Every student will choose a semester-long project in which they are interested in engaging, worth a total of 150 points toward their final grade. There are generally three options for these semester-long projects.

1) A Literature Review Paper
2) A Research Proposal
3) A Research Paper

EXPECTATIONS:

Introduction: Your introduction should state in 2-3 pages what your research question is, why this question is important, and preview the structure of your argument for the remainder of the paper. Your research question should be directly stated in your introduction, preferably in one sentence. (You may elaborate more on it in the remainder of the paragraph/introduction.) If you are doing a research paper, your introduction should also provide some brief information about the methods and/or data used.

Your research question should be relatively specific, no matter which option you choose. As you progress through your research you may choose to narrow your question as you begin to identify the major arguments in the literature/research. For example, if you started with “How gender affects people’s health”, you may find that it makes sense to narrow it to something like “How socioeconomic differences between men and women explain their health outcomes” or “How differential family obligations explain differences in health between men and women”. By the time you hand in your “interim product” on October 17th, you should have finalized your research question.

Reviews of Literature: No matter which option you choose, you will have to do some review of the related literature/research. Keep in mind that your review of the literature should usually be organized around common themes/arguments/weaknesses, not a “blow-by-blow” of each individual article or book.

Your review should focus primarily on work published in scholarly journals and books. Articles from newspapers or popular magazines may be referred to, but should not be treated as “expert” sources and should make up no more than 10% of your sources. You should utilize scholarly reference databases like Sociofile, Medline, etc to help you in identifying sources. Be forewarned that ProQuest does not reference all journals and will point you to sources like newspapers and magazines, which are not considered scholarly. It is also a good idea to “snowball” from the lists of references included with articles/books you identify early in the process. If you pay attention to the articles/monographs being cited in other articles, you will start to get a sense of who the “key people” are doing research related to your research question.

It is also sometimes useful to sit down and manually peruse journals which apply to your general area of interest. You’d be surprised at the articles you might find that apply to your idea, but would not have been picked up by a key word search on a reference database. The same can be done by skimming the shelves in the library surrounding a particularly useful book you have found. You may want to pair up with a partner and divide up the journals, with each of you looking for articles relating to both topics.

Keep in mind that, since this is a sociology course, I am going to be expecting you to take a sociological perspective on whatever issue you are considering. In other words, I am going to expect you to be considering how social structure, social stratification, and/or culture are related/affect the phenomenon you are interested in. This does not mean that you cannot reference work which is done by non-sociologists. In fact, some of the most “cutting edge” sociological research/theoretical arguments today are the ones which apply a sociological perspective across disciplines. In other words, what is sociological about the work that is being done in other fields, or how could the work be improved by bringing in a sociological perspective?
**Data and Methods Section:** If you are doing a research proposal or research paper, you should include a data and methods section in your paper. In this section you should identify and describe the data you plan to use or did use. You should also identify the variables you will include in your analyses and how they were measured. Finally, you should describe the methods you will use to analyze your data.

**Results Section:** If you are doing a research paper, your results section should systematically report the results of your data analysis. The results section is not a place for interpretations of the meanings of these results. You should simply report what they were in both statistical and “layman’s” terms.

**Discussion Section:** If you are doing a research paper, you should include a discussion section in which you interpret the meaning of your results. The discussion section is also the place to “fess up” if there are weaknesses in your data or data analysis which leave some question or issues unaddressed. Don’t let someone else point it out to you; show them that you know it’s not perfect but still useful/interesting.

**Conclusion Section:** The conclusion is where you wrap up what you just did. What were the major themes you found in your review of the literature? What weaknesses or gaps did you identify in previous research? How will your proposed research fill those gaps or how did it fill those gaps?

**PRODUCTS TO BE GRADED:**

**Interim product** (due October 17th - 25 points): Your interim product should be a working draft of your paper or sections of your paper. This does not mean that it should be a first draft of that work. In other words, you should be writing in complete sentences, using paragraphs with topic sentences, etc. What you do hand in should be as well written as you think you can make it. You will be graded on the same criteria as the final product, although I will not expect you to have progressed as far.

**Final written product** (due on December 9th - 100 points): Should be approximately 15-20 pages (but may be longer). In addition to the specific expectations outlined on this sheet, you will be graded on the content and organization of your paper, sentence structure, spelling and grammar. Your paper should reflect some analysis on your part - meaning that you have identified common themes and/or weaknesses in previous work (and attempted to fill one of them if you are doing a research paper or suggesting which one you will fill if you are working on a proposal). All papers should be word-processed or typed, in a standard font, with one inch margins.

**Final presentation** (25 points): Students will sign up for end of the semester presentation days on October 24th. Presentations will be approximately 20 minutes long followed by discussion/questions. You will be kept to the time limit. You will be graded on the content and professionalism of your presentation. You may want to consider handouts, particularly if you are doing your own research.