

**Research Methods I (SOC 302)**  
Rhode Island College, Fall 2016

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Soc 302-01 TuTh 4:00-5:50 PM Craig-Lee 203	⌘	Soc 302-02 TuTh 10:00-11:50 AM Craig-Lee 205
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Prerequisite: Any 200-level sociology course; math general education requirement

*Instructor Information*

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

[marthur@ric.edu](mailto:marthur@ric.edu) (preferred)

401. 433. 9633

Office: Craig Lee Hall room 451

Drop-In Availability: Tuesday and Thursday 2-3 pm, right after class (usually), or by appointment

**This course uses the Blackboard course management system. You will need to have reliable Internet access on computer or tablet, or scheduled time in the campus computer labs, in order to successfully complete this course. You will also need to check your email regularly.**

*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*

Ruane, Janet M. 2016. *Introducing Social Research Methods*. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1-118-87424-0. List price \$49.95.

Wang, Gabe T. and Keumjae Park. 2016. *Student Research and Report Writing*. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1-118-96391-3. List price \$34.95.

Additional reading materials will be made available via Blackboard; students are encouraged to validate their RIC IDs at the library as soon as possible.

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.

- 1) **PARTICIPATION:** You are expected to come on time for every class meeting. If you must miss class, you are still responsible for the material we covered. 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 and that all questions and comments should be made in a spirit of respect for other students and their contributions to the class. Participation will be assessed, in part, using a rubric available in Blackboard. **10 points.**
- 2) **ASSIGNMENTS:** Three types of small assignments are required during the course:
  - 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—**20 points.**
  - 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 in-class quizzes—**20 points.**
  - c. *In-class group assignments* will occur nearly every week; many of these will be collected and graded. These are not announced, so you should be in class regularly—**15 points.**
- 3) **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPER:** At the end of the course, 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 points.**
- 4) **FINAL EXAM:** Arrangements TBA, but it will be open-book and open-note. **20 points.** Note: the final and paper are NOT optional; students who do not complete them on time will receive an incomplete in the course until they make arrangements to do so.
- 5) **READING:** You are expected to complete all assigned course readings prior to the date for which they are assigned.

**Note:** federal guidelines (<http://ifap.ed.gov/dpclatters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>) expect students to complete two hours of work out of class for every one hour of in-class time.

## Course Schedule

All readings should be completed by the time class begins on that date, unless otherwise noted. All assignments have specific due dates and times listed.

*Tuesday, August 30: Introduction to Research Methods*

- ✓ Read: syllabus thoroughly
- Be sure to get course books or make arrangements to complete readings with reserve copies

## Part I: Research Development and Design

*Thursday, September 1: Theory & Research*

- Read: Ruane, 1-43
- Read: “Statistical Fallacies, Paradoxes, and Threats to Validity,” pp. 35-50 from Klass, *Just Plain Data Analysis*
- Complete: Blackboard survey due by 9:30 am on Friday, September 2
- Complete: Theory blog post due by 9:30 am on Friday, September 2

*Tuesday, September 6: Choosing a Topic*

- Read: Wang & Park, 1-30, 81-85
- Read: Ruane, 68-78

*Thursday, September 8: Research Ethics*

- Read: Ruane, 46-66
  - Read: Wang & Park, 96-99, 150-52, 160-62
  - Read: Katchadorian, “Operation Delirium,” *New Yorker* 46-64
  - Complete: Ethics blog post (due by 9:30 am today)
  - Complete: CITI human subjects training (<http://www.citiprogram.org>). Detailed instructions available on Blackboard (due by 9:30 am Friday, September 9).
- Note: Monday, September 12 is the deadline to drop this class*

*Tuesday, September 13: Reading and Using Prior Research*

- Read: Mears, “Not Just a Paper Doll,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34 (317-43)
- Complete: “How to Read” handout (not due separately, but you must complete it in order to do the in-class exercise)
- Read: Graff, “How to Write an Argument,” *Clueless in Academe* 275-77
- Complete: Choosing a Topic blog post (due by 9:30 am **Today, Tuesday**)

*Thursday, September 15: Library Instruction Session*

- Read: RIC Sociology Department Term Paper Guide (<http://www.ric.edu/sociology/termpaperguide.php>)
- Read: Sample Literature Reviews, as posted in Blackboard
- Read: Wang & Park, 31-80
- Bring: “Thinking Tool” document with sections 1, 2, and 3 completed for *your* paper topic

*Tuesday, September 20: Sampling and Measurement*

- Read: Ruane, 94-115
- Read: Wang & Park, 86-96, 100-104

*Thursday, September 22: More on Measurement & Study Design*

- Read: Ruane, 78-92, 118-38
- Read: Wang & Park, 110-16, 126
- Complete: Lit Review Prep blog post (due 9:30 am today)

*Tuesday, September 27: Class cancelled*

- Mandatory out-of-class small-group meetings this week: come prepared with printed or electronic copies of your research articles and your partially-complete literature review chart.
- Read: Ruane, 232-54, 273-76
- Read: Wang & Park, 105-110
- Complete: Plagiarism Tutorial by 6 pm today (detailed instructions available on Blackboard) <http://www.lycoming.edu/library/instruction/tutorials/plagiarismGame.aspx>

*Thursday, September 29: More on Sampling*

- Complete: Measurement, Sampling, and Study Design blog post (due by 9:30 am today)
- Complete: Literature Review Chart (due by 9:30 am on Friday, September 30)

## Part II: Methods of Data Collection

*Tuesday, October 4: **Online** Class on Surveys and Interviews*

- Read: Ruane, 163-208, 265-73
- Read: Wang & Park, 174-82
- Read: Census 2010, <http://www.census.gov/2010census/about/> (don't just read the main page, spend at least 20 minutes exploring the site)
- Read: Werner, "The Older Population: 2010." <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>
- Watch: Interviews video
- Watch: Surveys video
- Complete: Review quiz (due 9:30 am Wednesday, October 5)

*Thursday, October 6: Surveys & Censuses II*

- Bring: a printed draft of your literature review suitable for peer review
- Read: Spalter-Roth *et al.*, "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties?" ASA [http://www.asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach\\_Beyond5\\_Social\\_Capital.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach_Beyond5_Social_Capital.pdf)
- Complete: Surveys blog post (due 9:30 am today)

*Tuesday, October 11: No Class Meeting—work day*

- Read: Wang & Park, 116-23, 211-14
- Read: Healey-Etten, "Interviewing Tips," *Teaching Sociology* (162-4)
- Read: Edin, "What do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" *Social Problems* 47 (112-133)

*Thursday, October 13: Interviews II*

- Complete: Literature Review (due 9:30 am Thursday, October 13)
- Complete: Interviews blog post (due 9:30 am Thursday, October 13)
- Complete: Survey assignment (Excel file due by 9:30 am, Monday, October 17)

*Tuesday, October 18: Observation & Ethnography I*

- Read: Ruane, 210-30
- Read: Wang & Park, 123-25, 157-60
- Bring: 5 completed surveys to class

*Thursday, October 20: Observation & Ethnography II*

- Read: Desmond, "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor," *American Journal of Sociology* 117:5 (1295-1335)
- Complete: Observation & Ethnography Blog Post (due by 9:30 am today)
- In class today: midterm quiz

*Tuesday, October 25: Content Analysis I*

- Read: Wang & Park, 214-35
- Bring: two completed interviews & consent forms to class
- Work on revisions to literature review

*Thursday, October 27: Content Analysis II*

- Read: Barbieri & Connell, "A Cross-National Assessment of Media Reactions and Blame Finding of Student Perpetrated School Shootings," *American J. of Criminal Justice* 40:1 (23-46)
- Complete: Content Analysis blog post (due by 9:30 am today)

*Tuesday, November 1: Comparative-Historical Research I*

- Read: Arthur, "The Neglected Virtues of Comparative-Historical Methods," Zake & Decesare, *New Directions in Sociology* 172-92
- Complete: Observation assignment (due by 9:30 am today)

*Note: Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for withdrawing from this course*

*Thursday, November 3: Comparative-Historical Research II*

- Read: Shon and Roberts, "An Archival Exploration of Homicide," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 54 (43-60)
- Complete: Comparative-Historical Methods/Revision blog post (due 9:30 am today)

*Tuesday, November 8: No class—Election Day*

- Complete revisions on literature review
- If you are eligible, don't forget to vote

*Thursday, November 10: Experiments I*

- Read: Ruane, 140-61
- Complete: Literature Review Revision blog post by 9:30 am today

*Tuesday, November 15: Experiments II*

- Read: Pager, Bonikowski, and Wester, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 74:5 (777-99)
- Complete: Experimental Research Blog Post (due by 9:30 am today) **Note: this is a Tuesday due date for a blog post!!!**

*Thursday, November 17: Applied Research*

- Read: "Research Methods in the Real World," 358-75
- Read: Zevallos, "Sociology for What, Who, Where and How? Situating Applied Sociology in Action," <https://othersociologist.com/2012/11/02/sociology-for-what/>

### **Part III: Pulling it All Together**

*Tuesday, November 22: Comparing Methods and Multi-Method Research*

- Read: Creswell, "The Selection of a Research Approach," from *Research Design*, pp. 3-23
- Bring: Completed "Comparing Methods" chart
- Complete: Applied Research and Comparing Methods Blog Post (due by 9:30 am **Wednesday**, November 23)

*Thursday, November 24: Thanksgiving*

- No class

*Tuesday, November 29: Writing About and Proposing Research*

- Read: Park & Wang, 133-49
- Read: Ruane, 284-88
- Read: Cargan, "The Research Proposal," *Doing Social Research* (43-53)
- Read: sample research proposal papers

*Thursday, December 1: Presentations*

- Bring: two completed copies of the Presentation Template to class
- In class: Presentations
- Complete: Final Blog Post (due 9:30 am **Monday**, December 5)

*Tuesday, December 6: Small-Group Paper Meetings*

- Come see me during designated hours to discuss your paper. Bring whatever you have been working on.

*Thursday, December 8: Exam Review and Course Conclusion*

- Read: article for final exam (TBA; will be posted in Blackboard in the final exam folder)
- In class: exam review
- Complete: final research proposal paper, due 9:30 am Monday, December 12

### **Final exam arrangements TBA**

## 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/termpaperguide.php>.
- 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.

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, but you are still strongly encouraged to think about all of the blog post questions, 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/>

Career Development Center: <http://www.ric.edu/careerdevelopment/>

\*\*\*Your tuition pays for these resources. **Use them!**

### *Course Learning Outcomes*

This course is designed to meet learning outcomes of the Sociology and Justice Studies programs<sup>1</sup>:

- An understanding of the relations between theory and research
- An appreciation of the research process
- An ability to do sociological research
- An ability to articulate sociological analyses in oral and written form
- A familiarity with the occupational opportunities provided by sociological skills and understanding
- To prepare future leaders both in the academic and applied setting
- To emphasize the relevance of literature and research to practice in the field

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/degreeList.php> and <http://www.ric.edu/sociology/programJSTD.php>.