

Sample Assignments

Leslie J. Nichols
2019

(1) Undergraduate Diagnostic Assessment Assignment

Please write a 500- to 750-word letter introducing yourself to Professor Nichols. Why did you choose this university? What is your major? What are your career plans? Why did you decide to take this course and what do you hope to get out of this course? Because this course looks critically at issues of feminist research methodologies, please describe what you know about research and feminist approaches to research. Have you taken another research course?

(2) Undergraduate assignment: Research Project

As a class, we will conduct a study together that uses three research methods to gather data about students' experiences. Each student will be required to apply the three research methods below to build our analysis of the data we collect.

Topic: How students experience attending a small branch campus of a larger university. We will consider factors such as one-on-one engagement with instructors, access to resources (library, technology support, academic counselling, administrative support), access to courses required for graduation, access to a variety of courses, commuting time, why they chose to attend a smaller campus versus the main campus, and what they see as the benefits and drawbacks of their choice. We will be especially interested in the experience of women students to understand how they might be different from the experience of male students.

Methods: Interviews, time-use diaries, surveys. The interviews will allow us to learn about participants' experiences and feelings in their own voices. The time use diaries will allow us to see how the participants spend their time (commuting, attending lectures, seeking campus resources, getting support from instructors). The written surveys will allow us to gather data from an additional group of students to help us draw more generalized conclusions about their experiences using a Likert rating scale. Special attention will be made for the experience of students who are women, in regards to their experience throughout this project.

Participants: The participants will be students at the X University. Half of the class will be assigned to interview a female student and half will interview a male student to help us compare the experiences of women and men.

Data analysis: We will examine the data from the interviews, time-use diaries, and surveys to identify common themes raised by the participants about their university experience using statistics and a data coding method called “*grounded theory*”.

Interview Assignment (15%)

1. Interview transcript (5%): You will conduct a 30- to 40-minute interview with a part-time or full-time student from the X campus. Your interviewee should be someone who is not in this class and not a family member. You will need to record the interview (most cell phones have this feature). Transcribe the entire interview word for word, but don't include non meaningful words such as *um*, *you know*, and *like*. We will compose the interview script together as a class on January 14. The final script will be posted on Blackboard by January 16 for use in your interview.
2. Interview coding: Include a second hard copy of the interview transcription, on which you have coded the transcription thematically in pen or pencil. We will learn how to perform thematic coding in class.
3. Interview analysis and reflection (600–800 words, 10%): Analyze your data and list and describe key themes that emerged from your interview. Be sure to explain how you analyzed your data, including your theoretical approach. At the end of your analysis of the interview, write about how you felt during this process: what aspects went well; what aspects didn't go well and how you would change them in the future. Please be honest: conducting research is a learning process and you are not expected to do it perfectly the first time!

(3) Time-use diary (15%)

For this assignment you will investigate how your participants use their time. This will involve two steps:

1. Time-use diary (5%). Create a time-use diary for 5 days (i.e., Monday through Friday) following the example presented in class. Ask a friend or student colleague to fill out the diary. Provide instructions for how to do this. Ask your participant to provide as much detail as possible about how they spend their time. Ideally, the participant for this portion should be different from the person you interviewed.
2. Analysis and reflection (600–800 words, 10%). Analyze your data and list and describe key themes that emerge from the diary. Be sure to explain how you analyzed your data, including your theoretical approach. At the end of your analysis of the diary, write about how you felt during this process: what aspects went well; what aspects didn't go well and how you would change them in the future. Please be honest: conducting research is a learning process and you are not expected to do it perfectly the first time!

(4) Survey Assignment (15%)

This assignment consists of two parts:

1. Survey questions and recruitment (5%): We will work together in class to develop survey questions. You will your questions to the dropbox at the end of the class. I will then create a joint survey for the whole class to use. You will recruit 5 students from outside this class to complete the survey.
2. Survey analysis and reflection (600–800 words, 10%): I will share the results of the survey for your analysis on Blackboard. Analyze your data and list and describe key themes that emerged from the survey. Be sure to explain how you analyzed your data, including your theoretical approach. At the end of your analysis of the survey, write about how you felt during this process: what aspects went well; what aspects didn't go well and how you would change them in the future. Please be honest: conducting research is a learning process and you are not expected to do it perfectly the first time!

(5) Graduate research thesis proposal

Your proposal should be 12–15 pages, not including references or appendices. Include the following sections:

1. *Title* (1-2 lines): Should provide a hook to your project and engage readers' interest.
2. *Introduction*: Provide a clear statement of the research problem. This can be a research question, a hypothesis, a series of propositions, or a broad statement of intent. Also explain your purpose, research questions, and objectives.
3. *Literature Review*: What is the nature of the problem you are addressing? Describe the importance of the subject being studied. Review recent literature that has examined this question. Explain how this literature relates to your research problem. Cite a minimum of 12 sources.
4. *Methodology*: Describe how you will address your research problem and conduct your research. Consider how you will avoid hidden biases or problems associated with the approach you take.
5. *Ethical Issues*
6. *Appendices*: May include an interview guide, focus-group guide, or survey. If your research will involve human subjects, create an informed-consent statement for your research study that covers information about your study, risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality, compensation, contacts, what participation will consist of, how participants can provide feedback, and how your data will be published.
7. References