Alozie’s Template for Completing the Research Design

To receive a grade in this course, a student must complete a research design. The design should be approximately 13 pages long, typewritten, double-spaced, referenced and must reflect the preparer’s original thinking. The design must contain sufficient details as to make it a blueprint (e.g. it should be prepared in such a manner that an independent person could easily implement it in the absence of the preparer. All topics must be approved by the instructor.

Whenever social scientists are called upon to evaluate any piece of scholarly work (theses, dissertations, journal articles, etc.) they are guided by four major questions:

1. What questions are being asked, and are they worth asking?
2. To what body of knowledge do these questions belong?
3. What methodology is employed to answer those questions and is it the correct methodology?
4. What results are obtained, and what contribution has been made?

These questions also comprise the major sections of a well-executed research design. Although some works may not fit this model or some parts thereof totally, mastering the model can only be likened to mastering the alphabet; students build very quickly beyond this point. With this in mind, I require all designs for this course embody all of these questions. In practical terms, the questions break down as follows:

Part One: What questions are being asked, and are they worth asking? This is called the problem identification stage.

- What is the problem?
- Why should we be interested in this problem?
- What concepts, hypotheses and theories are you concerned with?
- How are these concepts, hypotheses and theories related conceptually or practically?

Part Two: To what body of knowledge do these questions belong? This is the literature review stage.

- What have other scholars (in some cases popular writers) said about this particular subject?
- Are these works directly or indirectly related?
- What gaps do you see in this literature?
- Will your research address this gap or some part of it?

Note: this review helps you to refine the research questions, variables of interest, hypotheses, concepts, theories, etc.
Part Three: What methodology is employed to answer those questions and is it the correct methodology? *This is the methodology stage.*

- **Measurement Issues**
  - Units of Analysis
  - Population versus sample
  - Operationalization of concepts and variables
  - Dependent and independent variables

- **Data Collection Strategies**
  - Experiment
  - Survey
  - Fieldwork
  - Aggregate
  - Documents

- **Data Analysis**
  - Level of data and statistical operations feasible
  - Univariate, bivariate, multivariate
  - Descriptive or inferential

Part Four: What results are obtained, and what contribution has been made? *This is the research report stage.*

- Manner of presentation: charts, tables, histograms, etc.

**Note:** For this course, students are expected to design their projects to include all but the data analysis section of Part Three and the whole of Part Four. These areas will be tackled in another course.