GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCH PAPER

An important part of your grade (80 points) will be participating in a group project and writing up a 10-15 page research paper. While many students do not like group projects (it’s sometimes difficult to get together with other members, someone in the group slacks off and affects the work of the rest of the group, etc.) I feel that such projects are more reflective of actual challenges that you will face outside of the college environment when you go to work at your first “real job.” In short, this assignment is not just a way to earn points, but to learn valuable skills that can be put to use outside of the classroom. You will learn, for example, how to deal with conflict, how to work cooperatively to achieve goals, how to become a better communicator, and how to interact with others that may be different from you ethnically, socially, culturally, etc. Groups will consist of five members and will be formed by the instructor. No one is allowed to work independently on a research project. Below are guidelines for the paper. **MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW ALL GUIDELINES AND STEPS IN THIS HANDOUT TO THE LETTER IF YOU WANT TO MAXIMIZE YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND GAIN MAXIMUM POINTS.**

ASSIGNING GROUP ROLES

Each group member will have specific roles as described below. It is up to the group to decide who will be assigned which roles. If you need my help, do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Keep in mind, however, that I am here to guide you, not do your work. If a situation should arise which cannot be resolved by the group as a whole, I will mediate by meeting with each group member and finally with the whole group. As a final result, if any group member(s) should continue to not participate or perform their agreed upon role(s) or task(s), that student(s) will be given one written warning signed by the remaining group members. If the member(s) still does not participate s/he will be removed from the group and be responsible for an individual research paper; the topic, page length and format of the paper will be chosen by the instructor.

1. **Meeting Coordinator/Discussion Leader** - Schedules meeting times and places keeping in mind each members’ school/work schedule and keeps the group on task by structuring meetings.
2. **Recorder/Processor** - Keeps minutes of each meeting (paying particular attention to work assigned to members) and distributes the record to the rest of the group members and the instructor by email. S/he is also responsible for integrating members' rough drafts into a group paper (this responsibility is expected to be shared by other members). The processor should make sure that the paper is free from grammatical, spelling, and any structural errors. S/he should also make sure that the paper “flows” well and that sections are not simply stapled together after being written by each group member.
3. **Intermediary** - Meets with instructor periodically to report on group progress, team work, etc.

CHOOSING A PAPER TOPIC

I want to allow latitude in choosing a topic for your research paper. There are two basic requirements which must be met: (1) the paper must be sociological; and (2) it must analyze some form of popular culture (It should be about some form of commercial entertainment, entertainment media, commercial fads/fashions, sports or games). What do I mean by a paper being sociological? Simply, that it must concentrate on the effects people have on one another. This course is organized around three sociological approaches to popular culture: (1) detailed analyses of the meaning of particular popular cultural genres; (2) perspectives on the organization of popular cultural industries; and (3) historical views of the changing forms of popular culture. Your papers need
to adopt one of these three approaches, or perhaps a combination of approaches. A standard topic might involve selecting a genre, e.g., disaster movies, and then (1) analyzing the genre's meaning, and/or (2) discussing the industry which produces the genre. In other words, the paper must develop some sort of analysis; profiles of stars will not work. Again, you must write using at least one of the perspectives below:

1. **Writing from a social change perspective**
   In this perspective, you would write about how a cultural object changes as society's views and values change. You must show how a cultural object has changed, and how these changes are reflective of societal change. A good example to base a paper on using this perspective is Hubbard's article on romance novels. Typically, a research project from this perspective chooses a cultural object (like romance fiction) and breaks time up into periods (like the 50's, the 60's, the 70's and the 80's) and shows how societal values changed between each of the periods, how the cultural object changed between each of the periods, and how and why the changes in the cultural object reflect the changes in society between those periods. Groups doing this type of research may use novels (e.g. detective fiction), movies (e.g. horror films), music lyrics (e.g. heavy metal), magazine ads, etc., and will want to collect their own data. You will need to collect at least 15 pieces of data (e.g. 15 song lyrics, 15 movies, etc.). Some examples of this perspective would be to determine how women's roles have changed in horror films, advertising, etc., or how action movies have portrayed African-Americans from 1970-1990., etc.

2. **Writing from a social meaning perspective**
   In this perspective, you would write about how a cultural object reflects society's values and beliefs and/or what messages particular cultural objects are conveying. You are not concerned with shifts over time unlike the social change perspective. A good example to base a paper on using this perspective are the Brown article on blues, spirituals, and thrash metal music, or Gerson & Lund's article on Playboy magazine. Groups doing this type of research may use novels (e.g. detective fiction), movies (e.g. horror films), music lyrics (e.g. heavy metal), magazine ads, etc., and will want to collect their own data. You will need to collect at least 15 pieces of data (e.g. 15 song lyrics, 15 movies, etc.). Some examples of this perspective would be to determine how women and men are portrayed in contemporary television advertising, how minorities are portrayed in prime-time television, etc.

3. **Writing from a social organization perspective**
   In this perspective, you would write about how a cultural object is affected by changes in the industry that produces it. You will be taking a historical approach, but unlike the social change perspective, you will not be showing how changing cultural objects reflect changing societal attitudes. Rather, you will argue that changes in cultural objects occur because the industry changed. In essence, you will be doing a historical overview of an industry. A good example to base a paper on using this perspective is the Powers, Rothman, & Rothman article on the movie industry. Groups doing this type of research will gather their data by reviewing other sources. Some examples of this perspective would be to determine how punk music emerged and changed due to changes in the music industry, how the proliferation of cable programming (among other things) has effected what the broadcast networks air on TV, etc. You will need to collect 9 secondary sources of data/information that will be used to write the paper. These can be books or articles. Internet sites cannot be used.

**COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS**
The group will be responsible for three assignments relating to their paper. Assignments #1 and #2 MUST BE TYPED AND TURNED IN ON TIME. 5 POINTS WILL BE SUBTRACTED FROM EVERYONE'S TOTAL SCORE FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT TURNED IN LATE. Assignments and papers must be turned in no later than 4:00 p.m. on the day they are due. Assignment #3 requires the intermediary for each group to meet with me twice. If your group's intermediary fails to meet with me, 5 points will be subtracted from everyone's total score.
ASSIGNMENT 1--TOPIC & WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

First, indicate what you plan to write your paper about, and explain why the topic is interesting. (Do not simply say that you have always enjoyed mysteries. Try to identify some sociologically interesting features of the genre. Also, tell me which of the three approaches you plan on taking {social change, meaning, organization}). You should be able to do this in a paragraph.

Second, prepare a bibliography of materials of the sources you plan to use for your paper (Note: You should have at least 9 sources as spelled out in the "Writing the Paper" section in this handout). This is a working bibliography; it probably will not be a complete list of your sources because you will continue to find new materials as you work on the paper. The assignment should show that you have been looking into your topic and that you have found enough material to write a paper. If you cannot find at least 9 sources, it is DEFINITELY time to change topics. Use the ASA format (see the ASA guide at the end of this handout for examples). Make sure the assignment is typed or it will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENT 2--THESIS & PROPOSAL

Write the thesis of your paper. A thesis is a one or two sentence summary of the main point of your paper--what you are trying to prove. A thesis is more than a description of your topic; it should reveal what you intend to say about your topic. A good thesis typically begins like this:

"In this paper, I am going to show that....." or, "In this paper, I am going to suggest that......"

Remember, the thesis needs to be sociologically relevant! It should also avoid stating the obvious. It is not enough to say something like "In this paper, I am going to show that television is popular with most people."

You also need to write up a brief (2-3 pages, dbl. spaced) proposal telling me how you will study your topic and what you will argue. Your proposal needs to include:
1. The thesis that you wrote above.
2. Statements telling me how you will gather your data and how much data you will gather.
3. A brief explanation of the structure of your paper. In other words, what are you planning on saying and how will you say it?

The proposal should be written in essay form. Make sure the assignment is typed or it will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENT 3--MEETING WITH THE INTERMEDIARY

I will set time Monday (10am-4pm) and Tuesday (11am-4pm) during the 11th and 14th weeks of the semester to meet with each of the intermediaries regarding your progress.

WRITING THE PAPER

General
1. The paper topic must be chosen by the group and cleared by the instructor.
2. All assignments must be completed and turned in on time.
3. Make sure you spend most of your time analyzing your topic as opposed to describing it. In other words, you want an analytical, not simply descriptive, paper.

Formatting
4. The paper must be between 10-15 pages in length excluding charts, graphs, tables, pictures, etc., and references. No more, no less.
5. The paper is to be double-spaced, typed or word processed in a regular 11 or 12 point font (such as Roman, Times, or Courier) with one inch margins on all four sides.
6. Page numbers must be included on all pages of the paper.
7. The paper's margins must be justified.
8. The paper must use the headings I have provided and be organized in that fashion.
9. Follow the instructions regarding citing material in this handout TO THE LETTER. FAILURE TO DO SO LOOKS A LOT LIKE PLAGIARISM AND IS GROUNDS FOR NOT ONLY FLUNKING THE COURSE, BUT EXPULSION FROM THE COLLEGE.
10. Proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are expected. Make sure you use formal English. Do not use slang unless you are quoting someone else.
11. A title page that includes the names of all group participants, the title of the paper, the date, and the course name must be stapled to that front of the paper.
12. All previous assignments must be included with your paper and these along with your paper must be turned in in a folder.

Sources
13. At least 3 scholarly written sources must be collected and used in your paper. Articles in your reader can be used, but are not counted as one of the 9 required sources. These sources must be taken either from scholarly articles or books. Magazine articles do not count in this category.
14. At least 3 popularly written sources must be collected and used in your paper. Articles in your reader can be used, but are not counted as one of the 9 required sources. These sources can be taken either from popular books, newspapers, or magazine articles.
15. At least 3 separate sources from the internet must be collected and used in your paper. WebPages used as required reading for the class may be used, but are not counted as one of the required 9 sources.

Contact me if you have any questions or problems. Make me earn my paycheck!!!

HEADINGS AND ORGANIZATION
Students generally ask me about the expected format for the paper. Obviously, everyone has a different style of writing and way of organizing material. Typically, however, research papers have a similar format that they follow. Your paper, therefore, needs to be divided into the following sections and must use the six headers I have provided (Introduction, Method, Analysis & Discussion, Conclusion, Tables, Graphs, & any other appendices, and References). It is generally a good idea to use subheadings in the Analysis & Discussion section also.

I. INTRODUCTION (Roughly 2 pages)

A. In this section, you should state what has been done by others on your topic. You are doing a small review of the literature. You need to tell your reader what has been done on this topic and explain why your topic is unique. You also need to explain what your topic and thesis is.

1. It is good to show that while people may have researched your topic, no one has researched it in the way that you would like. Devote a few paragraphs to reviewing the current literature. The following is an example of this:

Much has been written on the subject of music from a social/historical perspective. Some authors have concerned themselves with the developmental and historical aspects of musical forms (Baker 1979; Carlin 1988), others have focused on the sociological implications of music (Curtis 1987; Wicke 1987). Few, however, have compared styles of music, especially the forms I analyze in this paper, namely, Negro spirituals and early delta blues, and Christian and secular thrash metal. (taken from Charles M. Brown 1995. "Musical Responses to Oppression and Alienation" in the International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society 8(3):439).
2. You may also wish to mention that others have researched similar topics, but have not looked at yours (especially if your topic is one that has never been researched before).
3. You should clearly state what it is that you will be looking at in your paper.
   a) Your thesis statement should be clearly written out so that your reader will know what you intend to argue in your paper.
4. End this section by clearly stating how the paper will proceed. For example: "This paper will proceed in the following manner: First I will explain the methodology and theoretical orientation used and how and why they were chosen; Second, I will present several findings from the CD's I have chosen to study; Third......etc.

II. METHOD (Roughly 1 page)
A. In this section, you should state what you did in your study. You should address the following questions:
   1. What specific theoretical orientation (if any) are you planning on using and why?
   2. What methodology did you use, surveys, participant observation, interviews, content analysis, formulaic analysis, etc., and why?
   3. How many pieces of data did you collect?
      a) Data can be books, CD's, people interviewed, etc.
   4. If you are conducting interviews or surveys, you need to tell me how many people you sampled, the number of males and females, the age spread (e.g., "subjects ranged in age from 18-56"), average class level (working, middle or upper class), and any other demographic data you deem appropriate.

III. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION (Roughly 6-9 pages)
A. In this section, you should state your findings. Most of your time should be spent here.
   1. What did you find?
   2. Did your findings coincide with previous research (if anyone had researched your topic before)? What, if anything, was the same? What, if anything, was different?
   3. How would you explain your findings? (Use your theory here).
   4. Snippets of raw data would go in this section to accentuate your findings.

IV. CONCLUSION (Roughly 3-4 pages)
A. In this section, you should state why your study is important.
   1. Begin with a short paragraph reminding the reader of your main thesis.
   2. Reiterate how you would explain your findings. Do this in a few paragraphs.
   4. Were there any misconceptions that your or previous research held that were supported or dismissed by your findings? Why or why not?
   5. How would you describe your specific research topic in general based upon your findings?
   6. State why your paper is important in a paragraph or two.
   7. Are there any weaknesses in your analysis? If so, what might they be?
   8. What should the next step be in exploring your topic? What might others wish to do to continue your research?

V. TABLES, GRAPHS, PICTURES & ANY OTHER APPENDICES
A. Put all tables, graphs, pictures, interview questions, etc. in this section

IV. REFERENCES
A. Put your reference list in this section. Remember to follow ASA format and list sources alphabetically.

CITING SOURCES WITHIN THE PAPER
Correct citations are important. Failure to correctly cite a source is considered plagiarism and is punishable by immediate failure of the course and expulsion from the university. Simply put, it's not worth it. Not only
are there negative ramifications to your academic status, but you won't be challenged to think for and express
yourself. Below are guidelines for correctly citing sources within your paper. The next section details how
sources should be listed in your bibliography.

1. **Quotes less than four lines in length**
   Quotes less than four lines in length are not separated from the regular text. Quotation marks are used to
   identify which words are quoted, and the quote is followed by the author's last name, the year, and the
   page number. Below is an example:

   For over 40 years, television has played an important role in American society. Several have commented on
   it's impact, especially on younger viewers. One researcher even went so far as to say, "I believe that
   television is probably the most insidious invention because it effects the young in such a negative fashion"
   (Donaldson 1995:231).

   Notice that the period goes after the citation, not directly after the word "fashion" in the quote.

2. **Quotes over four lines in length**
   Quotes over four lines in length are set apart from the regular text. Each line should be indented five
   spaces and the author's last name, the year, and the page number should be included after the
   quote. The lines in this quote should be SINGLE SPACED! Below is an example where the first two
   lines are double spaced (as they would be in your paper), and the quote is single spaced:

   Cone (1972) suggests that blues music must be understood as a creative response to the feelings of pain and
   suffering which African Americans sing about in he music.

   The blues are not art for art's sake, music for music's sake. They are a way of life, a lifestyle of the black
   community; and they came into being to give expression to black identity and the will for survival. Thus
   to seek to understand the blues apart from the suffering that created them is to misinterpret them and
   distort the very creativity that defines them (Cone 1972:124).

   Notice that the indented quote: (1) does not use quotation marks; (2) has a period after the cited source.

3. **Paraphrasing an author's idea**
   You must give an author credit if you paraphrase h/her idea. Basically, anytime you take a quote and
   reword it in your own words or you have an idea about something that you got from someone else, you
   should give h/her credit. Below is an example:

   According to Wuthnow (1988), a restructuring has occurred across denominational lines,
   forcing a split between religious liberals and conservatives over moral and political issues in
   the United States.

   Unlike quotes, you do not provide the page number when you paraphrase (unless you are using the MLA
   reference style). Instead, you use the author's last name and the year in parentheses.

**ASA STYLE GUIDE**

**FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE:**
FOR A MAGAZINE ARTICLE:

FOR A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE:

FOR A BOOK:

FOR CHAPTERS TAKEN FROM A BOOK:

FOR EDITED BOOKS:

FOR A SOURCE FROM THE INTERNET:

FOR A CD, CASSETTE, LP, OR EIGHT TRACK:

FOR A MOVIE, VHS, BETA, OR LASERDISC:

FOR A TELEVISION PROGRAM:

FOR AN INTERVIEW:

GRADING THE PAPER
Here are some things that I am looking at when I grade your papers:

1. Have you properly understood and applied the specific approach (social change, social meaning, social organization) you have chosen?
2. Do you present adequate evidence supporting your thesis?
3. Have you thought critically about your subject? Does your evidence really support your thesis, or is the link weak or non-existent? Could there be alternative ways to explain your findings that you do not take into account? (Make sure you cover all of the bases).
4. Is the paper well organized?
5. Is the paper free from grammatical, formatting, and spelling errors?
6. Does the paper reflect a "formal" as opposed to an "informal" tone?
7. Is your paper free from "filler?" Do you avoid wandering off the subject?
8. Have you followed each of the "instructions for the paper" to the letter? Has any one of those instructions been ignored?

Furthermore, grades will be determined by (1) instructor's grade (worth 70 pts.) and (2) group member's grade (worth 10 pts.). Group members will grade each other (but not themselves) on a 10 point scale. So, for example, if you are in a group with Jose and Bob, and Jose gives you a grade of 10, and Bob gives you a grade of 7, I will average these out \((10+7 \div 2) = 8.5\) or 9\} and add that average to my grade for your paper. Thus, if I grade the group paper a 60, then, in this case, you would receive 69 points total \(60 \text{ pts.} + 9 = 69\) points.

**TURNING THE ASSIGNMENT IN**

Each group member must write down the number of points s/he is giving to each group member on a sheet of paper. Make a copy of this and put both copies in a regular letter envelope and seal the envelope. BE SURE TO PUT YOUR NAME ON BOTH SHEETS OF PAPER AND ON THE ENVELOPE. NOTE: Your group members should not see the grade that you are assigning them. All letter envelopes for the group are to be deposited into a large sealed manila envelope with all group member names on the outside.

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THE COMPLETED PAPER IS DUE BY 4:00, THURSDAY, MAY 8TH. I WOULD RECOMMEND TURNING THE PAPER IN DURING CLASS ON THE 20TH. LATE PAPERS TURNED IN BETWEEN MAY 21ST THROUGH MAY 28TH WILL BE ASSIGNED A MAXIMUM OF 50 POINTS FOR EACH GROUP MEMBER. PAPERS TURNED IN LATER THAN MAY 28TH WILL RECEIVE 0 POINTS FOR EACH GROUP MEMBER!!