**Passion Project**

The general premise behind the Passion Project: 1) For the rest of the semester, we will be periodically working on your project. 2) It has to be some type of learning about one of our units of study, and you have to document it (posting on Google Classroom). 3) You’ll present your accomplishments to the class. 4) That’s it. Have fun. Find your passion. Explore it. Enjoy learning what you want.

**Part I. Pick a Topic and Create a Research Question.** The topic and question that you pick should be…

* Related to one of the units that we will be studying this semester (gender and sexuality, socialization, race and ethnicity, deviance and the prison system, culture, or social stratification).
* Narrow. For instance, at the beginning you might choose to do your research on poverty and its causes; however, as the semester goes on, you might decide to focus your research on food deserts. At the beginning of the process, your guiding research question might be “What causes poverty?”; however, as you do more research, your guiding research question might be “How do food deserts aid in the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty?” When developing your research question, think about Peter Berger’s *Invitation to Sociology.*
  + When developing research questions, you should be thinking about bigger picture causes and significances (e.g. Why does the problem occur? What is the effect/significance of the problem?). In addition, you should be looking to ask questions from the point of view of AT LEAST one of the perspectives (functionalist, social conflict, or symbolic interactionist). These will be discussed next week.

**Part II. Research.** The research on your broad topic (e.g. causes of poverty) will help you get to your narrowed down, specific topic (e.g. food deserts). Your research can and should come from any number of reliable sources including: newspaper and magazine articles, books (yes...like an actual book), and peer reviewed journals (think JSTOR). However, as I am asking you to think outside the box for your project, you should also be thinking outside of the box in terms of your research as well. You should think of using resources such as documentaries and movies, ethnographies (we will learn about these later this semester), interviews with professionals in the field, Twitter/Facebook/social media, radio (e.g. NPR stories), podcasts, museum exhibits (in person and digitized), interviews, etc. Make sure to keep a running bibliography of all the sources that you use. When researching you should begin thinking of the following questions:

* How does the problem affect the community in which you live and/or society as a whole?
* Why does the problem occur? (There are most likely multiple causes to your problem. While narrowing down your topic, you might consider refining your research to one of the causes)
* Why is this problem significant? What are the long term effects? (It will be useful to utilize both anecdotal and statistical evidence)

**Part III. Develop a Solution:** One of the goals of the project is to develop a solution to the problem you have been researching. It is important that you narrow down your topic at the beginning so you can develop a manageable solution. You will most likely not fix racism, sexism, poverty, etc. in the course of a semester; however, your solution should attempt to take meaningful steps towards fixing the problem. To develop your solution you should take a look at the causes of these problems and try to target one or two of these causes. Here are some examples of solutions from past years:

* Volunteering (e.g. volunteering at a school, food pantry, etc.)
* Starting School Club (e.g. starting a Queer-Straight Alliance)
* Writing Local Politician (e.g. To make them aware of issues dealing with schooling, poverty, LGBT issues, etc.)
* Developing a blog and/or using “hashtag activism” to make people aware of the problem
* Leading a protest to make the community aware of the problem that you are addressing
* Creating art, poetry, or music that addresses the issues you researched
* In the past, students have also enacted much larger scale solutions:
  + Writing local politicians to make them aware of a problem and eventually getting a grocery store built in their neighborhood which was a food desert
  + Partnering with Mt. Sinai Hospital to get books donated to newborns in low income neighborhoods and raising $30k to fund this project.

**Part IV. Presentation of Your Final Product.** At the end of the semester, each student/group will give a 10-minute presentation to the class. The purpose of the presentation is to educate the class on the problem you have chosen to research. You should also discuss what solution(s) you/your group had to begin to solve this problem. The presentation can be in the form of a TED-Talk, documentary, or performance.

**Part V. Blog.** Each individual (not group) will be required to consistently blog about the progress that they are making. The blog should be an electronic (and public) record of the kind of progress you are making on your project, the questions with which you are grappling, and what direction you envision taking your Passion Project. See the following page for the blog calendar.

**Passion Project Calendar**

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| **Due Date** | **Tasks** |
| 9/13 | **Initial Direction:** Discuss the general direction that you would like to go with your project. Think about the kinds of topics/stories/issues that interest you. What sociological questions do you have about these topics/stories/issues? |
| 9/23 | **Topic Proposal:** Develop and explain a narrowed down sociological question (or questions) that will drive your analysis; give an explanation of why you are interested in the topic; will you work by yourself or in a partner/group? |
| 10/11 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 5 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 5 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? What sociological questions do they spur? |
| 10/28 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 10 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 10 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? What sociological questions do they spur? |
| 11/11 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 15 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 15 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? What sociological questions do they spur? |
| N/A | **Newspaper/Magazine:** Find a source from a newspaper or magazine (either print or online) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Book/Book Excerpt:** Find a source from a book (either an entire book or excerpt from a book) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Documentary or Podcast:** Find a source from a documentary or podcast that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Peer Reviewed Journal:** Find a source from a peer reviewed journal (JSTOR would be a good place to start looking for one – check the class website for the link) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Expert**: Interview an “expert” (can be a professor, someone who works in the field that you are studying, etc.) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| 11/19 | **Reflection on Project - Explanation of Cause:** Provide an explanation as to WHY your problem occurs. What are bigger picture societal/sociological causes of this problem? |
| 12/6 | **Reflection on Project DRAFT- Explanation of Significance:** Provide an explanation of the SIGNIFICANCE of this problem. This could be the significance on a community, city, nation, world, etc. Why is this something we should care about? |
| 12/13 | **Initial Ideas for Solution:** After thinking about the multiple causes and significance of your problem, what initial ideas for solutions do you have? Brainstorm several possible solutions and why you think these might be plausible solutions. |
| 12/20 | **Your Solution Draft:** What will you do/are you doing to solve this problem? Give a detailed explanation of how you are attempting to solve the problem? Why did you choose to develop this solution? |
| 1/3 | **Final Reflection on Project - Explanation of Significance:** Provide an explanation of the SIGNIFICANCE of this problem. This could be the significance on a community, city, nation, world, etc. Why is this something we should care about? |
| 1/10 | **Final Your Solution:** What will you do/are you doing to solve this problem? Give a detailed explanation of how you are attempting to solve the problem? Why did you choose to develop this solution? |
| 1/13 | **Week of Presentations** |