

Soc205TVWeb Social Change and Social Institutions Winter 2007 Term Project Guidelines: Service Learning and Research Options

This guide outlines the requirements for your service-learning reflection report and for the research paper. Remember that the term project, for both options, is a capstone experience, that gives you the opportunity to integrate the concepts, perspectives, and research you have learned in this course. The service-learning report is an exercise in applied sociology in which you apply concepts, theories and research findings to make sense of your experience and in which you in turn use your experience to think critically about the applicability and usefulness of sociological concepts, theories, and research. The research paper gives you the opportunity to analyze a specific social issue, from the suggested topics, and to propose a creative, social response to that issue or improvements to current programs or policies. The following are general guidelines for both options of the project. You should also refer to the Resource Guide, exploring resources related to your topic. I will give you feedback on your Topic Statement, but feel free any time to contact me with additional questions about your project, by email or by arranging for a telephone conversation or appointment.

SERVICE-LEARNING OPTION

Term Project Details: 340 possible points Due: No Later Than March 24th through appropriate Assignment Dropbox

Also complete the Research Questionnaire (by Feb 18th) and the Project Questionnaire, which includes your self-evaluation (by March 24th).

Item	Points
Reflection Paper (4-5 pages)	200
12 hours of service and a log of activities	140
EXTRA CREDIT! Supervisor Evaluation (using Service Learning Program Form)	20
Total	340-360

1. Reflection Paper The paper should be 4-5 pages long, and include specific and detailed reflections on your experience, related to concepts, theories, and issues we have explored this term. You cannot obviously relate to all issues, but you would want to consider how your experiences reflect or illuminate what you learned about social change and social institutions, particularly in the social institution within which your service learning occurred. You must cite and use **at least one research resource** (see Resource Guide), to set your experience in your placement

organization and with a particular group of people in a broader context. For example, if you are working with a mentorship program, you might cite research on how or whether mentorship programs help at risk youth make it educationally, make up for problems in their families, or avoid the criminal justice system. You should also cite **at least one program resource** specifically related to your placement, which could be a description of a similar program or (preferably) the program or agency brochure that outlines the mission and program goals. These two resources will help you in interpreting your experience (Why is the program set up the way it is? What evidence is there that the activities of this program are really effective? Are these youth and their reactions typical? What social factors has this program considered? What social factors has it ignored? How might they develop more effective strategies to achieve their goals?)

Evaluation Rubric (200 possible points): I use this to evaluate your work and you will use it in your self-evaluation

Criteria	Points
Reflection paper follows guidelines (length and content)	50
Cited/used research resource(s)	35
Cited/used program resource(s): mission, outcomes, strategies	35
Related experiences (with examples) to sociological concepts or themes	80
Total	200

2. Service Hour and Activity Log You need to have documentation that you have contributed at least 12 hours of service. The easiest way to do this is by keeping a log of your activities, and getting your supervisor to sign it as a confirmation that your statement of time contributed is accurate. The log needs to include: Date and duration of work, and a brief description of what you did during that time. (140 possible points)

3. EXTRA CREDIT! Supervisor Evaluation The PCC Service Learning Program has a [Supervisor Evaluation form](#). The evaluation does not need to be this elaborate, if it would be difficult to get your supervisor to complete it. A brief statement by your supervisor, perhaps on your Service Hour Log, will suffice. Keep in mind, however, that a good evaluation can be useful for your portfolio as you seek employment.

4. Site Evaluation The PCC Service Learning Program also has a [Site Evaluation](#), which is **optional**. Having student feedback on service-learning sites is useful for our Service-Learning Program and future students.

RESEARCH OPTION

**Term Project Details: 340 possible points Due: No Later than
march 24th through appropriate Assignment Dropbox**

Also complete the Research Questionnaire (by Feb 18th) and the Project Questionnaire, which includes your self-evaluation (by March 24th).

Item	Points
Research Paper (6-10 pages, plus Works Cited page)	340
EXTRA CREDIT! Outside Review (by expert, person working in the field, or person with experience in the subject)	20
Total	340- 360

1. Paper Guidelines [6-10 pages total, plus Works Cited page]

The paper should be divided roughly into two equal parts: an analysis of the issue or question you are investigating and a proposal in the form of an action, policy, or program that addresses the issue you have investigated.

Issue analysis [3-5 pages] This section addresses the researchable question you formulated in your topic statement or one that you developed from your research. Draw from research or theories you have learned so far in sociology and from the Resource Guide and other research-based resources. Make sure that you relate to theories and concepts on social change and social institutions we have studied this term (where appropriate). Be sure that you consider the impact of social class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age (when appropriate) on the issue. This part is a critical analysis that includes a consideration of social research on the issue. For this section, you should use **at least two resources**. In most cases, these resources would be articles, books, or websites that report on sociological research related to the issue. If you work for an agency that addresses the issue or if you have access to interview an expert in the field, you could use that experience or interview as a resource. The two resources are indicated as a minimum. Most topics would probably require the use of more than two resources. You need to cite resources used in the text, following any information or analysis you got from specific resources, and at the end in a section called "Works Cited" or "Bibliography."

Proposed response [3-5 pages] For this section, you are essentially writing a proposal in support of a particular action, program, or policy

with respect to the issue you have investigated. This might be a totally original proposal or a description of your assessment and suggested improvements of an existing program, project, or action. For clarity, I will use the word proposal to describe either an original proposal or a critical assessment and modification of an existing program, project, or action. You should also consult with **at least two resources** for this section. One resource could be materials describing an existing program. The resources used should be cited in the text of the paper, as well as in an end section. The proposal section needs to address three points:

- **Need and Asset Assessment** What are the particular needs your proposal is addressing? What people are involved? On what level are you addressing the issue (e.g., national policy, a program for a particular school)? What are the people, organizations, and institutions that could potentially contribute to addressing the issue or are already addressing the issue in some way? Include here a discussion of projects, actions, or programs that might have inspired your own efforts and indicate the particular contribution your proposal would make.
- **Outcomes or Objectives** What do you intend to accomplish and how would you evaluate the effectiveness of your proposed response? If your proposal builds on an existing program or policy, indicate the existing goals or intended outcomes as well as any modification you feel should be made.
- **Proposed Action, Program, or Policy** Include a list of the steps that need to be taken or the activities involved. Indicate who needs to be involved, what resources must be mobilized, how those resources could be enlisted, what people, organizations, and institutions you have identified as being most critical to the success of your plan and the ways in which you would expect them to be involved. Think about what kind of financial investment might be needed, although you do not need to construct an actual budget. If you are assessing an existing project that you are adapting for your proposal, describe what you know about how the group or organization answers these questions and what you think could be improved.

General Points About Papers

- Papers should be between 6 and 10 pages (more or less equally divided between the two parts), typed (12 font), and double-spaced.
- If you have never done a research paper before, it would be a good idea to look at the [PCC Library's Research Resources](#) that include

Ebscohost (Magazine Articles Online) and Article Databases. Click on [Guides and Tutorials](#), and review relevant sections.

- If you purchased a book with the InfoTrac pass, there is an InfoWrite section on the website that is very useful.
- Resources consulted need to be cited appropriately and adequately in the text and on an end page, using some kind of standard citation system (MLA style sheet, APA or ASA). See APA, MLA, and other styles on the PCC Library website under Guides and Tutorials.

>The citation should include the source or author, the title, volume and issue numbers for journal articles, and date of publication.

>If you are citing a website, be sure to include the name of the website, the organization producing the website, the actual web site address or Uniform Resource Locator (URL), and the date that you retrieved the information. I should be able to access the website using the URL you provide. Be sure to check for that while you are on the website, since sometimes the URL will not be included in your printout.

>If you quote from or summarize the main points from a particular resource in the text, you must cite the resource in the text. The citation in the text can be a short version (or footnote) that refers to a more complete reference at the end of the paper, in a "Works Cited" section.

>Use quotes sparingly. You should paraphrase the main ideas from your resources and write your analysis in your own words, citing those resources that helped you with specific data, concepts, and ideas that contributed to your analysis.

- Your paper will not be graded on grammar and spelling, but it should be readable enough to get your ideas across. It might be a good idea to have someone else read it, or take a draft to the writing-skills center or multicultural center. You can also use the Online Writing Lab, which can be accessed through [MyPCC](#), under Student Resources. If it is very difficult to read, I may deduct up to 10 points.

Evaluation Rubric (340 possible points)

Criteria	Points
Paper follows guidelines: length, structure, sociological thesis or question	50

Resources are research-based, minimum 4, used in text, properly cited	80
Sociological perspective, concepts, themes, issues used	60
Analysis demonstrates critical thinking related to the research	75
Proposal linked to analysis and applies sociological research to program, project or action	75
Total	340

2. Outside Review You should present your proposal either to a person working in the field you are addressing, or to a person with experience related to your issue. Ask them to give you a professional assessment of your proposal. How feasible and effective do they think it would be? Are there similar efforts being tried? Why or why not? Attach either a letter from the person (on letterhead, if available) or your summary of their comments, with contact information about the person who did the review. In other words, you need to verify that you shared the project with an actual person, and enable me to contact them. This professional review is designed to elicit feedback from someone in a position to evaluate your proposal from a knowledgeable perspective. Your reviewer might also be one of your resources.

Remember! You must submit the Term Project no later than **March 24th through the appropriate Assignment Dropbox [Service Learning or Research]**. Also submit the **Project Questionnaire** with your self-evaluation no later than **March 24th**. If you are unable to make this deadline, you must request an Incomplete grade; otherwise, I will submit a grade based on what you have submitted. If you must take an Incomplete, you will need to submit your remaining assignments through regular email: jabushak@pcc.edu. It will take about one week for the change of grade to appear on your record.

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Guidelines for the Term Project Topic Statement and the Research Questionnaire

You have two options for the term project: a research paper or a service-learning project. Both projects give you the opportunity to apply concepts and theories related to social change and social institutions to the understanding of a specific social issue and the kinds of creative social programs or policies public and private organizations and social groups have developed in response to the issue. The research project introduces you to the sociological research on the issue and to how research-based programs or policies are planned and implemented. The service-learning project gives you a more hands-on experience of the practicalities and complexities of implementing such programs or policies, based on social research, but taking on a life of their own.

Term Project Preparation Both the research paper and the service-learning project require that you know how to conduct sociological research through the Internet, including the use of EBSCOhost and Internet sites specific to social sciences, public policy, and your particular topic. Those choosing the research paper option must also know how to write a research paper and to properly cite resources in the text and in a Resources Used or Bibliography section at the end of your paper. In addition, there are specific guidelines for both the research paper and service-learning project. You can prepare for the Term Project, by completing the Research Questionnaire

Research Questionnaire Complete the Research Questionnaire and submit it through WebCT Assignments by **February 18th**. This questionnaire includes your project **Topic Statement** (see below) and answers to some questions to demonstrate that you understand the project requirements and can conduct adequate sociological research online. Those choosing the service-learning option will also be asked to submit information about their worksite or volunteer placement. This questionnaire is worth 20 points.

SERVICE-LEARNING TOPIC STATEMENT The service-learning option entails selecting a service-learning site, working (volunteer or paid) 12 hours in an approved site (see below) and writing a 4-5 page report reflecting on your experience and linking it to topics and issues related to social change and social institutions. You will need to cite one research article related to your topic and one program or policy description based on the research (which could be the program description of the organization or agency you have worked with). See details in the Term

Project Guide. Students choosing the Service-Learning Option need to submit the following:

Please note: Identifying a worksite placement and submitting the service-learning agreement are not required until July 30th, but it is a good idea to select a place to do your service learning early in the term, and to contact me to make sure that your placement will work well for this course. Please do contact me with any questions.

Worksite Placement Your service-learning site can be any public or private non-profit agency, organization, or school that works for social change in one of the areas we studied this term. The PCC Service-Learning Program has developed partnerships with a number of organizations. You will find these on the [PCC Service-Learning website](#). You can also contact the Service Learning Office for more ideas, or you can develop a relationship on your own with a comparable organization. If you are unsure if a particular organization fits the guidelines for this project, contact me to discuss how you can make your service-learning experience work for this course.

Service-Learning Agreement You will find a service-learning agreement form on the [PCC Service-Learning website](#). You should download this form, complete it, have it signed by your supervisor, and return it to me as soon as possible. You can mail it, fax it, or scan it and submit it with the Research Questionnaire. My mailing address is: Jan Abu Shakrah, Department of Sociology, Portland Community College—Sylvania Campus, 12000 SW 49th Avenue, Portland, OR 97219, and my fax number is: 503.977.8548.

Research Questionnaire Complete the Research Questionnaire and submit it through WebCT Assignments. The Research Questionnaire includes your Topic Statement.

PROJECT TOPIC STATEMENT The research project gives you the opportunity to integrate the concepts and perspectives you have learned in this course to analyze a specific social issue and to propose a creative, social response to promote change with respect to that issue.

Possible Topical Areas Your Term Project topic or issue must relate to the major social institutions and social dynamics we are studying this term. Here I list the major topical areas, followed by some suggested issues.

- **Media** *Examples: Media consolidation and FCC regulations, alternative media, media news, media violence, media literacy.*

- **Families and Intimate Relationships** *Examples: domestic partners benefits and rights, the problems confronting single-parent families, domestic violence, juggling family and work, caring for aging family members, the effects of divorce on children.*
- **Education** *Examples: school violence, segregation, biased testing, ability grouping, access to higher education, education and social mobility, school funding, illiteracy, drops outs.*
- **Religion** *Examples: religious intolerance, religious freedom, the separation of church and state, impact of religion on politics, religion and social attitudes like racial prejudice, homophobia, and anti-Semitism, secularization, religion and war.*
- **Economy and Work** *Examples: the impact of globalization on US workers, corporate downsizing, the living wage vs. the minimum wage, de-skilling, underemployment, alternative employment, the decline of unions, impact of the high-tech revolution, workforce discrimination, sexual harassment, worker satisfaction and safety, affirmative action, retirement, and social security.*
- **Power, Politics, and Authority** *Examples: Campaign finance reform, election reform, the influence of Political Actions Committees and lobbyists, citizen participation in the political process, the USA Patriot Act, civil liberties, militarization of the police, the all-volunteer army versus the draft, women in the military, and other current issues related to the war in Iraq or the "war on terror."*
- **Criminal Justice System** *Examples: Crime or violence prevention, racial profiling, police brutality, sentencing, prisons as deterrence or rehabilitation, alternatives to prison, treatment of women or minorities in the criminal justice system, civil liberties and the "war on terrorism."*
- **Health Care** *Examples: economics of healthcare, the medicalization of deviance, HMOs, health insurance, quality of healthcare, access to healthcare, preventive healthcare, impact of sex, race, and social class on health and healthcare access, AIDS treatment and politics, and the social organization of death and dying.*
- **Population, Urbanism, and the Environment** *Examples: immigration, over-population, family planning, race and the suburbs, the plight of inner cities, disposition of toxic waste, and environmental racism and classism.*
- **Globalization** *Examples: free trade versus fair trade, WTO, FTAA, and other regional or global trade agreements, World Bank policies, structural adjustment programs and development debt, approaches to economic development, world poverty and hunger, the impact of natural disasters like the tsumani.*

Topic Selection Criteria

1. Choose a topic that interests you. This could be a topic you have already researched or are researching for another class, but you will have to write a new paper, conforming to the project guidelines and criteria for this course.
2. The issue and your discussion should relate to the major concepts, themes, and issues explored in Soc205: Social Change and Social Institutions.
3. Choose a timely issue that has been the focus of media, research, and public policy attention. This will insure that you can find good, research-based resources—in the form of articles, books, websites, public policy debates, and existing programs.
4. Make sure that you focus on the sociological aspects of the issue and that your resources reflect the social dimensions of the issue. This is particularly important on issues like the environment. Every issue is multidimensional and you need to pay attention to psychological, biological, and technological aspects, but your focus should be on how psychology, biology, or technology is used in or affected by the social context.

The **Topic Statement** should be written in two parts:

- (1) **A Researchable Question** involving a projected relationship between two or more variables. Start with a “why” or “how” question and develop a researchable question from it. Explain how you plan to “operationalize” or define your variables.
- (2) **A Proposed Response**, in the form of an action, program, or policy designed to prevent, alleviate, resolve, or enhance the core issue. This proposed response should arise from asking what can be done to prevent, alleviate, resolve, or enhance the core issue you are researching.

A Researchable Question This project is an exercise in social issue formulation, analysis, and response implementation. To begin this process, you need to formulate the issue in the form of a question that can be answered through empirical, sociological research. How you phrase the question will indicate what kind of action or program you will design to respond the issue. If necessary, refer to Chapter 2 of your textbook on Doing Sociological Research (in **General Sociology: Social Change and Social Institutions**, you will find this in **Chapter 1**). You will get some guidance there about how to formulate a testable hypothesis and design a research project.

Examples:

Why are so many people in the US unable to read and write? I can formulate that “why” question into a researchable question by asking, “What are the causes of functional illiteracy in US society?”

What happens to kids whose parents divorce? I can formulate this

question into a researchable question by asking, “What impact does divorce have on children?”

For each of these questions, I will need to define (or “operationalize”) my terms or “variables”—what do I mean by functional illiteracy, what do I mean by impact, and how will I measure that impact?

A Proposed Response Sociologists as agents of social change are not just interested in asking theoretical questions. In addition to wondering “Why,” they also ask, “What can be done about it?” As the second part of your Topic Statement, you must ask the “what is to be done” question in a form that will lead to a concrete plan of action that can be carried out by social groups or institutions in society.

Examples:

You could ask, for example, “What kind of educational programs could be designed to meet the needs of adults who are functionally illiterate?” “How can we reform school programs to insure that all school children graduate with functional literacy?” “What programs can we institute to support children during a divorce process?” “How can we change the divorce process to reduce the harm to children?”

Completing this preliminary process of formulating a Topic Statement will prepare you for the Term Project. Using the example of functional illiteracy, once you have discovered the social causes or contributing factors of functional illiteracy and analyzed, you could then design a program that would reduce or eliminate functional illiteracy. You could also find projects that are already working to reduce functional illiteracy, assess their effectiveness, and propose modifications to make them more effective, based on the sociological understanding you have acquired by studying social institutions and social change. The Research Option will follow the two-part format suggested by the Topic Statement, whereas the Service-Learning Option is more flexible (and shorter) and would focus on the agency, school or organization you are working with.

Please note that the Research Project will require that you use resources that include sociological research to support your analysis of the issue, and examples of actions or programs that support your proposed response. Some possible resources are listed in the Term Project Guidelines.

Remember! You must submit a Research Questionnaire that indicates whether you are choosing the research or the service learning option and which includes your Topic Statement. Service learning students need to identify their placement and submit a Service Learning Agreement, as soon as possible in the term. The **Research Questionnaire is due**

February 18th [you will find it only in the Assignment Dropbox by that name]. Even if you are behind in your other assignments, please submit the Research Questionnaire at this time so I can provide some guidance on your Term Project.
