

## WRITING PROJECT

### Constructing a Sociological Research Paper

**EVALUATION:** This collection of graded projects is worth 40% of your overall course grade. In order to receive maximum credit for this project, all requirements listed below must be met. Annotated bibliographies, formal outlines, and final research papers will each be evaluated using rubrics (available in Pilot) designed to specify the student's writing strengths and weaknesses. Writing Project Assignments that are submitted late will be graded last, and will be subject to a 10% grade deduction.

**PART 1: SOCIAL PROBLEM SELECTION.** By the end of the third week, each student will have selected a social problem of interest that will be used as a point of focus for the remainder of the writing project. Selections will be peer reviewed in class, and together we will collaborate to cement your social problem selection into a working research question.

**PART 2: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES.** Each student will submit annotated bibliographies for *three (3)* sources in one Microsoft Word document, all in APA format. All three sources will be relevant to your selected social problem and research question.

**PART 3: FORMAL OUTLINE.** Your formal outline will include substantive subject matter for all of the items listed in Part 4 below. Each main bullet point in your outline (introduction, literature review, data and methods, theory, conclusion) shall have multiple subsections below it. The last subsection of your introduction will be your research question. Outlines will contain a minimum of 2-3 pages of content (not counting the cover or references pages), and will include *five (5)* academic peer-reviewed sources.

#### PART 4: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER.

##### **Introduction:**

Provide general background on your social problem. Explain why you consider it to be a *social* rather *personal* problem. Use one citation that highlights the nature of your social problem, and explain how it will be used as a connecting thread between the remaining sections of your paper. Explain the value of using sociology and your sociological imagination to understand social life as it relates to your social problem. Cite any sources you use (direct quotes or paraphrases) in APA format. The last sentence of your introduction will be your research question.

##### **Research Question:**

Your research question will be a concise and narrow (one sentence, in the general form of IV->DV) explanation of the relationship that you will be exploring in the rest of your paper. Remember, your research question will be included in your paper as the last sentence of your introduction.

**Literature Review:** Conduct a review of relevant academic literature pertaining to your social problem. Compare and contrast key arguments and theories from similar sources, and analyze and explain key differences/conflicts between dissimilar sources. Cite any sources you use (direct quotes or paraphrases) in APA format.

**Data and Methods:** Show how relevant, widespread or significant your selected social problem is by reviewing the sampling and method(s) of data collection used in your academically relevant sources. Include information about, and your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of, each of the following from all of your sources: sample size, choice of methodological approach, and important findings. Cite any sources you use (direct quotes or paraphrases) in APA format.

**Theory:** Consider and discuss your social problem through the lenses of the three central sociological theoretical paradigms – functionalism, social conflict, and symbolic interactionism. Which one best explains your social problem? Discuss the best fit, then compare and contrast this perspective to the other two paradigms. Remember that a well-argued theory section not only advances one position, it also argues against the other core theoretical perspectives.

**Conclusion:** Restate your research question, and express any conclusions you have reached throughout the course of preparing your research paper. This is the section in which you can express your personal opinions/experiences about the subject. Include ideas for how future research into this social problem may be conducted. Discuss potential applications to policy that may impact the social problem of focus (e.g. changes in law, institutional procedures).

Final research papers will contain a minimum of 4-5 pages of content (not counting the cover or references pages), and will include at least *seven (7)* academic peer-reviewed sources.

**MECHANICS:** In constructing your project, be sure to follow these instructions:

1. **Use APA format.** That means proper punctuation and style for in-text citations, and appropriately formatted references pages noting all sources of information contained in your project (text, books, the internet, class notes, or other sources), whether directly quoted or indirectly paraphrased. Running headers and abstract pages are encouraged, but not required, for this project.
2. **Cover page.** You **MUST** always include a cover page with the following items: a creative/informative title, your name, instructor name, course name and section number (SOC2000-xx), and project due date.
3. **Format.** This project is to be typewritten, with one inch margins, page numbering (except the cover page), font size 12, and double line spacing. Appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar are considered in the grading of this project.

**ASSISTANCE:** The instructor and graduate teaching assistant are available to students for a general review of assignments for completeness and satisfying project requirements prior to the due date of the project.

**HOWEVER...** Questions about the use of APA format and other technical writing issues are to be directed to the WSU Writing Center (775-4186), WSU Writers Hotline (775-2158), and/or style manuals (available on-line on the WSU library homepage, and available in hard copy in the reference area of the WSU library). **THIS PROJECT REQUIRES APA FORMATTING AND CITATION STYLE.** A link to the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University, one of the most up-to-date APA style guides available, can be found in Pilot.

**WARNING:** *The use or copying of another student's work, or of work that is not your own, is a form of plagiarism and may be subject to academic disciplinary action. Cite the sources of your information throughout your paper for both paraphrased and directly quoted material. All student submissions may be processed through TurnItIn.com at the sole discretion of the instructor.*