

Graduate Student Paper

Students registered for SSC 570 must complete a 10-page analytical paper based on the methodology of four papers from social science journals.

The following guidelines should help you complete this project:

- The purpose of this project is to help you understand how researchers apply particular methods in actual research projects. You will do this by reading the results of at least four research projects, then analyzing how the researchers went about doing their study.
- The first step is to review articles in peer-reviewed social science journals. Identify four articles with clear methods sections that you can easily analyze. This may involve a fairly extensive search.
- Consider how each author went about researching their subject. Ask yourself questions such as: What is their research question? Is this study more applied or more basic in focus? What type of study design did they use? How did they collect, analyze, and interpret their data? What type(s) of data did they rely on? Did they use a deductive or inductive approach? How do they relate this study to theory?
- Critically examine each article, assessing whether you think the authors applied their methods appropriately. Are their methods appropriate given their research question? Do their methods allow them to reach their conclusions, or are they interpreting their results inappropriately?
- Find a link between your four articles. This can be either a substantive or methodological connection. In the former case, consider how each author approaches studying the same topic. In the latter case, consider how the authors differ with respect to a methodology.
- Prepare a paper in which you analyze and critique the articles.

Guidelines and Suggestions

- Approach this as you would the task of preparing a literature review.
- Select substantive articles, not articles that specifically talk about a particular methodology. Your task is to analyze the methods used by a social scientist to carry out an ordinary study.
- Integrate your analysis. Avoid simply listing four articles, each with a separate analysis. Select a particular substantive or methodological issue, and use this as a basis for analyzing your articles. This means you may have to look through many articles to find four that are appropriate.
- Some authors/articles are better than others at specifying their methods clearly. Try to locate articles with a clear description of the methods the researcher employed.
- Don't get locked into your articles – if you find as you go along that one or more of your articles don't fit into an integrated analysis, go back and find a different article that provides a better fit.

The paper is due on May 9, 2005. Please turn in copies of your articles along with the paper.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss your paper topic or other issues as you prepare the paper, please see me during my office hours.