

Course Project

Options and Instructions

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
SPRING 2016 • Sociology of the Body

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You will be responsible for completing a project synthesizing the information you learn in this course. The final project can be in one of two forms: a research proposal, a formal literature review (ideal for students who are forming an academic paper), or an academic autoethnography. Either option should be about eight-to-ten pages in length and should attend to the relationship between the body and society using academic resources. The goal of this paper is to showcase your mastery of, and critical thinking about, sociological concepts related to the body and embodiment. Your project contains the following parts:

- **The Project Proposal.** Your one-page proposal is due online by 8pm on Monday, February 22.
- **A Peer-Review.** Your nearly completed final draft is due online by 8pm on Monday, April 11. Papers will be returned online by 8pm on Monday, April 18.
- **The Final Paper.** Your final paper is due online by 8pm on April 25. No exceptions.

PART ONE: The Project Proposal

The goal of this brief paper is to “pitch” your project to me (i.e., a proposal, literature review, or an autoethnography). The proposal isn’t your final paper, but it should be well-composed outline of what your project will look like, including relevant thesis statements and research questions. Additionally, your proposal should contain at least three properly-cited references to academic literature. Your single-spaced one-page proposal is due online by 8pm on Monday, February 22. The final project options are as follows:

- **Option One: A Research Project Proposal.** A research proposal is just like an empirical research article without the data collection and results from analysis. It contains a research question, review of the relevant literature, proposed methods section including data, measures, and analysis, and a discussion/conclusion. This option is ideal for advanced students with a background in research methods or for those who are composing senior theses related to the body or embodiment. This option should be about 8 to 10 pages in length. For more about the Research Project Proposal, see [APPENDIX A](#).
- **Option Two: A Review of the Literature.** A Literature review is a comprehensive review of current research that is relevant to your topic/problem/question. The goal is not to summarize paper after paper, but to meaningfully synthesize information by topic/concept from lots of research. A literature review should contain a thesis statement, body, and conclusion. This option should be about 8 to 10 pages in length. For more about the Literature Review, see [APPENDIX B](#).
- **Option Three: A Body Autoethnography.** An autoethnography is an in-depth study of a person’s life who just so also happens to be the author. It challenges the author/subject to analyze a part of their life as it relates, and contributes to, sociological literature. This option should be about 8-10 pages in length. For more about the Body Autoethnography, see [APPENDIX C](#).

PART TWO: Peer Review

Your nearly complete paper is due online by 8pm on Monday, April 11. The next day, I will assign a blinded copy to one of your classmates for peer review. The peer-review process will check for typographical errors, misuse of grammar, completeness, and conceptual understanding and flow. Your review of your classmate's paper is due the following week online by 8pm on Monday, April 18. I will furnish a review sheet prior to the exchange.

PART THREE: The Final Paper

Your final paper is due online by 8pm on April 25. No exceptions.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS:

- All papers should be well-organized and error-free.
- Your paper may NOT include any personal information, like your name, my name, or class information. Papers will be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin software.
- All papers must have one-inch margins and use 12pt Times New Roman font.
- You must use proper citation. If your discipline requires another method of citation, please check with me before you use it.
 - Please cite the authors every time you refer to their work or summarize it (e.g., Barrett 2003); however, you only need to refer to each article once per paragraph.
 - Paper should contain parenthetical citation. That is, you should not write the full title of the article in the body of your paper -- just the author and the year of publication in parentheses [e.g., (Schlenker and Weigold 1992)].
 - Include a formal reference list at the end of your paper (starting on its own page). A reference list is a list of all of the articles you referred to in your work. Here is an example of what a reference looks like in ASA format:
 - Schlenker, Barry R., and Michael F. Weigold. 1992. "Interpersonal Processes Involving Impression Regulation and Management." *Annual Review of Psychology* 43(1): 133-168.
 - ASA Style: http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf

Need help finding academic journals? Research articles? READ APPENDIX D

Need help understanding how research articles work? READ APPENDIX E

APPENDIX A

Option One: Research Proposal Requirements

Social scientific inquiry takes many forms, so if you have a paper format in mind, just bring it to me and I will let you know if your style works for this project. Typically, a paper proposal has five main parts, including: an introduction, literature review, methods (including information on data sources, measures, and analyses), discussion/conclusion, and a list of references. This outline is intended to help you walk through composing a basic research proposal.

I. INTRODUCTION

GOAL: To construct a research question, designate its sociological relevance, as well as its importance society. *Your introduction should be about 500 words in length, or, 1.5 double-spaced pages.* Write a page or two about your broad research question interests. Be sure to consider the following:

1. Briefly state your research topic.
2. Construct a broad research question related to your interests.
 - a. If you're interested in performing quantitative research (i.e., surveys that assess the opinions of ten or more people or secondary data analyses), designate broadly how your variables of interest will relate to each other (i.e. how does church attendance affect perceptions of body size?)
 - b. If you're interested in performing qualitative research (i.e., in-depth interviews, participant observation, or content analysis), designate your guiding questions and population of interest. For example, your *qualitative* research questions might be along the lines of "What guides people's opinions of interracial marriage?" or "How does one's religion/religious beliefs/religiosity guide acceptance of interracial marriage?" In *quantitative* research, we were able to see that these things are related – but we have NO idea about the process by which they relate (or even IF they are REALLY related!).
3. Why is your topic important to study? Is there any benefit or national trends that drive your study? Is it beneficial to you?
4. Explain why your topic is a sociological question.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

GOAL: To retrieve and review research that is relevant to your topic of interest or research question. A literature review meaningfully synthesizes information along various dimensions (listed below). Additionally, a literature review points to gaps or inconsistencies in research that need attention! Keep in mind that existing literature may not cover your topic EXACTLY, but could be related and help form a justification for further inquiry. *Your literature review should be about four to six double-spaced pages and include roughly fifteen (15) peer-reviewed articles from academic journals.* Be sure to consider the following:

1. Your review can synthesize across the following dimensions:
 - a. Timing – How old is previous research? Is it dated? Does it need to be studied again in light of contemporary issues or conditions?
 - b. Variables – What variables have been considered in relation to one another on a topic of research? Should other variables be considered?
 - c. Theoretical perspective – What theoretical perspectives have been used in the past to interpret social phenomena? Would another perspective provide a different or more useful interpretation? How would a "macro" or "micro" perspective interpret the issue differently?

- d. Methodology – How have previous studies collected and analyzed data? Are these procedures methodologically sound? Have important strategies for data collection or analysis and interpretation been overlooked? Have different sets of data yielded different results?
 - e. Emergent research question(s) – Summary statement(s) of testable propositions emerging from the authors’ literature review.
2. Note: you need to group topics together as much as possible: don’t just summarize one author’s work, then another, then another, etc. Stay focused on YOUR topic and what the literature has to say about it...or not!
 3. Conclude your review with one gap or inconsistency that may be sated with your research question.
 - a. For qualitative projects, you’ll need to include testable hypotheses. That is, you need to specify what you think the causal relationships between your IVs and DV(s) are. Use “If-then” statements: “*If*(IV is some state or value) *then* (DV is likely to be some state or value) if you need help getting started.
 - b. For quantitative projects, you’ll need to specify your guiding questions

III. PROPOSED METHODS

GOAL: Accurately report your data, measures, and analysis of that data. *Your methods section should be about two-to-three double-spaced pages in length.* Be sure to consider the following:

DATA: Describe the data you will be using to test or explore your research topic. You should address the following questions:

1. What type of data are you using? Are these primary or secondary data (briefly, what does that mean)?
2. Why this type of data?
3. Who collected the data or who funded its collection?
4. When were the data collected?
5. Are data drawn from an *entire* population or just a sample?
6. From what population did the data come?
7. What is the total sample size (the “n” or number of cases)?
8. Briefly state how the sample size might influence the precision of your results.
9. What kinds of *variables* are in the data set?
10. What are the benefits or drawbacks of using this type of data set (primary, secondary)?
11. What method was used to select cases from this population (e.g., probability or non-probability)?

For QUANTitative proposals (MEASURES and ANALYSES):

MEASURES: Describe how you plan to operationalize and measure the concepts expressed in your research questions. For example, if you want to know about sex or gender differences, how will you measure them? Fatness is a concept, how will you measure it? Be sure to consider the following:

1. Compose a survey of at least ten questions, include a copy of it with your paper (APPENDIX A)
2. Discuss at what level EVERY variable is measured, that is, continuous, categorical (nominal), ordinal, interval, or ratio.
3. Discuss how well your measures reflect your research concepts. For instance, is self-reported health an accurate or valid measure of health? How about depression? Happiness? Some literature says it is and others say it’s not – tell me and use support from previous literature.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY: For this portion, you will tell us about how you will analyze your data. Depending on your project and level of analytic skill, be sure to consider the following:

- a. What is your method of analysis? Why is it appropriate?
- b. What software was used?

For QUALitative proposals (MEASURES and ANALYSES):

MEASURES: Once have constructed your guiding questions, you will need to construct an interview guide (consisting of 10 to 15 questions). This will be your list of questions you ask your respondent. The goal of the interview guide is have a script of questions that you know you want to ask. To goal of these questions are to get stories and not simply opinions that could have been recorded with a self-administered survey. Notice that some probing questions are also included. Note: your guide should be included in an appendix at the end of the paper and not in the main text. After your brief description of your interview guide, simply note that a copy of your guide is located in APPENDIX A. Here is an excerpt from a sample interview guide:

1. What do you consider fat?
2. How would you describe your opinions of fat people?
3. Is one kind of fatness better or more acceptable to you? Why/Why not?
4. Can you think of an instance where it is (or has been) ok? Not ok?
5. Do you think your religious beliefs guide your views of fatness?
6. Can you walk me through a typical ...

ANALYTIC STRATEGY: For this portion of the paper, you will provide a description of how you will be analyzing your data. Be sure to consider the following:

1. What is your method of analysis? Why is it appropriate?

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

GOAL: To formulate a discussion of your findings and/or draw conclusions based on your proposal. Now that you have gone to the literature, identified a gap, formulated research questions and hypotheses, and strategized how to test these hypotheses, you must make sense of it all for the reader. Usually, the main goal of a proposal is to convince someone that your research will be valuable or deserve funding or recognition. *Your discussion/concluding section should be about two-to-three double-spaced pages in length.* Be sure to consider the following:

1. Describe your expected findings how they can relate back to the existing literature you reviewed. Will they be consistent with past literature or refute it?
2. Describe the potential impact of your research. What will you learn? Are there still any unanswered questions?
3. Tell us about WHY your research is IMPORTANT.
4. Describe of the strengths and weaknesses of your research. Please include a few lines on how your findings might be strengthened with more or different quantitative OR qualitative data. Keep in mind the STRENGTHS of each type of analyses as you think of ways to strengthen your research. Are there still any unanswered questions?
 - a. Keep in mind, when you refer to the literature from your lit review, you MUST STILL PROVIDE A CITATION FOR IT.

APPENDIX B

Option Two: Literature Review

GOAL: To retrieve and review research that is relevant to your topic of interest or research question. A literature review meaningfully synthesizes information along various dimensions (listed below). Additionally, a literature review points to gaps or inconsistencies in research that need attention! Keep in mind that existing literature may not cover your topic EXACTLY, but could be related and help form a justification for further inquiry. *Your literature review should be about eight to ten double-spaced pages and include at least fifteen (15) peer-reviewed articles from academic journals.* Be sure to include the following:

1. Include an introduction to your review, including your topic or question of interest.
2. Your review can synthesize across the following dimensions:
 - a. Timing – How old is previous research? Is it dated? Does it need to be studied again in light of contemporary issues or conditions?
 - b. Variables – What variables have been considered in relation to one another on a topic of research? Should other variables be considered?
 - c. Theoretical perspective – What theoretical perspectives have been used in the past to interpret social phenomena? Would another perspective provide a different or more useful interpretation? How would a “macro” or “micro” perspective interpret the issue differently?
 - d. Methodology – How have previous studies collected and analyzed data? Are these procedures methodologically sound? Have important strategies for data collection or analysis and interpretation been overlooked? Have different sets of data yielded different results?
 - e. Emergent research question(s) – Summary statement(s) of testable propositions emerging from the authors’ literature review.
3. Note: you need to group topics together as much as possible: don’t just summarize one author’s work, then another, then another, etc. Stay focused on YOUR topic and what the literature has to say about it...or not!
4. Conclude your review, and include if you can, one gap or inconsistency that may be sated with further research.

APPENDIX C

Option Three: Body Autoethnography

An autoethnography is a form of self-reflective writing that explores the author's personal experiences and connects their unique story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings (in our case, body-related or embodied meanings). This work is the ultimate expression of the sociological imagination -- connecting embodied experiences/phenomena with socio-historical context. For this assignment, your job is to write an autoethnography where you describe, in great detail, your past, current life situation, and aspirations for the future related to your body through a sociological lens. In short, tell me the story of you (or some embodied aspect of your experience) as if you were a sociologist. You'll likely want to incorporate one or more of the following into your autoethnography: gender, race, sex, sexuality, disability, size, appearance, age, the medicalized body, the individual body, the leaky body, etc. The more intuitively you incorporate theorizing and concepts related to the body and embodiment, the better your grade will be (so, I expect that you'll be incorporating foundational reading on the body in your work!).

This assignment can be broken down into three parts. However, you do not need to adhere to the order in which these parts are presented below (i.e., you may start out by explaining your present situation). You are required connect at least two perspectives, theories, or concepts we covered in class, in each *section*, IN DEPTH. Your autoethnography should be about eight to ten double-spaced pages and include at least twelve (12) peer-reviewed articles from academic journals to support the perspectives, theories, and/or concepts you use. You are welcome to use in-class resources, but they do not count towards your twelve outside resources! The following are required sections with guiding (not required) questions:

- The Past: Provide a rich description of your personal history with respect to your body/embodied experiences. For example, where did you come from? Under what conditions (physical and social?) What were your first memories of ____? Be as intimate and as detailed as possible in explaining your personal history. Think about how (and by whom) you were socialized and the aspects of your culture (e.g., norms, expectations, beliefs, values, etc...) that have been taught to you.
- The Present: Thoroughly explain your embodied existence at this time in your life and your current life situation (e.g., What kind of person are you? Why are you here? How did you come to think or feel this way? How are things going for you now?). In terms of socialization, which values/norms/beliefs have you internalized and which are you still questioning or may have even rejected? How is your current situation similar or different to others of your age, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, social class background, religion, education level, or any other sociological variable? What is essential for this section, however, is that you provide enough material as to make me feel as if I know you (and perhaps what you are going through at this point in your life).
- The Future: Tell me about your hopes and objectives for the future. Where do you see yourself in the years to come? How does privilege affect your situation or feelings (which ascribed statuses are going to help or hinder your chances of "success")? Do you wish to fight for social change? What impact do you wish to leave on those you encounter on a daily basis and on the larger world itself? This section should make for a nice conclusion to your autoethnography.

NOTE: This paper is NOT intended to be a chronicle of lurid details of your life (e.g., a list of sexual exploits). It's ok to include intimate, embarrassing, or taboo aspects your life; however, your papers will be shared with your classmates during peer-review, so, consider your audience.

There are three types of autoethnographies (i.e., evocative, analytic, and performance) and I encourage you to read about them in the VERY brief paper (by Sara Crawley) I've attached for your reference. **This assignment was adopted from an autoethnography assignment by Matthew Reid of Grand Valley State University.**

APPENDIX D

How to Find Peer-reviewed Research

What's a peer-reviewed research article? Well, peer-review is a process that original research must undergo in order to have their theory, methods, and findings evaluated by others that specialize in their field. These articles are published in major journals and are about 10-20 pages in length. Don't be intimidated by the length -- a lot of it is graphs, charts, and references.

Do you need help with finding peer-reviewed research or books? Contact the **USF LIBRARY**

Phone: 866-550-8036 (toll-free)

Live Chat: <http://www.lib.usf.edu/help/> (Links to an external site.)

In person: Visit the first floor or schedule a consultation here: <http://www.lib.usf.edu/services/forms/research-consultation-request/>

Susan Silver is the Sociology Librarian

Email: ssilver@usf.edu

QUICK TIPS FOR FINDING PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH

<http://www.lib.usf.edu/guides/finding-articles/>

How do I find these peer-reviewed articles WHEN I KNOW WHICH JOURNAL I WANT TO USE?

1. Go to lib.usf.edu
2. Click on "Research Tools" on the top right corner
3. Click on "E-Journals"
4. Type in your journal's name carefully.
5. Search for original research using keywords related to your interests. (All journals have different landing pages, so you will have to find out how to search on your own.)
 - o For example, you can select major keywords related to the institution of interest (e.g., "work," or "workplace," or "education," or "schools," or "children's health" or "youth and well-being").
 - o As another example, I research fatness in the workplace, so I would search for "obesity" or "fat" or "fatness" or "plus size" and "work" or "workplace."
 - o You will have to scroll through and read many abstracts before you'll find what you're looking for.
 - o Many articles will focus on a concept or subject related to yours, but perhaps not directly -- don't fret, this is what literature searches are like! On the same line, some articles may examine your topic directly -- that's great also!
6. Frustrated? If you need more assistance, contact the research help desk "RESEARCH RESCUE" or go to: <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/content.php?pid=258164&sid=2130837> (Links to an external site.) ([Links to an external site.](#))

How do I find these peer-reviewed articles WHEN I DO NOT KNOW WHICH JOURNAL I WANT TO USE?

1. Go to lib.usf.edu
2. Click on "Research Tools" on the top right corner
3. Click on "Databases by title"
4. Find "Sociological Abstracts" (you may already be familiar with JSTOR, but those articles tend to be older).
5. Search for original research using keywords related to your interests. (All journals have different landing pages, so you will have to find out how to search on your own.)

- For example, you can select major keywords related to the institution of interest (e.g., “work,” or “workplace,” or “education,” or “schools,” or “children’s health” or “youth and well-being”).
 - As another example, I research fatness in the workplace, so I would search for “obesity” or “fat” or “fatness” or “plus size” and “work” or “workplace.”
 - You will have to scroll through and read many abstracts before you’ll find what you’re looking for.
 - Many articles will focus on a concept or subject related to yours, but perhaps not directly -- don’t fret, this is what literature searches are like! On the same line, some articles may examine your topic directly -- that’s great also!
6. Frustrated? If you need more assistance, contact the research help desk “RESEARCH RESCUE” or go to: <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/content.php?pid=258164&sid=2130837> (Links to an external site.) ([Links to an external site.](#))

APPENDIX E

Anatomy of a Research Article

Below is a general guideline you can use when dissecting a research article from an academic journal. Article format and style may vary, but you should be able to locate all the elements below.

Abstract – This is an abbreviated and general overview of what you’ll find in the article including a) statement justifying the reason for the study, b) methodology used, c) statement of hypothesis or expected findings, and d) results.

Review of literature – In order to provide background information on what we already know about a topic and justify the need for additional research, the researcher begins by reviewing previous research or literature. Necessary terminology and definitions, relationships among variables, and general findings in previous research are laid out here. This provides a foundation on which to build the current research. Part of reviewing the literature of previous research is to also to indicate where the gaps or inconsistencies are so that others (e.g., *you*) may provide answers or corrections with their follow up research. Note that this section of the article may not be called “Review of Literature,” and may in fact be a number of sections, each with its own heading.

This section brings together a body of research that is related to, but not necessarily on the exact same topic that you are examining. Important components of previous research that are often addressed here are:

- **Timing** – How old is previous research? Is it dated? Does it need to be studied again in light of contemporary issues or conditions?
- **Variables** – What variables have been considered in relation to one another on a topic of research? Should other variables be considered?
- **Theoretical perspective** – What theoretical perspectives have been used in the past to interpret social phenomena? Would another perspective provide a different or more useful interpretation? How would a “macro” or “micro” perspective interpret the issue differently?
- **Methodology** – How have previous studies collected and analyzed data? Are these procedures methodologically sound? Have important strategies for data collection or analysis and interpretation been overlooked? Have different sets of data yielded different results?
- **Emergent research question(s)** – Summary statement(s) of testable propositions emerging from the authors’ literature review.

Theory – Sometimes there is a section explicitly labeled “theory” or something similar. Sometimes this is included in the review of literature. Either way, you should be able to glean some idea of what kind of perspective previous research has used to interpret some phenomenon and how the current article follows or challenges such perspective.

Methods – An explanation of how data is gathered and analyzed. Not a very “sexy” section of the research article, but necessary to explain to readers where the answers or interpretations are coming from. This section should explain to

the reader whether the study is based quantitative or qualitative research methods. Sometimes researchers will gather their own data through surveys or interviews, sometimes they'll use an existing data set (such as General Social Survey). The source of the "raw data" and methods used to analyze and interpret it should be made explicit here. This may be an important component in determining how good or sound a piece of research really is.

Results/Findings – Another sometimes dry portion of research article is where the results from the data analyses are interpreted. Although this may be done largely through a table, chart, or graph containing statistics, it must also be interpreted in plain English. So a researcher discovers a statistically significant positive relationship between education and income at the .05 level? What does it mean? The research should spell out for you (and you should do the same in with your results) that an increase in education is related to an increase in income level.

Conclusions/Discussion – Although the last part of the research article, perhaps the most crucial as this is where we find out if the current research provides any important information. This is where the researcher interprets more than the statistics. This is the discussion of the overall meaning of the research. What do we learn from this? How does it add to or challenge existing research? Are there suggestions for future studies to increase knowledge on this or related topics? This is where the researcher's voice should most clearly be heard as they tell you what they found and why it is important. You will do the same in your conclusions/discussion section of the thesis.

Bibliography/Works Cited – An important and often overlooked section of the research paper. Think of this as a legend to a map that directs readers to the research you have reviewed or incorporated in your work. Should you happen to review an important point made by another researcher, you need to provide explicit directions on how to find that same article, book, or other source to the reader. Styles may differ, but all works cited sections will contain: author(s) name, date of publication, title, source (journal, book, etc.), precise publication location (publisher and geographic location in the case of a book, journal volume, number, and page numbers for journal articles).

(Adapted from Erin Anderson)