

Social Research Methods
Sociology 302-01
Rhode Island College, Fall 2021

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 will often be available right after class & am available at many other times throughout the week. You can schedule a meeting with me at <https://calendly.com/mmlarthur> – advising meetings are 15 minute blocks for quick questions, class office hours meetings are 30 minute blocks for more sustained discussion.

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 primarily 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 or extra-help sessions, which will occur periodically, and if needed, we will use Thursdays for 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. 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 expect students to complete three hours of work (including both in-class and out-of-class time) for every credit hour earned.

Course Schedule

Note on deadlines: to help you organize your life, nearly all work will be due Mondays at 10 am. There are a few exceptions indicated on the syllabus. Due dates are also available in Blackboard. I understand that life is complicated and will provide flexibility on deadlines when needed, with the following exceptions:

- Quizzes and in-class assignments for which I will provide an answer key will not be accepted after I have released the answer key.
- Research blogs submitted after the beginning of the class session in which we discuss the relevant material will not be accepted for credit.
- When peer review is used, late papers will be accepted but will be ineligible for peer review participation or credit.

Note that late work will likely face an extended grading delay as I will prioritize grading on-time work. Also note that you will need to complete assigned readings PRIOR to completing written assignments and quizzes.

Part I: Research Development and Design

Week (Tues Date)	Read	Attend	Watch & Complete	Do
September 7 <i>All work due Sept 13</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Course Syllabus <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Introduction,” “Linking Methods with Theory,” “Beginning a Research Project,” & “Reading & Understanding Social Research” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 1-30, 81-85	<input type="checkbox"/> September 9 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"/> Be sure you can access Blackboard & course texts <input type="checkbox"/> Getting to Know You Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory blog post
September 14 <i>All work due Sept 20</i>	<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"/> Saylor, “Research Ethics” <input type="checkbox"/> Katchadorian, “Operation Delirium,” <i>New Yorker</i> 46-64	<input type="checkbox"/> September 14 Zoom session, choosing a topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Causation video/quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Policy implications video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature review prep/article assignment, including proposing topic ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Library tutorial

<p>September 21 <i>All work due Sept 27</i></p> <p><i>Note: 9/22 is the drop deadline</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 150-52, 160-62, 31-80 <input type="checkbox"/> Graff, "How to Write an Argument," <i>Clueless in Academe</i> 275-77 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> September 21 Zoom session, research ethics <input type="checkbox"/> Zoom September 23 for library help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Using sources video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Objectivity video with quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send me an email as described in Blackboard <input type="checkbox"/> CITI Human Subjects Training <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule your small-group meeting for next week <input type="checkbox"/> Submit finalized paper topic <input type="checkbox"/> Find articles for your literature review <input type="checkbox"/> No blog post this week!
<p>September 28 <i>All work due Oct 4</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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"/> OWL on ASA style in-text and bibliographic references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> September 28 and 30: Small-group Zoom meeting, as scheduled (required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Blog Post <input type="checkbox"/> Plagiarism tutorial <input type="checkbox"/> Begin your literature review chart
<p>October 5 <i>All work due Oct 11</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Why are Citations Important in Research Writing?, <i>Medium</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Articles for your literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Spalter-Roth <i>et al.</i>, "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?" ASA <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, "Survey Research" <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 174-82 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> October 5 Zoom, measurement, sampling, and study design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a survey research project video with quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Review Chart <input type="checkbox"/> Measurement, Sampling, & Study Design Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for optional but recommended literature review consultations
<p>October 12 <i>All work due Oct 18</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Edin, "What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" <i>Social Problems</i> 47 (112-133) <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 116-23, 211-14 <input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, "Interviews" and "Focus Groups" <input type="checkbox"/> Healey-Etten, "Interviewing Tips," <i>Teaching Sociology</i> (162-4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> October 12 Zoom, surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Interview questions video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> How interviews work video with quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Literature Review Draft <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews blog post

October 19 <i>Most work due</i> Oct 25	<input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Field Research” <input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 123-25, 157-60 <input type="checkbox"/> Desmond, “Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor,” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 117:5 (1295-1335)	<input type="checkbox"/> October 19 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"/> Literature review peer review (due Thursday Oct. 21 at 6 pm) <input type="checkbox"/> Survey assignment <input type="checkbox"/> Final literature review due <input type="checkbox"/> Observation & Ethnography blog post
October 26 <i>All work due</i> Nov 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Saylor, “Unobtrusive Research” & “Using Existing Data” <input type="checkbox"/> Romney & Johnson, “The Ball Game is for the Boys,” <i>Communication & Sport</i> , 1-19 <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"/> October 26 Zoom, Observation and Ethnography	<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary methods video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Content analysis video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Using existing data video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Review class survey results <input type="checkbox"/> Midterm quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Methods and Existing Data blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews assignment
November 2 <i>All work due</i> Nov 8	<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, “Experiments” <input type="checkbox"/> McMillen, “Rat Park” Comic	<input type="checkbox"/> November 2 Zoom, Documentary Methods & Using Existing Data	<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"/> Experiments blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Observation assignment
November 9 <i>All work due</i> Nov 15	<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 9 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"/> Literature review revisions blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Sociology assignment

November 16 <i>All work due</i> <i>Nov 22</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Wang & Park, 133-49 <input type="checkbox"/> Creswell, "The Selection of a Research Approach," from <i>Research Design</i> , pp. 3-23	<input type="checkbox"/> November 16 Zoom, applied research	<input type="checkbox"/> Multimethod research video with quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Comparing methods video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary methods assignment <input type="checkbox"/> Complete revisions of literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Register for spring courses, including Soc 404
November 23 <i>All work due</i> <i>Nov 29</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Cargan, "The Research Proposal," <i>Doing Social Research</i> (43-53) <input type="checkbox"/> Sample research proposal papers	<input type="checkbox"/> November 23 Zoom, comparing methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing the research proposal video with quiz	<input type="checkbox"/> Applied research blog post
November 30 <i>All work due</i> <i>Dec 6</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Frankham, "Mental Illness Affects Police Shootings," <i>Contexts</i> Spring 2019 70-72	<input type="checkbox"/> November 30 Zoom, research proposals	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing an abstract video	<input type="checkbox"/> Proposal prep & comparing methods blog post <input type="checkbox"/> Write an abstract of the Frankham article <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for paper consultation time slot
December 7 <i>Most work due</i> <i>Dec 13</i>	No assigned reading	<input type="checkbox"/> December 7 Zoom: small-group research consultations (optional but strongly recommended)	No assigned videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit paper outline (due Thursday Dec. 9 by 6 pm) <input type="checkbox"/> Paper outline peer review <input type="checkbox"/> Final blog post
December 14 <i>All work due</i> DEC 23	No assigned reading	<input type="checkbox"/> December 14 Zoom, course conclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Paper consultations available by appointment	<input type="checkbox"/> Course conclusion video	<input type="checkbox"/> Final exam, arrangements TBA <input type="checkbox"/> Final paper due Thursday, December 23 by 4 pm

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.

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 (<https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/user-support-services> or 456-8803) 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.

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 <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/disability-services-center>

Supplemental Services

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: <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/writing-center>

- Seek support to develop your academic & study skills at **OASIS**:
<https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/office-academic-support-and-information-services-oasis>
- Visit the **Counseling Center** to obtain support with anxiety, depression, or other distress you may be experiencing. Services are free & confidential: <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/center-health-and-wellness/counseling-services>
- **Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or other basic needs is urged to contact the Learning for Life (<https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/learning-life>) and/or the Dean of Students' Office (https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RhodeIslandCollege&layout_id=33).**

If you would like more information about the resources available, you can ask me at any time this semester. You do not need to tell me why you are asking to get help for a friend, another student, or yourself.

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

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet learning outcomes of the Sociology and Justice Studies programs (see <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/department-sociology/> & click on your program and then program goals 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 <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/department-sociology/>.