



## **Syllabus**

### **Master class on doing doctoral research in EU Studies**

Intensive course

**Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Roman Petrov**

Total number of hours: 30

Final grade: pass/fail based on the work for the whole semester

### **Objectives of the course**

The course is aimed at bridging best practices and experiences of leading Ukrainian academics in field of EU Studies and needs of Ukrainian doctoral students and young academics. The course envisages individual approach to all members of the class to build up their doctoral research and to publish the final product. Furthermore, the course will offer skills how to disseminate the research results and how to pursue further academic carrier. The course will be offered to wider audience via events organized under the framework of the JM Module (EUSRLab) and the UESA events.

## **Course Outline**

### **Topic 1. Writing Research Proposals on doctoral and professional levels.**

1. Types of Research Design.
2. Independent and dependent variables.

### **Topic 2. Choosing your research problem.**

1. Narrowing your research question.
2. Broadening your research question.
3. Design your research question.

### **Topic 3. Preparation to write your research paper.**

1. Academic writing styles.
2. Making on outline and summary of your paper.
3. Paragraph development of your research paper.

### **Topic 5. Writing introduction.**

1. Collecting background information.
2. Building up theoretical framework.
3. Practical exercises.

### **Topic 6. Literature Review.**

1. Evaluating sources.
2. Citation tracking.
3. Primary and secondary sources.
4. Scholarly v. popular.
5. Practical exercises to literature review.

### **Topic 7. Writing research proposal for individual research project**

1. Structural elements and purpose of research proposal.
2. Formal requirements.
3. Peer-groups on research proposals.

### **Topic 8. Oral presentation skills**

1. Power-point presentations – proc and cons.
2. Best and worst experiences of public speaking.
3. Tips for better presentation.

### **Topic 9. Working with the literature and bibliography managers.**

1. Quality of sources – ranking of the sources in English language.
2. Quality of sources – ranking of the sources in Ukrainian language.
3. Search for sources (search engines – Google Scholar, databases JStor, EBSCO, ProQuest, etc).
4. Systematic monitoring and automated alerts (TOC, Zetoc, alerts for databases and individual journals).
5. Systematization and storage
6. Making notes, effective and ethical use of notes in the text..

## **Topic 10. Methods of research for law and interdisciplinarity in contemporary international legal research.**

1. Overview of research methods in international law.
2. Empirical research and its logic.
3. Experience of qualitative research – how it frames the writing.
4. Interdisciplinary approach to research.
5. What is interdisciplinarity.
6. How interdisciplinarity can be used for contemporary research in international law.

## **Topic 11. Best experiences and practices of research and interdisciplinarity in contemporary international research in EU Studies.**

1. Best experiences and practices in EU Studies;
2. Best experiences and practices in legal research;
3. Best experiences and practices in interdisciplinary research;
4. Best experiences and practices in international research in context.

### **Supporting reading materials\***

#### ***Writing a research proposal.<sup>1</sup>***

The goal of a research proposal is to present and justify the need to study a research problem and to present the practical ways in which the proposed study should be conducted. The design elements and procedures for conducting the research are governed by standards within the predominant discipline in which the problem resides, so guidelines for research proposals are more exacting and less formal than a general project proposal. Research proposals contain extensive literature reviews. They must provide persuasive evidence that a need exists for the proposed study. In addition to providing a rationale, a proposal describes detailed methodology for conducting the research consistent with requirements of the professional or academic field and a statement on anticipated outcomes and/or benefits derived from the study's completion.

Krathwohl, David R. *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal: Suggestions for Students in Education and the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005.

A proposal should contain all the key elements involved in designing a completed research study, with sufficient information that allows readers to assess the validity and usefulness of your proposed study. The only elements missing from a research proposal are the findings of the study and your analysis of those results. Finally, an effective proposal is judged on the quality of your writing and, therefore, it is important that your writing is coherent, clear, and compelling.

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<sup>1</sup> Materials are based on “Organising Your Social Science Research Paper: Writing a Research Proposal”, <https://libguides.pointloma.edu/c.php?g=944338&p=6806963>.

**Regardless of the research problem you are investigating and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions:**

1. **What do you plan to accomplish?** Be clear and succinct in defining the research problem and what it is you are proposing to research.
2. **Why do you want to do it?** In addition to detailing your research design, you also must conduct a thorough review of the literature and provide convincing evidence that it is a topic worthy of study. Be sure to answer the "So What?" question.
3. **How are you going to do it?** Be sure that what you propose is doable. If you're having trouble formulating a research problem to propose investigating.

### **Common Mistakes to Avoid**

- Failure to be concise; being "all over the map" without a clear sense of purpose.
- Failure to cite landmark works in your literature review.
- Failure to delimit the contextual boundaries of your research [e.g., time, place, people, etc.].
- Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research.
- Failure to stay focused on the research problem; going off on unrelated tangents.
- Sloppy or imprecise writing, or poor grammar.
- Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.

### **Beginning the Proposal Process**

As with writing a regular academic paper, research proposals are generally organized the same way throughout most social science disciplines. Proposals vary between ten and twenty-five pages in length. However, before you begin, read the assignment carefully and, if anything seems unclear, ask your professor whether there are any specific requirements for organizing and writing the proposal.

**A good place to begin is to ask yourself a series of questions:**

- What do I want to study?
- Why is the topic important?
- How is it significant within the subject areas covered in my class?
- What problems will it help solve?
- How does it build upon [and hopefully go beyond] research already conducted on the topic?

- What exactly should I plan to do, and can I get it done in the time available?

In general, a compelling research proposal should document your knowledge of the topic and demonstrate your enthusiasm for conducting the study. Approach it with the intention of leaving your readers feeling like--"Wow, that's an exciting idea and I can't wait to see how it turns out!"

**In general your proposal should include the following sections:**

## **I. Introduction**

In the real world of higher education, a research proposal is most often written by scholars seeking grant funding for a research project or it's the first step in getting approval to write a doctoral dissertation. Even if this is just a course assignment, treat your introduction as the initial pitch of an idea or a thorough examination of the significance of a research problem. After reading the introduction, your readers should not only have an understanding of what you want to do, but they should also be able to gain a sense of your passion for the topic and be excited about the study's possible outcomes. Note that most proposals do not include an abstract [summary] before the introduction.

**Think about your introduction as a narrative written in one to three paragraphs that succinctly answers the following four questions:**

1. What is the central research problem?
2. What is the topic of study related to that problem?
3. What methods should be used to analyze the research problem?
4. Why is this important research, what is its significance, and why should someone reading the proposal care about the outcomes of the proposed study?

## **II. Background and Significance**

This section can be melded into your introduction or you can create a separate section to help with the organization and narrative flow of your proposal. This is where you explain the context of your proposal and describe in detail why it's important. Approach writing this section with the thought that you can't assume your readers will know as much about the research problem as you do. Note that this section is not an essay going over everything you have learned about the topic; instead, you must choose what is relevant to help explain the goals for your study.

**To that end, while there are no hard and fast rules, you should attempt to address some or all of the following key points:**

- State the research problem and give a more detailed explanation about the purpose of the study than what you stated in the introduction. This is particularly important if the problem is complex or multifaceted.

- Present the rationale of your proposed study and clearly indicate why it is worth doing. Answer the "So What?" question [i.e., why should anyone care].
- Describe the major issues or problems to be addressed by your research. Be sure to note how your proposed study builds on previous assumptions about the research problem.
- Explain how you plan to go about conducting your research. Clearly identify the key sources you intend to use and explain how they will contribute to your analysis of the topic.
- Set the boundaries of your proposed research in order to provide a clear focus. Where appropriate, state not only what you will study, but what is excluded from the study.
- If necessary, provide definitions of key concepts or terms.

### III. Literature Review

**Connected to the background and significance of your study is a section of your proposal devoted to a more deliberate review and synthesis of prior studies related to the research problem under investigation.** The purpose here is to place your project within the larger whole of what is currently being explored, while demonstrating to your readers that your work is original and innovative. Think about what questions other researchers have asked, what methods they have used, and what is your understanding of their findings and, where stated, their recommendations. Do not be afraid to challenge the conclusions of prior research. Assess what you believe is missing and state how previous research has failed to adequately examine the issue that your study addresses. For more information on writing literature reviews.

Since a literature review is information dense, it is crucial that this section is intelligently structured to enable a reader to grasp the key arguments underpinning your study in relation to that of other researchers. A good strategy is to break the literature into "conceptual categories" [themes] rather than systematically describing groups of materials one at a time. Note that conceptual categories generally reveal themselves after you have read most of the pertinent literature on your topic so adding new categories is an on-going process of discovery as you read more studies. How do you know you've covered the key conceptual categories underlying the research literature? Generally, you can have confidence that all of the significant conceptual categories have been identified if you start to see repetition in the conclusions or recommendations that are being made.

**To help frame your proposal's literature review, here are the "five C's" of writing a literature review:**

1. **Cite**, so as to keep the primary focus on the literature pertinent to your research problem.
2. **Compare** the various arguments, theories, methodologies, and findings expressed in the literature: what do the authors agree on? Who applies similar approaches to analyzing the research problem?
3. **Contrast** the various arguments, themes, methodologies, approaches, and controversies expressed in the literature: what are the major areas of disagreement, controversy, or debate?

4. **Critique** the literature: Which arguments are more persuasive, and why? Which approaches, findings, methodologies seem most reliable, valid, or appropriate, and why? Pay attention to the verbs you use to describe what an author says/does [e.g., asserts, demonstrates, argues, etc.].
5. **Connect** the literature to your own area of research and investigation: how does your own work draw upon, depart from, synthesize, or add a new perspective to what has been said in the literature?

#### IV. Research Design and Methods

This section must be well-written and logically organized because you are not actually doing the research, yet, your reader must have confidence that it is worth pursuing. The reader will never have a study outcome from which to evaluate whether your methodological choices were the correct ones. Thus, the objective here is to convince the reader that your overall research design and methods of analysis will correctly address the problem and that the methods will provide the means to effectively interpret the potential results. Your design and methods should be unmistakably tied to the specific aims of your study.

Describe the overall research design by building upon and drawing examples from your review of the literature. Consider not only methods that other researchers have used but methods of data gathering that have not been used but perhaps could be. Be specific about the methodological approaches you plan to undertake to obtain information, the techniques you would use to analyze the data, and the tests of external validity to which you commit yourself [i.e., the trustworthiness by which you can generalize from your study to other people, places, events, and/or periods of time].

**When describing the methods you will use, be sure to cover the following:**

- Specify the research operations you will undertake and the way you will interpret the results of these operations in relation to the research problem. Don't just describe what you intend to achieve from applying the methods you choose, but state how you will spend your time while applying these methods [e.g., coding text from interviews to find statements about the need to change school curriculum; running a regression to determine if there is a relationship between campaign advertising on social media sites and election outcomes in Europe].
- Keep in mind that a methodology is not just a list of tasks; it is an argument as to why these tasks add up to the best way to investigate the research problem. This is an important point because the mere listing of tasks to be performed does not demonstrate that, collectively, they effectively address the research problem. Be sure you explain this.
- Anticipate and acknowledge any potential barriers and pitfalls in carrying out your research design and explain how you plan to address them. No method is perfect so you need to describe where you believe challenges may exist in obtaining data or accessing information. It's always better to acknowledge this than to have it brought up by your reader.

The research design establishes the decision-making processes, conceptual structure of investigation, and methods of analysis used to address the central research problem of your study.

Taking the time to develop a thorough research design helps to organize your thoughts, set the boundaries of your study, maximize the reliability of your findings, and avoid misleading or incomplete conclusions. Therefore, if any aspect of your research design is flawed or under-developed, the quality and reliability of your final results, as well as the overall value of your study, will be diminished.

**In no particular order, here are some common problems to avoid when designing a research study.**

- **Lack of Specificity** -- do not describe the investigative aspects of your study in overly-broad generalities. Avoid using vague qualifiers, such as, extremely, very, entirely, completely, etc. It's important that you design a study that describes the process of investigation in clear and concise terms. Otherwise, the reader cannot be certain what you intend to do.
- **Poorly Defined Research Problem** -- the starting point of most new research in the social sciences is to formulate a problem statement and begin the process of developing questions that address the problem. Your paper should outline and explicitly delimit the problem and state what you intend to investigate since it will determine what research design you will use [identifying the research problem always precedes choice of design].
- **Lack of Theoretical Framework** -- the theoretical framework represents the conceptual foundation of your study. Therefore, your research design should include an explicit set of logically derived hypotheses, basic postulates, or assumptions that can be tested in relation to the research problem. More information about developing a theoretical framework can be found [here](#).
- **Significance** -- the research design must include a clear answer to the "So What?" question. Be sure you clearly articulate why your study is important and how it contributes to the larger body of literature about the topic being investigated.
- **Relationship between Past Research and Your Study** -- do not simply offer a summary description of prior research. Your literature review should include an explicit statement linking the results of prior research to the research you are about to undertake. This can be done, for example, by identifying basic weaknesses in previous studies and how your study helps to fill this gap in knowledge.
- **Contribution to the Field** -- in placing your study within the context of prior research, don't just note that a gap exists; be clear in describing how your study contributes to, or possibly challenges, existing assumptions or findings.
- **Provincialism** -- this refers to designing a narrowly applied scope, geographical area, sampling, or method of analysis that restricts your ability to create meaningful outcomes and, by extension, obtaining results that are relevant and possibly transferable to understanding phenomena in other settings.
- **Objectives, Hypotheses, or Questions** -- your research design should include one or more questions or hypotheses that you are attempting to answer about the research problem underpinning your study. They should be clearly articulated and closely tied to the overall aims of your paper. Although there is no rule regarding the number of questions or hypotheses associated with a research problem, most studies in the social sciences address between one and five key questions.



- **Poor Methodological Approach** -- the design must include a well-developed and transparent plan for how you intend to collect or generate data and how it will be analyzed. Ensure that the method used to gather information for analysis is aligned with the topic of inquiry and the underlying research questions to be addressed.
- **Proximity Sampling** -- this refers to using a sample which is based not upon the purposes of your study, but rather, is based upon the proximity of a particular group of subjects. The units of analysis, whether they be persons, places, events, or things, must not be based solely on ease of access and convenience.
- **Techniques or Instruments** -- be clear in describing the techniques [e.g., semi-structured interviews] or instruments [e.g., questionnaire] used to gather data. Your research design should note how the technique or instrument will provide reasonably reliable data to answer the questions associated with the research problem.
- **Statistical Treatment** -- in quantitative studies, you must give a complete description of how you will organize the raw data for analysis. In most cases, this involves describing the data through the measures of central tendencies like mean, median, and mode that help the researcher explain how the data are concentrated and, thus, lead to meaningful interpretations of key trends or patterns found within the data.
- **Vocabulary** -- research often contains jargon and specialized language that the reader is presumably familiar with. However, avoid overuse of technical or pseudo-technical terminology. Problems with vocabulary also can refer to the use of popular terms, cliché's, or culture-specific language that is inappropriate for academic writing.
- **Ethical Dilemmas** -- in the methods section of qualitative research studies, your design must document how you intend to minimize risk for participants [a.k.a., "respondents", "human subjects"] during stages of data gathering while, at the same time, still being able to adequately address the research problem. Failure to do so can lead the reader to question the validity and objectivity of your entire study.
- **Limitations of Study** -- all studies have limitations. Your research design should anticipate and explain the reasons why these limitations exist and clearly describe the extent of missing data. It is important to include a statement concerning what impact these limitations may have on the validity of your results and how you helped ameliorate the significance of these limitations.
- Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise. Characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective (usually), a clear focus on the research problem under investigation, and precise word choice. Like specialist languages adopted in other professions, such as, law or medicine, academic writing is designed to convey agreed meaning about complex ideas or concepts for a group of scholarly experts.
- [Academic Writing](#). Writing Center. Colorado Technical College; Hartley, James. *Academic Writing and Publishing: A Practical Guide*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

## I. Improving Academic Writing

To improve your academic writing skills, you should focus your efforts on three key areas:

**1. Clear Writing.** The act of thinking about precedes the process of writing about. Good writers spend sufficient time distilling information and reviewing major points from the literature they have reviewed before creating their work. Writing detailed outlines can help you clearly organize your thoughts. Effective academic writing begins with solid planning, so manage your time carefully.

**2. Excellent Grammar.** Needless to say, English grammar can be difficult and complex; even the best scholars take many years before they have a command of the major points of good grammar. Take the time to learn the major and minor points of good grammar. Spend time practicing writing and seek detailed feedback from professors. Take advantage of the [Writing Center](#) on campus if you need help. Proper punctuation and good proofreading skills can significantly improve academic writing [see sub-tab for [proofreading your paper](#)].

**Refer to these three basic resources to help your grammar and writing skills:**

- A good writing reference book, such as, Strunk and White's book, [The Elements of Style](#) or the [St. Martin's Handbook](#);
- A college-level dictionary, such as, [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#);
- The latest edition of [Roget's Thesaurus in Dictionary Form](#).

**3. Consistent Stylistic Approach.** Whether your professor expresses a preference to use MLA, APA or the *Chicago Manual of Style* or not, choose one style manual and stick to it. Each of these style manuals provide rules on how to write out numbers, references, citations, footnotes, and lists. Consistent adherence to a style of writing helps with the narrative flow of your paper and improves its readability. Note that some disciplines require a particular style [e.g., education uses APA] so as you write more papers within your major, your familiarity with it will improve.

## II. Evaluating Quality of Writing

A useful approach for evaluating the quality of your academic writing is to consider the following issues from the perspective of the reader. While proofreading your final draft, critically assess the following elements in your writing.

- It is shaped around one clear research problem, and it explains what that problem is from the outset.
- Your paper tells the reader why the problem is important and why people should know about it.
- You have accurately and thoroughly informed the reader what has already been published about this problem or others related to it and noted important gaps in the research.
- You have provided evidence to support your argument that the reader finds convincing.

- The paper includes a description of how and why particular evidence was collected and analyzed, and why specific theoretical arguments or concepts were used.
- The paper is made up of paragraphs, each containing only one controlling idea.
- You indicate how each section of the paper addresses the research problem.
- You have considered counter-arguments or counter-examples where they are relevant.
- Arguments, evidence, and their significance have been presented in the conclusion.
- Limitations of your research have been explained as evidence of the potential need for further study.
- The narrative flows in a clear, accurate, and well-organized way.

Boscolo, Pietro, Barbara Arf  b, and Mara Quarisa  . "Improving the Quality of Students' Academic Writing: An Intervention Study." *Studies in Higher Education* 32 (August 2007): 419-438; [Academic Writing](#). The Writing Lab and The OWL. Purdue University; [Academic Writing Style](#). First-Year Seminar Handbook. Mercer University; Bem, Daryl J. [Writing the Empirical Journal Article](#). Cornell University; Candlin, Christopher. *Academic Writing Step-By-Step: A Research-based Approach*. Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016; [College Writing](#). The Writing Center. University of North Carolina; [Style](#). College Writing. The Writing Center. University of North Carolina; [Invention: Five Qualities of Good Writing](#). The Reading/Writing Center. Hunter College; Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012; [What Is an Academic Paper?](#) Institute for Writing Rhetoric. Dartmouth College.

**A literature review** surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources you have explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to your readers how your research fits within a larger field of study.

Fink, Arlene. *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper*. Fourth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014.

**A literature review may consist of simply a summary of key sources, but in the social sciences, a literature review usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis, often within specific conceptual categories.** A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information in a way that informs how you are planning to investigate a research problem. The analytical features of a literature review might:

- Give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations,
- Trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates,
- Depending on the situation, evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant research, or
- Usually in the conclusion of a literature review, identify where gaps exist in how a problem has been researched to date.

**The purpose of a literature review is to:**

- Place each work in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem being studied.
- Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration.
- Identify new ways to interpret prior research.
- Reveal any gaps that exist in the literature.
- Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies.
- Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort.
- Point the way in fulfilling a need for additional research.
- Locate your own research within the context of existing literature [very important].

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Fink, Arlene. *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005; Hart, Chris. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998; Jesson, Jill. *Doing Your Literature Review: Traditional and Systematic Techniques*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2011; Knopf, Jeffrey W. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39 (January 2006): 127-132; Ridley, Diana. *The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2012.

It is important to think of knowledge in a given field as consisting of three layers. First, there are the primary studies that researchers conduct and publish. Second are the reviews of those studies that summarize and offer new interpretations built from and often extending beyond the primary studies. Third, there are the perceptions, conclusions, opinion, and interpretations that are shared informally that become part of the lore of field.

In composing a literature review, it is important to note that it is often this third layer of knowledge that is cited as "true" even though it often has only a loose relationship to the primary studies and secondary literature reviews. Given this, while literature reviews are designed to provide an overview and synthesis of pertinent sources you have explored, there are a number of approaches you could adopt depending upon the type of analysis underpinning your study.

### **Integrative Review**

Considered a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated. The body of literature includes all studies that address related or identical hypotheses or research problems. A well-done integrative review meets the same standards as primary research in regard to clarity, rigor, and replication. This is the most common form of review in the social sciences.

*The methods* section describes actions to be taken to investigate a research problem and the rationale for the application of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information applied to understanding the problem, thereby, allowing the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. The methodology section of a research paper answers two main questions: How was the data collected or generated? And, how was it analyzed? The writing should be direct and precise and always written in the past tense.

Kallet, Richard H. "How to Write the Methods Section of a Research Paper." *Respiratory Care* 49 (October 2004): 1229-1232.

### **Content**

**The introduction to your methodology section should begin by restating the research problem and underlying assumptions underpinning your study.** This is followed by situating the methods you will use to gather, analyze, and process information within the overall "tradition" of your field of study and within the particular research design you have chosen to study the problem. If the method you choose lies outside of the tradition of your field [i.e., your review of the literature demonstrates that the method is not commonly used], provide a justification for how your choice of methods specifically addresses the research problem in ways that have not been utilized in prior studies.

**The remainder of your methodology section should describe the following:**

- Decisions made in selecting the data you have analyzed or, in the case of qualitative research, the subjects and research setting you have examined,
- Tools and methods used to identify and collect information, and how you identified relevant variables,
- The ways in which you processed the data and the procedures you used to analyze that data, and
- The specific research tools or strategies that you utilized to study the underlying hypothesis and research questions.

**In addition, an effectively written methodology section should:**

- **Introduce the overall methodological approach for investigating your research problem.** Is your study qualitative or quantitative or a combination of both (mixed method)? Are you going to take a special approach, such as action research, or a more neutral stance?
- **Indicate how the approach fits the overall research design.** Your methods for gathering data should have a clear connection to your research problem. In other words, make sure that your methods will actually address the problem. One of the most common deficiencies found in research papers is that the proposed methodology is not suitable to achieving the stated objective of your paper.
- **Describe the specific methods of data collection you are going to use,** such as, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, observation, archival research. If you are analyzing existing data, such as a data set or archival documents, describe how it was originally created or gathered and by whom. Also be sure to explain how older data is still relevant to investigating the current research problem.
- **Explain how you intend to analyze your results.** Will you use statistical analysis? Will you use specific theoretical perspectives to help you analyze a text or explain observed behaviors? Describe how you plan to obtain an accurate assessment of relationships, patterns, trends, distributions, and possible contradictions found in the data.
- **Provide background and a rationale for methodologies that are unfamiliar for your readers.** Very often in the social sciences, research problems and the methods for investigating them require more explanation/rationale than widely accepted rules governing the natural and physical sciences. Be clear and concise in your explanation.
- **Provide a justification for subject selection and sampling procedure.** For instance, if you propose to conduct interviews, how do you intend to select the sample population? If you are analyzing texts, which texts have you chosen, and why? If you are using statistics, why is this set of data being used? If other data sources exist, explain why the data you chose is most appropriate to addressing the research problem.
- **Describe potential limitations.** Are there any practical limitations that could affect your data collection? How will you attempt to control for potential confounding variables and errors? If your methodology may lead to problems you can anticipate, state this openly and show why pursuing this methodology outweighs the risk of these problems cropping up.

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