**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: PROJECT OVERVIEW**

**Project Planning Pieces**

**Topic Selection (5 points)**

For this piece of the assignment, you will select your proposal topic. Based on current issues in our community and on class interests that were shared in the “Getting to know you” survey in Week 1 of the semester, I will create four or five mock “Requests for Proposal” (RFPs). When organizations have money available to hire a researcher to answer their questions, they sometimes publish RFPs to invite researchers to submit their proposals for consideration. The organizations and people mentioned in the RFPs for this class are *fictional* but based on real organizations and social problems in our community.

For the “Topic Selection” assignment, you will select the RFP you would like to respond to and fill out the Topic Selection worksheet.

**Background Research Plan (5 points)**

The next step in writing your proposal is to figure out what you need to know, what you already know, and what you don’t know yet. For the “Background Research Plan,” you will complete a worksheet to help you identify topics and key words to guide your research. You will think about what you need to find out and where you could find that information – do you need to find some research reports? Do you need to read some scholarly literature? Do you need to ask an expert? Completing the Background Research Plan will prepare you for our library information session, writing your literature review, and conducting your expert interview.

**Research Ethics (5 points)**

As you think about your research questions and how you might collect data to answer them, you must think about how to do your research in an ethical way. This activity will help you think about who and what needs to be protected – what are the risks involved in your research and who is bearing the most burden? Who will your research help? What can you do to minimize the risk and maximize the benefits?

**Literature Review (10 points)**

Writing literature reviews is a core researcher skill, but one that takes time to develop! To begin this part of your project, we will have a library information session where you will learn how to find peer-reviewed academic literature on your topic. You will then complete a literature review table to help you see the connections across the literature you find. Finally, you will write a summary of your results (citing all of your sources in APA style). Your literature review should provide you with information on what is known about your topic, what remains unknown or in need of further research (a bit hint to you!), and how other scholars have designed their research.

**Research Design (15 points)**

This section of the project is the “main event,” in a way. This is where you will decide exactly how you will collect the data necessary for answering your research question. Using what you have learned about measurement, sampling, and different data collection methods (e.g. experiments and quasi-experiments, surveys, field research and interviewing, secondary data), you will design a study that will produce the information sought in the initial RFP you chose. We will do some “workshopping” of this assignment in class to help you develop your ideas.

**Dissemination Strategy (5 points)**

The final piece of a proposal is the dissemination strategy: how will you share your results? For this planning activity, you will consider who needs to hear about your results and what would be the best way to communicate with them. You might consider peer-reviewed journal articles, “white papers” or research reports, presentations (and what type of audience you might have), more accessible formats like one-page summaries or brochures, or any other communication medium that you think would be effective for sharing information with your audience. Remember that part of the “research ethics” equation is “who benefits” from your research – how will you make sure that your research gets to the people who need it most?

**Supplemental Activities**

There are two other course assignments that might become part of your proposal: the **Survey Design** and **Interview Guide** activities. These activities are considered separate from your proposal planning and your final proposal, *but* they may well become part of your proposal if you choose to propose a survey or an interview-based study. You are welcome to build your research design around these assignments and to include your survey or interview guide as “supplemental material” in your final proposal.

**Final Proposal**

At the end of semester, you will combine all of your project planning assignments into a full proposal. This should not take a great deal of new writing – you have done all the work already! Your task will simply be to revise your components according to my feedback and any new information you have learned, and then put them into the provided proposal template. This final proposal is worth 20 points.