

## HONORS IN SOCIOLOGY: 920: 497 and 498

*Professor Karen A. Cerulo  
Department of Sociology*

*Class Time: Wednesday – 5th period 3:55-5:15PM  
Class Location: Davison Hall Room 122 or Department Library—Room 128*

<b>Professor's Office:</b>	Davison Hall – Room 130
<b>Professor's Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:cerulo@rci.rutgers.edu">cerulo@rci.rutgers.edu</a>
<b>Professor's Office Hours:</b>	Wed: 1PM-3:30PM ...and by appointment
<b>Sociology Department:</b>	848-932-7654—to be used in emergencies only

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Honors in Sociology” is a two semester seminar course. Those enrolled in this course are sociology majors who, during this academic year, will produce a Senior Honors Thesis. This requires lots of independent initiative ... but you won't be alone in the project. Our class will meet weekly to work through the various phases of doing an independent research project. In addition, every student will get individualized guidance from both the course instructor and a faculty advisor from the sociology department.

An independent research project includes many steps. Over the course of the year, you must accomplish the following course goals:

- select an area of study
- develop a focused research question that you can realistically answer via data collection and analysis
- identify, read, synthesize and critique the most relevant existing literature on the topic
- decide on a research design
- apply for IRB approval for your project
- collect and analyze data
- prepare a 12-15 minute presentation of your research to be delivered at a special event including your colleagues, family, friends and members of the sociology department
- write and submit a final paper that describes the project and its findings, (typically 30-50 pages in length including tables, figures, references and appendices if needed).

In class meetings, we will initiate each of these tasks, and each week you will complete assignments designed to keep you on track and on time for achieving the final goals of the course. ***Keeping on schedule is absolutely vital to success in this course!*** Please don't be fooled. A year may seem like a very long time ... but trust me ... in reality, it is *just enough* time to complete these tasks!

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course involves several requirements:

1) We meet as a class just once a week—you **must attend each meeting**.

The second class meeting that most courses typically include is fulfilled here by your meeting one-on-one with your advisor and with me. So ...

- **Choose a faculty advisor that has some expertise in the area you want to research.** If you do not have someone in mind, go to the department faculty list and read about our faculty's areas of expertise: <http://www.sociology.rutgers.edu/people/faculty/menu-ii> Make sure that you and your advisor find a convenient time to get together. During the the year—especially at the beginning of the year—**plan to meet with your advisor roughly once a week.**
- **I would like to meet with each of you weekly or biweekly** to discuss your specific project and issues that arise in completing the research. We can do this during my office hours or by appointment (via Skype if necessary). You can also keep touch with me via email should a pressing question arise.

2) Most classes will involve some reading. **Complete all reading prior to our class meeting.**

3) **Complete written assignments** and turn them in **on time**. This syllabus will clearly list all deadlines. These assignments are designed to keep you moving at a pace that will ensure your successful completion of the course. **Falling behind is a recipe for failure.**

4) **All students must receive authorization for their research from Rutgers' Institutional Review Board (IRB)** before collecting data. The application looks daunting, but I will help you with it. This will consume most of our time during the first month of the course.

- **Anyone using human subjects must be certified via the CITI program.** This means reading more about the ethics of human research at this website and passing a multiple-choice test. Go to <https://orra.rutgers.edu/citi> , scroll down to Instructions, follow them and take the test. The test will take a couple of hours, but you can start and stop, take notes (and refer to them) as needed until you complete it. You must take the test until you pass it. **You must complete the CITI certification by September 28, 2016—no ifs, ands or buts!**
- **Your applications must be filed on 10/19 or 10/26—no later!** Because you are filing for an exemption, (as all of you should be), authorization will be given in 1-2 weeks.<sup>1</sup>

Everything you do to gain IRB certification will have multiple uses. In fact, I have designed the first few weeks of the class to coincide with the IRB required tasks and parts of the proposal will be used in your final paper—so this will be early effort that will pay off in the long run.

5) Your **oral presentations** are *tentatively* scheduled for Wednesday April 5, 2017. The date will be finalized later this semester.

6) Your **final paper** due date is *tentatively* set for Friday April 7, 2016. The date will be finalized later this semester. Once you hand in the paper, you may have to make revisions. The due date for revisions will be set later this semester.

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<sup>1</sup> If you need an expedited review, (hopefully none of you will), authorization will take one month. If you need an expedited review, your absolute filing deadline is **October 12, 2016**. If you miss the deadline, you will not be authorized to collect your data and will not finish your project in time.

## READINGS

Once you select a topic, you will locate, list and read some articles/chapters/books related to your topic. (We will review how to do this in class.)

In addition, everyone will read short selections from two “how to do it” books.

- Ruane, Janet M. 2016. *Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Wang, Gabe T. and Keumjae Park. 2016. *Student Research and Report Writing: From Topic Selection to Complete Paper*. Walden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

I will place chapters from these books on our course Sakai site. To access the readings, 1) go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in. 2) Look at the bar on the left side of the screen and click on “Resources.” 3) Look for the reading using the author’s last name and chapter or page number.<sup>2</sup> I will leave one copy of each book in our department library. These books are also available for purchase (new or used) if you would like to have copies for your personal library. Your best deal comes from amazon.com:

- Ruane: [https://www.amazon.com/Introducing-Social-Research-Methods-Essentials-ebook/dp/B0197BV5AQ/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1467211095&sr=8-2&keywords=janet+m.+ruane#nav-subnav](https://www.amazon.com/Introducing-Social-Research-Methods-Essentials-ebook/dp/B0197BV5AQ/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1467211095&sr=8-2&keywords=janet+m.+ruane#nav-subnav)
- Wang and Park: [https://www.amazon.com/Student-Research-Report-Writing-Selection/dp/1118963911/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1467211152&sr=8-1&keywords=gabe+t.+wang](https://www.amazon.com/Student-Research-Report-Writing-Selection/dp/1118963911/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1467211152&sr=8-1&keywords=gabe+t.+wang)

## GRADES

This is a full year course. Consequently, grading will work somewhat differently than it does in your typical courses.

- Your Fall semester grade will be temporary—it will show on your transcript as an “H” for honors—that’s it.
- In April, after your project is complete, I will discuss your work with your advisor, and we will grade you for both the Fall and Spring semester. In addition, each of your projects will get a designated level of Honors: Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors. This too will be decided in conjunction with your advisor.

## OUR CLASS ENVIRONMENT

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. ***Behavior that distracts students and faculty is NOT acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, texting, checking email, surfing the internet, listening to music, reading newspapers, sleeping, discourteous remarks, etc.***

Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is of course permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, then your instructor, in compliance with the University Code of Student Conduct, is entitled to direct that student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or other students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. Students are furthermore expected to comply with the University’s policies on academic integrity, a statement of which may be found at the following url: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> **Note:** If you have trouble accessing the Sakai site, please contact them at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or 848.445.8721. Sakai Help Desk representatives are available **Monday through Friday 8:00AM-6:00PM**.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### 9/7: Hello!

Who am I? Who are you?

Review the syllabus and course requirements

Discuss your topics

Discuss finding a faculty advisor

Discuss types of data and accessing the sociology lab

### Assignment—What should I do this week?

1) By the time we meet today, I will have emailed each of you at your Rutgers email address—this is the email provided to me on the class roster.

Review my comments on your topic proposal. Also read pages 1-10 and 18-25 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing*. Then, using my comments, our class discussion and the reading, produce a revised project description. **The revised description is due by the start of class on 9/14—no ifs, ands, or buts! Send all assignments as MS Word attachments via email.** Your new description should include:

- a project title
- a summary of your project (no more than three paragraphs). The summary should tell me what exactly you plan to study and why is it important.
- a short paragraph describing the methods you will use. For example, will you analyze pre-existing survey data, content analyze newspapers or magazines, interview people, etc.?

Do this as best you can. You may not be able to fully develop these points the first time around. But we are going to do this 2-3 times over the next few weeks until we get the description just right. I will give you feedback each time. We will use this material in your IRB proposal.

2) **Begin your CITI certification.** This means reading more about the ethics of human research at this website and passing a multiple-choice test. Go to <https://orra.rutgers.edu/citi>, scroll down to Instructions, follow them and take the test. The test will take a couple of hours, but you can start and stop, take notes (and refer to them) as needed until you complete the test. **You must complete the CITI certification by September 28, 2016—no ifs, ands, or buts! You must bring a copy of your certificate to the 9/28 class.**

### 9/14: Placing your topic in scholarly literature.

Research continues an ongoing story. We discover things that change, stay the same, or we identify new twists, turns, and new roads of inquiry surrounding a specific issue, question, or puzzle. To do this, you will need to know what research has been done on your topic. Today, we'll review some tools for getting to know the literature.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Read pp. 31-54 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing*; these pages elaborate on today's lecture. Then, use lecture, the reading, and the advice of your faculty advisor to find seven to eight articles or book chapters that are directly related to your topic. **This reference list must be typed and submitted to me by the start of class on 9/21—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

## 9/21: What method is right for you?

Different projects call for different methodologies. Will you use existing survey data ... do your own interviews ... prepare and administer a questionnaire ... do a content analysis of print or video ... do field observations? We'll review your projects with the goal of pointing you in the right direction. We'll also review the basics of the most popular methods.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** I have several methods “aids” posted on Sakai.

- Everyone should read chapter 11 in Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*. Whether you sample people, sites or things, you'll need this information.

Then ...

- If you plan on doing interviews, read chapter 9 in Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*.
- If you want to create a questionnaire, read chapter 8 in Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*.
- If you plan on doing content analysis, this link provides a good introduction to the method: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1315&guideid=61>
- If you plan on using GSS data, This link will help you get started: <https://gssdataexplorer.norc.umd.edu/pages/show?page=gss%2Fhelp>
- If you think you might engage in field research, read chapter 10 in Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*.

Once you have done the appropriate reading, write a two to three paragraph description of your methodology. Do this as best you can. You may not be able to hit all these points the first time around. But we are going to do this 2-3 times over the next few weeks until we get the description just right. I will give you feedback each time. We will use this material in your IRB proposal. **The description is due to me by the start of class on 9/28 class—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

## 9/28: Working through the IRB application

Before we meet today, I will have emailed to you a MS Word file containing an IRB application. I will have already filled in some of the answers. In class, we'll go over each section and you will fill in the information unique to your project. This form will have to be revised a couple of times before you submit it, but we will work through it together.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

Based on today's lecture, complete the IRB materials I have sent you. **The assignments are due back to me by the start of class on 10/5—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

## 10/5: The Ethics of Research

Today, we are going to discuss some important “dos and don'ts” of doing research, all of which revolve around ethical research practices. We will also review your consent forms for the IRB. Finally, we will make appointments for one-on-one meetings.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

Read chapter 3 in Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*.

## 10/12: Individual Meetings

By this time, you have received my comments on the first draft of your IRB proposal. **Thus, today we will not meet as a class.** Instead I will hold office hours today from 1-6PM. You will come at the appointed time (we made appointments in last week's class) and we will spend about 30 minutes per person reviewing my comments.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Make any required changes in your IRB proposal. **The revision is due back to me by Monday 10/17.**

## 10/19: Submitting the IRB proposal

In today's class we will review how you will submit the IRB proposal. Those who still require revisions will meet with me individually.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Read chapter 4 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing*.
- 2) Start reading the items you listed on your reference list. For each item, write 2-3 paragraphs that summarize each article or chapter. *Try to get halfway through your list this week.* Your summary should tell me a) the purpose of the article, b) the researcher's hypotheses, c) the methods used, d) the basic findings, and e) the relevance of the article for your research. Next week, we'll begin talking about how to write a literature review.

## 10/26: Writing your literature review

Today, we will talk about the "art" of writing a literature review. We will review a couple of examples in class.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Read the rest of the items on your research list. Again, for each item, write 2-3 paragraphs that summarizes the article or chapter. Your summary should tell me a) the purpose of the article, b) the researcher's hypotheses, c) the methods used, d) the basic findings, and e) the relevance of the article for your research. The description of your full reading list is due next week **by the start of class on 11/2—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

## 11/2: Data collection:

Today, we'll discuss the various things you will need to do to collect your data. If you are going into classes to recruit subjects, we'll review the steps you need to take. If you are doing content analysis, we'll review your coding sheets. If you're using survey data, we'll review your selection of variables. If you are doing field observations, we'll talk about diaries and observation checklists. We will also make appointments for one-on-one meetings.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Re-read the appropriate chapter from Ruane's *Introducing Social Research Methods*.
- 2) You will leave class with a check list of things you need to do to begin data collection. **You are required to submit a progress report on these items by the start of class on 11/9—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

## 11/9: Individual Meetings

By this time, you have received my comments on the first draft of your literature review. **Thus, today we will not meet as a class.** Instead I will hold office hours today from 1-6PM. You will come at the appointed time (we made appointments in last week's class) and we will spend about 30 minutes per person reviewing my comments on your literature review and looking at your progress report, re: data collection.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Make any required changes in your literature review. **The revision is due back to me by the start of the 11/16 class—no ifs, ands or buts!**

## 11/16: Thinking about data analysis

By now, you have decided what kind of data you will use. In today's class, we'll review some options for analyzing it, including some demonstrations of available software. We will also make appointments for one-on-one meetings on 11/30.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Go to the sociology lab and learn how to access the analytic software you will need. (I will have guides to SPSS on the Sakai Site.)

**11/23: No class today—the university considers this day a Friday schedule.**  
***Happy Thanksgiving!***

**11/30: Individual Meetings:** Today we will not meet as a class. Instead I will hold office hours today from 1-6PM. You will come at the appointed time (we made appointments in our last class) and we will spend about 30 minutes per person reviewing data collection issues.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Keep collecting data. Continue visiting the sociology lab and learn how to access the analytic software you will need.

## 12/7: Putting it all together

A finished research paper has several specific sections:

- *Introduction*—Succinctly describes the questions or puzzles that motivate your study and briefly describes what your paper will accomplish. (Ideally 2-3 double spaced pages in length.)
- *Literature Review*—What do people have to say about your question or puzzle? What questions remain? How does your project flow from existing literature? What gaps does it fill? (Typically 5-10 double spaced pages in length.)
- *Methods Section*: How will you go about answering your question? Who or what did you sample ... and how? What measurement instrument did you use ... how was it created? What variables did you create ... and how? How did you analyze your data? Your methods section should be sufficiently precise as to allow someone else to read it and duplicate your study. (Typically 4-6 pages in length.)
- *Findings*: What questions did you set out to answer? What did your data tell you? (Typically 5-8 pages in length.)
- *Discussion and Conclusion*: What are the implications of your work ... the limitations? What questions remain? (Typically 4-8 pages in length.)
- *Reference list, Tables, figures, appendices* (Typically 3-10 pages in length.)

***(Go to the next page)***

You have created drafts of some of these sections over the course of the semester—specifically the introduction, literature review, and methods section. Today, we'll discuss how to expand and polish those sections.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?** Review today's lecture notes and read chapter 11 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing*—pp. 236-247 only. Then, using these resources, start writing a polished version of your introduction, literature review, and methods section. You should be working on this for the remaining weeks of the semester and over the break. **A version of this half of the paper will be due at our second class meeting in the spring—January 25—no ifs, ands or buts!** (January 25<sup>th</sup> is my birthday—consider it your gift to me ;-))

#### **12/14: Where are we?**

Today, we will meet as a class and, together, assess where each project is and what needs to be done. I'll also give some preview of what next semester will look like.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) You should be collecting your data.
- 2) Continue working on a polished version of your introduction, literature review, and methods section. You should be working on this for the remaining weeks of the semester and over the break. **A version of this half of the paper will be due at our second class meeting in the spring—January 25—no ifs, ands or buts!**

***Have a wonderful and safe holiday break!***

#### **January 18: Welcome Back!**

Today, we'll meet as a class and everyone will update the group on their progress. We'll discuss problems you may have had in collecting data and writing up the first half of your paper. We'll also discuss next steps.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) If you haven't finished collecting your data, it **must** be completed this week. **No ifs, ands, or buts.**
- 2) If you haven't fully familiarized yourself with a method of analyzing your data (i.e. SPSS or a qualitative package), you **must** do so this week. **No ifs, ands, or buts.**

#### **January 25: Analyze your data.**

Today, we'll review the possible techniques for data analysis and we'll discuss some concrete ways to focus the analysis. We will also make appointments for one-on-one meetings.

**Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Start your data analysis.
- 2) Turn in first half of paper—**no ifs, ands or buts!**



## February 1: Individual Meetings

Today we will not meet as a class. Instead I will hold office hours today from 1-6PM. You will come at the appointed time (we made appointments in our last class) and we will spend about 30 minutes per person reviewing feedback on the first half of your paper and discussing your data analysis.

### Assignment—What should I do this week?

- 1) Continue your data analysis.
- 2) Use the feedback from our meeting to begin revising the first half of your paper.
- 3) Re-read chapter 11 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing*—**this time, complete the entire chapter, pp. 236-255.**

## February 8: Writing up findings

There is an art to writing up your findings. We'll talk about it in today's class. In addition to general principles, we'll review some especially good examples of "findings" sections in published papers. (These examples will be available on our class Sakai site.)

### Assignment—What should I do this week?

- 1) Finish your data analysis—it must be done by our next class meeting, **no ifs, ands, or buts!**
- 2) Start writing a first draft of your findings.

## February 15: Writing up findings II

We will continue discussing your write up of your findings. In particular, we'll discuss as a class problems you may be facing.

### Assignment—What should I do this week?

Finish writing your findings section. **It is due to me by the start of the 2/22 class—no ifs, ands or buts!**

## February 22: Writing a discussion/conclusion

A good conclusion can really bring sparkle to a paper. We'll talk about it in today's class, highlighting the 2-3 things your discussion/conclusion should do. In addition to general principles, we'll review some especially good examples of discussions/conclusions in published papers. (These examples will be available on our class Sakai site.)

### Assignment—What should I do this week?

- 1) Re-read chapter 11 in Wang and Park's *Student Research and Report Writing* as needed.
- 2) Take a crack at writing your discussion/conclusion. **This first draft will be due by the start of the 3/1 class—no ifs, ands or buts!**

### **March 1: Converting your paper into a presentation**

Early next month, each of you will give a 12-15 minute presentation here in the department. We have a special session including your family, friends, and department faculty and students and everyone listens to your report. The session is followed by a nice lunch.

In today's class, we'll talk about how you prepare a presentation such as this.

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

At this point in the semester, you have two main tasks: writing your paper and writing your presentation. Each task is a bit different. This week, focus on the presentation. (In the meantime, I will be working on comments for you regarding your findings and discussions sections.) So ...

- 1) Take a first crack at writing your presentation. Remember a 12-15 minute talk should be no longer than 5-6 double-spaced pages. So think about the sections of your paper—intro, lit review, methods, findings, discussion/conclusion and apportion those pages accordingly.

**This first draft will be due by the start of the 3/8 class—no ifs, ands or buts!**

### **March 8: Making Powerpoint slides to accompany your talk**

Today, most presentations make use of Powerpoint slides. In class, we'll review how to make an effective slide and we'll talk about making slides work in your presentation.

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Create a power point presentation. **The finished product is due by the start of the 3/22 class or earlier—no ifs, ands or buts!**

### **March 15: No meeting—Spring Break.**

*But ... you'll need to keep working through the break. Deadlines are approaching and you have lots to complete!*

### **March 22: Practice Your Presentation**

Today, everyone will get a chance to practice their talk. We'll all give one another some constructive feedback and I will send you written feedback.

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Revise your talk based on the feedback you've received.
- 2) By now, you have my comments on your findings and discussion/conclusion sections. You should be reviewing them and working on putting all the pieces of your work together to form your final paper.

### **March 29: Practice Your Presentation**

Today, everyone will get a chance to practice their talk one more time.

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

- 1) Revise your talk based on the feedback you've received.
- 2) Continue working on putting all the pieces of your work together to form your final paper. **The final paper is due in two weeks!**

### **April 5: Presentation Day!**

Enjoy the fruits of your work—this day is yours!

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

Complete your final paper. **It is due at the beginning of next class—no ifs, ands, or buts!**

### **April 12: Turn in Paper and complete paperwork**

Today, you will turn in your final papers. We will also review and complete all forms needed to make sure you get the proper “Honors” listing at graduation. We will also make appointments for one-on-one meetings to be held next week.

#### **Assignment—What should I do this week?**

Be in contact with your advisor and make sure they have your paper and have made plans to read it and send you comments within the week.

### **April 19: Revisions**

Either your advisor or I (or both) may feel you need to make some revisions in your final paper. I will hold office hours today from 1-6PM. You will come at the appointed time (we made appointments in last week's class) and we will talk about the revisions. If you must make revisions, **they are due by Monday April 24.**

### **April 26: No class—you're done! Stop by my office for any parting comments!**