

# Group Research Project for SOC 320 || Fall 2017

Introduction to Social Research || Samuel C. Mindes || [samuel.mindes@wsu.edu](mailto:samuel.mindes@wsu.edu)

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Social research is a complex and dynamic process that involves critical and creative thinking. In order to better understand the dynamic nature of social research, you will be participating in a semester-long group research project in which you will plan and execute qualitative or quantitative research on a sociological topic. This will involve the steps of research design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting of findings.

To conduct this research, you will work in a group with fellow students. Each group was assigned a research topic, but it will be responsible for selecting a specific topic and research question(s) within this topic. Groups were carefully selected to distribute particular skills of students, individual interests, and other qualities to strengthen and balance each group. I have made an effort to create groups with shared interests and diverse skills, so be sure to utilize everyone in the group to ensure the group is successful.

The research project will culminate in a 15- to 20-page (double-spaced) research paper due in the final week of the course. This paper will describe, justify, and explicate the research conducted by the group, including an introduction, a literature review, an explanation and justification of the methods, a description of the data and findings, and a conclusion. The group will also deliver a 15-minute presentation of their research to the class during the final week, which will be followed by 5 to 10 minutes of questions from the class. The presentation will include a discussion of the topic, its relevance to sociology, the research question(s) driving the study, the methodology, the main findings, and the interpretation of findings as they were described in the research paper. This presentation should include graphics and visuals as they are relevant.

In addition to the major components of the project (i.e., the research paper and presentation), the group project will include five other pieces (or assignments). The first assignment will involve working through the first stages of the research process for *both* a qualitative and quantitative approach. The second assignment asks groups to complete a literature review of their specific topic. The third and fourth assignments pertain to selecting and justifying a research method and preparing the data collection process, respectively. The final assignment requires the group to prepare a detailed outline of the research paper, which will help with the writing, organization, and distribution of work for the research paper. In addition, several days of the course will be used exclusively as **Group Work Days** (explained below), which will give you an opportunity to check in with your instructor, get feedback from classmates, and/or work on the project. Each assignment will be explained in more detail later, as will the expectations for the final paper and presentation. How time will be spent during each Group Work Day will be explained later, as well.

This project is to be completed in a group, but you will be graded individually. Your grade will be determined based on the grade your group receives on each component of the project,

which will then be adjusted for each individual group member based on your contribution to the group, as determined by your groupmates in a brief evaluation survey at the end of the semester. All group members should contribute equally to every component of the group project, but not necessarily in the same way. It is recommended that the group determine how each group member will contribute to each part of the project to ensure equal contribution overall. You should try to use the particular skills of each groupmate in the best way possible to improve the overall project. It is strongly recommended that when each component of the project is assigned that the group collectively decide on what responsibility each group member has for that assignment. Your group should meet regularly outside of class time to complete assignments and tasks, plan the research and data collection, and work on the paper and presentation.

## **PROJECT COMPONENTS**

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Below is a very brief overview of the various components of the group research project, which also shows how the **200 points** are distributed for the project. More detailed explanations will be provided as necessary.

### **Group Work Days:**

Several days of the course will be dedicated to working on the project with your groupmates during class time. For these days, attendance is mandatory. An unexcused absence on each of these work days will result in a deduction of 10 points from your individual grade for the group project. The dates of these Group Work Days are included in the project schedule below.

### **Assignments (50 points; 25% of project grade):**

Research Design assignment (due Monday, September 18): 10 points

Literature Review (due Monday, October 2): 15 points

Data Collection Plan assignment (in-class Friday, October 13): 10 points

Data Collection Procedure assignment (due Friday, October 20): 15 points

### **Research Paper Outline (20 points; 10% of project grade):**

Due Friday, November 17 in class

### **Research Paper (100 points; 50% of project grade):**

Due Friday, December 8 by 5pm on Blackboard

### **Presentation (30 points; 15% of project grade):**

During the final week of the course, your group will present your research project to the class and the instructor. This will be a 15-minute presentation that will be followed by 5-10 minutes of questions from the class.

### **Presentation Dates:**

Monday, December 4

Wednesday, December 6

Friday, December 8

## IMPORTANT PROJECT DATES

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Below is a list of the important project dates, which includes due dates for assignments, Group Work Days, and other significant dates for staying on track for completing the requirements of the project.

Friday, September 8 ..... Groups assigned  
Monday, September 18..... Research Design assignment due  
Monday, September 18.....Group Work Day: Research Designs\*  
Monday, October 2 ..... Literature Review due  
Friday, October 13.....Group Work Day: Decide on Method and Plan\*  
Friday, October 13.....Data Collection Plan in-class assignment  
Friday, October 20.....Data Collection Procedure assignment due  
Week of October 23 (or so) ..... Collect Data  
Friday, November 17 ..... Research Paper Outline due  
Friday, November 17 ..... Group Work Day: Paper\*  
Friday, December 1 ..... Group Work Day: Presentation\*  
Monday, December 4 .....Group Presentations\*  
Wednesday, December 6 .....Group Presentations\*  
Friday, December 8.....Group Presentations\*  
Friday, December 8..... Research Paper due (by 5pm)

\*10 points will be deducted from your individual Group Research Project grade for unexcused absence on these days, as it is imperative that you attend group work days and all group presentations.