

DRUGS & SOCIETY

Research Project

One of the hallmarks of sociology is that when we have questions about the social world we have the tools to go out and find the answers to our questions. In this class, as you are introduced to the debates and misconceptions about drugs, drug use and drug regulation, you will undoubtedly have many questions. This project will provide you with the opportunity to work with other students to try to answer questions that you have.

There are many ways to approach this project – and any social science method is legitimate. You might consider going somewhere (like a series of parties, 12-step meetings, a rehab facility or the drug court program) and conduct a series of observations. Alternatively, you could select a group of people and either interview or survey them. The only limitation is that you avoid project ideas in which you might put yourself at risk of injury or arrest. So, you can't go and observe students engaging in pot-smoking, because this behavior is illegal. You could though interview students and ask them questions about pot-smoking.

NOTE: Since this is a sociology class, your project should be focused on a sociological question and use social science methods. Please see me in advance if you are unsure that your project fits these criteria.

For the early portions of this project (proposal and data collection) you will work in small groups¹. The final portion of the project (the final paper) will be submitted individually. This strategy will allow you gather a large amount of data, will allow you to divide the bulk of the labor among group members, but will also place the responsibility for the final paper on you as an individual.

You will have some time in class to work on this project, but you should expect to do most of the project planning all of the data collection outside of class. Each member should expect to do about 5 hours of data collection. So, depending on the data collection method you choose, each member should do 5 hours of field observation; 5 1-hour interviews (or 10 30-minute interviews); or 20 surveys.

A few notes on group work:

Group work can work well if every member contributes equally and consistently. Each of you is responsible for communicating regularly with your members and taking responsibility for knowing what your group is working on. (Claiming to not know what your group is working on or what you should be doing is unacceptable. If steps are unclear, take initiative in your group to be a leader and assign tasks.)

One way to make group work effective is to (1) assign specific tasks to each group member at each meeting and (2) set clear deadlines for when work should be completed. I encourage you to document the task distribution and deadlines in email.

If one group member is not carrying their weight, you should talk with me about the problem (and be prepared to make your case with evidence – such as emails). When you turn in your data, I will also ask you to fill out a report in which you tell me about how your group worked together. In regard to the group assignments, I do reserve the right to grade a group members differently based on their exceptional or inadequate contributions.

Project Requirements

All 4 parts of this project will be submitted electronically on Blackboard. Computer/internet problems will not be accepted as legitimate excuses for lateness. I advise you to avoid working at the last minute! All late assignments will be penalized 10 points per day (including weekends).

¹ If you would prefer to do this project individually, please see me so that we can work out a plan for your project.

Part 1: Project Proposal

Grade Criteria: 5 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: September 16

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to begin strategizing about your project early on in the semester. You will follow the standard format of a Human Subjects Review Board proposal (I will provide a template for your group to follow). In brief, your proposal will address the following issues:

1. Description of Project (Research question & method)
2. Description of Subjects
3. Description of Subject Participation
4. Ethical Issues
5. Recruitment of subjects
6. Confidentiality/Anonymity of Responses
7. Debriefing
8. Compensatory Follow-up
9. Consent form

Required Meeting: After you submit your paper each will be required to meet with me after class (you will sign up for a time) to talk about your project. These meetings are an excellent opportunity for you to get help before you start collecting data. Because of the importance of these meetings, you will not receive a grade for Part I until our meeting is complete. If you change/refine your proposal based on our meeting, I will allow you to edit and resubmit this first paper for a higher grade. You will have one week from the date of our meeting to make such changes.

Part 2: Data

Grade Criteria: 5 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: October 5

You will submit all of your data and your signed consent forms (if required).

Part 3: Peer Review

Grade Criteria: 10 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: Oct 23

You will submit a complete draft of your paper on Blackboard **by 5 PM on Friday, October 23**. The more complete your paper the better your feedback is likely to be. However, it is better to turn in an underdeveloped draft than nothing at all. **In class on Monday, October 26**, you will exchange papers with another student and you will provide each other feedback using a form that I provide. You will fill out the feedback form and submit it online **by 4 PM on Wednesday, October 28**.

You will receive half of your credit for bringing a printed draft to class and half of your credit for the quality of the feedback you provide to your fellow student.

NOTE: NO LATE DRAFTS ACCEPTED & ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY – Because this assignment involves the entire class, late drafts will not be accepted. If you do not turn your draft in on time **or** if you do not show up in class **you will receive a grade of zero (0)** for this portion of the project.

Part 4: Final Paper**Grade Criteria:** 25 Percent of Final Grade**Date Due:** November 18

You will write a paper that analyzes your data in light of your research question. This paper will look like an abbreviated journal article. Thus, you should use formal language (avoid first person, contractions, slang, etc.). You will also need to include at 6 academic sources beyond the materials provided to you in this course.

Format of paper:

1. Introduction: Provide some background on your topic.
2. Research Question: What was your research question? Why is this question important? What did you expect to find?
3. Methods: How did you conduct your research?
4. Findings: What did you find? How did your research question evolve? Did you see what you expected?
5. Analysis: How do you interpret your findings in light of this course and your research?
6. Conclusion: What are the implications of your findings? If you had more time/money/resources what else would you do?

Audience – Assume that your reader does not know much about this topic. Be clear. Define your terms.

Evidence – Use specific details from your field notes as evidence to support your arguments.

Length – Your paper should be a minimum of 8 pages. (Penalties will be incurred for being too short, using large/small font, and overly adjusting margins.)

Citations – Your paper should be properly cited using APA format. Use in-text citations to support claims and statements. All cited sources should appear in the works cited page. DO NOT “pad” the bibliography with citations not referenced in the text. Avoid quoting me directly in your paper.

Headings – I encourage you to use headings (“Methods,” “Findings,” etc.) in the same way that you see these headings in journal articles. This practice will help you to (1) keep your paper organized and (2) make it clear to me that you have included all of the required sections.

If you are concerned about your grade in this class, then this project should be a priority for you. I encourage you to get help from as many places as possible. Meet with me, get feedback from your peers, and go to the writing center. The more effort you put in, the better your final project will be. I promise.

Name: _____

All responses to this questionnaire are confidential! I will use this information to assign each of you to groups that will work well. However, I make no promises about accommodating your specific requests. And, remember, that you must take responsibility to make group work go well.

What topic(s) are you most interested in for the research project?

What kind of study would you most like to do? (e.g. field observation, survey, interview)

Which of the two above issues (subject or method) is most important to you?

In thinking about this project, what strengths do you bring to the group?

What do you think are your weaknesses?

Is there anyone in this class that you would really like to work with?

Is there anyone you'd prefer not to work with?

Is there anything else you want me to know about you?