comparative-Historical Blog Post Due
 → Literature Review **chart** due by 7 pm
- Tuesday, October 9 **Surveys and Censuses**
 ▶ “Questionnaires and Structured Interviews,” (211-250) **T**
 ▶ Census 2010, <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/about/> (explore the links, don’t just read the main page) **O**
 → Literature Review due 9 am on Wednesday, October 10.
- Thursday, October 11 ▶ Gross, “How Religious are America’s College & University Professors” http://religion.ssrc.org/reform/Gross_Simmons.pdf **O**
 ▶ Werner, “The Older Population: 2010.” <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf> **O**
 → Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
 ▶ Surveys/Lit Reviews Blog Post due

- Tuesday, October 16 **Interviews**
▶ “Qualitative Interviewing,” (251-290) **T**
▶ Healey-Etten, “Interviewing Tips,” *Teaching Sociology* (162-4) **O**
- Thursday, October 18 ▶ 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
▶ Interviews Blog Post due
- Tuesday, October 23 **Observation and Ethnography**
▶ “Observational Techniques,” (291-326) **T**
▶ Survey assignment due today
- Thursday, October 25 ▶ Duneier, “A Statement on Method,” *Sidewalk* (333-358) **O**
▶ Damaske, “Brown Suits Need Not Apply,” *Sociological Forum* 24:2, (402-24) **O**
→ Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
▶ Ethnography/Doing a Survey Blog Post due
- Tuesday, October 30 **Experiments**
▶ “Experimental Research,” (185-210) **T**
***Withdrawal deadline Nov. 2
- Thursday, November 1 ▶ Gerber, “Social Pressure & Voter Turnout.” *APSR* 102 (33-48) **O**
▶ Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *AJS* 108 (937-975) **O**
→ Use the reading handout to study these articles and bring your work to class
▶ **Interview assignment due today**
▶ Experiments/Doing Interviews Blog Post due today
- Tuesday, November 6 **No Class—Election Day**
- Thursday, November 8 **Content Analysis & Visual Sociology**
▶ “Content Analysis,” (357-380) **T**
▶ **Observation assignment due today by 7 pm**
- Tuesday, November 13 ▶ 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
▶ Content Analysis/Doing Observation Blog Post due
- Thursday, November 15 **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
▶ Choosing Methods Blog Post due

PART III: THE USES OF RESEARCH

- Tuesday, November 20 **Applied Social Research**
▶ “Applied Social Research,” (381-410) **T**
▶ Zevallos, “A Brief Introduction on Applied Sociology” **O**
▶ Applied Research/Paper Prep Blog Post due by 9 am Nov. 21
- Thursday, November 22 **No Class—Thanksgiving**
- Tuesday, November 27 **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, November 29 **Course Review/Exam Prep**
▶ Final Blog Post due by 9 am on Nov. 30th
- Tuesday, December 4 **Individual Meetings**
Class is cancelled for today; I’ll hold small-group meetings to prepare for final paper submission instead.
- Thursday, December 6 **Course Conclusion**
Research Proposals Due by 7 pm Tonight
→ Five-minute informal presentations on proposals in class
→ Final exam will be available after 7:30 pm tonight

Take-Home Final Exam Due by 6:00 pm, Monday December 17th

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. 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; instead, the lowest grade will be dropped. (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>.