SOCI 269

An Introduction to Quantitative Sociology

*Final Presentation & Term Paper*

Sakeef M. Karim

*Amherst College*

## The Term Paper

Drawing on the applied examples featured in [Module II](https://soci269.netlify.app/#moduleii) of our class, students must submit a **8-12 page** term paper on a topic related to *one* of the following areas of sociological inquiry:

[*Race, Ethnicity and Nation*](https://soci269-w6.netlify.app)

[*Gender and Sexuality*](https://soci269-w7.netlify.app)

[*Culture*](https://soci269-w9.netlify.app)

To earn an A, students must also submit a companion data visualization using data from the *General Social Survey* Cumulative Data File or one of three three-wave GSS panels.[[1]](#footnote-1) Students are free to create this visualization in either  or Python .

## The Data

#### Note

* gss\_cumulative is the GSS Cumulative Data File.
* gss\_2006\_2008\_2010 is the 2006 GSS Panel.
* gss\_2008\_2010\_2012 is the 2008 GSS Panel.
* gss\_2010\_2012\_2014 is the 2010 GSS Panel.

Each dataset was prepared using the [{gssr}](https://kjhealy.github.io/gssr/) package in .

###

### Accessing the Data Files

For simplicity, you can access GSS data by copying and pasting the script below directly into RStudio:

load(url("https://github.com/sakeefkarim/intro\_quantitative\_sociology/raw/refs/heads/main/data/assignments/term%20paper/gss\_269.RData"))

### Variables and Codebooks

Learn more about the variables in your data by using the interactive table [embedded online](https://soci269-a13netlify.app/#variables). You’ll find codebooks online, too.

## Expectations for Final Presentation

You must prepare a presentation that provides a *preliminary* overview of your term project. Presentations will last $≈$ 7-10 minutes. **Any presentation shorter than 7 minutes or longer than 10 minutes will be penalized**. To ease interpretation, you should prepare a slide deck that includes—but is not necessarily limited to—the following items:

* A *title slide* that summarizes your project and provides a succinct, high-level answer to the question: “what is your presentation *about*?”
* A slide (or set of slides) that clearly presents the *research question(s)* guiding your project.
* A *literature review* that situates your work within a broader body of sociological scholarship. Here, you should *concisely* review the extant literature[[2]](#footnote-2) and point to potential “gaps” or lacunae that your project will address.[[3]](#footnote-3)

|  |
| --- |
| **Hint**With conciseness and precision in mind, this portion of the presentation should only last $≈$ 2 minutes. |

* A *data* slide that describes the dataset at the heart of your project.
* A *variables* slide that describes the key items and analytic constructs at the heart of your project.

|  |
| --- |
|  More Than Descriptives? |
| If you plan to fit models or draw on other statistical techniques, you must provide a brief overview of your *analytic strategy*. |

* A slide that presents some preliminary *results*—say, some preliminary data visualizations, tables or summary statistics.

|  |
| --- |
| **Hint**This section should last at least 2-3 minutes. |

* A *conclusion slide* that distills key takeaways from the presentation and answers the question: “what should the audience *remember* about my findings and my broader topic of interest?”

Beyond following the structure detailed above, you will be evaluated on:

* Your *delivery*—that is, the clarity and concision of your script; the deployment of effective transitions between slides; and how well you manage time.
* Your *command* of the presentation material—that is, your familiarity with $x$, your phenomenon of analytic interest, as well as the data and methods undergirding your analyses.
* The *design* of your slide deck–that is, whether you avoid clutter on slides; use effective headlines and titles; and ensure that your slides easy to read and visually engaging. For more suggestions, review [this](https://kieranhealy.org/blog/archives/2018/03/24/making-slides/).

## Expectations for Term Paper

### Introduction

This may sound quite familiar—but bear with me. In your introductory section, you should clearly and precisely discuss the [research question](https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/smart-strategies/formulating-your-research-questions/) animating your project. Your opening paragraphs must briefly summarize the relevant literature you are engaging with and offer a clear roadmap for the exposition to follow. What is $x$—the central question, puzzle, problem, or idea your research addresses? What are the key claims being made or hypotheses being adjudicated vis-à-vis $x$? How will you draw on different theoretical perspectives, conceptual models, and empirical tools to develop your argument? Addressing these questions is essential.

### Literature Review

In your second section, you should provide a more detailed overview or exegesis of the [existing literature](https://guides.library.harvard.edu/c.php?g=1426096&p=10795535). How have other scholars studied $x$? What conclusions have they drawn? What are the evidentiary bases for these conclusions or claims? Identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments pervading the extant literature. Are there any “gaps” worth filling?

### The Basic Argument

After reviewing the extant literature, you will provide a well-developed argument that builds on existing insights while charting a relatively novel path forward. In furnishing your argument, you should apply—and ideally, *synthesize*—insights from the studies covered in [Module II](https://soci269.netlify.app/#moduleii) of this class to make sense of $x$, your phenomenon of interest. To this end, you must draw on some of the core readings covered in [Weeks 6](https://soci269-w6.netlify.app), [7](https://soci269-w7.netlify.app) and [9](https://soci269-w9.netlify.app)—although the best papers will weave in supplementary material as well. More generally, although some of the concepts discussed in [Module II](https://soci269.netlify.app/#moduleii) are contested and multivocal in nature, students should not mischaracterize any of the arguments sketched by the scholars we have engaged with in class. Doing so will result a penalty.

|  |
| --- |
|  Fitting Models or Performing Statistical Analyses? |
| If you plan to estimate models, build nonparametric algorithms, or draw on other statistical instruments, you must carefully explain *how* you subjected your theoretical propositions to empirical scrutiny. |

### Formatting Conventions

Final papers must be between 8-12 pages, inclusive of references. Once again, you are free to prepare your term paper in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, LaTeX, RMarkdown or Quarto. Concretely, this means you can submit your short essay as a .docx file or as a . Your main text must be double-spaced and formatted in a 12-point font. Margins should be set to 1 inch on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right). You are free to use either an [APA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html) or [ASA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/index.html) citation style to manage the references you include.

|  |
| --- |
|  Zotero  |
| If you haven’t done so already, you may want to invest in [Zotero](https://www.zotero.org/) to manage your citations. |

|  |
| --- |
|  A Note About Subheadings |
| You ***must*** use subheadings to organize your arguments. |

1. Specifically, the (i) 2006-2008-2010 panel; (ii) 2008-2010-2012 panel; or (iii) 2010-2012-2014 panel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. What arguments are already out there? [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. How will the current study augment what’s already out there? [↑](#footnote-ref-3)