Welcome to EVST 399 / SOAN 300! This course teaches you how to design research for your Senior Capstone, Honors Project, or Masters.

Research is a complicated enterprise, but not as complicated as many think. Designing research projects can be broken down into 6 key steps. Each of these involves several decisions, both practical and theoretical. This course covers the basics, at a level suitable for undergraduate majors in environmental studies, sociology, and anthropology. From the rudiments of epistemology to the practice of research design, it introduces the choices you have to make, as you seek to learn systematically about our world.

We will consider the following topics, among others:

- the difference between a research topic and a research question, and how to develop your topic into a good question (step 1);
- how to choose a logical structure for your research (step 2);
- the relationship between research questions and the types of data that can answer them (step 3);
- the kinds of data-gathering methods suitable for capturing particular types of data (step 4);
- the proper choice of research sites or samples for answering your research question (step 5);
- ways to analyze the data that these methods produce (step 6).

By the end of the course, students should know a good deal more about research than they do at the beginning. They will also learn a good deal more about scholarship!

Overview

We will spend the first 4 weeks of the semester focusing on research design principles. We will spend the central part of the semester exploring various data-gathering methods and learning to analyze the data that results. We will become familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of these various methods. Each student will then prepare a formal research proposal, outlining a self-designed research project. After critique, students will revise these proposals for public presentation. The course fulfills the University’s Writing Across the Curriculum WB requirement.

Major assignments

We will engage in a series of activities, each designed to help you learn.

- Nine exercises to familiarize you with professional literature in your fields.
- Seven exercises that show you how to collect and analyze data.
- A six-step process to lead you from a possible research topic to a fully designed research proposal. Done well, this will give you a proposal you can use for your Senior Capstone, Honors Research, or for a future Masters Degree.
- Special training in research ethics, that allows you to submit research proposals to the Redlands IRB.
- Two exams: a midterm and a final.
- Training for giving stellar public presentations.

Prof. Jim Spickard,
Professor of Sociology

Class Meetings
MW 9:30-10:50am
Larsen Hall 224

Office Hours
MT 3-4:30
TTh 11-noon & by appointment

This course introduces Environmental Studies and Sociology/Anthropology majors to the basic elements of research design and to several of the data gathering and data analysis methods that are used in their disciplines. If all goes well, by the end of the course students will have a draft research design for their Senior Projects.

Full Online Syllabus & Website at:
http://EVST399.coolsociology.net
or
http://SOAN300.coolsociology.net
Schedule:

Topic #1: Research Design
1/9: Introduction to research design
1/11: Step 1: Finding a research question
1/16: Searching the Literature
1/18: Step 2: Choosing a logical structure
1/25: Step 4: Choosing a data-collection method
1/30: Step 5: Choosing a data-collection site

Topic #2: Working with Data
2/1: Step 6: Choosing a methods of data analysis
2/6, 8, 13: Working with economic, demographic, and organizational data
2/15, 20, 22: Working with survey data

-------------- Spring Break --------------

3/6: MIDTERM EXAM

Topic #3: Interview Data
3/8: Introduction to Interviewing
3/13: Constructing an interview protocol
3/15: Interview skills
3/20: Working with qualitative data: coding

Topic #4: Other Data Collection Methods
3/22: Ethnography
3/27: Action research for environmental practice

Topic #5: Real-Life Research
3/29: Guest Speaker #1
4/3: Guest Speaker #2
4/5: Guest Speaker #3

Topic #6: Your Proposal
4/10: Reporting research
4/12 (evening): Public presentation of your research proposals

Research Design Project

Steps:

1. Four Topic Ideas: (due 1/25)
   - Identify four possible research topics that you would find interesting
   - Outline each in about a page of text (250 words each; 1000 words in all)
   - Over the following couple of weeks, you will then negotiate with me to choose a project that is appropriate for senior-level undergraduate research

2. Preliminary Design Outline: (due 2/20)
   - A relatively complete outline of your chosen project. (About 750 words: 3 typed pages)

3. Extended Design Outline: (due 3/8)
   - A thorough and detailed outline of your chosen project. (About 1250 words: 5 typed pages)

4. Proposal Draft: (due 3/29)
   - This draft should be as complete as you can make it, and of the quality that you typically turn in as a final project for other classes. Both I and a student partner will read it, giving you feedback. (Expect this to be about 10 pages long: 2500 words)

5. Your Comments on Another Student’s Draft: (due 4/5)
   - (2-3 pages; 500-750 words)

6. Final Proposal: (oral & written) (due 4/13)
   - This is an extensive, professional-level revision of your draft. Typical proposals require major rewrites for clarity. (About 1250 additional words, assuming that you salvage about half of your previous draft’s language.)
   - Present your project to the public as a Meso-PechaKucha Presentation.
   - This will be a special evening presentation at 7pm, Wednesday, April 12th. Bring your friends!

more information at: http://EVST399.coolsociology.net
**Help & Resources**

*If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed…*

1. **Make an appointment with me**  
   You are welcome to email me, or make an appointment to meet, ideally during my office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way.

2. **Use online resources**  
   On the website, I’ve posted a series of guides to our assignments, links to useful information, and information about books you can read. Check it out!

3. **Get to know the Reference Desk**  
   Our library staff is eager to help guide your research and to orient you to our library’s paper and online resources.

4. **Use the Writing Center**  
   The Writing Center is a free resource at any stage of the writing process, from getting started to revising drafts to polishing a final essay. You can make an appointment online at [https://redlands.mywconline.com/](https://redlands.mywconline.com/)

5. **Visit the Academic Success Center**  
   In some cases, students benefit from tutoring or one-on-one intervention. The Academic Success Center offers (free) tutoring in many subjects, and can also help you with general study, note-taking, or textbook reading strategies. They are located in Student Development Center the lower floor of the Armacost Library.

---

### Expectations, Grades, and Other Matters

**Regarding plagiarism:** The short version is: **Do your own work.** You may borrow ideas from others, so long as you cite them properly and then extend or evaluate their analysis. You cannot clip and paste text from the Internet into your papers and pass it off as your own. You cannot turn in a paper that someone else has written. Plagiarized work or exam cheating will automatically get a zero on the assignment and may cause you to fail the class. The University has an Academic Honesty Policy, which you can find in the latest [University Catalog](http://evst399.coolsociology.net).

**Technology Use in Class:** Research has demonstrated convincingly that students who try to take notes electronically learn much less than do those who take notes by hand. Therefore, unless you have a documented accommodation, **do not use laptops, tablets, phones, etc. for note-taking.** Bring a paper notebook, have it on the desk in front of you, and use it. You may bring your other equipment, but leave it in your book bag under the table. **Exception: a tablet, if you purchased an electronic textbook.** Unless you are a parent who needs to be available to small children, turn off your cell phone.

**Grading Standards:** I am a relatively tough grader, because I think undergraduates can do excellent work; we just seldom ask. I’m asking. Here are my standards:

- **A.** You did everything I could possibly ask of you, and you did it extremely well. You worked very hard, learned a great deal, and showed conspicuous intelligence. The quality of your work was outstanding.
- **B.** You did all the work, and you did it well. You worked hard and learned a good deal. The quality of your work was good.
- **C.** You did all the work. It is clear that you learned a number of things, though those things may not hang together in a systematic and critical understanding of the course material. The quality of your work was adequate.
- **D.** You did most of the work, including all the major course requirements. You may have learned some things, but it is not clear that you learned anything important. The quality of your work was less than adequate.
- **F.** You have demonstrated an obstinate ignorance. You did not complete the course requirements. You have proved unwilling or unable to do college level work in this subject area.

### For More Information:

**Visit the Course Website at:**

- [http://evst399.coolsociology.net](http://evst399.coolsociology.net)
- [http://soan300.coolsociology.net](http://soan300.coolsociology.net)

---

### Accommodations

If you have a documented learning (or other) issue, and you need a reasonable accommodation so you can learn effectively, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. In almost every case, we can design something that will work.