

Research Proposal Project

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

For the final project of the course you will draft and revise a proposal for a social science research project employing one or more of the research methods we have reviewed in the course. We encourage you to devise a project relevant to the topic of race; but if you have other interests that you would like to explore, you should feel free to propose a project on that topic.

Remember that the assignment is not to write a research paper; the assignment is to write a research *proposal*. In other words, you will pose a question and explain your method for answering that question, but you will not actually answer the question. Your proposal will not therefore have a main thesis or claim, though it should have a central question and/or hypothesis.

The proposal should meet the following basic criteria (further guidance is offered below):

- ¶¶The proposal should 7-10 pages in length (double-spaced text)
- ¶¶The proposal should include a works cited section and should cite any sources used in the proposal.
- ¶¶The draft should be a full-length proposal, not simply a set of notes. The draft proposal is required, not optional.
- ¶¶The proposal should be for a study that would be feasible to conduct.
- ¶¶The proposal should include the following sections:

- (1) An **Introduction**, including a statement of an “originating question,” “specifying question” (see below) and an explanation of the significance or interest of the research problem, (likely 1-3 pages).
- (2) A section on **Research Design**, including a specific description of research method (ethnography, interviews, quantitative data collection, experimental procedure, or mixed methods procedure) and a justification of the choice of procedure for answering your specific research question (likely 3-5 pages)
- (3) A section on **Data Collection Procedure** which presents a specific research instrument (plan of ethnographic research, interview schedule, survey instrument, or experimental design for collecting your data) (likely 2-3 pages)
- (4) A concluding section where you use some of the theories from this class to speculate on (a) findings, (b) potential problems with your research design, and (c) additional research that might contribute to the issues you’ve raised.

FURTHER GUIDANCE ON THE ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Your goal in writing a research proposal is to formulate a researchable problem, and to develop a strategy for answering your research question. The proposal is a map that will guide you throughout the research process.

Your research proposal should include the following elements:

In the Introduction:

- 1) *Originating Question*: The origination question is framed at a very general level, and is thus not intended to be “answered” in any definitive way. Rather the originating question refers to the larger concerns or issues that first drew you to the problem (and are likely to resonate with other scholars working on unrelated topics). For example: How does participation in different forms of collective action affect participants’ sense of class identity?
- 2) *Specifying question*: This, posed as a question, is the specific problem you are investigating. It is typically “inspired” by the originating question, hopefully in a way that sheds new light on those broader concerns. Indicate how the specifying question relates to your originating question, and how your way of posing the problem differs from the way others have posed it. For example: How are the experiences of participating in a living wage campaign versus a strike different and how do such differences affect participant’s identity?
- 3) *Significance of research*: What is your proposed contribution to knowledge on this subject? How might your research be of interest to scholars or other readers? Use some of the tools you learned from the literature review.

Research Design

How are you going to answer your research question? What methodology will you select and *why is this the best method for answering your question*? What specific case or cases (groups, populations, settings, samples) are you selecting to examine and why?

Data Collection Procedure:

- For ethnographic studies: what activities will you engage in? what will you observe?
- For interview-based procedures: What questions will you ask? (devise a set of questions or an interview schedule)

*For survey-based procedures: Develop the questionnaire or instrument you will distribute to participants. Or explain the data set you will use (if it already exists).

*For experimental procedures: Describe the experimental design. What are the variables? What is the manipulation or comparison? How will subjects be recruited?

Don't be discouraged if there are aspects of the proposal that seem preliminary or tentative. Such is the nature of research proposals.