Sociology Research Guide

Find Books   Find Articles   Suggested Websites   Research Process Guide
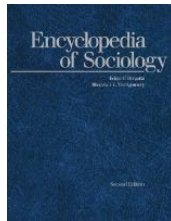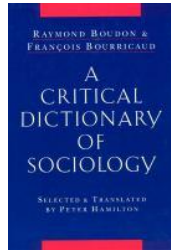
I.   Find Books

A) Reference Materials: Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.
Reference materials offer background information and broad overviews of subjects. This information is often helpful in narrowing your topic and in selecting a specific area to explore further. Reference materials such as almanacs and yearbooks also provide quick access to statistical data.
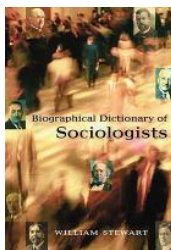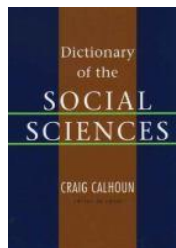
1) Suggested Titles:

Encyclopedia of Sociology. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000. (VER HM425 .E5 2000) 430 signed essays in five volumes provide a thorough overview of topics in sociology.

A Critical Dictionary of Sociology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. (REF HM17 .B6813 1989). Presents a selective and critical discussion of the fundamental questions of sociology.

Biographical Dictionary of Sociologists. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008. (VER REF HM478 .S74 2008) Brings together 190 men and women past and present, who have made or are making significant contributions in the field of sociology. Each entry includes a short biography highlighting a sociologist's personal background, a detailed analysis of the theories or approaches that person contributed to his or her individual field, and a selective list of the subject's books, articles, or other professional literature.

Dictionary of the Social Sciences. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. (VER REF H41 .D53 2002) Serves to orient students and non-specialists to the concepts, theories, methodologies, schools of thought, and individuals that define classic and contemporary scholarship in the social sciences

B) Library Catalog: Print and E-book Collections

The online catalog offers convenient access to titles housed at all VC library locations. At the catalog screen, select "Search the Catalog" to locate titles or subjects that match your terms such as "socialization".

> **E-books:**
> After entering your search terms such as **homelessness**, use the filters in the left menu bar to limit your results to those books available online.
>
> E-books can be checked out and downloaded to a PC, iPad, or other device. See the **Accessing E-books** section in the Library Tips document.

C) Browse the Collection

Physically browse the sociology titles shelved by call number in the following Library of Congress Classification ranges:

HM: Sociology (General)

HN: Social history and conditions
    Social problems
    Social reform

HQ: The family
    Marriage
    Women

HS: Societies: secret, benevolent, etc.

HT: Communities
    Classes
    Races

HV: Social pathology
    Social and public welfare
    Criminology

II. Find Articles

A) Article Databases

1. Academic Search Complete: This database offers full-text coverage of 4,500 journals on a wide variety of subjects. Titles include:

   - *Canadian Journal of Sociology*
   - *Sociological Forum*
   - *American Journal of Sociology*
   - *Qualitative Sociology*
   - *Annual Review of Sociology*
   - *Contemporary Sociology*

   and over two hundred others. Select from a number of different limiters to customize your search, including cover stories, publication dates, page numbers, etc.
   Enter your keyword(s) to search all journals simultaneously for articles

addressing your topic. For example, if looking for information on how the effects of **divorce** on **children**, enter both terms connected with the Boolean operator "and".

Citing the articles: The database offers formatting rules with examples for citing the articles selected. For assistance in citing the articles, select the "Help" link in the upper right corner of the screen, scroll to view "Citation Styles" in the left menu bar, and then choose the documentation style of your choice.

2. Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center: Provides a wealth of information on current issues and controversial topics. Information includes pro-con essays, journal articles, statistics, primary sources, and links to multimedia files. The database also provides assistance in citing the information selected.

In-house Magazines and Journals: *Futurist* and *Journal of Social Psychology* are available in the reference section of the Wright Library, located on the Vernon campus.

III. Suggested Websites

The Institute for American Values: Within the focus on civil society, the institute's three current priorities are marriage, thrift, and public conversation. Together, these three are primary determinants of the health of civil society.

Encyclopedia of Death and Dying: Free encyclopedia which provides hundreds of articles on topics related to death and dying. The website features a search bar which will allow you to quickly locate an article, or you can browse through the alphabetically divided pages.

Forced Migration Online: Forced Migration Online (FMO) is home to a growing collection of resources relating to refugees and forced migration. FMO is designed for use by students, academics, practitioners, policy makers, the media, forced migrants or anyone else interested in the field of forced migration.

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation: The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) advises the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on policy development in health, disability, human services, data, and science, and provides advice and analysis on economic policy. ASPE leads special initiatives, coordinates the Department's evaluation, research and demonstration activities, and manages cross-Department planning activities such as strategic planning, legislative planning, and review of regulations. Integral to this role, ASPE conducts research and evaluation studies, develops policy analyses, and estimates the cost and benefits of policy alternatives under consideration by the Department or Congress.

The Research Process

1) Select a topic that you find interesting and appropriate for the assignment.

2) Review reference sources such as subject encyclopedias for background information to help focus or narrow the search.

   For example, students interested in the **social class** may consult the *Encyclopedia of Sociology* for ideas in narrowing the focus to its relationship to **academic achievement**.

3) Restate the topic as a question. Inquiry is at the heart of the research process, a quest to locate information which answers questions and leads researchers to a greater understanding of the topic.

   Restating the topic as a question will help in:
   - Locating information that is useful and relevant to the primary focus or thesis of your research.
   - Identifying the keywords or phrases to use in the search statement.

      Example: What is the relationship between **social class** and **academic achievement**?

4) Develop a search statement by combining keywords or concepts from the research question. For example, **"social class"** and **"academic achievement"** were identified as keywords in the question above. By connecting both terms with the Boolean operator **"and"**, the researcher will retrieve only those articles that discuss *both* concepts, thus improving the relevancy of the search.

      Enter in search field: **social class <u>and</u> academic achievement**

5) Develop alternate search statements to improve the search results. Authors may use various terms to describe the same concept.

   For example, **social class** is often used in the same context as **social status**.

   By identifying and connecting alternate terms, researchers may expand the search results. As indicated below, consider brainstorming and listing synonyms or word variations to identify alternate keywords.

Concept 1		Concept 2
social class	AND	academic achievement
social status	AND	educational outcomes
class distinctions	AND	scholastic success
social rank	AND	academic ability

6) Evaluate information for objectivity and reliability.

7) Cite the information borrowed from other authors or informational sources. Careful documentation will ensure that credit is given with no intention to plagiarize or claim ownership of information belonging to other researchers. For explanations and examples, visit the Duke University Library's Citation page.

Questions?

Email: librarian@vernoncollege.edu

Chat: Select the chat icon on the library homepage.

Phone: 940-552-6291 ext: 2222