

## Research Proposal Instructions and Rubric

### Overview

#### *Important Dates:*

When and Where	Assignment Type	Assignment	% of Grade
September 30, before class, on Canvas	Building-block	Research topic and question	5%
October 17, before class, on Canvas	Building-block	Annotated bibliography	5%
October 24, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Literature review (for peer evaluation)	5%
November 2, before class, on Canvas	Second draft	Literature review (for instructor feedback)	5%
November 7, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Data and methods (for peer evaluation)	5%
November 16, before class, on Canvas	Second draft	Data and methods (for instructor feedback)	5%
November 21, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Introduction (for peer evaluation)	5%
November 30, before class, on Canvas	Second draft	Introduction (for instructor feedback)	5%
December 5, 12:30pm, on Canvas	Final product	Final proposal	25%

#### *Purpose:*

The objective of our year-long honors program is for students to answer their own sociological research question through an independent research project and communicate their findings in the form of a paper. The research proposal is an important step in completing your research project, as it will help you articulate a research question, find and evaluate previous research on your topic, design your study, and make a plan for the winter quarter.

Through this assignment, you will practice the following skills:

- Synthesize sociological research
- Articulate a sociological research question
- Design a sociological research study

- Communicate effectively through writing
- Revise your writing

***Task:***

The final product for this quarter is an original research proposal that articulates and justifies the importance of a sociological research question, synthesizes relevant literature, and outlines a plan for answering the question. The final proposal has the following sections: (1) an introduction, (2) a literature review, (3) a data and methods section, (4) a plan for winter quarter, and (4) references. You will complete each section one at a time, with multiple opportunities to revise and improve your writing. There is no expected number of pages for the final proposal. Instead of focusing on the length of your proposal, focus on whether or not each of your sections have achieved what they should.

***Formatting:***

All of your assignments for the research proposal should be double-spaced and in 12-point Times New Roman font. You should use ASA citation style for both [in-text citations](#) and the [references list](#).

**Assignments**

Assignments will be graded based on the rubric at the end of this document.

1. Research topic and question - due by September 30, before class, on Canvas

The purpose of this assignment is to identify your research question and to begin considering some questions to move your project forward. Include in your assignment:

- Research question: Articulate your research question. To make your question specific and answerable, try to use 25 words or fewer. Your research question must be sociological (that is, it must be about the social world).
- Importance: Explain why your research question is important to answer. What conceptual or practical problem does the answer to your research question help us solve?
- Hypotheses: Describe any hypotheses you have. What argument are you hoping to make?
- Literature: Identify some literature you need to engage with. What are two things you need to learn or read now to move your project forward?
- Data and Method: Describe what kind of data and method you are considering. This may be mostly hypothetical at this point, but try to be specific. If you are considering interviews or focus groups, discuss who you might talk to and how you would find them. If you are considering ethnography, identify a site. If you are considering secondary analysis of survey research, identify a possible dataset or two. If you are doing content analysis, identify what you will be analyzing and where you will get it from.
- References: If you used any sources (which you probably will), cite them.

2. Annotated bibliography - due by October 17, before class, on Canvas

The purpose of this assignment is to identify previous research on your topic and consider how you may use it to shape your research project. Your annotated bibliography should include 5-10 sources that are either peer-reviewed journal articles or books. Each source should have a full citation and a short paragraph that summarizes (1) its credibility, (2) its key argument(s), and (3) its relevance to your project.

In addition to turning in your annotated bibliography on Canvas, bring a single-sided printed copy of it to class on October 17.

3. Literature review - first draft due by October 24, before class (for peer evaluation) and second draft due by November 2, before class (for instructor feedback), on Canvas

The purpose of the literature review is to provide necessary background information (e.g., definitions) and outline key arguments (e.g., theories) that are relevant to your research topic, and motivate your research question. Your literature review should be organized from general to specific, leading your reader to understand why your particular research question must be answered. It should synthesize the sources from your annotated bibliography to provide an overview of scholarly work, focusing on what the previous research means for your project. Make sure to include a references list.

You are expected to incorporate your peer evaluator's feedback into your second draft.

4. Data and methods - first draft due by November 7, before class (for peer evaluation) and second draft due by November 16, before class (for instructor feedback), on Canvas

The purpose of the data and methods section is to describe the evidence (i.e., data) you will use in support of your argument and the way you will analyze it (i.e., the method). This section should be very specific and should convince your reader that your plan is feasible.

- If you are doing secondary analysis of survey research, identify the specific dataset you will use and describe the sample. Identify the variables (independent variables, dependent variables, control variables) you plan to use and explain how they are measured. Identify the statistical program and statistical techniques (e.g., t-tests, linear regression, etc) you plan to use.
- If you are collecting your own survey data, in addition to the above, explain who you are surveying and how you will access them. Estimate how many survey responses you will collect. Provide an appendix of survey questions.
- If you are conducting interviews or focus groups, explain who you will interview and how you will access them. Estimate how many interviews you will conduct. Describe your plan for transcription. Identify which analysis software you will use. Provide an appendix of interview questions.
- If you are doing ethnography, identify your site and explain how you will access it. Estimate how many hours of ethnography you will engage in. Describe your plan for taking and analyzing field notes, including which analysis software you will use.

- If you are doing content analysis or archival research, identify what you will be analyzing, where you will find it, and how you will collect it. Identify the analysis software you will use.

In addition to these questions, make sure to explain whether your project has a comparative dimension and who or what you are comparing. Explain what you expect to find based on your understanding of previous research and theory. Describe any ethical concerns. If your project is human subjects research and requires informed consent, include a consent form as an appendix. Include a references list.

You are expected to incorporate your peer evaluator's feedback into your second draft.

5. Introduction - first draft due by November 21, before class (for peer evaluation) and second draft due by November 30, before class (for instructor feedback, on Canvas

The goal of the introduction is to capture your audience's attention, articulate and motivate your research question, and provide an overview of what is to come. In Booth's words, it should describe the context, problem, and response. While you may organize your introduction in any way you see fit to accomplish this goal, one commonly used template is (1) one or two paragraphs describing the empirical and theoretical importance of the research topic, (2) one paragraph articulating the research question and why it is so important to answer, and (3) one paragraph summarizing the rest of the paper (in your case, your chosen data and method and what you expect to find). The introduction is not a literature review, although it may introduce some concepts or ideas described further in the literature review. Include a references list.

You are expected to incorporate your peer evaluator's feedback into your second draft.

6. Final proposal - due December 5, 12:30pm, on Canvas

The final proposal should include these sections in the following order:

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Data and Methods
- Plan for the Winter Quarter
- References

Your plan for the winter quarter should be as specific as possible. It should explain how often you will meet with your advisor, when you will complete data collection, when you will complete data analysis, any other resources (e.g., the statistical consultant) you will leverage, etc.

You are expected to incorporate your peer evaluators' and instructors' feedback into the final proposal.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I can't submit a draft assignment or peer evaluation by the deadline. What should I do?

A: You should fill out an extension form to request more time (up to seven days). Go to <https://tinyurl.com/carianextension> to fill out the form. If you are unsure of whether you need to fill out the form, go ahead and fill it out anyway. There will be no penalty for doing so. If you need an extension for a peer evaluation, please also notify the student whose work you are evaluating.

Q: How will I know if my extension request was granted?

A: When you submit your form, your request is automatically granted. If I need more information, I will contact you by email. Otherwise, you will not receive additional confirmation.

Q: What if I fill out an extension request but I don't submit the assignment within seven days?

A: You will receive a zero on the assignment.

Q: I don't think I will be able to submit my final proposal by the deadline. What should I do?

A: I cannot accept late work for the final proposal, because I must submit your final grades on time. If you think you will have difficulty meeting the deadline for the final proposal, please let me know right away.

## Rubric

	<b>Exemplary (5)</b>	<b>Accomplished (4-3)</b>	<b>Developing (2-1)</b>	<b>Beginning (0)</b>
Introduction	The introduction provides a specific and compelling reason why the reader should be interested in the research topic and question. It articulates a specific and answerable sociological research question. It provides a succinct and informative overview of the remaining paper.	The introduction provides a reason why the reader should be interested in the research topic and question, but it is not compelling. It articulates a sociological research question, but it is either vague or unanswerable. It provides a sufficient overview of the remaining paper.	The introduction provides a superficial or vague reason why the reader should be interested in the research topic and question. It articulates a sociological research question, but it is both vague and unanswerable. It provides an overview of the remaining paper, but it is incomplete or redundant.	The introduction does not provide a reason why the reader should be interested in the research topic and question. It articulates a research question that is vague, unanswerable, and not sociological. It does not provide an overview of the remaining paper.
Literature Review	The section is successful in synthesizing background information and key arguments relevant to the research topic. It effectively describes what previous research means for the project. It convinces the reader of the importance of answering the research question.	The literature review is mostly successful in synthesizing background information and key arguments relevant to the research topic. It mostly describes what previous research means for the project. It mostly convinces the reader of the importance of answering the research question.	The literature review is somewhat successful in synthesizing background information and key arguments relevant to the research topic. It somewhat describes what previous research means for the project. It somewhat convinces the reader of the importance of answering the research question.	The literature review is unsuccessful in synthesizing background information and key arguments relevant to the research topic. It does not describe what previous research means for the project. It does not convince the reader of the importance of answering the research question.
Data and Methods	The section describes the evidence that will be used in the final project and how it will be analyzed. It provides all the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the project is feasible.	The section describes the evidence that will be used in the final project and how it will be analyzed. It provides nearly all the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the project is feasible.	The section describes the evidence that will be used in the final project and how it will be analyzed. It provides most of the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the project is feasible.	The section does not describe the evidence that will be used in the final project or how it will be analyzed. It does not provide enough details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the project is feasible.

	<b>Exemplary (3)</b>	<b>Accomplished (2)</b>	<b>Developing (1)</b>	<b>Beginning (0)</b>
Plan for Winter Quarter	The section sets a realistic and detailed plan for the winter quarter. It lists all the relevant deadlines and resources for help.	The section sets a mostly realistic and detailed plan for the winter quarter. It lists nearly all the relevant deadlines and resources for help.	The section sets a somewhat realistic and detailed plan for the winter quarter. It lists most of the relevant deadlines and resources for help.	The section sets an unrealistic or undetailed plan for the winter quarter. It does not list the relevant deadlines or resources for help.
In-Text Citations	In-text citations are always used when necessary and follow ASA citation style.	In-text citations are almost always used when necessary and follow ASA citation style with minimal errors.	In-text citations are sometimes used when necessary and follow ASA citation style with some errors.	In-text citations are rarely or never used when necessary and do not follow ASA citation style, or have several errors.
References	All references are included in the references list and include all bibliographic information in ASA citation style.	All references are included in the references list, but some citations are missing bibliographic information. There are minimal errors in the use of ASA citation style.	All references are included in the references list, but most citations are missing bibliographic information. There are some errors in the use of ASA citation style.	Some or all references are not included in the references list. Some or all citations are missing bibliographic information. There are several errors in the use of ASA citation style.
Organization	The proposal contains all sections in the appropriate order. Every section is organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.	The proposal contains all sections in the appropriate order. Nearly all sections are organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.	The proposal contains all sections in the appropriate order. Most sections are organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.	Some sections of the proposal are missing or out of order. Few sections are organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.
Writing Mechanics and Clarity	There are no spelling and grammar errors. The writing always clearly communicates the idea.	There are minimal spelling and grammar errors. The writing mostly clearly communicates the idea.	There are some spelling and grammar errors. The writing somewhat clearly communicates the idea.	There are several spelling and grammar errors. The writing does not clearly communicate the idea.

**Total Points:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 30