

Soc 8090:
Secrets of Successful Research Proposals: A Hand-On Workshop

Writing Research Proposals

Fall 2019

2:30 – 5:00 Wednesdays

Room: 1183 SST

Instructor: **Phyllis Moen**

phylmoen@umn.edu

Office Hours: 1123 SST
Tuesdays
2pm - 3pm (or by appointment)

Course Description and Goals:

This course provides insights and hands-on help in developing a research proposal requesting funding from an external foundation or agency or a within-university opportunity. It will also be helpful to students writing proposals for their dissertation. Research proposals are very similar, whether one is seeking funding or a PhD. This is a collaborative project involving writing and reviewing each piece of a proposal draft and rewriting each piece - several times. The central requirement of the course is **participation**. Skills to be learned in this workshop include; clarification and communication of ideas orally and in writing; writing in active, interesting voice; ways of making an argument; focusing on big picture in research proposal as well as on exact techniques; building and aligning questions/theories/data/methods/funding possibilities; broadening issue while simultaneously narrowing scope; and **persistence**.

Course Requirements:

What class participants will need is a **research question**. What do you want to know? They will also need a proposed **method**. How do you plan on investigating your questions? It would help if you could find two or three good articles sort of addressing your question – but not quite. The central requirement of the course is **participation**. We learn by doing and by observing others. This is a collaborative project involving writing and reviewing each piece of a proposal draft and rewriting each piece – several times. Attendance is critical, as is offering suggestions to others in the class, and willingness to **revise, revise, revise**. We are literally going to make up research projects starting sometimes with vague ideas. They will get sharper and better.

Process:

In making suggestions to others in the class like as everyone develops their own proposal, the goal is to build trust and support by talking about what we like, and what we'd like to see, not what we don't.

Skills to be Learned in this Workshop include;

- Clarification and communication of ideas orally and in writing
- Writing in active, interesting voice
- Ways of making an argument
- Focusing on big picture in research as well as on exact techniques
- Building and aligning questions/theories/data/methods/funding possibilities
- Broadening issue while simultaneously narrowing scope

Course Plan:

Week 1

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

Introductions

Assignment: Write your question and a paragraph about your proposed research. This is a first draft. Think about who your audience is – NSF? Your committee?

Issues we will discuss: How to sharpen question? *Is it researchable?* Why is it important to you? What do you know about what your audience wants?

Week 2

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

What is your research question? Who is audience?

What is your revised research question and why does it matter?

Assignment: Revised question and three reasons why the study to address it is important -- to society, to science, to theory (whatever you see as why it is) -- and needs doing.

Issues we will discuss: Is rationale convincing? How could it be made more convincing? What are ways to further define research question and components? Does it map on to issues funding agencies or foundations or your committee members care about? How can it be made to “fit” their agendas or expectations?

Week 3

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

What do we know already?

Assignment: Write 1 – 2 page description of what is already known about topic and theories/hypothesis raised in 5 – 10 articles on it. Define and operationalize key concepts you will be addressing, as well as possible hypotheses.

Issues we will discuss: What is the evidence to date? What are theoretical underpinnings? What are shortcomings of existing research? From concepts to variables and vice versa. What are we measuring? What do we want to measure?

Week 4

Wednesday, September 25, 2019 NO CLASS

Work on lit review

Week 5

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

Designing Research:

How to do it?

Assignment: Draft of (1 page) outline of conceptual /theoretical/orienting model.

Issues we will discuss: Why is a logic model helpful? How do we think about relationships? Causality?

Week 6

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

Designing Research:

Sample and Scope?

Assignment: Define limitations and scope, as well as why proposed research is still useful.

Issues we will discuss: Collecting data, using secondary data. Which best addresses your issue?

Week 7

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Designing Research:

What are specific aims, methods to address them, and why?

Assignment: Describe aims, methods and rationale for them.

Issues we will discuss: Remember expectations and requirements of audience. What are strengths/weakness of qualitative or quantitative data? How to defend choice of method?

Week 8

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Designing Research:

What can you test? Two threats to causality.

Assignment - Revisit Model and Methods: Are methods, logic model, aims a good fit? Modify hypotheses, model, aims, methods accordingly.

Issues we will discuss: How to be clear and consistent at every step.

Week 9

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Designing Research:

Ethical and Human Subjects Issues?

Assignment: Draft an IRB document. What are potential ethical pitfalls for you?

Issues we will discuss: What is ethical treatment of subjects? Why is privacy a key concern? What to do/not do? Writing about human subjects.

Week 10

Wednesday, November 4, 2019

Designing Research:

Expected findings and timeline

Assignment: Write what you think you will find. Any preliminary findings from pilot work? Refine model, methods, and hypotheses.

Issues we will discuss: Can you use published data (census?, other studies?) to set the stage? What are you an expert in? Again, why is this study important?

Week 11

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Budget: Guests Ed Sumner (Sociology Department) and Gina Rumore (ISRDI)

Assignment: Write preliminary budget and rationale

Issues we will discuss: What is a legitimate expense? What is a reasonable budget? What are appropriate rationales?

Week 12

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Putting it Together

Assignment: Rough draft of whole proposal – write abstract!

Issues we will discuss: Why is abstract so important? What about title? What about concluding paragraph?

Week 13

Wednesday, November 27, 2019 – THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Week 14

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Elevator Speech (who, what, where, why and how)

Assignment: Slide Presentation, final paragraph, revised abstract, and Elevator Speech. Submit “final” proposal (even though it is still a work in progress!)

Issues we will discuss: Getting out of weeds to the big picture?

Week 15

Wednesday, December 11, 2019 Elevator Speech (who, what, where, why and how)

Assignment: Slide Presentation, final paragraph, revised abstract, and Elevator Speech. Submit “final” proposal (even though it is still a work in progress!)

Issues we will discuss: Getting out of weeds to the big picture?

RESOURCE MATERIALS

U of M – CLA Research Support & Resources

<https://cla.umn.edu/research-creative-work/research-support-resources>

Research Methods Essential toolkit

HHS.gov – U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (Human Subjects)

Brochures for the Public – <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/education/brochures/index.html>

Becoming a Research Volunteer: It's your decision (brochure) –
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/education/brochures/3panelfinal.pdf>

Training Options link – webinars and training videos -
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/education/training/index.html>

Link to free online training NIH Office of Extramural Research -
<https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>

Brandeis University Human Subjects in Research (IRB) link
<http://www.brandeis.edu/ora/compliance/irb/101/index.html>

General Overview of Methods

What is program evaluation: A set of beginners guides to Program Evaluation and Social Research

Methods <http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/BasicguidesHandouts.html>

This set includes brief introduction guides to logic models, surveys, focus groups, establishing cause.

Logic models are really the process of establishing the key questions in research:

1. What is supposed to happen, or what's your hypothesis, or what is the intervention supposed to do, exactly.
2. What data do you need to answer the first question.
3. How to collect data to answer the question.

e-Source <http://www.esourceresearch.org/> From the US National Institute of Health. This site says "Inside you will find 20 interactive chapters with authoritative answers to methodological questions on behavioral and social science research." Basically, how they say research should be done.

Statistics: Power from data. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/power-pouvoir/toc-tdm/5214718-eng.htm> has sections describing data collection methods, questionnaires.

Educational research

lectures http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/dr_johnson/2lectures.htm
rief outlines of general methods, including qualitative, historical, statistical analysis, and so on.

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Anol Bhattacharjee Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3/ from 2012. On line text book, complete book.

Surveys

What is a survey <http://www.whatisasurvey.info/> This "booklet is written primarily for non-specialists and is free of charge. Its overall goal is to improve survey literacy among individuals who participate in ...Surveys".

Presenting data

Making data meaningful <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/writing/> from the UN Economic Commission of Europe. How to write, present and communicate about data.

Communicating Statistics <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/presentation-and-dissemination/> "This page brings together resources about communicating and disseminating official statistics, including guidance documents and case studies"

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS POLICY

GRADES: University academic achievement is graded under two systems: A-F (with pluses and minuses) and S-N. Choice of grading system and course level (1xxx/3xxx/4xxx) is indicated on the registration website; changes in grade scale may not be made after the second week of the semester. Some courses may be taken under only one system; limitations are identified in the course listings. The Department of Sociology requires A-F registration in courses required for the major/minor. University regulations prescribe the grades that will be reported on your transcript.

- A Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements (4.00 grade points)
- A- 3.67 grade points
- B+ 3.33 grade points
- B Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements (3.00 grade points)
- B- 2.67 grade points
- C+ 2.33 grade points
- C Achievement that meets the basic course requirements in every respect (2.00 grade points)
- C- 1.67 grade points
- D+ 1.33 grade points
- D Achievement worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements (1.00 grade point)
- F Performance that fails to meet the basic course requirements (0 grade points)
- S Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.
- N No credit. Its use is now restricted to students not earning an S on the S-N grade base
- I Incomplete, a temporary symbol assigned when the instructor has a "reasonable expectation" that you 1) can successfully complete unfinished work on your own no later than one year from the last day of classes and 2) believes that legitimate reasons exist to justify extending the deadline for course completion. The instructor may set date conditions for make-up work. If a course is not completed as prescribed or not made up as agreed within the year, the I will lapse to an F if registered on the A-F grade base or an N if registered on the S-N grade base.
- W Official withdrawal from a course after the end of the second week of the semester. You must file a course cancellation request before the end of the sixth week of the semester to ensure that the W, rather than the F, will be formerly entered on your record.

FINAL EXAMINATIONS (see schedule on the Calendar web site at <http://onestop.umn.edu/onestop/Calendars/FinalExams.html>): You are required to take final examinations at the scheduled times. Under certain circumstances, however, you may request final examination schedule adjustment in your college office. Instructors are obligated to schedule make-up examinations within the

final examination period for students who have three final examinations within a 16-hour period. Instructors also are encouraged to reschedule examinations for students with religious objections to taking an examination on a given day. You must submit your request for an adjustment in your schedule at least two weeks before the examination period begins. For assistance in resolving conflicts, call the CLA Student Information Office at 625-2020. If you miss a final, an F or N is recorded. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make up the examination. Final examinations may be rescheduled by the instructor only through the official procedure for that purpose (as noted on the above web page). Final examinations may not be scheduled for the last day of class or earlier or for Study Day. If an examination is rescheduled at the instructor's request, and you have an examination conflict because of it, you are entitled to be given the final examination at an alternative time within the regularly scheduled examination period for that semester.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: As a CLA student, you are responsible for attending class and for ascertaining the particular attendance requirements for each class or department. You should also learn each instructor's policies concerning make-up of work for absences. Instructors and students may consult the CLA Classroom, Grading, and Examination Procedures Handbook for more information on these policies (<http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cqep/>).

COURSE PERFORMANCE AND GRADING: Instructors establish ground rules for their courses in conformity with their department policies and are expected to explain them at the first course meeting. This includes announcement of office hours and location, the kind of help to be expected from the instructor and teaching assistants, and tutorial services, if available. The instructor also describes the general nature of the course, the work expected, dates for examinations and paper submissions, and expectations for classroom participation and attendance. Instructors determine the standards for grading in their classes and will describe expectations, methods of evaluation, and factors that enter into grade determination. The special conditions under which an incomplete (I) might be awarded also should be established. The college does not permit you to submit extra work to raise your grade unless all students in the class are afforded the same opportunity.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: You are entitled to a good learning environment in the classroom. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students will be asked to leave (the policies regarding student conduct are outlined in the CLA Classroom, Grading, and Examination Procedures on-line at <http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cqep/>).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: University instructors may restrict or prohibit the use of personal electronic devices in his or her classroom, lab, or any other instructional setting. For the complete policy, visit: <http://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>

SCHOLASTIC CONDUCT: The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

*Scholastic Dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. **Students cannot evade (intentionally or unintentionally) a grade sanction by withdrawing from a course before or after the misconduct charge is reported. This also applies to late withdrawals, including discretionary late cancellation (also known as the "one-time-only drop").*** For the complete policy, visit:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/>.

A REMINDER OF RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
*** SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES ***

GRADE INFORMATION: Grades are due in the Office the Registrar within 3 business days after the final examination. No information regarding grades will be released by the department office staff to anyone except designated personnel in Records and college offices. Students may access their own grades through their computer account. They may do this by following the directions on the One Stop web site at <http://onestop.umn.edu/>.

INCOMPLETES: It is the instructor's responsibility to specify conditions under which an Incomplete (I) grade is assigned. Students should refer to the course syllabus and talk with the instructor as early as possible if they anticipate not completing the course work. Coursework submitted after the final examination will generally be evaluated down unless prior arrangements are made in writing by the instructor. University policy states that if completion of the work requires the student to attend class in substantial part a second time, assigning an "I" grade is NOT appropriate. Incompletes are appropriate only if the student can make up the coursework independently with the same professor.

MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS: Arrangements for special examinations must be made directly with the instructor who taught the course and who is responsible for approving and supervising the examination or making individual arrangements. Circumstances for missing an exam include, but are not necessarily limited to: verified illness, participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University, serious family emergencies, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and religious observances. It is the responsibility of the student to notify faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible.

GRADE CHANGES: Grades properly arrived at are not subject to renegotiation unless all students in the class have similar opportunities. Students have the right to check for possible clerical errors in the assignment of grades by checking with the instructor and/or teaching assistant.

Students with justifiable complaints about grades or classroom procedures have recourse through well-established grievance procedures. You are expected to confer first with the course instructor. If no satisfactory solution is reached, the complaint should be presented in writing to the department Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising (909 Soc Sci). If these informal processes fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, other formal procedures for hearing and appeal can be invoked. See the departmental advisor in 923 Social Sciences to explore options.

DISABILITY SERVICES: Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. For more info contact Disability Resource Center in 180 McNamara.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: University policy prohibits sexual harassment as defined in the December 1998 policy statement, available at the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Questions or concerns about sexual harassment should be directed to this office in 419 Morrill Hall.

SOCIOLOGY PROGRAMS INFORMATION: The Sociology Department offers two options for the Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Science degree. We also have an Honors Program. Students interested in majoring in Sociology should view the online-information session about the major. Further information can be obtained from the following persons and offices or online at <http://cla.umn.edu/sociology>

General information, Sociology Department, 909 Social Sciences - 624-4300

Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising, Bobby Bryant, 923 Social Sciences – 624-4300

Director of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Kathy Hull, 1131 Social Sciences - 624-4339

Sociology Honors Advisor, Professor Joachim Savelsberg, 1144 Social Sciences - 624-0273

Director of Graduate Studies, Professor Jeylan Mortimer, 1014B Social Sciences – 624-4064 and/or

Graduate Program Associate, Becky Drasin, 927 Social Sciences - 624-2093

Undergraduate jobs, internships, volunteer and research opportunities, scholarships, and much more can be found in the Undergraduate Resources site - <https://sociologyundergrad.wordpress.com/>