Sociology 6110-001
Methods of Social Research
Tues & Thurs, 2:00-3:20 PM in BEH S 107

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Office Location: 409 BEH S
Office Hours: Friday 3-4:30 or by appointment

Graduate Teaching Assistant:
Mindy Steadman
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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course provides an overview of the theory and practice of social science research. Regardless of your methodological persuasion or substantive area of study, my goals are to make you a better consumer and producer of research. We will focus broadly on the research methodologies most commonly used in social science disciplines. Specific learning objectives include:

a.) to familiarize students with different types of methods that are used to accumulate evidence in the social sciences (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, comparative)
b.) to expose students to the ethics and logic of data collection and analysis,
c.) to make students aware of the various sources of error and bias that are inherent in research methods,
d.) to give students an opportunity to develop their own research proposal.

Lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, and guest speakers will be used to achieve these learning objectives. By the end of the course, each participant should have the skills, knowledge, and experience to write a successful project proposal and to critically read existing research.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Seminar Format: The seminar format means that students will be expected to share the burden of discussing and presenting the reading material. In other words, the success of the course depends on the hard work of each seminar participant. “Everyone a Learner. Everyone a Teacher. Everyone a Leader.” I expect everyone in this course, including myself, to be a learner, teacher, and leader.

Course Website: Most course materials are currently available on Canvas. All course announcements will be made via Canvas and/or the University of Utah (umail) email lists. You are responsible for checking both regularly.
Readings: All readings should be completed prior to the class they are assigned. Readings will be available as pdf's via Canvas or as url links on the syllabus. Primary readings will be drawn from the books listed below, and additional readings will be posted to Canvas.

1. *The Craft of Research*
   By Booth, Colomb, Williams
   ISBN: 978-0226065663

2. *Observing Ourselves: Essays in Social Research*
   By Earl Babbie
   ISBN: 978-1-4786-2201-7

A “methods” textbook may be useful, though not required. An older (cheaper) edition of one of these recommended texts, or any alternate textbook used in an undergrad research methods course, would be fine. The library has plenty of these texts that you could borrow. Lectures in class will cover the material (terms and definitions), but access to a text may provide that background material that is useful to learn the material.

*Investigating the Social World* by Russel Schutt

*The Basics of Social Research* by Earl Babbie

Grading & Evaluation: Please refer to the final pages of the syllabus for objectives, instructions, and grading criteria for each assignment. All assignments are due at the start of class on the day they are due. Late assignments may be accepted, with permission of instructor, but will be subject to a penalty. Final course grades will be assigned based on the following distribution of points:

- **Participation Assignments** 60+ points (20%)
  *E.g., Discussion Leader + Ethics + Self-Eval*

- **Research Proposal** 150 points (50%)
  *Final Proposal + the building block assignments*

- **Final Exam** 90 points (30%)

I use the following grading scale:

- **A** (100-93 points)
- **A -** (90-92 points)
- **B +** (89-87 points)
- **B** (86-83 points)
- **B -** (80-82 points)
- **C +** (79-77 points)
- **C** (76-73 points)
- **C -** (70-72 points)
- **D +** (69-67 points)
- **D** (66-63 points)
- **D -** (60-62 points)
- **F** (< 60 points)

- Instructor will post grades on the course website within two weeks of submission.

- It is the student’s responsibility to report and discuss grade discrepancies with the instructor.

- The instructor will entertain grade change requests. Such discussions should occur outside of class time, and at least 24 hours after the assignment/exam was handed back. (i.e., take the time to reflect on the comments provided and review answer keys prior to disputing a grade.)

- There will be no extra credit available.
Respectful Learning Environment
In order to maintain a positive, civil environment for learning, students shall strive to meet the goals described in the University of Utah’s Student Code, which states “the mission of the University of Utah is to educate the individual and to discover, refine and disseminate knowledge. The University supports the intellectual, personal, social and ethical development of members of the University community. These goals can best be achieved in an open and supportive environment that encourages reasoned discourse, honesty, and respect for the rights of all individuals. Students at the University of Utah are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility and self-discipline and engage in the rigors of discovery and scholarship.”

Special Accommodations (ADA Statement)
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Academic Misconduct
Per University of Utah regulations (Policy # 6-400). “A student who engages in academic misconduct,” as defined in Part I.B. and including, but not limited to, cheating, falsification, or plagiarism, “may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University, or revocation of the student’s degree or certificate. Sanctions may also include community service, a written reprimand, and/or a written statement of misconduct that can be put into an appropriate record maintained for purposes of the profession or discipline for which the student is preparing.” Please refer to the Student Code for full elaboration of student academic and behavioral misconduct policies (http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php).

Sexual Misconduct Statement (Addressing Sexual Misconduct)
Title IX makes clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

University Safety Statement
The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit www.utah.edu.
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>14 &amp; 16</td>
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<td>Nature of Science and Research</td>
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<td>Sampling and External Validity</td>
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| 1    | Jan 7 & Jan 9 | **Introductions, Syllabus Review**  
**What is Research?**  
**Goals & Strategies of Social Research**  
| 2    | Jan 14 & Jan 16 | **Questions, Theories, Hypotheses**  
**Choosing A Topic**  
**Reading:** Booth, Colomb, Williams. *Craft of Research*. (Chpts 3-4)  
**Determining Your Personal Biases & Preferences**  
| 3    | Jan 21 & Jan 23 | **Ethics Certification** (online via Canvas).  
**Research Ethics & the IRB**  
**Reading:** CITI training & ASA Code of Ethics for assignment |
| 4    | Jan 28 & Jan 30 | **Thinking Critically: Confronting the Imprecise Nature of Research**  
**/** Review expectations for Topic Approval; see powerpoint file called “5 Steps”  
**/** Preview the three types of validity |
| 5    | Feb 4 & Feb 6 | **Measurement**  
**Skim:** Viswanathan (2005) “What is Measurement?” in *Measurement Error and Research Design*. 1-70. Skim the technical examples, if it is over your head.  
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| 6    | Feb 11 & Feb 13 | **Topic Approval** (online via Canvas). | **Causality:** Experimental versus Non-experimental Research Designs  
| 7    | Feb 18 & Feb 20 | **Finding Information About Your Topic**  
**Reading:** Booth, Colomb, Williams. *Craft of Research*. (Chpts 5-6)  
**In-Class Workshop:** http://myendnoteweb.com | **Reading Research:** Becoming a Critical Consumer of Research  
**Reading:** White (2005) “Writes of Passage” in *JMF* 67: 791-798.  
| 8    | Feb 24 & Feb 27 | **Reference List** (online via Canvas). | **Sampling & External Validity**  
**In-Class Lecture:** Description & definition of sampling methods. [Chapter on sampling in an introductory level research methods textbook will provide background; see powerpoint lecture called “Sampling”]  
**Discussion:** What went wrong with the 2016 presidential election polling & predictions? The following articles are ones that begin discussing the methodology and sampling issues  
**Using & Finding Existing Sources of Data**  
**In-Class Demonstration:** www.icpsr.umich.edu | |
| 9    | Mar 3 & Mar 5 | **Quantitative Strategy of Data Collection (Surveys)**  
**In-Class Lecture:** Description & definition of survey research methods. [Chapter in an introductory level research methods will provide background; see powerpoint lecture called “Survey Research”] | **Reading for Discussion:** Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The science of asking questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9: 65-88. | |
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Mar 10 &amp; Mar 12</td>
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<td>Mar 24 &amp; Mar 26</td>
<td><strong>Annotated Bibliography &amp; Literature Review</strong> (online via Canvas)</td>
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<td><strong>Qualitative Strategy of Data Collection</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reading for Discussion:</strong> Dana R. Fisher, Alexandra Murphy, Colin Jerolmack, Kimberly Kay Hoang, and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. <em>How to Do Ethnography Right</em>. In <em>Contexts</em>.</td>
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<td>Mar 31 &amp; Apr 2</td>
<td><strong>Comparative Research Designs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>In-Class Activity:</strong> Methods of Agreement, Method of Difference</td>
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<td>Apr 7 &amp; Apr 9</td>
<td><strong>Review of Concepts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Exam</strong> (in class)</td>
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<td>Apr 14 &amp; Apr 16</td>
<td><strong>Specific Aims</strong> (online via Canvas; bring 2 hard copies to class)</td>
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<td><strong>Proposals &amp; Publications: The Currency of Academic Research</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Booth, Colomb, Williams. <em>Craft of Research</em>. (Chpts 1-2, 12-16)</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Schwartz. (2008). The Importance of Stupidity in Scientific Research. <em>Journal of Cell Science</em> 121, 1771</td>
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<td><strong>In-Class Activity:</strong> Peer Review</td>
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<td>Apr 21</td>
<td><strong>Research Consultations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Self Evaluation</strong> (online via Canvas).</td>
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<td>Apr 29</td>
<td><strong>FINAL WRITTEN PROPOSAL</strong> (submit online via Canvas) by Wed. April 29 at 5pm.</td>
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PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS

“Everyone a Learner. Everyone a Teacher. Everyone a Leader.”

Every class period, students are expected to be prepared to discuss the day’s readings and to participate in in-class activities. There are three separate assignments where participation is formally assessed.

DISCUSSION LEADER

Each student is expected to be discussion leader once per semester.

Summary: By 8pm on Monday, prior to the class in which you are presenting, post a summary of your assigned reading to Canvas. Summaries should be limited to one single-space page or less, and should provide a concise overview of the assigned reading or topics you are assigned to discuss. These summaries will be available for all students to see.

Discussion: During class, students will lead a discussion of the assigned reading material. You can start with a brief overview of the material (similar to what you prepared in your summary), but you should focus most of your time on a critical analysis and discussion of the main topics associated with the assigned reading material. You are encouraged to break the class into smaller groups, develop an activity that allows the class to discuss the material, and/or bring in outside materials or examples to illustrate the main topics and themes of your assigned material. The instructor will provide guidelines to each individual/group regarding how much time you will be expected to cover, and whether there are particular topics that should be emphasized. Be creative.

GRADING: 25 points. 5 points for the quality and timeliness of your posted summary. 20 points for the quality, effectiveness, and creativity of your in-class facilitation. Notes: Students will self-select which week/topic they want to discuss on the first day of class. Most discussions will be done in small groups. All group members will receive the same grade.

ETHICS CERTIFICATION

All researchers are obligated to collect, analyze, and report research ethically. This assignment will introduce you to the history and guidelines for conducting ethical research. It will also expose you to the code of ethics adopted by your primary discipline.

On-Line Training & Certification: Complete the “Basic Course” in “Social and Behavioral Sciences” in the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI). It is an online, interactive set of modules designed to improve knowledge of the Common Rule, HIPAA Privacy Rule, and Good Clinical Practices for individuals involved in human subjects research. Read through all of the modules, pass all of the quizzes, and then print/save a copy of the certificate showing that you have completed the training. [https://www.citiprogram.org/](https://www.citiprogram.org/)

Reading: Read the American Sociological Association’s (ASA) Code of Ethics. This document sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie sociologists’ professional responsibilities and conduct. Note: If you are from a discipline other than Sociology, feel free to use the code of ethics from your major professional organization. We will discuss these in class.

SUBMISSION: Upload a copy of the certificate to the course website.

GRADING: 15 points. This assignment will be graded as pass/fail: Pass (15 pts), if you turn in the completed CITI certificate. Fail (0 pts), if you do not. Partial credit (5-10 pts) will be awarded if you complete the certification after the deadline or if only part of the certification was completed.
SELF-EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT

Write a short essay reflecting on what you learned throughout the semester (no longer than 1 single-spaced page). Think about whether you gained any skills or knowledge that you will be able to use in the future. Did you participate and engage fully in the activities and lectures? At the end of the essay, include the following sentence stating how many points (out of 20) you think you deserve as a grade: “Based on my effort, participation, and learning this semester, I believe I deserve ___ out of 20 points.” Be honest, be fair, and do not hesitate to give yourself full points if you believe you deserve them. If you believe you deserve a less than perfect grade, then assign your grade accordingly. Your essay must include specific examples and/or reasons justifying the grade you choose to give yourself.

SUBMISSION: Submit through the course website.

GRADING: 20 points. You will receive the grade you assigned yourself in your essay.
RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Final project + building-block assignments

The purpose of this exercise is to teach students how to apply appropriate research methods to an individually-chosen research topic. It is intended to help students conceptualize an independent research project, like a Masters Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation, or perhaps begin thinking about how to write research proposal for a funding agency.

This multi-part assignment will be worked on throughout the entire semester. Very early in the semester, students will choose a research topic, ideally one that they are interested in pursuing for their Masters Thesis, Doctoral Dissertation, major research paper, or other professional undertaking. After choosing a topic, students will then develop the specific research question to be addressed, as well as a bibliography of at least twenty references and a brief description of each reference. The final assignment will be a written proposal in which the annotated bibliography is reworked into a literature review and includes a detailed discussion of how the proposed research will be conducted. A proposal includes justification of the chosen research methods to be used to answer the chosen research question.

TOPIC APPROVAL
Submit via Canvas.

Grading: 5 points. 1 point for each of the five exercises detailed below. You will receive feedback on the appropriateness, scope, and/or feasibility of the proposed topic.

1. First, write a short statement (a paragraph is probably acceptable), detailing a topic you are interested in pursuing for an independent research project. In this statement, explain what the topic is and why it is important enough to be researched. You should be as specific as possible, but you do not need to know how you will conduct the research at this time.

2. Next, write a specific research question related to that topic. Is your research question descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, or evaluative? You may need to write several questions to help you narrow the topic. If you do that, please star the ‘best’ one and complete the remaining exercises related to it.

3. Now state a specific hypothesis or hypotheses related to your research question? Remember: a hypothesis identifies a clear independent and dependent variable. It states a direction of association (positive, negative, neutral). It can usually be written into an “if, then” statement. Identify each component.

4. Describe why you think the hypotheses are in the direction that you stated. This explanation or discussion would be the start of your theoretical framework

5. Fill in the worksheet suggested in the Booth reading (chpt 4) to determine the significance of your research question/problem:
   - **Topic**: I am studying __________
   - **Question**: because I want to find out what/why/how __________
   - **Significance**: in order to help my reader understand __________.
INITIAL REFERENCE LIST

Submit via Canvas.

**Grading**: 10 points. Reference lists will be graded according to the following three criteria:
1. Whether a consistent bibliographic style has been adopted (4 points),
2. Whether the list contains reputable, scholarly research-based sources (4 points), and
3. Whether the chosen sources appear to have relevance and timeliness to topic (2 points)

Researchers always begin a study by looking at what other researchers have found on a given issue. After your topic is approved, you should immediately work at compiling a list of high-quality journal articles that deal with your chosen subject. Use the resources (databases and catalogs) introduced during class, by the librarian and instructor.

Your initial reference list must include at least twenty (20) social science journal articles – i.e., published peer-review research articles. Additional citations on your reference list (beyond the 20 journal articles) may include books, reports, mass print media (magazines, newspapers). Internet references should be avoided, unless you know that the source is credible such as a refereed on-line open-access journal, a report from a well-known agency, etc. This is a research methods course, so you are expected to find research articles. Type your reference list using a standard format for bibliographic references (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style). You may choose the format/style that is most relevant to your discipline.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY & LITERATURE REVIEW

Submit via Canvas.

**Grading**: 30 points.
20 points for the “annotated bibliography” with 2 points for each of 10 articles reviewed. Completeness and quality of summaries will be assessed. Chosen sources should be relevant to topic and scholarly in nature.
10 points for the “literature review” essay. Did the author use an appropriate in-text citation style? Are the articles integrated and synthesized, rather than serially described?

You will create an “annotated bibliography” for at least ten (10) of the sources identified from your previous assignment. An annotated bibliography provides full citation information for the source, followed by a short summary for each reference. The summaries for each chosen article should not simply quote or paraphrase the abstract for the article; they should include a response to each of the following points:
(a) A description of the author's objectives (e.g., what was the major question or questions the author was trying to illuminate?)
(b) A description of the data on which the authors’ conclusions were based and how the data were collected. (e.g., was it a survey, experiment, qualitative case study, or what? what kind of sample was used?)
(c) A description of key variables, as well as how they were operationalized.
(d) A short summary of what the author(s) concluded.
(e) Additional notes that remind you about how or why this reference is particularly relevant to your proposed research topic.

Next, you will create a “literature review” essay (minimum = 2 single-spaced pages) where you attempt to summarize the chosen literature in a single, coherent essay. The lit review provides discussion of what we already know about the topic, where the gaps in understanding may be, and possible definitions for key terms or concepts. The essay you create has to include at least the 10 research articles annotated above (it can include additional sources). You must use a formal and consistent in-text citation style.
DRAFT SPECIFIC AIMS

Bring hard copy to class.

Grading: 5 points. 1 point for writing and bringing draft to class. 1 point for participation in peer-review activity in class. 3 points for quality and clarity of draft, as assessed by average of peer evaluations.

A Specific Aims section provides an overview of the subject/topic of the proposal, the central research question, including why it is important and how it fits into the existing literature, and a brief introduction/summary to the proposed method. This is an extended abstract of the entire proposal, which allows the reader to decide whether they want to read more about your proposal. This section should be about 1 page single space (or a little less). This assignment is the first draft of this section of your full proposal, but it should be as complete and as clear as possible (or at least as complete and as clear as you have developed your project so far).

Peer Review – In class, you will read, assess, and provide feedback to two of your peers’ drafts. Assign each draft a numerical value, as described below. Also have a conversation in your group about the strengths and weaknesses of the drafts, providing ideas about how to further develop the details of the proposal.

3 – Perfect. No Revision is needed. This draft is so clear and so well-written. After reading it, I know exactly what the question, project, and methods being proposed are. The proposed project is very novel and important. I cannot wait to read more details in the full proposal.

2.5 – Pretty Good Start. Fairly minor revisions are needed in this draft, in order to better articulate the question, the methodology, and/or the importance of the topic and project.

2 – Needs Work – A fair amount of revision is needed in this draft to better articulate the question, the methodology, and/or the importance of the topic and project.

1.5 – Confused, but Keep Working on this Topic. A lot of revision is needed. The draft is not clear and/or is poorly written. After reading it, I do not know what the question and/or proposed methods will be. The author has not demonstrated how or why the topic and project are novel or important. However, even if it is hard to understand from this draft, I think this idea is probably one worth pursuing.

1 – Back to Drawing Board? The draft is hard to understand. The writing is poor, and the ideas are not well developed or articulated. After reading it, I am not able to say what the question, methodology, or importance are. A lot of work is needed to clarify this topic and/or methodology. A new topic could be considered, or perhaps you need to continue narrowing the topic into a specific research question that has a specific methodology.

0 – Nothing. The student you are assigned to assess did not have a draft ready for review.
**PROPOSAL – FINAL WRITTEN PROJECT**
*Submit via Canvas.*

**Grading:** 100 points. Papers will be graded according to the completeness of the outline presented below. Quality of writing, critical thought, and appropriateness of research design will also be considered.

A proposal is used to gain clearance to proceed with the research from funding agencies, committees that safeguard human subjects, or other authorities such as faculty advisors. Proposals outline a specific research question, what is already known about the topic (lit review), plus provide a detailed plan for how a research project will be conducted. There are no set page limits or page requirements for this assignment. Though, typically a proposal of this nature will be about 10 pages in length. The final written proposal should contain the following elements. Use subheadings to designate each section of the document:

(a) **Specific Aims:** An overview of the subject of the proposal, the central research question, including why it is important, and a brief introduction/summary to the proposed method. This is like an extended abstract that allows the reader to decide whether they want to read more about your project. It should be limited to one page.

(b) **Background or Literature Review:** Review of the theoretical and research literature related to your topic. This is where you show that you’ve done proper background research and that you understand the relevant theories and that you are knowledgeable about previous research on the subject. You should conceptually define the key concepts you want to study.

(c) **Proposed Study, Research Questions:** Outline the specific research questions you wish to answer, as well as hypotheses (when relevant and if not outlined in previous section). You should also try to describe how your research is new or different from existing research and justify the importance of your research topic and proposed project.

(d) **Method or Research Plan:** A detailed discussion of how you propose to study the subject, including a justification for your methodological choices.
   1. **Data:** What types of data will you collect or use to answer your research question? Describe your proposed plan or method of data collection, and justify why these methods are appropriate for your research questions. Consider both the strengths and limitations of your approach.
   2. **Measurement:** How will you measure (or operationalize) the key concepts? Be very specific. For example, if you are using a survey to collect responses, list the actual survey question(s) that will be used to measure each concept.
   3. **Sample:** What population do you want to study, and how will you select a sample. How representative is that sample? Don’t forget to discuss how the lack of generalizability might affect the desired results.
   4. **Analytic Plan:** How will you analyze and/or manage the data once collected?
   5. **Preliminary Results:** If relevant, what preliminary research have you done on the topic? Do you have any pilot study results? (for most students, this section will be very brief, such as “no preliminary results at this time”)
   6. **Timetable:** Outline a specific, detailed timeline for completing each phase of proposed study.

(e) **Budget:** What are the financial costs, if any, associated with the project? How will you cover these costs? Be specific. Provide details. (1 page)

(f) **Ethical Considerations:** What precautions will you take to avoid violating standards of ethical research conduct? What are the ethical issues you would need to consider to do this project? Will you need IRB approval or not? (1 page or less)

(g) **References.** A list of the sources you consulted and cited within the proposal. Use whatever bibliographic style that is relevant to your discipline. Be consistent. Be formal, with both this end-of-paper section and with the in-text citation style.
CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There's an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- Emergency Response Guide: Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.

- See Something, Say Something: Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

Safety Escorts: For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call 801-585-2677. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.