This assignment packet includes the instructions for all stages of your research project. Please see the syllabus for all due dates. All work will be turned in via Turnitin on our Inquire page and will be checked for plagiarism.

The research project is worth 70% of your course grade.

**Stage 1: Problem Statement** ................................................................. page 1

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*Students who prepare group projects are expected to manage the affairs of their own group.*
Stage 1: Problem Statement

The purpose of the problem statement is to settle on a framework for your research project. It will help you to narrow your focus, situate your project within the academic research and a theoretical tradition, and develop an agenda for a literature review.

Address the following questions in a narrative format. Do not use bullet-points in the paper. The problem statement is worth 5 of the entire 100 points of the research project.

- What is the general phenomenon in which you are interested?
- Why is this topic interesting, worthy, timely, and important to pursue?
- What is/are the specific question(s) you would like to answer?
- What research will you consult to better understand this topic?
- Under what theoretical tradition does your phenomenon fall?

Suggested length: 1-2 typed, double-spaced pages
Stage 2: Literature Review

At this stage you will write a critical literature review. This will clarify your thinking about the research topic, situate your project within a theoretical tradition, and move to a more specific framework.

You must consult the academic literature for this assignment. Newspapers, magazine articles, and most web pages are not academic sources. If you order anything through Interlibrary Loan, order early as it may take 4 – 5 days for items to arrive. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of a source, please see me. The number of sources you use will depend on your project, but you should have **at least 7 sources if you are working alone and at least 11 if you are working in a group**.

When writing the literature review, critically assess the most relevant contribution of each source and then devise ways to combine like sources into paragraphs or sections of the literature review. The similarities may be methodological, topical, theoretical, or in terms of weaknesses or strengths. The literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Do not write a literature review in which you summarize each source in its own individual paragraph. **The highest possible grade for literature reviews that share the traits of an annotated bibliography will be a “B.”** See the attached “Comparing the Annotated Bibliography to the Literature Review” by UNA’s Center for Writing Excellence for guidance.

**AVOID PLAGIARISM!** Include all of your sources in the bibliography and indicate where you use them in the text.

The literature review is worth 10 of the entire 100 points of the research project. The literature review should include:

1. **The literature review.** Individual projects with at least 7 academic sources should be 4 – 5 pages long. Group projects with at least 11 academic sources should be 7 – 8 pages long.
2. **A bibliography.** Put your sources in alphabetical order by author’s last name. Adhere to the ASA guidelines at:

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SOCI 454 – Seminar
Research project instructions
Stage 3: Research Design

At this stage you will develop a research strategy designed to answer your research question. You may propose a qualitative or quantitative methodology or a combination of the two. Additionally, you may propose to use either primary data (you gather your own data) or secondary data (data someone else has gathered for a different purpose such as the GSS, census, etc.). If you use secondary data, you must describe the methodology for gathering the data. Please follow the format below when developing your research design. The amount of attention you pay to each section will depend on your project.

The notes and textbooks from your qualitative and/or quantitative methods classes and the methods texts found in the Sociology Library on the first floor of Trout Hall may prove useful as you construct your research design.

*Students working in groups are expected to propose a more ambitious research design.* This means that your sample size should be larger or you should use multiple methods (observation plus interviews, for example). Some general rules of thumb:

1. Interviews: 8-10 for individual projects and 17-20 for group projects;
2. Surveys: sample size of 80-100 for individual projects and 150-250 for group projects;
3. Participant observation/ethnography: 7 hours of field work for individual projects (such as 14 – 30 mn. visits to a field site) or 14 hours of field work for group projects;
4. Focus groups: 2 focus groups of 5-6 persons for individual projects and 4 focus groups of 5-6 persons for group projects;
5. For all other methodologies, please consult with me.

The research design is worth 10 of the entire 100 points of the research project. The research design should be 4 – 5 pages long, not including research instruments (e.g. survey, interview, or focus group questions, coding scheme for content analysis, etc.) and supporting documents (e.g. recruitment email, permission letters, etc.). Include the following in your paper, using sub-headings to make it organized:

**Hypotheses or Questions**
State hypotheses, questions, propositions, or theoretical statements developed from the literature. This flows from the literature review.

**Research Method**
Describe the research method that you think is the most appropriate for studying your problem.

1. Describe the research method(s) will you use.
2. Justify your choice of a research method. Why is the method better suited to your research problem?
3. Describe the primary advantages and disadvantages of using this method.
4. Describe the kinds of problems and/or concerns you must consider and how you will handle them.
**Sampling Procedure**
Describe the sampling procedure you will use. Remember that you are not expected to have chosen who or what is in your sample yet.

1. Specify the target population and the sampling procedure you will use to research that population.
2. Justify your choice of a sampling procedure, given your research problem and chosen method.
3. Discuss any problems you anticipate with your sampling technique. These may be practical problems about compiling a sample or problems related to sample generalizability.

**Research Instruments and Measurement**
Discuss the instruments, supporting documents, and procedures that you will use to make observations in the body of your paper and place copies of longer items in the Appendix. Final drafts of your instruments are due when you turn in your IRB application.

1. Briefly describe the major features of instruments you are using to gather data (survey, interview, focus group questions, coding scheme for content analysis or field observations, etc.) and how they relate to major concepts in your paper. If you are using techniques developed by someone else (survey questions, coding sheet, etc.), provide proper reference.
2. Discuss any special concerns in the development, administration, and use of your instruments.
3. Discuss any supporting documents found in the Appendix as they relate to how you plan to carry out your research, such as recruitment letters or notices for surveys or interviews, consent forms, letters to organizations asking for permission to perform research on persons, activities, or documents, etc.

**Ethical Considerations**
Identify any ethical issues that may arise in your proposed research and discuss how you will handle them.

**Appendix**
Label each item in your Appendix, such as Appendix 1: Recruitment email, Appendix 2: Survey, etc.

1. Provide drafts of your instruments such as your coding scheme for content analysis, survey, interview questions, field research strategy, etc.
2. Provide drafts of supporting documents, such as recruitment letters or notices for surveys or interviews, consent forms, letters to organizations asking for permission to perform research on persons, activities, or documents, etc.

**Bibliography**
Include a bibliography.
Stage 4: Oral Report

Everyone will present their research findings to the class in a 15 minute oral report during the last three class periods. I will assume that you have completed all parts of your research project, but I understand that you may still be in the process of writing your final report. Therefore, some of your conclusions may be tentative; you will certainly benefit from the questions posed by me and your fellow students as you finish writing the final report.

You are required to prepare a PowerPoint presentation (not Prezi!) of your oral report, although be careful that you do not inundate your audience with multiple or unwieldy PowerPoint slides. Below is a guide for how much time you should spend talking about the different parts of your project. Students doing group projects should avoid an overly choppy presentation. You will devote no more than 12 minutes to the presentation and 3 minutes to questions and answers, for a total of 15 minutes. Failure to adhere to the 12 minute presentation limit will result in a lower grade.

- 2 minutes – The rationale for your project: a quick introduction and summary of your literature review
- 2 minutes – A quick summary of your research design
- 4 – 6 minutes – A presentation of your major findings
- 1 – 2 minutes – A conclusion
- 3 minutes – Questions and answers

The oral report is worth 25 of the entire 100 points of the research project. I will use the criteria below when evaluating your oral report and will pay the most attention to Preparedness and Organization since this aspect of the presentation deals heavily with content.

1. YOUR GENERAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE AUDIENCE. Present your work from an outline or notes rather than read it from a prepared script or directly off of your PowerPoint slides. Make eye contact with the audience or otherwise engage the audience.

2. YOUR PREPAREDNESS AND ORGANIZATION. Present the research within the allotted time. The presentation flows nicely; it is not choppy or disorganized. Present the most essential information about the project (for all stages). Any supporting visuals (graphs, tables, charts, quotations, etc.) are well crafted, easy to read or understand, and complete. Your grade will be reduced if you include/copy SPSS output. Create your own graphics in PP.

3. YOUR ABILITY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Although this is primarily an opportunity for students to present their work, it is also a chance for class members to participate in intellectual discussion. Therefore, I will make note of everyone’s contribution in the question and answer periods. Your contributions will affect your course participation grade.
Stage 5: Final Report

The final report is the final draft of your research project. *It should reflect improvements and updates of earlier drafts that are the result of your own and the instructor’s evaluations.* Suggested page lengths are given below. Variation is page length is fine, as long as the essential information for each section is presented.

The final report is worth 50 points, or half of your entire grade for the research project. It should include the sections below in the following order. With the exception of the title page, please put *section headings* in your final report.

1) Title page

2) Introduction: 1 page. The introduction should include your broad research questions or hypotheses (more specific questions/hypotheses come later). It should draw the reader’s attention to the project by highlighting the importance of the proposed research.

3) Literature Review: 4 – 5 pages for individual projects and 7 – 8 pages for group projects. This is a review of the literature most relevant to your topic. This section should begin with a short introduction, followed by a well organized review of the most relevant literature, and should end with a conclusion. The conclusion may include your specific research questions or hypotheses, unless you place them at the beginning of the Research Design. *References to the literature should be properly cited. Final reports with literature reviews that share the traits of an annotated bibliography will receive a grade no higher than a “B.”*

4) Research Design: 4 – 5 pages, excluding instruments (see Appendix below). This is the research strategy you designed to address your specific research questions or hypotheses, which you should put at the beginning of this section, unless they are at the end of the literature review. Update the research design proposal to reflect how you actually carried out your research, with sub-sections on: the research method (survey, interview, fieldwork, etc.); sampling (type of sample, sample size, response rate, strengths and weaknesses/problems, and any other important information about the sample); a discussion of the instruments of data collection and how they were used to measure key concepts; ethical considerations relevant to your project; and the method of data analysis. Make reference to coding schemes, survey or interview instruments, recruitment letters, etc. that are included in the Appendix.

NOTE: See instructions for the research design assignment for a reminder of some important considerations.

5) Results: 5 – 8 pages (length will vary depending on your project). Here you present the results of your analysis. Use the Table function in Word to create tables and the graph functions in Word or Excel for graphs. YOUR GRADE WILL BE REDUCED IF YOU INCLUDE PRINTED COMPUTER (SPSS) OUTPUT IN THE RESULTS SECTION!
6) **Conclusion**: 2 pages. Conclude the report by summarizing the research questions, the contributions to the literature and theory, the research design, your findings, the major strengths and weaknesses of your project, and any suggestions you have for further research on this topic.

7) **Appendix**: 1 or more pages. Please respect the following order when organizing the Appendix. Label each item, such as Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.

- Recruitment letter(s)
- Consent Form(s)
- Data collection instruments – copy of survey, coding sheet, interview questions, list of variables, etc.
- Any additional supporting documents – transcripts (typed) of interviews, field notes, tables, charts, categories for qualitative analysis, etc. YOUR GRADE WILL BE REDUCED IF YOU INCLUDE PRINTED COMPUTER (SPSS) OUTPUT IN THE APPENDIX!

3. **Bibliography**: 1 or more pages. Put all items in alphabetical order and follow ASA guidelines: [http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_forASA_Style.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_forASA_Style.pdf)
Comparing the Annotated Bibliography to the Literature Review

Annotated bibliographies and literature reviews are both comprehensive collections of relevant sources, but that is where the similarity ends. Their purposes, structures, and components are very different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annotated Bibliography</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Provides the reader with an ordered list of sources for additional reading. Usually also provides brief explanations of why each source is credible and relevant to the topic.</td>
<td>Provides an overview of a particular topic or problem by summarizing and explaining the most significant sources in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Sources are separated from each other and are arranged alphabetically, so they will be easy to locate.</td>
<td>Sources are integrated into paragraphs based on the progression of the topical overview, and they may be mentioned more than once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Components</strong></td>
<td>Each item in the list uses the formal citation style (usually APA, MLA, or Chicago) to cite a single source and includes a short paragraph with a summary explaining its credibility and relevancy.</td>
<td>Uses an introduction to explain the topic, synthesizes sources progressively as the topic is explained through the body, and then concludes by summarizing the overall background presented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional differences:

- In the case of an annotated bibliography, there is a separate paragraph for each source cited. In a literature review, each body paragraph should include several sources, and sources may be repeated as necessary.
- An annotated bibliography examines each source based on its relationship to the topic; a literature review draws together multiple sources to examine where they agree or disagree.
- An annotated bibliography must organize sources alphabetically, but a literature review is likely to use problem/solution, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, classification/division, or process to organize sources.
- An annotated bibliography allows the reader to choose whether to explore the available sources or not on their own while a literature review directs the reader to a particular understanding of the available sources;

The following illustration provides an example of the differences in layout between an annotated bibliography and a literature review. The sources that are arranged alphabetically in the annotated bibliography are integrated throughout the paragraphs of the literature review. The order of sources shown in the literature review is just an example; any appropriate sources can be used wherever they fit.

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Cayla Buttram, David MacMillan III, & Dr. R.T. Koch, Jr.
Updated November 2012
UNA Center for Writing Excellence
Annotated Bibliography

(Source A)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source B)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source C)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source D)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source E)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

Literature Review

(Introduction)

(Body paragraph 1)
1. Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.
2. Evidence:
   a. Summary and citation of Source C.
   b. Summary and citation of Source A.
3. Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the next part of the topic.

(Body paragraph 2)
Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.
Evidence:
- Summary and citation of Source E.
- Summary and citation of Source B.
Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the next part of the topic.

(Body paragraph 1)
Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.
Evidence:
- Summary and citation of Source D.
- Summary and citation of Source C.
Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the conclusion.

(Conclusion)