

**EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH & LEARNING PROJECT
SOC 491 SYLLABI
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY**

DESCRIPTION

The Experiential Research & Learning Project (SOC 491) is designed to allow students to create or participate in an emancipatory research or experiential project or forum (delete) focused around or relevant to a contemporary sociological issue, question, or debate. Students may elect SOC 491 as an option to SOC 490 Thesis. Students registering for SOC 491 work with a faculty advisor to develop and carry out either an activist research or experiential learning project. The subject area for either option is purposely open in order to provide students with the opportunity to select a topic, issue, or debate that engages their interest and emboldens them to make or contribute to social change. This contribution, depending on which option is selected may be made through participation in some direct effort to create social change (e.g., an action or evaluation research project or a service-learning project) or through participation in a community, regional, national, or international organization (e.g., an internship with an activist, community, or non-profit organization or coalition) or through some contribution to a relevant social justice policy initiative (e.g., a refereed conference paper and presentation at a state, national, or international conference or forum; a policy-white paper) or through a semester of experiential study (e.g., study abroad; a self-designed experiential learning project).

REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION

SOC 491 requires advanced standing in either the M.A. or 5 year M.A.-B.A. program (21 credit hours of instruction). Students who elect NOT to do a thesis must take EITHER SOC 491 or SOC 492 but not both. They should also register for one of these classes in the final year of their program. Owing to the intensive work required to successfully complete SOC 491, students should not enroll for more than one other three credit hour course in any semester that they are registered for SOC 491. All outstanding incompletes in coursework must be removed from the student's transcript prior to enrollment in SOC 491. Students should be aware that faculty members are not available to oversee projects or sign registration forms during university breaks (including the summer) and holidays. With this in mind, please plan to complete SOC 491 during the fall and/or spring semesters.

Students may either work in collaboration with a full-time faculty member to craft a project or they may elect with the approval of their faculty project advisor(s) to expand upon an earlier interest or topic. Please note that any paper submitted for previous course work will not count toward the final paper required for SOC 491, although as noted above a student may undertake new work on a previous area of interest with their advisors' permission. Students should consult with a full-time member of the sociology faculty before commencing substantial work for SOC 491. Any work previously completed or begun or work done without the approval of the faculty chair will not be accepted for credit toward SOC 491.

SOC 491 OPTIONS

OPTION #1: Activist Research Project

The Activist Research Project allows the student to develop an action-oriented project in conjunction with an activist, community, or non-profit organization with a demonstrated commitment to illuminating and to rectifying some form of social inequality or injustice. The subject area for the activist research project is intentionally open but must be in accordance with programmatic requirements, as established and interpreted by the faculty committee (i.e., the faculty committee chair and second reader). Furthermore, the activist research project is designed to provide the opportunity to do independent research in an area that is personally compelling and sociologically relevant to contemporary debates involving social inequality and social justice. With this in mind, students electing to do an activist research project are strongly encouraged to use qualitative, feminist, evaluation, or mixed (qualitative and quantitative) research methods that are both collaborative and emancipatory by design rather than purely academic in perspective.

In formulating their initial proposal for submission to the faculty committee, the candidate should consider the following questions.

1. What is the main research question, issue or debate and how is the proposed project related to inequality and efforts to create greater social justice?
2. What is the purpose for the proposed research? Have you consulted with potential collaborators to ascertain their perspective on what type of research they would like to see done and why?
3. How will those (communities, organizations, groups, and individuals) impacted by your topic be brought into your research as collaborators? How will you approach these potential collaborators to gain their participation and what role do you see for them in the research process? How do these collaborators see their own role in the proposed research? Will these collaborators be included in some or all stages of the research process and to what extent? What methodological issues are created by working with collaborators with a vested interest in your topic and how will you deal with them?
4. What are potential sources of information or data and how might you triangulate evidence from various sources?
5. How will you include the voices of various constituents in the final analysis?
6. What lens will you bring to the final analysis of your data and how can you balance the goal of collaboration with authorial control over the final product?
7. Specifically, how will the final research paper or report be used to further social change that is transformative in nature? Specifically, how will this activist research project contribute to the lessening of social injustice?

8. Once the final paper or project is done, what then? How will the completion of the activist research project affect your professional relationship with your collaborators? How do your collaborators view the completion of this project? How will you continue to work for greater social justice on the issue you have studied?

The faculty committee chair will work through these questions with the candidate and provide guidance on developing a project with the appropriate scope and reach into the community or organization that the candidate is collaborating with. Because of the nature of activist research, the actual length of the final paper or report will vary. It will however be set by the faculty committee chair in conjunction with the second reader and in accordance with university and department curricular standards.

Option #2: Experiential Learning Project

For those electing a local or global community-based project or forum, various formats are possible including but not limited to: 1) travel abroad, 2) internship at an activist, non-profit, or community based organization, 3) service-learning with placement at an activist, non-profit, or community based organization, or 4) participation in a local or international conference or forum designed around a sociological area of interest. Students interested in any of these four options, should consult with a full-time member of the sociology faculty at Roosevelt University to discuss ideas on how they might design an experiential learning project consistent with the academic standards of the department of sociology and the university. This consultation should take place no later than the fall or spring semester PRIOR to the semester in which the student plans to enroll in SOC 491. It will not be possible to design and implement a plan of action for the experiential learning project in the same semester that the work toward that project is to commence (see Procedures and Timeline for SOC 491 below). Students electing the experiential learning project must realize that AFTER the project is designed and ready to be enacted, it will require at least two full semesters of work to complete. Furthermore, the experiential learning project is designed to provide students with personal experiences that expand their worldview, challenge their background assumptions, and sharpen their analytic skills.

A brief elaboration of what each format (i.e., study abroad, internship, service-learning, or conference/forum) for doing an experiential learning project would entail is briefly elaborated below.

1. **STUDY ABROAD** – Roosevelt University is actively working to expand study abroad opportunities available to graduate students. If you are interested in study abroad, please visit the Roosevelt website – <http://www.roosevelt.edu/financialaid/studyAbroadPolicy.htm> for a description of policies that apply to exchange and non-exchange students seeking study abroad opportunities. This site also includes information on the Petition to Study Abroad (which is required), study abroad fees, tuition and fees during term(s) of registration while studying abroad, standing within the university requirements, funding and scholarship opportunities, application for study abroad, earning and transfer of academic credit, and other program participation requirements. Students interested in study abroad should contact a full time member

of the sociology faculty at Roosevelt (312-341-341-3743) and the Office of International Program (312-341-3531) or internat@roosevelt.edu to discuss interests and opportunities. Since there is a fair amount of preparation that must take place in order to make it possible to study abroad and to facilitate the transfer of study abroad credit back to Roosevelt University, lead time of no less than a few months during the regular academic year (Spring and Fall semesters) is paramount for developing a study abroad program. For a list of approved non-exchange programs recommended by Roosevelt University go to <http://www.roosevelt.edu/isa/studyAbroadNonExchange.htm>. Interested students may also research study abroad options on such sites as: <http://www.studiesabroad.com>; <http://www.IEPasport.org>; <http://www.cieel.org>; <http://www.amerispan.com>; etc. to learn more about study abroad opportunities. Students interested in study abroad summer programs must complete all necessary forms and applications, including all departmental and university procedural requirements during the regular academic year (spring and fall semesters) in order to undertake summer study (see Procedures and Timelines For SOC 491 below).

While the focus of study abroad (e.g., a particular society, region, or community or a particular global issue of sociological relevance) is open, to be credit-bearing for SOC 491, the student must develop a study abroad plan in consultation with a full time member of the sociology faculty at Roosevelt and must have that plan approved both by that faculty member and the Office of International Programs at Roosevelt. As part of the study abroad experience, students will be required to keep a journal describing and analyzing their experiences, to write a final paper of between 25-35 pages (see Course Objectives below), and to make an oral presentation about what they have learned from their study abroad experiences (see Presentation of Work below). Failure to complete any of these requirements will result in 0 credits for SOC 491.

2. INTERNSHIP - for students of sociology, a credit-bearing internship typically involves a career related work experience that provides students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience that enhances their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of sociological study. Students interested in doing an internship must work with a full time member of the Roosevelt sociology faculty (i.e., hereinafter referred to as their internship faculty chair), who will work with them to develop learning objectives and to identify possible internships and to support the procurement of an appropriate placement. As part of the internship experience, the student-intern will be required to play an active and responsible role in contacting organizations they are interested in working at to ascertain if a meaningful internship can be arranged and if adequate supervision and mentoring can be arranged. Sociology internship can typically be organized with social justice, activist, non-profit, and community-based organizations. Once the student-intern has identified an organization that is willing to work with them and that appears appropriate to their learning goals, they must follow the steps elaborated below before commencing work at the internship site.

Step I - Internship Plan: once a potential internship is identified, the student-intern must develop a written internship plan and then submit it to their internship faculty chair for approval. The internship plan should describe the main duties and responsibilities expected of the intern and how they are related to an area of sociological interest (e.g., work and disability, sexual preference and hate crimes, race and residential segregation, gender and domestic violence, class and academic opportunities); how these duties and responsibilities will be structured and carried

out at the placement site; and how the student's work duties and responsibilities will be monitored and by whom. This plan should be submitted to the internship faculty chair for review and recommendations. If the internship responsibilities are appropriate (i.e., relevant to learning objectives and actionable) and the supervisory plan is sufficient (i.e., adequate for learning and mentoring to occur), the plan will be approved by the internship faculty chair and the student may proceed to Step 2 (see below). If the plan needs modification or reinvention, it will be returned to the student with recommendations that must be addressed before proceeding with any internship responsibilities or work hours.

Step 2 Pre-start-up Procedures - Prior to starting the internship, the student should obtain and review all of the material in the "internship packet," which is available from the chair of the department of sociology or the faculty internship chair. This packet includes a model "contract letter," an "internship calendar," and "internship logs." Prior to starting their internship, the student should draft a "contract letter," complete the "internship calendar" and submit both of these documents to the internship faculty chair. Once these documents are received and approved by the internship faculty chair and the internship supervisor (at the internship site), [s]he will notify the student that they may begin their internship work hours. As a six credit hour graduate course, an internship done for SOC 491 requires a minimum of 400 work hours (which can be accomplished in either ten weeks of full time work (i.e., 40 hours per week) or in fewer hours per week over the number of weeks necessary to reach 400 hours. Do note that some organizations only accept interns willing to commit to a full semester of full time work, which may be in excess of the 400 required hours for SOC 491.

Step 3 Reporting Procedures – Over the course of enrollment, interns will maintain a weekly log of her/his activities and at the end of every three week period review it with their internship site supervisor, who will sign the weekly log. No later than the fifteenth of each month (approximately every four weeks), the student-intern will submit the signed log to the internship faculty chair for regular review and recommendations. Student interns will be expected to respond to recommendations both in the course of their work responsibilities and in subsequent logs. The student-intern will also submit a one-page cover letter that summarizes and highlights the experiences of the previous month, particularly detailing how they contributed to the principal project(s) or tasks assigned to them. Ten days before the last day of scheduled classes that semester, the student-intern will submit the final log sheets and a copy of any written or visual work prepared for the organization to the faculty coordinator. In the next semester, the student-intern will write a final report of between 25-35 pages detailing their experiences and how they relate to a relevant sociological issue, debate or question and based on the final draft of that document give an oral presentation to the sociology faculty (see Presentation of Work below).

3. **SERVICE-LEARNING** – for graduate students of sociology, service-learning opportunities combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the service activity will bring about meaningful transformation in both the provider of service and in the recipient(s) of service. This transformation is accomplished by combining service responsibilities with structured opportunities that link the tasks of self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of new experiences, skills, and knowledge. Students interested in

doing service-learning must work with a full time member of the Roosevelt sociology faculty (i.e., hereinafter referred to as their service-learning faculty chair), who will work with them to develop learning objectives and to identify service opportunities and to support the procurement of an appropriate placement. As part of the service-learning experience, the service-learner will be required to play an active and responsible role in contacting organizations they are interested in doing their service at to ascertain if a meaningful service experience can be arranged and if adequate supervision and mentoring can be arranged. Service-learning opportunities typically can be organized with social justice, activist, non-profit, and community-based organizations. Once the service-learner has identified an organization that is willing to work with her/him and that appears appropriate to their learning goals, they must follow the steps elaborated below before commencing work at the service site.

Step I – Service Plan: Once a potential service-placement is identified, the service-learner must develop a written service plan and then submit it to their service-learning faculty chair for approval. The service plan should describe the main duties and responsibilities expected of the intern and how they are related to an social issue; how these duties and responsibilities will be structured and carried out at the placement site; and how the service-learner’s service will be supervised and by whom. This service plan should be submitted to the service-learner faculty chair for review and recommendations. If the service responsibilities are appropriate (i.e., relevant to learning objectives and actionable) and the supervisory plan is sufficient (i.e., adequate for learning and mentoring to occur), the plan will be approved by the service-learning faculty chair and the service-learner may proceed to Step 2 (see below). If the service plan needs modification, it will be returned to the student with recommendations that must be addressed before proceeding with any service responsibilities or hours.

Step 2 Pre-start-up Procedures - Prior to starting the service placement, the service-learner should obtain and review all of the material in the “service-learning packet,” which is available from the chair of the department of sociology or the faculty service-learning chair. This packet includes a model “contract letter,” an ”service calendar”, and “journaling guideline” and a “description of the final service-learning paper.” Prior to starting their service hours, the service-learner should draft a “contract letter,” complete the “service calendar” and submit both of these documents to the service-learning faculty chair. Once these documents are received and approved by the service-learner faculty chair and the service-learning supervisor (at the service site), [s]he will notify the student that they may begin their service hours. As a six credit hour graduate course, service-learning done for SOC 491 requires a minimum of 400 service hours (which can be accomplished in either ten weeks of full time work (i.e., 40 hours per week) or in fewer hours per week over the number of weeks necessary to reach 400 hours

Step 3 Reporting Procedures – Over the course of enrollment, service-learners will maintain a weekly journal of her/his activities that includes description, reflection, and analysis of their experiences and the social issue(s) that they are working on at their service-placement (see journaling guidelines in “Service-Learning Packet.” No later than the fifteenth of each month (approximately every four weeks), the service-learner will submit their journal entries to their faculty chair for review and recommendations. Service-learners will be expected to respond to recommendations both in the course of their service responsibilities and in subsequent journal entries. The service-learner will also submit a one-page cover letter that summarizes and

highlights the experiences of the previous month, particularly detailing how they contributed to the principal project(s) or tasks assigned to them. Ten days before the last day of scheduled classes that semester, the student-intern will submit their final journal entries and a copy of any written or visual work prepared for the organization to the faculty coordinator. In the second or final semester of registration, the service-learner will write a final paper of between 25-35 pages detailing their experiences and how they relate to a relevant sociological issue, debate or question and based on the final draft of that document give an oral presentation to the sociology faculty (see Presentation of Work below).

COURSE OBJECTIVES (written and oral components)

In order to receive a passing grade and six credits for SOC 491 students must demonstrate the ability to conceptualize and conduct independent, sociologically grounded and relevant research or to propose and organize an independent experiential project on an agreed upon social issue, question, or debate. Furthermore, both the written and oral aspects of the activist research or experiential learning project must demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1. Analytical reading and knowledge of relevant sociological literature on topic/question/debate under study;
2. Sociological and critical thinking about the topic/issue/question/debate;
3. Application or development of relevant sociological theory to illuminate research purpose or thesis;
4. Application of appropriate research methods and design (for activist research);
5. Adequate attention to description, analysis, and self-reflection (for experiential learning projects);
6. Written and oral work must be well-organized, logically-developed, and syntactically- and grammatically-correct.
7. Appropriate and adequate system of documentation (i.e., the ASA Style Guide, the Chicago Manual of Style, or Turabian's Manual for Writers).

FACULTY COMMITTEE

After reviewing the course descriptions for SOC 491 students should formulate some initial ideas about how they might fulfill the requirements for either the activist research or experiential learning project. Once the student has done this, it is time to approach one of the full-time sociology faculty members, preferably whose interests are similar to yours, to discuss your ideas and to form a faculty committee. This faculty committee will minimally include two people, the faculty chair (who must be a full-time member of the Roosevelt sociology faculty) and a second member-reader. The second reader may be another member of the sociology faculty at Roosevelt or a faculty member from other discipline or university that has a demonstrated knowledge of

your research or project topic. The second reader of your committee should be chosen in consultation with the faculty chair of your committee. Additional readers may be added to your committee with permission of the faculty chair. The faculty chair of your committee will work very closely with you during all phases of your research or experiential learning including the exploration and conceptualization of potential topics or experiential learning possibilities; the selection of the design and research methods from your research (for activist research) or the creation of an appropriate experiential learning experience (for an experiential learning project); the writing of the initial and subsequent drafts, revising and editing all drafts, and formatting the final polished product (i.e., use of style guide for citations, references, and other supporting documents).

PRESENTATION OF WORK (Oral Defense)

Once the final draft of the candidate's work has been provisionally accepted by the faculty chair and the other members of the candidates' committee, the candidate will then schedule her/his oral defense of their work. This oral defense is an opportunity for the candidate to present her/his work to the members of the sociology faculty and other invited guests. A final grade of PASS will not be submitted until the candidate has successfully complete their oral defense and has responded in writing to any final recommendations made by the faculty chair in consultation with the members of the candidates' committee and any full-time member of the sociology faculty present at the oral defense. The oral defense and any revisions requested following it **must** be accomplished in a timely fashion that meets the university deadlines for graduation (see timeline below). Please keep in mind that failure to meet ALL deadlines will delay the candidate's graduation for at least one semester. Finally, four hard copies of the final paper must be submitted to the faculty chair (i.e., one for each member of the faculty committee, one for the department assessment files, and one for the office of the provost).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

It is the candidate's responsibility to read and observe the university's policy on academic integrity. If you have any questions or do not understand what constitutes academic integrity, it is the student's responsibility to discuss this with their faculty committee chair before submitting any written work. Failure to observe the University's standards of academic integrity will preclude the awarding of academic credit for SOC 491.

EVALUATION

As noted above the conceptualization, research or experiential project, and writing process for SOC 491 will be overseen by the candidate's faculty chair with the support of the second reader and any additional readers that have been approved by the faculty chair. The chair and all other readers evaluate the candidate's work and then render a grade of Pass or Fail. A grade of Pass carries with it 6 credit hours; while a grade of Fail carries 0 credit hours.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Depending on the nature of the activist research project or experiential learning project, the faculty chair will provide the candidate with a list of recommended theoretical, methodological and other relevant texts, as well as any information on style guides.

PROCEDURES AND TIMELINE FOR SOC 491

1. SOC 491 will minimally take **two semesters** (i.e., both a Fall and Spring semester) to complete and students must plan their academic schedule accordingly. Activist Research Projects will NOT be read or graded when the university is not in session (i.e., Thanksgiving break, winter break, spring break, at any time during Summer Session, or any other break). Candidates are responsible for considering these blackout dates when planning a timeline for completion of SOC 491, the degree, and for graduation submission deadlines.
2. At the **beginning of the first semester of the final year of study** (e.g., the Fall semester for expected graduation in Spring of the following year OR the Spring semester for expected graduation the following Fall) the student should approach one of the full time members of the sociology faculty to discuss ideas for their activist research project and to select a faculty chair. Once a full time faculty member agrees to chair the candidate's committee, the candidate should consult with that person on the selection of the two additional faculty members for their committee and then contact those faculty members to determine if they are available and able to serve on the proposed committee. The candidate should ask and secure a faculty chair and committee members no later than two weeks into the first semester of their expected final year of study.
3. Candidates must submit the completed SOX 491 **Intent and Approval Form** to the Sociology Chair (available from any full time member of the sociology faculty), with the required signatures, **no later than the last week of classes in the semester prior to when the candidate plans to enroll in either SOC 491**. This form requires the candidate to attach a written 3-4 paragraph project description, including: 1) a purpose statement about the research topic, question, debate, issue, argument, or intention; 2) a brief overview of the project's scope; 3) a brief research or experiential learning plan, respectively including a description of the proposed research method or type of experiential learning (which should first be discussed with the faculty chair). The form also asks that any specific terms of the research or project be specified (i.e., number of service or internship hours; participants in the research other than the candidate; type and amount of supporting research; and written requirements in terms of length, etc. The Intent and Approval Form may be completed by the candidate with the assistance of their faculty chair. Finally, upon completion, the Intent and Approval form must be signed by the candidate, the faculty chair, and any additional readers **BEFORE** enrollment in SOC 491 is possible.
4. Once completed the Intent and Approval Form should be signed by the candidate and then submitted to the faculty chair and all other committee members for their signatures. When all of the required signatures have been obtained, the candidate should ask their faculty chair to complete a "Individualized Section Registration Form," which once completed and signed will allow the candidate to register for SOC 491. This form is available in the

Registrar's office or from the staff in the SOC Office (Room XXX). This form is available from the departmental office in room 752 or online (<http://www.roosevelt.edu/pdfs/individsecreg.pdf>). The candidate cannot register for SOC 492 until all the required signatures (i.e., faculty chair, all committee members, and the candidate) are obtain the form is submitted to the faculty chair.

5. During first semester of registration, the candidate will work in close consultation with their faculty chair, as well as complete any travel, internship, or service hours required for their project. Once these aspects of SOC 491 are completed, the candidate will begin developing their final written paper. The candidate should keep in mind that writing the final paper is a process and, thus, requires her/him to undertake research and to prepare, submit, and revise drafts based on continued dialogue with the faculty chair. Students should meet with their faculty chair at the beginning of the final semester (i.e., within the first two weeks) to establish a timeline for completing research, submitting drafts and receiving feedback with a view towards the final deadline. The student and faculty chair are encouraged to identify these specifics in writing; so all parties are in agreement about procedures. Students should plan to allow faculty the minimum of a two-week turnaround for reading drafts; however, a faculty chair may indicate the candidate that s/he needs more time. On the faculty chair reads drafts. When the faculty chair indicates that the candidate has completed a penultimate draft, the candidate will submit a clean hardcopy of that revision to the faculty chair and to the second reader. After consultation with the second reader, the faculty chair will then request the candidate make any needed revisions. After the candidate submits these revisions, s/he should schedule their oral defense with their faculty chair.

After the oral defense, the faculty chair will consult with the second reader regarding the need for final revisions and then convey that request to the candidate, who will be expected to complete these final revisions. After the final version of the candidate's work is submitted, the faculty committee will evaluate it, and the chair will submit a grade of Pass (worth 6 credits) or Fail (worth 0 credits).

6. Four copies of the final version of the final paper ct must be submitted to the faculty chair no later than the last day of classes in order for the candidate to receive a grade for that semester. However, individual faculty chairs may establish an earlier deadline if necessary and if communicated to the student early on in that semester.