

Prompt

Experimental Research Proposal

SOC 201 - Research Methods

Due: May 9, 2017

Assignment Overview

Your assignment is to write a research proposal that includes a **review of the current literature** on a topic of your choosing, a discussion of major **theoretical paradigms** that address your research question, clearly articulated **hypotheses**, a description of the experimental method you've chosen to test your hypotheses, and a discussion of the **significance of your research for your wider field** of study.

I've broken down the proposal into five milestones. We will periodically meet in groups during class to review everyone's progress for the first four milestones. The fifth and final milestone is the actual due date of the final proposal. I will not be collecting or grading anything until the final proposal is due at the end of the semester. However, this is a golden opportunity to seek help from me and/or your peers during class hours. You will be provided a grading rubric and detailed instructions for each constituent element of the proposal at least a week before each in-class group meeting.

Paper format: While any standardized format of your choosing is acceptable (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), you must be consistent in the format you use. The *suggested* length of the final proposal is between 2,000 and 3,000 words but remember quality is more important than quantity.

Submission Format: The final proposal is to be handed to me, in person, no later than the end of the class the day the assignment is due. Any assignments handed in after the class period has ended will be docked 50%.

Grading: There is a 5% extra credit opportunity for those who complete the assignment in the \LaTeX word processor and who email me their source code the day the assignment is due. I will hold an out-of-class seminar on \LaTeX literacy if three or more people express interest later in the semester.

Group Review Calendar

0.1 Research Question

February, 21 - Group Meeting #1

This is perhaps the most important step in the research process. The quality of your research question will determine the significance of the contribution your research makes to the wider field. Be prepared to share with the classmates your research question along with two competing theories that speak to your topic (1-3 sentences for each theory). You must obtain approval of your research question from me via email no later than a week after the first group meeting (feel free to send your approval requests before the in-class group meeting).

0.2 Literature Review

March , 14 - Group Meeting #2

Literature reviews provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on a particular topic and they allow the author to signal their command of the major theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. They also allow space for the author to relate their study to the ongoing theoretical debates in their field of inquiry. For the in-class group meeting have the first draft of your literature review completed (600-1000 words) along with a bibliography of sources used (a quality literature review will include at least five peer-reviewed journal articles).

0.3 Theory and Hypotheses

April , 4 - Group Meeting #3

The theory section should transition smoothly from the discussion of the wider theoretical literature that was undertaken in the previous section (literature review) and bring the reader's attention back to the original research question. This is the space where the author either showcases their own theory or identifies a prevailing theory that addresses their research question. The hypothesis section, which follows the theory section, is where the author first introduces their null and alternative hypotheses and discusses the how the paper's theory helps form these hypotheses. For the in-class group meeting have the first draft of your theory section completed (300-600 words) and have your null and alternative hypotheses written down and ready to be shared. In the final proposal, the hypothesis section should be between 300-400 words long.

0.4 Research Methods

April , 23 - Group Meeting #4

This is the section of the paper where the author introduces their experimental design, which

includes a discussion of the operationalization and measurement of the experiment's treatment effect and outcome, sampling methods, and, of course, the particular method of statistical analysis. This is the only opportunity the author has to convince the reader that the methodological approach they've chosen to test their hypotheses will yield acceptable evidence either in favor or against their alternative hypothesis. For the in-class group meeting have a 1-2 page outline of your research methods section ready to share.

0.5 Final Proposal

May ,9 - Hard copy due in class

What remains is a 300-400 word introduction, editing, and formatting. It is your responsibility to complete what remains and assemble it with the constituent elements we completed throughout the semester. Remember, this is only a proposal and does not include analysis and conclusion sections. The final proposal should range between 2000-3000 words, although this is simply a suggestion. You will be graded on the quality of your proposal and not its length.