

Thesis Instructions and Rubric

Overview

Important Dates:

When and Where	Assignment Type	Assignment	% of Grade
April 19, before class, on Canvas	Building-block	Findings outline	5%
May 1, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Findings	5%
May 15, before class, on Canvas	Second draft	Introduction, literature review, and data and methods revision	5%
May 22, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Conclusion	5%
May 31, before class, on Canvas	First draft	Full thesis draft	10%
Week 10, in class	Presentation	In-class presentation	5%
June 13, 12:30pm, on Canvas and by email	Final product	Final thesis	40%

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 thesis paper. This quarter, you will write the Findings and Conclusion sections of your thesis and revise the sections you wrote in the fall quarter to create a cohesive paper that answers your sociological research question.

Through this assignment, you will practice the following skills:

- Synthesize sociological research
- Articulate a sociological research question
- Design a sociological research study
- Identify findings and themes relevant to a sociological research question
- Articulate the empirical and theoretical contributions of a research study
- Communicate effectively through writing
- Revise your writing

Task:

The final product for this quarter is a thesis that articulates and justifies the importance of a sociological research question, synthesizes relevant literature, describes your data and method, discusses findings and themes from your analysis, and makes a conclusion about your research question. The final thesis has the following sections: (1) an introduction, (2) a literature review, (3) a data and methods section, (4) a findings section, (4) a conclusion, and (5) references. You will have multiple opportunities to revise and improve your writing. There is no expected number of pages for the final thesis. Instead of focusing on the length of your thesis, focus on whether or not each of your sections has achieved what it should.

Assignments

Assignments will be evaluated based on the rubrics at the end of this document. Draft assignments will be graded based on completeness.

1. Findings outline - due by April 19, before class, for instructor feedback, on Canvas

The purpose of this assignment is to articulate and organize findings that answer your research question, and to identify evidence that supports each finding. Unlike the other assignments, this one should be in outline form. Each top level item of the outline should be a different finding or reason (in Booth et al’s language), written as a sentence . Under each finding/reason, list evidence that illustrates or supports it. This could be a quote, excerpt, or description for qualitative work, or a statistic or pattern for quantitative work. In addition to listing the piece of evidence, comment on how that piece of evidence relates to the finding/reason or what it means for your answer to your research question. An example from qualitative research:

Research question: How was the unequal division of labor in families with young children established during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answer/claim/thesis: The pandemic expanded traditional gender expectations to new domains of household labor and heightened the importance of gendered justifications for the division of household labor.

- I. During the pandemic, couples justified their unequal division of labor through explanations that seemed rational, but were actually based on gender. *[This is one finding/reason, written as a sentence.]*
 - A. Quote from Jessica De León about her husband: “He’s really busy in the mornings. He just locks himself in the room sometimes, and just stays there. And I’m giving him breakfast and food in there so he can actually eat. But yeah, he really can’t leave his work once he gets started.” *[This is my first piece of evidence for the finding/reason.]*
 - 1. This quote shows how Jessica constructs her husband’s work as inflexible, which seems like a rational reason why she would do all the childcare. In reality, her work as a lab

researcher was also very inflexible. *[This explains why the piece of evidence is relevant to the finding/reason.]*

B. Etc.

An example from quantitative research:

Research question: Who endorses inversive sexism?

Answer/claim/thesis: Inversive sexism is endorsed by Americans as often as hostile and modern sexism. It is more likely to be endorsed by males, younger people, and people who identify as lower-middle class.

- I. Males are more likely to endorse inversive sexist attitudes. *[This is one finding/reason, written as a sentence.]*
 - A. The coefficient for female in my ordinary least squares regression on inversive sexism is -0.29, and is significant ($p < 0.001$). *[This is my first piece of evidence for the finding/reason.]*
 1. This indicates that females are predicted to have an inversive sexism score that is 0.29 points lower than males. *[This explains why the piece of evidence is relevant to the finding/reason.]*
 - B. Etc.

While I expect most students will have 2-4 findings or themes, and each finding or theme to have multiple pieces of evidence supporting it, you are not required to have a certain number. Instead, your goal is to answer your research question in a convincing way. List your research question and answer/claim/thesis at the top of your outline. You may include tables, figures, or images at the end of the outline for reference.

2. Findings - due by May 1, before class, for peer and instructor feedback, on Canvas

The purpose of the findings section is to present and interpret pieces of evidence from your data (e.g., quotes from interviews, excerpts from social media posts, statistics from quantitative analysis) to make a cohesive claim that answers your research question. It is common to begin the Findings section with one paragraph that briefly summarizes all the themes you will describe in more detail in the section. It is also common to organize the Findings section into subsections (with their own subheadings) that group pieces of evidence that, together, illustrate a single finding or reason for your claim. (The top level items in your Findings Outline may become these subsections!) With each subsection, each piece of evidence should be clearly interpreted, meaning you should explain its significance to your reader. The evidence you provide should be sufficient, representative, accurate, precise, and credible. You should also write your Findings in reference to your research question. For example, you might summarize at the end of each subsection what it means for the answer to your research question. List your research question and answer/claim/thesis at the top of your assignment.

3. Introduction, literature, and data and methods revision - due by May 15, before class, for peer and instructor feedback, on Canvas

The purpose of this assignment is to (1) realign the sections of your thesis you wrote in the fall to match what you actually did and found and (2) incorporate all relevant feedback from your peers and Professor Carian from the fall. For example:

- You may need to revise your Introduction and Literature Review because the focus of your research or your research question changed.
- You may need to revise your Introduction and Literature Review because an unexpected finding came up in your analysis, and you need to synthesize previous research related to it.
- You may need to revise your Data and Methods because you didn't end up collecting as much data as you thought.
- You may need to revise your Data and Methods because you couldn't access the data you wanted, and so had to change plans.
- You may need to revise your Data and Methods because you now have more details about how you collected and analyzed data.
- You need to add to your Data and Methods summary statistics on your variables and/or sample.
- You may need to revise all three sections because you didn't revise them in the fall with the feedback from your peers.
- You may need to revise all three sections because Professor Carian provided feedback on your final proposal in the fall.

This is not an exhaustive list of reasons why you may need to revise. No matter what, you will need to revise what you wrote in the fall! And you will need to revise even after you've turned in this assignment! Include your Findings section in the draft you turn in. We will not provide feedback on your Findings; it is for reference so we can see how well the Findings match with the rest of the paper. List your research question and answer/claim/thesis at the top of your assignment.

4. Conclusion - due by May 22, before class, for peer and instructor feedback, on Canvas

The purpose of the Conclusion is to (1) *briefly* summarize your findings and answer your research question, (2) identify limitations of your research, and (3) describe the empirical and theoretical contributions of your research. There is no length requirement for your Conclusion, but you might write one paragraph toward each of these goals (maybe more for discussing the contributions of your research). You may also organize it in any way you wish, although I recommend the order above. List your research question and answer/claim/thesis at the top of your assignment.

5. Full thesis draft - due by May 31, before class, for peer feedback, on Canvas

For this assignment, you will turn in a full draft of your thesis, including all relevant sections in the following order:

- Abstract

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Data and Methods
- Findings
- Conclusion
- References

If, by the deadline, you have not revised or finished certain sections, *you should still turn in what you have*. This is your last opportunity to get formal feedback before you turn in your final thesis. Take advantage of it!

6. Presentation - during week 10 of the quarter, in class

During week 10 of the quarter, you will share your research with the class and (their schedule permitting) your advisor through a 7-8 minute presentation, followed by 3-4 minutes of question and answer. Your presentation should (1) briefly summarize the existing research and motivate your research question, (2) outline your data and methods, (3) articulate your findings and provide convincing evidence of your claims, (4) make a conclusion about your research question and identify your research's contribution. You will also be graded on the quality of your slides, your presentation technique, and your response to questions. See the rubric at the end of this document.

7. Final thesis - due June 13, 12:30pm, for instructor and advisor feedback, on Canvas and via email

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

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Data and Methods
- Findings
- Conclusion
- References

You are expected to incorporate your peers' and Professor Carian's feedback into the final thesis. Your final thesis will be evaluated by Professor Carian and your advisor. Professor Carian will determine your final grade for the thesis as it relates to this course, and both Professor Carian and your advisor will determine whether you pass "with honors."

In addition to submitting your thesis on Canvas, send your thesis as an attachment to your advisor. Be sure to CC Professor Carian on the email.

Frequently Asked Questions

Content

Q: How long should my thesis/a particular section of my thesis be?

A: Besides your abstract (which should be less than 250 words), there is no length requirement for the thesis or any of the sections of the thesis, and sociological papers vary greatly in their length. Instead of focusing on length, focus on whether each section of your thesis accomplishes what it should by referencing the instructions above. For reference, sociological journals vary in the maximum word count they allow, from 7,500 on the low end to 15,000 on the (very) high end.

Late Work

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. No extensions are allowed for the final thesis or presentation.

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 our 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 thesis by the deadline. What should I do?

A: I cannot accept late work for the final thesis, because I must submit your final grades on time and tell the university if you passed "with honors." If you think you will have difficulty meeting the deadline for the final thesis, please let me know right away.

Formatting

Q: How should I format my work?

A: All of your assignments for the thesis 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](#).

Rubric for Drafts and Final Thesis

	Exemplary (5)	Accomplished (4-3)	Developing (2-1)	Beginning (0)
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 is successful in articulating the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. 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 is mostly successful in articulating the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. 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 is somewhat successful in articulating the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. 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 is unsuccessful in articulating the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. 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 question and findings. It effectively describes what previous research means for the paper. 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 question and findings. It mostly describes what previous research means for the paper. 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 question and findings. It somewhat describes what previous research means for the paper. 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 question and findings. It does not describe what previous research means for the paper. It does not convince the reader of the importance of answering the research question.

Data and Methods	The section is successful in describing the evidence used to answer the research question. It provides all the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the analysis is valid.	The section is mostly successful in describing the evidence used to answer the research question. It provides nearly all the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the analysis is valid.	The section is somewhat successful in describing the evidence used to answer the research question. It provides most of the details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the analysis is valid.	The section is unsuccessful in describing the evidence used to answer the research question. It does not provide enough details relevant to the chosen data and method to convince the reader that the analysis is valid.
Findings	The section is successful in describing key findings relevant to the research question. The evidence it provides is always sufficient, representative, accurate, precise, and credible. It clearly interprets said evidence.	The section is mostly successful in describing key findings relevant to the research question. The evidence it provides is mostly sufficient, representative, accurate, precise, and credible. It mostly clearly interprets said evidence.	The section is somewhat successful in describing key findings relevant to the research question. The evidence it provides is somewhat sufficient, representative, accurate, precise, and credible. It somewhat clearly interprets said evidence.	The section is unsuccessful in describing key findings relevant to the research question. The evidence it provides is not sufficient, representative, accurate, precise, or credible. It does not interpret said evidence.
Conclusion	The section is successful in briefly summarizing the findings and articulating an answer to the research question. It is successful in articulating the practical, empirical, and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. It is successful in identifying limitations of the research.	The section is mostly successful in briefly summarizing the findings and articulating an answer to the research question. It is mostly successful in articulating the practical, empirical, and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. It is mostly successful in identifying limitations of the research.	The section is somewhat successful in briefly summarizing the findings and articulating an answer to the research question. It is somewhat successful in articulating the practical, empirical, and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. It is somewhat successful in identifying limitations of the research.	The section is unsuccessful in briefly summarizing the findings and articulating an answer to the research question. It is unsuccessful in articulating the practical, empirical, and/or theoretical contribution of the paper. It is unsuccessful in identifying limitations of the research.
	Exemplary (3)	Accomplished (2)	Developing (1)	Beginning (0)

Abstract	The abstract is successful in stating the research question and indicating its importance, describing the data and method, summarizing the findings, and explaining the importance of the findings.	The abstract is mostly successful in stating the research question and indicating its importance, describing the data and method, summarizing the findings, and explaining the importance of the findings.	The abstract is somewhat successful in stating the research question and indicating its importance, describing the data and method, summarizing the findings, and explaining the importance of the findings.	The abstract is unsuccessful in stating the research question and indicating its importance, describing the data and method, summarizing the findings, and explaining the importance of the findings.
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 paper contains all sections in the appropriate order. Every section is organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.	The paper contains all sections in the appropriate order. Nearly all sections are organized to serve the goals of the section and facilitate clarity.	The paper 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 paper 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: _____ / 40

Rubric for Presentation

	Exemplary (3)	Accomplished (2)	Developing (1)	Beginning (0)
Summary of Existing Research and Motivation of Research Question	The presentation is successful in concisely summarizing relevant literature. The presentation is successful in motivating the research question. The research question is clearly articulated.	The presentation is mostly successful in concisely summarizing relevant literature. The presentation is mostly successful in motivating the research question. The research question is clearly articulated.	The presentation is somewhat successful in concisely summarizing relevant literature. The presentation is somewhat successful in motivating the research question. The research question is clearly articulated.	The presentation is unsuccessful in concisely summarizing relevant literature. The presentation is unsuccessful in motivating the research question. The research question is missing or unclear.
Data and Methods	The presentation is successful in concisely outlining the data and methods. Sample characteristics and/or variable summary statistics are provided when appropriate.	The presentation is mostly successful in concisely outlining the data and methods. Sample characteristics and/or variable summary statistics are provided when appropriate.	The presentation is somewhat successful in concisely outlining the data and methods. Sample characteristics and/or variable summary statistics are provided when appropriate.	The presentation is unsuccessful in concisely outlining the data and methods. Sample characteristics and/or variable summary statistics are not provided when appropriate.
Findings and Evidence	The presentation is successful in identifying key findings and providing convincing evidence.	The presentation is mostly successful in identifying key findings and providing convincing evidence.	The presentation is somewhat successful in identifying key findings and providing convincing evidence.	The presentation is unsuccessful in identifying key findings and providing convincing evidence.
Conclusion and Contribution	The presentation is successful in articulating an answer to the research question and the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper.	The presentation is mostly successful in articulating an answer to the research question and the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper.	The presentation is somewhat successful in articulating an answer to the research question and the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper.	The presentation is unsuccessful in articulating an answer to the research question and the empirical and/or theoretical contribution of the paper.

Slides	Slides have no spelling and grammar errors. Slides are engaging and easy to understand.	Slides have minimal spelling and grammar errors. Slides are mostly engaging and easy to understand.	Slides have some spelling and grammar errors. Slides are somewhat engaging and easy to understand.	Slides have several spelling and grammar errors. Slides are not engaging and difficult to understand.
Presentation Technique	Presenter uses the time effectively, is easily understood, and addresses the audience.	Most of the time, presenter uses the time effectively, is easily understood, and addresses the audience.	Presenter sometimes uses the time effectively, is easily understood, and addresses the audience.	Presenter does not use the time effectively, is not easily understood, and does not address the audience.
Questions and Answers	Presenter responds appropriately to questions.	Most of the time, presenter responds appropriately to questions.	Presenter sometimes responds appropriately to questions.	Presenter does not respond appropriately to questions.

Total Points: _____ / 21