Overview

Throughout this semester you will learn many theories and concepts that explain human social behavior. You have the opportunity to take the information learned from the textbook, lecture, class discussion, and related materials to analyze an American social policy issue, and its impact on individuals, families, and various social groups. This project is designed to help students to think critically about the impact of social policies on different demographic groups (age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabled status, veterans, children, teenagers, etc.); apply sociological concepts and theories to real life situations; and develop innovative solutions to address real issues affecting humans.

The Social Policy Research Project will count as your independent research project that you must complete and pass in order to complete the course successfully. The project is 40% of your final grade.

Student Learning Objectives:

By the completion of the Social Policy Research Project, students will be able to:

a) develop the sociological perspective by analyzing how social issues can both positively and negatively affect individuals and society;

b) define, examine, and analyze how various research methodologies can be used to determine human behavior;

c) understand how scholars analyze social problems, formulate hypotheses, research those problems, and draw conclusions about them; and

d) become more independent and critical thinkers, demonstrating the ability to use knowledge and logic when discussing an issue or an idea, while considering the consequences of their ideas for themselves, for others, and for society.
Social Policy Research Project Requirements

Students must complete the following requirements:

1. Select a Social Policy:
   a. Select an American social policy issue that you want to investigate.

   b. American Social Policy Issues (only 2 students are allowed to pick a topic):
      i. Child Support
      ii. Common Core
      iii. Sentencing Laws
      iv. Unemployment
      v. Cyber Laws
      vi. Public Health
      vii. Privacy

   c. After students have selected the general topic, students must begin searching academic and governmental literature to narrow the focus of the project (specific policy issue), then develop a position (thesis statement) regarding the social policy. For example, a student could choose to investigate Sentencing as their topic, and focus on the negative impact of Three Strikes Policy on minorities in California.

   d. Please be advised that students are not allowed to systematically collect data (surveys, experiments, interviews, etc.) without Human Subjects training and approval from Lone Star College’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

2. Decide how you will present the information (the social policy issue and the solution) to the class.
   a. Consider the following types of technologies to present the information to the class: PowerPoint (Prezi, etc.) presentation, website (wix, etc.), web application, video, large poster, board game, video game, web game, blog, etc.
b. Students should contact the Office of Technology Support for information on technologies available to students (e.g., Microsoft 365, Adobe Creative Cloud, video editing software, etc.).

The Social Policy Research paper comprises of two components: written paper (15 - 20 pages) and a class presentation.

**Paper Version of Social Policy Research Project**

3. The 15-page paper (minimum) must include the following (APA format):

a. **Cover Page:** Title, Class Info, Name of Student

b. **Abstract:** Provide a brief overview of the paper (150 – 250 words)

c. **Introduction:** Introduce the topic to the reader, provide background information on the topic, and provide a description of positive and negative aspects of the social policy (and any controversy surrounding it).

d. **Relevance:** Explain why this topic is relevant to study. In essence, why does your topic matter? Explain why this social issue is important for general society and to specific social groups. In other words, how does the particular social policy you selected impact different groups of people. For example, if Child Support was your topic, you could explain how Child Support policies impact men and women differently.

e. **Sociological Perspective:** Explain how you will address the social policy issue from a sociological perspective using one theory and concepts (sociological terms). For example, if Child Support is your topic, you could use the theory of structural functionalism to explain the impact of child support laws on families and societies.
   i.  
   1. **Sociological Theory:** Select one major sociological theory (conflict, functionalism, symbolic interactionism) as it relates to understanding the social policy issue.
2. **Sociological Concepts**: Explain how at least three sociological concepts (the bold terms in your textbook) relate to the topic you are investigating.

**f. Literature Review**: You must discuss what has been done on this topic from at least 10 scholarly research articles (from the annotated bibliography). You can use other sources (magazines, books, newspaper articles, etc.); however, 10 of them must be scholarly (academic) research. The literature review must be thematic, not a series of information found by each article. The literature review should provide a holistic view of the impact of the social policy on society by explaining the negative and positive implications. Additionally, this section should explain how this social policy impacts other social issues and/or problems. Explain what you think is causing the problem? Why? How? Explain the factors (variables). In other words, you are explaining the relationship among the factors (variables) identified. **Students must complete an Annotated Bibliography to complete this section. The Annotated Bibliography is due October 5th. See Appendix C for more information.**

**g. Empirical Data**: You are to include a discussion of specific facts, information, and data related to the social policy. Providing a numerical description of the social policy, and its impact on society (ex. Child Support – explain percentage of men and women paying child support, historical overview of child support laws and payments, number of people incarcerated because of negligence, etc.). Provide demographic and trend information related to your topic.

**h. Solution**: Based on the information found through your scholarly research and analyzing empirical data, your project must identify a solution that you would implement to address issues related to the social policy. For example, if a student chose Common Core, then he or she could explain an alternative solution to Common Core policies, and how the approach would be implemented. This solution should be an original idea or a revision of an existing solution (provide a plan with action steps).
i. **Research Design**: Students must identify a research method (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approach), strategies, and specific tools (survey, interviews, case study, etc.) to investigate the issue.

j. **Conclusion**: Summarize your project, scholarly research, and your proposed solution.

k. **Works Cited Page**: Provide a list of all sources cited in the paper in APA style format

l. **Paper Format**:
   i. **Paper Headings**:
      1. Cover Page (Title, Class Info, Date, Name of Student)
      2. Introduction
      3. Abstract
      4. Relevance
      5. Sociological Perspective
      6. Literature Review
      7. Empirical Data
      8. Solution
      9. Research Design
      10. Conclusion
      11. Works Cited

   ii. **Paper Technical Requirements**
      1. Typed in Microsoft Word (Pages and other formats are not accepted)
      2. Double-Spaced, Times New Roman font, 12 points
      3. Cover page and Abstract must be included (not counted towards page length)
      4. APA Works Cited page must be included (not counted towards page length)

**Classroom Presentation**

The classroom presentation must include the following requirements:
m. The presentation must be 10 minutes in length (the total presentation).

n. The presentation must include each component of the paper version.

o. The presentation must be memorized. You cannot use your script, notecards, or any memory aids. You must practice before the presentation date.

4. Submission Requirements to Instructor:
   a. Check the syllabus for the electronic and hard copy due date.
   b. Presentation materials (video, PowerPoint, website, etc.) must be sent at least 24 hours prior to the in-class demonstration.

Annotated Bibliography

Instructions

Due: 10/5/15

To prepare you for the assignment, Social Policy Research Project, you’ll need to search primary and secondary sources to get an understanding of your topic, and to narrow the focus. One of the more useful tools in conducting research is the annotated bibliography. For this assignment, you will construct an annotated bibliography based upon the policy issue that you have selected.

Description: An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to articles. Each citation is followed by a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph: the annotation.

Purpose: An annotated bibliography is an organizing tool that is helpful when working on a research project. An effective annotated bibliography is used to compile research sources in one location and provide the researcher with quick access to the information contained in each source. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. Annotations are usually about 150 words.
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Content/Subject: Your annotated bibliography will consist of the sources that you have deemed relevant to your topic. While you may encounter sources that are not relevant or do not fit the scope of your project while researching, for the purposes of this assignment, you will only include the ones that you find useful and relevant.

The Process:

1. Select 10 scholarly (peer-reviewed) journal articles relevant (sources) to your topic.

2. Cite sources in proper APA format. The citations should be organized in alphabetical order by author just as in an APA References page.

3. Follow the citation with a brief annotation that summarizes the source (approx. 5 sentences). All of the annotations should be in your own words (paraphrase).
   a. Explain how each source is relevant to the policy issue that you have selected and how it adds to your knowledge about your policy issue.

4. A complete Reference List (at the end of the document) that contains all of the sources. The Reference List must follow the APA format.

Writing Format: The annotations for each source should follow an academic style. Your citations must adhere to APA (American Psychological Association) style format. This will be one of the central components of the grade for this assignment. Failure to follow APA format exactly will reduce your grade.

- Cover Page with the following: Title of project, class information, student name, & date.
- Font - Times New Roman, Size: 12 point, 1” margins on each side, page numbers, Word document format (.docx/.doc).

Specific guidelines to follow when completing this assignment are:

- 10 sources from scholarly journal (peer-reviewed) articles.
- Sources focused around a narrowed issue or question of inquiry.
- Adherence to APA format for all citations.
- Sources in alphabetical order according to author.
Sample Annotated Bibliography

Sample APA Annotation (Taken from OWL Purdue)

The following example uses the APA format for the journal citation.


The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

Your completed annotated bibliography should have the following format:

Your Topic: Annotated Bibliography

Citation

Annotation (annotation is single spaced)
Citation
Annotation (annotation is single spaced)

Citation
Annotation (annotation is single spaced)

Citation
Annotation (annotation is single spaced)

Citation
Annotation (annotation is single spaced)

Reference Page (on last page)

Web Resources for Annotated Bibliographies:

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/02/
http://www.lonestar.edu/library/research-guides-nharris.htm
http://www.lonestar.edu/library/nh-annotated.htm#.UumMRrT7t_s
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/

Web Resources for APA Style Format

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/